



MIAMI-DADE COUNTY BLACK AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD REPORT TO  
THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ON THE



# STATE OF BLACK MIAMI FORUM 2019

The Black Affairs Advisory Board held the fourth State of Black Miami Forum on Thursday, November 7, 2019 in the Board of County Commission Chambers located in the Stephen P. Clark Government Center. Miami-Dade County is one of the country's most culturally and ethnically diverse counties and the third most populous state in the nation. Its Black population is comprised of some 20% of this dynamic metropolis, and speak English, Kreyol, Spanish and other languages.

## BACKGROUND

On April 7, 2016, Commissioner Jean Monestime, who was Commission Chair at the time, convened the first "One Heritage: State of Black Miami" forum on the campus of Florida Memorial University, Miami-Dade County's only Historically Black University. Held over the course of an entire day, the inaugural forum had panels on economic empowerment, housing and solutions for addressing community violence. In April, 2017, Commissioner Monestime convened the second forum, again at Florida Memorial University. There were two panels: "Youth: The Next Generation" and community development. In 2018, the Black Affairs Advisory Board asked Commissioner Monestime's office if it could continue the yearly discussion under the banner of its Village Dialogues, and as a result convened the "Wakanda Effect-the State of Black Miami 2018" which tackled Education, Health and Welfare, Social Justice, Economics and Housing and Culture and Heritage, reporting on the findings to the County Commission in February 2019. The 2019 State of Black Miami sought to focus on matters that can be directly influenced by the County Commission, convening three panels: Health, Social Justice and Housing & Economics. The purpose is to hear from experts and community stakeholders as to solutions to some of the concerns and challenges to the county's black citizens and present those solutions to the County Commission.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/southflorida/news/2016/04/07/state-of-black-miami-forum-delivers-solutions.html>

<http://www.stateofblackmiami.org/>;[https://www.miamitimesonline.com/news/state-of-black-miami-address/article\\_4f925e20-1a15-11e7-9592-ebb69f0c696b.html](https://www.miamitimesonline.com/news/state-of-black-miami-address/article_4f925e20-1a15-11e7-9592-ebb69f0c696b.html)

[https://www.miamitimesonline.com/news/state-of-black-miami-symposium-returns/article\\_c6062f8c-cc16-11e8-b880-b387ac981ed2.html](https://www.miamitimesonline.com/news/state-of-black-miami-symposium-returns/article_c6062f8c-cc16-11e8-b880-b387ac981ed2.html)



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## TOPICS, FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



### HEALTH

There is a serious issue facing the Black community regarding HIV infections and the disproportionate number of infections occurring in the Black community. Another topic was mental health and the Black community's reluctance to recognize and acknowledge mental illness and the stigma associated with mental illness held in the Black community which views it as a 'weakness' and therefore a relatively 'taboo' conversation. Climate change and the severe impact that climate induced illnesses such as asthma and other breathing related illness and airborne infections that affect the elderly and uninsured children as well as immigrants who are impacted by diseases such as Dengue & Zika. Further emphasis centered on addressing the disproportionate number of African Americans living with pre-existing conditions and not having access to quality health care.

#### *RECOMMENDATIONS:*

- Direct additional funding towards community outreach regarding the County mental health services offered; consider expanding offered services to include non-court ordered therapy options to the under insured/uninsured.
- Review county owned properties, particularly public housing and vacant County properties, to ensure that window enclosures screened and property is not breeding ground for mosquito borne illness.
- Elevate discussions related to climate change to policy-making levels, including increased emphasis on community education/awareness, strategic planning and research.





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## SOCIAL JUSTICE

This panel focused on Immigration and the impact it is having on the 2020 Census. A large proportion of the residents are immigrants, and this could possibly reduce the count, thereby impacting the federal dollars allocated as a result.

Amendment 4 and the Restoration of Ex-felon's voting rights also emerged as a topic of extreme concern since it would have an impact on the 2020 Elections. A disproportionate number of ex-felons are of African descent and their right to participate in the electoral process is of great importance.

Gun violence and the Gun Violence Intervention program gained traction as a means to reduce violence while utilizing innovative strategies such as identifying those who are the possible source of the violence impacting their communities by partnering with community-based programs that provide resources to these individuals.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS:*

- Consider county-wide mailer in English/Spanish/Kreyol advising residents that a response to the census does not impact immigration status.
- Commend the Supervisor of Elections for being proactive in implementation of Amendment 4.
- Support the Gun Violence Intervention program and the Chairwoman's community-based project through funding the community-based projects that work with those identified as the 'root causes' of the violence impacting their own communities and offering alternatives to violence such as employment and training.





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## HOUSING AND ECONOMICS

The panel opened with a discussion regarding the multiple disparity studies in the County, including the MDEAT Disparity Study, which was the subject of recent controversy. MDEAT made a presentation on its County-wide study and its finding in conjunction with Florida International University. Additionally, Miami Dade Small Business Development Director Gary Hartfield spoke on the status of the disparity study which is to be conducted by his office which concerns determining if there is an actionable disparity in county contracting. Eric Knowles of the Miami Dade Chamber of Commerce discussed the potential role for the County in expanding Black opportunities in the areas of homeownership and business opportunities.

This panel covered the status of affordable housing as well as the RAD program, which seeks to redevelop existing public housing through a combination of public and private financing. The lack of affordable housing is a 'hot' topic and various methods of addressing this issue were explored. It was discovered that a number of entities throughout the community are working toward the same goal, but in 'silos'. Some discussion centered on the impact of "Green Companies" that promote modification of homes through additional taxing and the impact on minority communities-especially the elderly or those on fixed incomes.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS:*

- It is recommended that Miami Dade Small Business Development provide a comprehensive update to the County Commission regarding the status of its disparity study, provide a deadline for completion and an ongoing Quarterly Report on the status of the information, data and statistics.
- It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners direct Public Housing and Community Development to work closer with community-based organizations in order to close the information and cooperation gap.
- It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners create a community taskforce to address explore further solutions to the pending affordability crisis in Miami-Dade County as regards to Housing. This task force should have representation from PCHD, MDEAT, the Urban League of Greater Miami as well as the Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce.
- It is recommended that Miami Dade Economic Advocacy Trust be directed to increase community outreach regarding the Homeownership Assistance Program, particularly in District 1, District 2, District 3, District 8 and District 9.