



**MEMORANDUM**  
**OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN JEAN MONESTIME**  
**Board of County Commissioners**

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<b>TO:</b> The Honorable Vice-Chairman Esteban Bovo, Jr. and Members of the Board of County Commissioners	<b>DATE:</b> January 16, 2015
<b>FROM:</b> The Honorable Chairman Jean Monestime Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioner District 2	<b>SUBJECT:</b> Chairman Remarks Installation Ceremony

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Senator Rubio, Congresswoman Wilson, Lieutenant Governor Lopez-Cantera, Retired Congresswoman Meek, Mayor Gimenez, My Fellow County Commissioners, Clerks of the Courts Mr. Ruvín, Other Federal, State and Local Elected Officials., Members of the Clergy, Members of the Press, County Employees, Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me, on behalf of my colleagues, to say thank you to now our former Chairwoman Commissioner Rebeca Sosa, for her leadership over the last 2 years. Commissioner Sosa, thank you!

If I were to thank everyone who has helped me get to where I am today, it would take hours. Several decades ago, I arrived on the shores of Miami-Dade County as a teenage immigrant seeking a better life. Several decades later we are here experiencing the transformative power of the American Dream.

Out of respect for your time, rather than recite my list of church elders, family members, teachers, friends and mentors who have guided me on this path, allow me to publicly express my sincere gratitude for the countless blessings in my life bestowed by a merciful God.

To be selected for this position / to be the Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Commission / is a tremendous honor. I am very humbled that my colleagues / by their unanimous vote / have made this day possible. To be chosen to lead the governing body that represents over 2.5 million people / a county commission that sets the priorities for our annual budget, one that is larger than 17 states and 78 countries, is an awesome responsibility. Today, I have taken a solemn oath as the Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Commission. With the continuing support of my wonderful wife, my loving sons, and the grace of God, you have my word - I will always try to do my best.

To the families and individuals in this community who are struggling to make ends meet, I understand the challenges you face. At different times in my life, I mopped floors, mowed lawns, washed dishes and drove a taxi to put food on my table. Along the way, I managed to earn an MBA and later opened a small business. Through hard work, the complete freedom we enjoy in these United States and God's many blessings / my family now enjoys a modest degree of prosperity.

Unfortunately, for too many of our citizens, prosperity is an elusive dream. Wages have been kept flat by the competitive job market / housing costs continue to escalate / tolls can cost a worker an hour of wages every day / health coverage is still a luxury item for many / and, a traditional mortgage to purchase a home requires the patience of Job and superior credit rating. Though the situation seems bleak for so many, I am confident that the County Commission can knock down many of these barriers to prosperity.

As elected officials, we have a duty and an obligation to make a difference in the lives of our citizens. I am asking my colleagues on the County Commission to focus all of their energy on reducing the income inequality gap / building wealth in our community

through home ownership, businesses development and fair wages, thus, broadening our base of prosperity.

The American Community Survey has ranked Miami-Dade County with the highest income inequality gap / among the top ten most populated counties in the U.S. It is entirely unacceptable for our community to be dead last on a statistic that reflects the quality of life of our citizens. Colleagues, we have an obligation to find remedies to the social and economic challenges our people face. As problems are identified, solutions should be proposed. To support this agenda, the committee system I am establishing today has the ability to improve the quality of life for all Miami-Dade County residents. In addition, I am establishing a Chairman's Council for Prosperity Initiatives. This council will serve as a resource for our committees, a clearinghouse for ideas that will make a lasting impact on the people of our community.

We have a Home Rule Charter in Miami-Dade County that grants tremendous authority to the county commission. We can, and we must, act. There are urgent situations that require immediate action, such as the need to stop the senseless bloodshed in our neighborhoods. Other tasks may require long term strategic planning. However, the key is to start now.

We have over 35,000 qualified, well-skilled and capable employees / professionals who work for the County and the Jackson Health System / who are dedicated to improving the lives of their fellow citizens. Each and every one of them entered the public service in order to make a difference. They want to leave a legacy of positive accomplishments. We need give them this opportunity. I want our employees to be proud to say they work for Miami-Dade County. Through their dedication and good works and our sound policies in collaboration with the Mayor, we can restore pride in the public service.

The advantage is, we are not a partisan body, not a gridlocked Congress. We are not divided by party politics, nor are we torn apart by party platforms. The unity of this board when making important decisions – like your unanimous choice for Chairman – should not be forgotten. This board is absolutely free and able to respond directly to the needs of our people. The time is now.

The freedom to act on behalf of our residents is not a privilege to be squandered. The struggle for freedom continues around the globe, but here in Miami-Dade County we share this opportunity to lead this community towards its more glorious days. And, I daresay that the people of Miami-Dade County, with such a diverse population, and so many immigrants, treasure freedom and opportunity more dearly than any other major community in the United States. The freedom we enjoy today was built by those who worked tirelessly to secure civil rights for all Americans. We celebrate and commemorate this achievement this coming Monday, on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

We are all gathered here today as Americans. Whether you were born at Jackson Memorial Hospital or arrived in this community by boat, by Amtrak, or by Pan American Airways, we are all here now / and it is our time to shape our future. Today we come together in a spirit of cooperation to nurture the God-given talents of all our people. Let us show the world what a free people, united in purpose and dedicated to serve, can accomplish. We are ALL here now. Our diversity is our strength. Our common goal is to build a stronger and most prosperous Miami-Dade County. Now is our TIME. God bless all of you and God bless Miami-Dade County.