

FELLOW ELECTED OFFICIALS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, DEAR FRIENDS...

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO JOIN YOU THIS MEMORIAL DAY MORNING TO DEDICATE THIS VERY SPECIAL MONUMENT HONORING THE LEGACY AND VISION OF THE FAMILIES WHO FOUNDED RICHMOND HEIGHTS.

OUR COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE HAS A LONG HISTORY AND OWES A GREAT DEAL OF DEBT TO MANY AFRICAN-AMERICAN PIONEERS, SOME OF WHOM WERE HERE EVEN BEFORE THE START OF DADE COUNTY.

BACK IN 1896, ALEXANDER LIGHTBOURN, AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN, WAS ONE OF THE LEADERS IN THE INCORPORATION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI...

WHEN ALMOST HALF OF THE CITY OF MIAMI'S INCORPORATORS WERE AFRICAN-AMERICAN.

WE ALSO SHARE A RICH HISTORY OF "FIRSTS" IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP.

THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN LEGISLATOR IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA AFTER RECONSTRUCTION...

THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN JUDGE IN THE SOUTH AND THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN JUDGE IN FLORIDA...

AND THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN LAWMAKER ELECTED TO REPRESENT FLORIDA IN CONGRESS SINCE RECONSTRUCTION...

THEY WERE ALL WERE FROM MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

THE LONG HISTORY OF STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS HAS THE NAMES OF GREAT HEROES THAT WE ALL LEARN ABOUT IN SCHOOL, AND WHOSE STORIES WE TELL OUR CHILDREN.

BUT THERE ARE COUNTLESS OTHER MEN AND WOMEN THAT WE MAY NOT NECESSARILY READ ABOUT IN BOOKS, BUT ALL OF WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO HISTORY IN THEIR OWN SPECIAL WAYS.

AND THAT'S WHO WE ARE HERE TO HONOR TODAY.

65 YEARS AGO, THE 26 FAMILIES WHO FOUNDED RICHMOND HEIGHTS WERE PIONEERS IN MANY WAYS.

THEY SERVED NOT ONLY TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR THE ONE OF THE FIRST SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOODS DEVELOPED FOR THE BLACK VETERANS OF WORLD WAR TWO...

BUT THEIR ACTIONS SERVED AS A MODEL FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW.

SO IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE REMEMBER WHO THEY ARE.

WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND OUR PRESENT, OR KNOW OUR FUTURE, WITHOUT A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF OUR PAST.

THIS IS WHY WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WHOSE WORK, AND PIONEERING EFFORTS, MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO BE HERE TODAY.

AS THE OLD SAYING GOES, WE DO IN FACT STAND ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS.

LET ME THANK COMMISSIONER MOSS FOR HIS LEADERSHIP IN RECOGNIZING THOSE 26 FAMILIES WHO BECAME THE FIRST TO PURCHASE PROPERTY IN THIS DEVELOPMENT, ON WHICH RICHMOND HEIGHTS NOW STANDS.

AND, ON THIS DAY WHEN WE CELEBRATE MEMORIAL DAY...

IT IS ESPECIALLY FITTING THAT WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT IN WORLD WAR TWO, AND THROUGHOUT OUR NATION'S HISTORY, WITH THE BRAVERY THAT IS FOUND DEEP IN THE HEART OF EVERY SOLDIER.

TO ALL THE VETERANS WHO JOIN US TODAY,
WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS THE GRATITUDE WE ALL
HAVE FOR YOUR SERVICE TO OUR NATION.

AND TO THE FAMILIES OF THE RICHMOND HEIGHT
PIONEERS...

WE ARE ALL PROUD OF YOUR ANCESTORS, AND WE
ARE PROUD OF THE SPIRIT WITH WHICH THEY
FORGED A NEW PATH FOR THEMSELVES, AND FOR
ALL OF US.

LET US ALL PAY TRIBUTE TO THEM, SO THAT
THROUGH THIS MONUMENT, THEIR LEGACY LIVES
ON.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS!

