

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
111 N.W. 1st Street, Suite 1034, Miami, FL 33128
Minutes of Meeting of March 23, 2016

- Present:** Darna Aybar-Guardia, Odalys Dipp, Monica Interian, Viviana Jordan, Beverly Nixon, Linda Robinson, Maria Santamaria, Raisa Sequeira, Marie Woodson, Mara Zapata, and Dona Zemo
- Excused:** Clora Adkins, Leah Blumenfeld, Marie Eloi, Sharon Kendrick-Johnson, Belinda Leon, Tara Leighton, Noreen Lagault Mendoza, Francesca Menes, and Phyllis Sloan Simpkins
- Guests:** Rosy Castro; Phoebe Zemo; Karla de Anda, Maria Onelia Maco and Maria Patricia Briones from the Miami Workers Center; Renita Holmes
- Staff:** Laura Morilla

Chairwoman Mara Zapata commenced the meeting at 5:35 p.m. and welcomed everyone. CFW members and guests all introduced themselves.

First there was a **Presentation** by Karla de Anda from the Miami Workers Center. Karla is an organizer for the Miami Workers Center and she talked about the “labor” aspect of human trafficking/labor servitude, especially the issue of domestic workers. Karla said that there are 100,000 domestic worker in Florida – 80% are women and 75% of those women are undocumented; most are Latin American, African American, or from the Caribbean. As part of her job as an organizer, Karla goes to malls, bus stops, parks, churches, wherever domestic workers gather, to talk to them. She also meets with domestic workers a couple of times per month at the Miami Workers Center to discuss their rights with them. Karla explained that domestic workers face many problems. They do not get paid the minimum wage or there is wage theft, they work extra long hours, no paid sick days, no chance to save for retirement because their employers don’t pay the social security taxes, problem with work visas, etc.

Karla explained that a person who wants to bring over a domestic worker from another country has to sign a contract with the U.S. Embassy guaranteeing that they will pay minimum wage, provide health insurance, etc. But many employers fail to keep these promises. If the domestic worker comes as a tourist and overstays the visa, there is no contract. The domestic workers fear immigration or the police and do not complain or report abuse. Also the domestic workers may be related and they work for related family members so if one complains then they all get fired. The State Department does not keep track of the visas they give to domestic workers.

Karla and the two domestic workers who came to the meeting want to create a taskforce to study the status of domestic workers in Florida and stop the abuse. After Karla finished, Maria Onelia and Maria Patricia talked about their specific experiences as domestic workers. They both told stories of long hours for very little pay, lack of respect and being humiliated, lack of freedom to move about, and even the monitoring of how much food they eat. Maria Onelia also had issues with her employer keeping her work papers and not knowing what was going on with her work visa. Maria Onelia eventually went to FIAC for help and in 2009 her case went to court. Maria Onelia got her back pay and wages due her and her employer was eventually designated as a human trafficker.

Mara thanked the three guests for their presentations and said that the CFW would do some thinking about what action the CFW could take to address these types of situations.

At this point there was a quorum so Dona moved to approve the agenda and Marie Woodson seconded the motion. The motion passed and **the agenda was approved.**

Viviana moved to approve the minutes of the CFW meeting of 02/24/16 and Marie Woodson seconded the motion. The motion passed and the **minutes were approved.**

The **Committee Reports** were then presented.

Events and Fundraising Committee. Mara asked everyone to review the written report.

Legislative Committee. Mara gave a quick update as follows: Governor Scott signed the National Statuary Hall bill and the bill requiring that rape kits be submitted for testing; the alimony reform bill passed; the abortion restriction bills passed; and the bill to allow domestic violence victims to be eligible for workers compensation did not pass.

Communications Committee. Viviana reported that Mara and Laura were guests on a radio program for Women's History Month and that she was also a guest on Spanish radio.

Human Trafficking Committee. Linda reported that Commissioner Souto responded to the CFW's letter offering to host public education forums in the various Commission districts so she and Maria Santamaria will organize a human trafficking forum in Commissioner Souto's district. Mara reported that Marie Eloi is also organizing a presentation to the Haitian American Nurses Association. Linda further reported that NCJW is trying to work through the PTAs to get into the public schools to educate about human trafficking and also that several forums are being held in South Miami-Dade by different groups.

Old Business. Mara reported that the In the Company of Women reception was a great success and that the CFW was well represented by many members.

Mara reminded the CFW members that the next CFW meeting is an on the road meeting on April 27th at 6 p.m. at the Miami Beach Women's Club.

The CFW members then briefly reviewed the YWCA's proposal to partner on a series of film screenings and panel discussions for 2016. The CFW will discuss this matter again after the scholarships have been awarded to determine how much money the CFW has left over. The CFW will aim for the October event.

New Business. Mara reminded everyone to file their financial disclosure forms.

Attendance at Community Events. Marie Woodson reported that she participated in the Young Women's Preparatory Academy's Women's Symposium, and that she also secured that donation of \$1000 for the scholarship again this year. Mara talked about the series of events and discussions that MDC InterAmerican Campus has been having for Women's History Month. Mara also reported that she had volunteered at the Mas Canosa Scholarship fundraiser.

Laura introduced Renita Holmes and announced that tomorrow night Renita's organization and the Black Affairs Advisory Board are hosting a Village Dialogue on the Status of African American Women at the African Cultural Arts Center. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Laura Morilla, Recorder