



The Black Affairs Advisory Board held the “State of Black Miami 2023” forum on Saturday, September 30, 2023 at the Joseph Caleb Center in northwest Miami Dade. As the seventh most populous county in the United States and home to a community of some 2.7 million residents, Miami Dade County remains focused on providing services and resources to its residents. The African American population for Miami Dade County hovers around 17-19% and represents a diversity of the African Diaspora.

BACKGROUND

On April 7, 2026, then Miami Dade Board of Commission Chair Jean Monestime convened the first “*One Heritage: State of Black Miami*” forum on the campus of Florida Memorial University-South Florida’s only Historically Black University (HBCU). The event was repeated in 2017 and in 2018, the Black Affairs Advisory sought the Chair’s approval to continue the conversation and has held the forum each year. The purpose is to hear from experts and community stakeholders seeking to identify and negotiate solutions for the challenges faced by the county’s Black citizens and present those findings to the entire Board of Commissioners. One of the items discussed this year included the lack of affordable housing. One of the suggested methods of addressing this issue included requiring that based on the fact that Miami-Dade County’s tourism is one of the major economic engines, that a portion of the taxes be dedicated to providing housing for those who work in the industry—who are typically low-wage earners.

TOPICS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE “STATE OF BLACK MIAMI 2023”

Panel I: Mental Health: Ronald Mumford, Moderator

Panelists: Mr. Marcken Volmy, LMHC, NCC; Mr. Ruban Roberts, RER Consulting; Ms. Ashley Moten Bradley, Inspired4Purpose; Dr. Jonathan Spikes, Affirming YOUTH, Inc.

The discussion on Mental Health was informative and insightful. Panelists informed the community on recent trends concerning Social Determinants of Health as well as your Zip Code as a determining factor for your health, particularly residents who live in underserved areas of Miami-Dade County. Panelists emphasized that Mental Health should not be viewed as a negative, but as a condition that needs to be addressed by Mental Health Professionals. It was also stated by residents that hospitals and Urgent Care facilities are not easily accessible, especially for those who rely on public transportation. Recommendations from residents were that public servants should inform and educate community members on resources available to them to address mental health concerns in the community. In addition, residents suggested that more Urgent Care facilities be available to residents in Liberty City and the surrounding area.

Recommendations:

- That public servants should inform and educate community members on resources available to them to address mental health concerns in the community. In addition, residents suggested that more Urgent Care facilities be available to residents in Liberty City and the surrounding area.
- That residents be referred to organizations such as the Miami Dade County National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to view mental illness as a medical condition which requires diligent treatment.

Panel II: Generational Wealth: J.S. Rashid, Moderator

Panelists: Robert Henderson, Henderson Financial Services; Ralph Colimon, Wells Fargo; N. Patrick Range, III, Attorney & CEO, Range Funeral Homes; Eric Johnson, Miami Dade Economic Advocacy Trust

The panel addressed barriers as well as opportunities for methods of accruing '*Generational Wealth*.' The conclusion was made that the concept is not fully shared or grasped or in some instances unattainable for many African Americans due to lack of opportunities related to obstacles such as redlining, lack of resources, discriminatory practices or the racial wealth gap. The panel discussed the various ways in which the issue could be addressed.

Recommendations:

- Educational programs geared at overcoming these barriers through financial literacy and programs aimed at promoting financial stability.
- Increase Black homeownership and advocate for fair property appraisals which often undervalue Black-Owned homes and neighborhoods. Provide resources and direct assistance in obtaining homeownership for Black community members.
- Encouraging entrepreneurship by providing mentorship and resources for Black businesses and business owners.
- Encourage Financial Planning for future generations through investments; transfer of income producing entities such as properties and pre-paid educational programs.

Panel III: Education: Moderator Stephen Hunter Johnson

Panelists: Rev. Richard Dunn; Dr. Marcus Bright, Miami Dade Economic Advocacy Trust; Ms. Daniella Pierre, Education Chair, North Dade NAACP

The Education Panel discussed many ways in which Miami-Dade County, particularly how Miami-Dade County's educational institutions can make headway.

- Act in conjunction with the Miami Dade Economic Trust (MDEAT) recommendation that require that a licensed Mental Health Coordinator be assigned to each school and implement early intervention programming at each school.
- Ensure that professional development training is in place for school security personnel.
- Implementation of weapon detectors or wands in schools to ensure students' and school personnel safety.
- Assessment of "Blind Areas" where sometimes illicit behavior occurs in each school should be identified and secured.
- Study and expedite the process for punishment for students who engage in violent and illegal behavior. Oftentimes, punishment is withheld and disruptive students return to the main school population.
- Direct collaboration and meetings with school leadership; counselors; teachers; law enforcement and parents/guardians to discuss and identify members of 'gangs' or 'street cliques.'
- Provide opportunities for under-performing students to receive remedial assistance in the areas of basic reading and math. Also provide high quality science; technology; mathematics and vocational training for students who do not wish to pursue college degrees.

