

MIAMI OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT

Hosted by:



In collaboration with:



AUGUST 22, 2023



DoubleTree by Hilton Grand Hotel Biscayne Bay

Imagine the Opportunities

What are your personal experiences with immigration?

What opportunities do you see for our community?

How are you willing to engage in this work?

Welcome to the Miami Opportunity Summit!

We are delighted to have you join us for this transformative conversation, where we aim to shift the narrative surrounding new arrivals in our communities. Together, we will explore how we can recognize the value and talents they bring, turning them into opportunities to foster a more prosperous and thriving community.

This event brings together a diverse group of individuals, including faith-based organizations, business leaders, and public sector professionals. By uniting these different sectors, we can create a powerful ecosystem that supports the integration of new arrivals into the workforce.

Throughout the summit, we will engage in meaningful conversations, share insights, and collaborate on strategies to advocate for change.

Miami-Dade County and South Florida have numerous vacancies waiting to be filled, and we firmly believe that new arrivals possess the skills and talents necessary to contribute to our thriving economy. By providing them with the opportunities they deserve, we can create a stronger, more inclusive community for all.

We extend our gratitude to all our attendees, sponsors, and partners who have joined us on this journey. Your support and commitment to this cause are invaluable, and together, we can make a lasting impact.

We encourage you to actively participate, share your experiences, and engage in fruitful discussions. Let us seize this opportunity to build bridges, break down barriers, and create a future where every individual has the chance to succeed.

Thank you for being a part of this important conversation. Together, we can shape a brighter future for our community.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a smaller loop, followed by a period.

Vanessa Joseph, Esq.,
Supervising Attorney, Catholic Legal Services, Inc.
Elected City Clerk, City of North Miami

ABOUT CATHOLIC LEGAL SERVICES, INC.



"You shall not treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for her or him as yourself, for you were once aliens..." Leviticus 19:34

We are committed to justice and the alleviation of human misery through the promotion of the principle of equal access to the system of justice and the provision of legal services to the neediest members of the community.

Catholic Charities Legal Services, Archdiocese of Miami, Inc., also known as Catholic Legal Services, (hereafter "CLS"), is a nationally recognized agency with an experienced team of attorneys and immigration professionals. CCLS mission is to provide professional legal services, both application assistance and attorney representation before the Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Immigration Courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals, to those who come from foreign lands who lack sufficient means to obtain representation without regard to faith or national origin. In addition to its professional competencies, Catholic Legal Services' staff reflects the diversity of the population it serves, allowing for culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services. Our clients come from all paths of life. We serve people from 185 countries and territories.

OUR MISSION

- Legal representation and immigration services to those who come to South Florida from foreign lands;
- Professional assistance to those who lack sufficient means to obtain legal help; and
- Quality services without regard to faith, race, national origin, or any other distinguishing characteristic.

OUR HISTORY

Catholic Legal Services grew out of the G.W.L. Legal Project, established in 1994 at Notre Dame D'Haiti Pierre Toussaint Center to provide legal services and immigration representation to refugees and immigrants from Haiti. The project rapidly expanded beyond the Haitian community because of the vast immigrant community in South Florida. Incorporated on January 8, 1998, when the G.W.L. Legal Project (1994) merged with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network in Miami (1988), CLS has become one of the most active nonprofit providers of legal immigration services in Florida.

From 3 staff to 69 staff including 31 attorneys and 5 DOJ-accredited representatives [A DOJ-AR is a person who is approved by the Department of Justice to represent aliens before the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), which includes the immigration courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), and must maintain a high standard of professional conduct] with two locations in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, CLS has served refugees and immigrants from around the world. Most CLS clients come from across the Americas, and CLS staff reflect their diversity of language and culture.

More than two thousand individuals seek the services of CLS each month including immigrants seeking to reunite with their families, many of whom were separated at the border; political and religious refugees seeking safety and security, many of whom have experienced persecution and torture; battered spouses and their children; religious workers seeking to minister to U.S. religious communities; and long-term residents of the United States with significant family and community ties who face deportation. These services include representation before the Immigration Court (IC), Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), United States Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Juvenile Court (JC).

These individuals, ranging from 2 months to 104 years of age, confront a complex immigration law system and a confusing bureaucracy. Many have unhealed wounds from a painful past and then encounter unexpected bigotry and barriers as they adjust to a new culture and way of life. They often face an uncertain future. However, with CLS help, many deserving immigrants and refugees persevere and realize their dreams for a bright and secure future in the United States.

www.cclsmiami.org



The Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Archbishop of Miami

cordially invites you to the

25TH

Anniversary **CELEBRATION OF** *Catholic Legal Services*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023
6:30 PM

DOUBLETREE GRAND BISCAYNE
MIAMI, FL 33132

Special Recognition
Mary Kramer, Esq.
Br. Edward van Merrienboer, O.P.

For more information, please contact:
administratorcls@cclsmiami.org
(305)942-5213



Scan QR code for more information
or visit www.cclsmiami.org/gala

THE MIAMI OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT IS SPONSORED BY:

DoubleTree by Hilton Grand Hotel Biscayne Bay



Overlooking Biscayne Bay, we're next to Sea Isle Marina. Bayside Marketplace, Miami Dade Arena, and PortMiami are within two miles, and the Miami Passport agency is a four-minute walk away. The free Metromover stops outside, taking you to downtown and Brickrell. Enjoy our spa and salon, outdoor pool, and a warm DoubleTree Cookie when you arrive.

1717 North Bayshore Drive
Miami, Florida, 33132
(305) 372-0313

American Business Immigration Coalition



The American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC) promotes common sense immigration reform that advances economic competitiveness, provides companies with both the high-skilled and low-skilled talent they need, and allows the integration of immigrants into our economy as consumers, workers, entrepreneurs, and citizens.

The goal of our bipartisan coalition of over 1200 diverse businesses and business associations is to provide a strong and effective voice seeking sensible immigration reforms to grow our economy and strengthen our families.

Sensible immigration reform is economically important, politically smart, and morally right.

www.abic.us

FWD.us



FWD.us is a bipartisan political organization that believes America's families, communities, and economy thrive when more individuals are able to achieve their full potential. For too long, our harmful immigration and criminal justice systems have locked too many people out from the American dream.

FWD.us is a bipartisan team of political campaigners spanning the fields of policy, advocacy, and technology working to create a stronger America. From whom we hire to whom we work with, we bring together people from a variety of backgrounds, ideologies, and lived experiences—and it makes us better at what we do.

Together, we are committed to improving people's lives today, while working toward the big, transformative change of tomorrow. We believe that when every person has the opportunity to achieve their full potential, our families, communities, and economy thrive.

www.fwd.us

MIAMI OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT SUPPORTERS



MIAMI DADE COUNTY, OFFICE OF THE MAYOR Mayor Daniella Levine Cava

Daniella Levine Cava was elected Miami-Dade County's first-ever woman Mayor in November 2020. She enters the Mayor's office following a nearly 40-year career as a relentless advocate for South Florida families in public service and elected leadership.

As Miami-Dade County's Mayor, she oversees a metropolitan government with nearly 30,000 employees serving nearly 3 million residents, managing an annual budget of approximately \$10 billion.

A social worker, lawyer, and community activist, she was first elected in 2014, and re-elected in August 2018, to serve as the Miami-Dade County Commissioner representing District 8.



Archdiocese of Miami

The Archdiocese of Miami is home to over half a million Catholics in Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties. Mass is celebrated in 17 languages. We have 108 churches and missions plus the National Shrine of Our Lady of Charity; and 63 schools, including 14 high schools. The archdiocese is led by Archbishop Thomas Wenski.

Miami-Dade Beacon Council



The Miami-Dade Beacon Council, a public-private partnership, is the official economic development organization for Miami-Dade County. Led by a professional staff and Board of volunteer community leaders, the organization facilitates business growth and expansion locally, nationally and internationally. The Council was founded in 1985 as an outgrowth of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce to focus on business recruitment, expansion and retention.

The Miami-Dade Beacon Council is the steward for the county-wide economic development plan, One Community One Goal, to strengthen and diversify the economy with high paying jobs. Today, the Miami-Dade Beacon Council continues to advance community objectives through a carefully planned action-oriented agenda developed in collaboration with Miami-Dade County officials, education, business and civic leaders.

AGENDA

9:00 A.M. TO 9:45 A.M. REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST BUFFET

9:45 A.M. TO 10:30 A.M. MIAMI'S WARM EMBRACE: OPENING THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY

Welcome Remarks from:

- Julie Grimes, Managing Partner, Hilton Bentley Hotel
- Vanessa Joseph, Esq., Immigration Attorney, Catholic Legal Services and Elected City Clerk, City of North Miami
- Rebecca Shi, Executive Director, American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC)

10:30 A.M. TO 11:25 A.M. UNVEILING MIAMI'S LANDSCAPES OF OPPORTUNITY

Navigating Miami's Immigration and Legal Terrain

In this presentation, we will explore the intricate landscape of immigration law as speakers shed light on the complexities and opportunities within the immigration system. We will gain insight on the pathways to integration and the legal frameworks that shape the experiences of new arrivals.

- ☒ Randy McGrorty, Executive Director, Catholic Legal Services
- ☒ Jacqueline Charles, Caribbean Correspondent at the Miami Herald

Unleashing Potential through Miami's Dynamic Business Ecosystem

This presentation will highlight the realm of possibilities hidden in Miami's private sector. We will uncover the untapped potential and opportunities that can lead to significant growth of our local economy.

- ☒ Hector Mujica, Head of Economic Opportunity for the Americas, Google
- ☒ Jeff Lozama, CEO, CMS Group

Miami's Political Tapestry

We will learn about the intricate threads of the political tapestry as it relates to immigration. Presenters will shed light on the ways in which diverse perspectives can actually be beneficial in producing opportunities.

- ☒ Samuel Vilchez Santiago, Florida State Director, American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC)
- ☒ David Metellus, Political Director, Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC)

11:25 A.M. TO 11:30 A.M. BREAK

11:30 A.M. TO 12:15 P.M. KEYNOTE PANEL - REDEFINING NARRATIVES: EMBRACING NEW ARRIVALS AS ASSETS

This panel will explore the importance of shifting the narrative surrounding new arrivals in our communities. We will discuss reframing conversations so that we can recognize the value our new neighbors bring as they help us create more inclusive and prosperous communities. Participants will learn about success stories and strategies for changing perceptions.

Moderator: Elliott Rodriguez, Anchor, CBS4 News Miami

- Daniella Levine Cava, Mayor, Miami-Dade County
- Rodrick Miller, CEO, Beacon Council
- Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami
- Michael "Mike" Fernandez, Chairman, MBF Healthcare Partners

12:15 P.M. TO 12:30 P.M. LUNCH

Remarks by: Honorable Oliver Gilbert III, Chairman, Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners

12:30 P.M. TO 1:30 P.M. LUNCHEON KEYNOTE PANEL - BUILDING BRIDGES: COLLABORATIVE PATHWAYS FORWARD

This panel will showcase the strategic approaches that can transcend political divides. This dynamic session will bring together thought leaders, experts, and changemakers from diverse backgrounds to discuss ways in which we can work together to encourage opportunity and forge a brighter future for all. In this dialogue, we will uncover pathways that unite us and pave the way for progress.

Moderator: Elliott Rodriguez, Anchor, CBS4 News Miami

Videos from

- ☒ U.S. Representative Maria Elvira Salazar (FL-27)
- ☒ U.S. Representative Veronica Escobar (TX-16)
- Pilar Guzman, CEO and Founder, Half Moon Empanadas
- Adolfo Henriques, Vice Chairman, Related Group
- David Lawrence, Jr., Founding Chair, The Children's Trust

1:30 P.M. TO 1:40 P.M. BREAK

1:40 P.M. TO 3:00 P.M. EMPOWERING NEW ARRIVALS: COLLABORATING WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR SUCCESS

This panel will highlight the crucial role of service providers in empowering new arrivals and facilitating their integration into the workforce. Representatives from various organizations will help us explore the services and resources available to new arrivals, discuss best practices for collaboration, and share success stories from individuals who have benefited from these partnerships.

Moderator: Rebecca Fishman-Lipsey, CEO, The Miami Foundation

- Gepsie Metellus, Executive Director, Sant La
- Peter Routsis-Arroyo, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami
- Santra Denis, Executive Director, Miami Workers Center
- Father Elvis A. Gonzalez, Pastor, St. Michael the Archangel Church

3:00 P.M. TO 3:30 P.M. CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

With your tablemates, immerse yourself in meaningful conversations reflecting on insights and innovative ideas shared throughout this event.

3:30 P.M. TO 4:10 P.M. ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE: AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF NEW ARRIVALS

This panel will focus on the importance of collaborative advocacy in driving change and amplifying the voices of new arrivals. Through a dialogue with community leaders and advocates, we will discuss the power of advocacy in shaping policies, influencing public opinion, and creating a more inclusive society. We will explore effective advocacy strategies, share inspiring stories of advocacy success, and discuss ways to empower new arrivals to become advocates for their own opportunities.

Moderator: Michaël's Deborah Saint-Vil, Manager of Legal Services, Office of New Americans of Miami-Dade County

- Tessa Petit, Executive Director, Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC)
- Samuel Vilchez Santiago, Florida Director, American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC)
- Maria Gabriela "Gaby" Pacheco, Director of Advocacy, Development, and Communications, The Dream.U.S.
- Oscar Londoño, Executive Director, WeCount

4:10 P.M. TO 4:30 P.M. REFLECTING ON OUR JOURNEY: INSIGHTS FROM A VISIONARY

- Jean Monestime, Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner

4:30 P.M. TO 5:30 P.M. MIAMI VIBES: COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Stay with us for a small celebration of this initial first step in our journey of seizing the opportunity to continue building a thriving Miami.



JULIE GRIMES

MANAGING PARTNER, HILTON BENTLEY HOTEL

Julie Grimes is a dynamic leader with a distinguished career in the hospitality and real estate industries. As the Managing Partner of the Hilton Bentley Hotel in Miami, FL, she drives strategic direction and operations. She also holds the role of Executive Director at Heafey-Bentley Management, contributing to real estate and hotel development achievements.

In 2007, Grimes co-founded the Hospitality Institute in Overtown, training over 1,000 inner city residents for local hospitality roles. She collaborated with Miami Dade College to establish the institute, fostering sustainability.

Following the 2008 hurricanes in Haiti, Mayor Manuel Diaz appointed Grimes Chairperson of Operation Hope for Haiti, raising substantial funds for World Vision's impactful interventions.

Grimes co-founded the Center of Service Excellence at Miami Dade College in 2008, elevating customer service standards in South Florida. Her commitment to education led to partnerships with Big Brothers & Big Sisters and Take Stock in Children, supporting at-risk students.

As Chair of Miami Dade College Foundation and a Camillus House Board Member, Grimes remains dedicated to community welfare. Her notable accolades include Tourism Profession of the Year nomination and the James W. McLamore Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award.

Originally from Canada, Grimes began in Public Works Canada, later venturing into the private sector. She holds a Business Administration degree from Algonquin College, and her move to Miami in 1995 marked the launch of the Doubletree Grand Hotel. Grimes became a US Citizen in 2004.

VANESSA JOSEPH, ESQ.



**IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY, CATHOLIC LEGAL SERVICES, INC.
ELECTED CITY CLERK, CITY OF NORTH MIAMI**

Vanessa Joseph is an immigration attorney based in Miami, Florida. She began her work in immigration and human rights as a law student when she worked in two legal clinics where she was able to engage in advocacy on behalf of the Haitian community of South Florida. In 2013, Joseph contributed to an *amicus curiae* brief filed in the case of *Benito Tide Méndez et al. v. Dominican Republic* before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. This brief focused on human rights violations by the Dominican Republic in its process of carrying out mass deportations of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent without allowing them proper due process or taking into account humanitarian considerations. At that time, at the grassroots level, Vanessa also helped the local Haitian activists of *Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miami* (FANM) organize a rally to protest the Dominican government's actions and decision.

Vanessa also worked with the Miami Law Health Rights Clinic where she represented dozens of low-income individuals who struggled with mental health issues, were HIV+, or had AIDS. During this time, Vanessa was an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD Fellow, where she delivered critically needed legal assistance to veterans in low-income and underserved communities in South Florida. Her hard work and dedication in the Health Rights Clinic led her to earn the CALI Excellence for the Future Award in the summer of 2014.

Today, as a Supervising Attorney at Catholic Legal Services, continues providing legal services to vulnerable populations. In addition to representing low-income immigrants, Vanessa conducts information sessions for immigrant detainees to inform them of their rights and the immigration court process. Through her work in the detention centers, she has provided these services to more than one thousand men and women through group and individual orientations and self-help workshops. Vanessa currently leads collaboratives dedicated to providing immigration resources and education to vulnerable populations across South Florida.

As a member of the South Florida chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), Vanessa serves as a Chair of the State Issues Committee and a member on the Pro Bono and Office of Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) committees. As member of AILA, Vanessa is focused on helping South Florida's immigrant community find and secure competent legal representation and advocating on the issues that affect the immigrant communities in South Florida. Vanessa also serves as the Secretary for both the Haitian Lawyers Association (HLA) and the Haitian American Professionals Coalition (HAPC). Vanessa recently joined the board of FANM where she helps the organization continue its critical work of empowering Haitian women and their families, and the board of Casa Valentina where she supports the organization's mission of helping youth transition successfully from foster care to independent living.

In addition to being an attorney, Vanessa is a public relations and marketing professional who has helped brands and companies connect with Haitian consumers.

As the daughter of Haitian immigrants who moved to the United States in the late 1980s, her dedication to the Haitian community of Florida is unwavering. These are the driving forces of Vanessa as a professional: a desire to serve as an advocate for marginalized communities such as the immigrant population and people with developmental disabilities; and, a dedication to the promotion of culture and creativity, especially her own Haitian heritage. Vanessa's strong beliefs in every individual's right to proper legal representation and the agency to fully participate in decision-making that affect their own lives inform every professional decision she makes. With a Juris Doctor from the University of Miami and a Master in Public Administration, Vanessa is and will continue to be a purposeful and passionate agent for change.

Given her passion for service, Vanessa Joseph, in 2019, was elected as the City of North Miami's Elected City Clerk. In this office, she makes history as both the City's youngest and first Black female City Clerk. While in office, Vanessa has worked to increase civic engagement amongst North Miami residents through various initiatives, including voting campaigns and the Madam Clerk Project, a civic education initiative targeting children. In December 2022, Vanessa earned the professional designation of Certified Municipal Clerk, becoming the first elected City Clerk of North Miami to earn such a designation.



REBECCA SHI

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN BUSINESS IMMIGRATION COALITION (ABIC)

Rebecca Shi is the visionary founder and executive director of the American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC). This bipartisan coalition comprises over 1200 influential figures, including CEOs, retired CEOs, donors, employers, and business associations from coast to coast, spanning states from Texas to Maine, Florida to Idaho. ABIC is dedicated to advancing common-sense immigration reform, promoting economic growth, job creation, and family unity. Notably, ABIC strategically lends business support to impactful national, state, and local campaigns that champion the rights of undocumented individuals. Recognizing the power of cross-partisan collaborations, ABIC secures tangible victories through alliances that bridge political divides. These accomplishments range from securing essential rights like driver's licenses, in-state tuition, healthcare equity, and access to justice across a spectrum of states, including red, purple, and blue.

Rebecca's personal journey as an immigrant from China at the age of ten fuels her deep commitment to the cause. She graduated with high honors from the University of Chicago, where she also delivered the commencement speech. Fluent in English, Mandarin, and Spanish, she possesses a strong multicultural perspective. Over the course of 12 years, she has emerged as a dynamic leader and organizer within the immigrant rights movement. Her mother's 19-year-long struggle with a deportation order has further driven her dedication.

Rebecca's impactful contributions have been widely recognized. She was honored as one of "20 in their 20s" by Crain's Business Chicago, acknowledged for her Asian American community leadership, and named an Illinois Governor Jim Edgar Fellow. Her work has been featured in esteemed publications like the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, New York Times, Texas Tribune, Miami Herald, Chicago Tribune, Politico, and Axios. She has also been a vocal advocate, testifying multiple times before the United States Congress.

RANDY MCGGORTY



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

Randy P. McGgorty is the Executive Director of Catholic Legal Services, Archdiocese of Miami (CLS), holding this role since the inception of the agency. He supervises a staff of 45, with 22 staff attorneys, serving nearly 3,000 clients monthly. These cases include individuals seeking to reunite with their families, political and religious refugees seeking safety and security, victims of domestic abuse, and long-term residents of the U.S. with family and community ties who face deportation. CLS has a strong bond with South Florida's Haitian Community as a primary provider of immigration services. This past year, CLS has spearheaded efforts to legally represent unaccompanied minors in removal proceedings. McGgorty graduated magna cum laude from Harvard, and earned his J.D. and M.S.S.W. from the University of Wisconsin. A frequent speaker on asylum and immigration related topics, he has been awarded the Adalsinda Lomangino Award and various other recognitions for contributions to immigration law and immigrant communities.

FEATURED SPEAKER



JACQUELINE CHARLES

CARIBBEAN CORRESPONDENT AT THE MIAMI HERALD

Jacqueline Charles is an accomplished foreign correspondent for the Miami Herald, renowned for her insightful coverage of Haiti and the English-speaking Caribbean. She recently received the 2023 ICFJ Excellence in International Reporting Award, adding to her impressive list of achievements.

Beginning her career as a high school intern at the Herald, Jacqueline's dedication and skill led her to become the go-to journalist for stories involving Haiti. Her extensive coverage earned her recognition as a Pulitzer Prize finalist and an Emmy Award winner. Notably, she was also honored with the Maria Moors Cabot Prize, one of international journalism's oldest accolades, for her exceptional reporting on the Americas.

Jacqueline's journalism journey started early, with her first overseas assignment covering the return of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Over the years, she has been at the forefront of major events, including Aristide's subsequent return and Haiti's historic 2011 presidential runoff.

Beyond her Haiti coverage, Jacqueline's versatility shines through her reporting on various topics. She has covered Miami's underserved communities, Broward County schools and government, the Florida Legislature, immigration, and social services. Her work has exposed issues such as school construction mismanagement and inequalities in education.

Born in the Turks and Caicos Islands with Haitian and Cuban-American roots, Jacqueline's unique background has fueled her passion for diverse communities. Her assignments have taken her across the Caribbean, covering subjects as varied as race in Cuba, whale hunting, and child trafficking.

Jacqueline's dedication to journalism and her impact on the field have been widely recognized. She is a founding member of the Carolina Association of Black Journalists and has served in leadership roles within the South Florida Association of Black Journalists. Her commitment to journalistic integrity and reporting excellence has earned her numerous awards, including the Journalist of the Year award from the National Association of Black Journalists for her coverage of Haiti's earthquake.

Her contributions extend beyond her reporting. Jacqueline co-produced a documentary on Haiti titled "Nou Bouke," which aired on PBS and earned her and her colleagues an Emmy Award. She was also part of the Miami Herald team that received a Pulitzer Prize for their Panama Papers investigation.

Jacqueline's influence is further demonstrated by her role on the University of North Carolina's School of Media and Journalism's Board of Advisers. Her remarkable career has solidified her as a respected voice in international reporting, making her a worthy recipient of the ICFJ Excellence in International Reporting Award.

HECTOR MUJICA



HEAD OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR THE AMERICAS, GOOGLE

Hector Mujica is at the forefront of driving economic opportunity initiatives at Google.org, Google's philanthropic arm, across the Americas. In his capacity, he manages a substantial grant portfolio exceeding \$100 million, dedicated to supporting initiatives that create pathways to digital economy employment for individuals facing multiple barriers. Hector is also a pivotal member of Google's Latino Leadership Council, guiding the company's social impact efforts within the Latino community.

Hector's journey in promoting social justice spans a decade, encompassing roles in philanthropy and public policy. His background includes diverse experiences, from investment banking at Oppenheimer & Co. to constituent casework with Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz's office, as well as engagement in diplomatic relations at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

Educated in a multifaceted range of disciplines, Hector holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Business from Florida International University. He further honed his expertise through a Professional Certificate in Social Entrepreneurship from Stanford Graduate School of Business and a Master of Public Affairs from the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley.

Beyond his professional commitments, Hector takes on leadership roles in vital initiatives. He Co-Chairs the Latino Digital Success Task Force at the Aspen Institute and serves on the Boards of Directors for Hispanics in Philanthropy and the Hispanic Federation. Additionally, he contributes his insights to advisory boards including WorkingNation and Inicio Ventures.

Currently residing in South Florida, Hector Mujica is an influential advocate for fostering economic empowerment and social change through innovative philanthropic and policy-driven approaches.



JEFF LOZAMA

CEO, CMS GROUP

Jeff Lozama is a prominent figure as the President and CEO of CMS International Group, Corp. This company specializes in the distribution of high-end building materials, and under his leadership, it has become a leading distributor and contractor serving South Florida, the Caribbean, and Latin America. With a wealth of experience exceeding 25 years in the industry, Lozama has contributed to notable commercial and residential projects across the Caribbean region.

Lozama's impressive project portfolio includes contributions to significant ventures such as the Federal Courthouse in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, the British Virgin Islands Community College, private island developments in the Bahamas, the Chub Cay Marina Resort, Sandals Resorts, various hotels and resorts across the region, and numerous other impactful initiatives.

Educated at Florida Memorial University, Lozama holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Management. Beyond his professional achievements, he is deeply involved in philanthropic endeavors. He is a founding member and Executive Director of the Man Dodo Humanitarian Foundation, which provides essential services to the less fortunate population in Haiti. He has also been active in various leadership roles and organizations, including the Haitian-American Chamber of Commerce, Miami-Dade County International Trade Consortium, Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce, Reciprocal Ministries International, and many more.

Lozama's commitment to community service and advocacy has garnered numerous recognitions and awards. He has received accolades from political representatives, including the Key to the City of North Miami, Community Ambassador's Award from Diaspora Art Coalition, and Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for his contributions to the Haitian community in Miami-Dade County.

His diverse and impactful contributions extend across sectors, including business, philanthropy, and community development. Jeff Lozama's influence is deeply rooted in his dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of individuals and communities, both locally and internationally.



SAMUEL VILCHEZ SANTIAGO

FLORIDA STATE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN BUSINESS IMMIGRATION COALITION (ABIC)

Samuel Vilchez Santiago serves as the Florida State Director of ABIC (American Business Immigration Coalition). Originally from Venezuela, he arrived in the U.S. as a political asylee during his formative years. Before joining ABIC, Samuel held roles of significance in championing human and civil rights. He served as the Human and Civil Rights Manager at ActBlue and later as the Florida Campaign Manager at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition encompassing various national civil rights organizations.

Samuel's educational background is notable, with a Bachelor's degree earned from Princeton University. He further pursued his academic pursuits by attaining a Master of Public Policy from the University of Oxford.

His dedication to community and societal betterment has garnered recognition, including the prestigious President Obama's Volunteer Service Award and the Congressional Youth Award. Samuel Vilchez Santiago's journey is a testament to his commitment to positive change and advocacy for social justice.



DAVID METELLUS

POLITICAL DIRECTOR, FLORIDA IMMIGRANT COALITION (FLIC)

Born and raised in Florida, David is a graduate of Florida International University with a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations. David's experience ranges across local and federal government agencies. Most recently, David has been working on electoral campaigns and initiatives across Florida to uplift and advance progressive causes. He also manages a South Florida consulting firm where he serves numerous campaigns, voter registration efforts, and ballot initiatives.

ELIOTT RODRIGUEZ



ANCHOR, CBS4 NEWS MIAMI

Elliott Rodriguez is a highly accomplished journalist and esteemed news anchor in South Florida. With a career spanning over four decades, he has covered significant news events across the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Elliott currently serves as the anchor for CBS4 News at 5, 6, 7, and 11 p.m.

His exceptional contributions to journalism have earned him prestigious awards, including two Emmy Awards and four Edward R. Murrow Awards. Elliott's reputation as a top news anchor has been recognized by the Miami New Times, naming him the Best News Anchor, and Ocean Drive Magazine, which honored him as one of South Florida's Sharp Dressed Men.

A remarkable highlight in Elliott's career is his Silver Circle Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, celebrating his 25 years of outstanding broadcasting in South Florida.

Elliott Rodriguez joined CBS4 in 1999, following prior roles as a reporter and anchor at WTVJ (Miami), WPLG (Miami), and WPVI (Philadelphia). He began his career in journalism as a newspaper reporter for The Miami Herald and The Miami News.

His extensive experience has taken him on assignments to Cuba, covering events like Fidel Castro's death, and to the Vatican, reporting on the Pope's health. Elliott has also covered stories such as the execution of a convicted killer on Death Row, the invasion of Panama, the Mexico City earthquake, Hurricane Andrew, political events in Venezuela and Nicaragua, and the "Fangate" debate during the Florida gubernatorial race in 2014.

Elliott Rodriguez holds a degree from the University of Miami and is a proud member of the Iron Arrow Honor Society, further exemplifying his commitment to excellence in journalism and his dedication to his community.



DANIELLA LEVINE CAVA

MAYOR, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Daniella Levine Cava was elected Miami-Dade County's first-ever woman Mayor in November 2020. She enters the Mayor's office following a 40-year career as a relentless advocate for South Florida families in public service and elected leadership.

As Miami-Dade County's Mayor, she oversees a metropolitan government with nearly 30,000 employees serving nearly 3 million residents, managing an annual budget of approximately \$10 billion.

Since taking office, she has worked to protect lives and livelihoods by deploying a countywide operation to distribute coronavirus vaccines efficiently and equitably across Miami-Dade; appointing the County's first Chief Medical officer; and working closely with city leaders and the business community to spread a unified pandemic response message. In collaboration with the Board of County Commissioners, she is working to distribute millions of federal dollars in American Rescue Plan relief funds to support small businesses and residents impacted by the pandemic, invest in critical infrastructure projects, and kickstart long term recovery.

Mayor Levine Cava's administration is focused on building a stronger, more inclusive, more resilient Miami-Dade: prioritizing reforms to make our county safer and prevent gun violence through the Peace and Prosperity Plan; restoring and reinvigorating a thriving economy that delivers economic security for Miami-Dade businesses and families and attracts new industries; saving Biscayne Bay and building and protecting our environment; and directly engaging with residents to make local government more responsive, transparent, and accountable.

A social worker, lawyer, and community activist, she was first elected in 2014, and re-elected in August 2018, to serve as the Miami-Dade County Commissioner representing District 8. As Commissioner, she invested in Miami-Dade small businesses and expanded economic opportunity, protected the environment and our water, increased the County police force for underserved areas, advocated for an expanded, reliable public transportation system, worked to create affordable housing and revitalize neighborhoods, and helped make local government more accountable and transparent.

She came to elected office after having served as an advocate for South Florida families for over 30 years. She served special needs children, low-income families and immigrants at Legal Services of Greater Miami, and then represented children in foster care and adoption system as Acting, Associate and Legal Director for the Guardian Ad Litem Program.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, she was recruited to create a new intake system for child abuse cases with the Department for Children and Families. Her efforts were concentrated on the neighborhoods of District 8 where she helped restore the lives and homes of those devastated by the storm.

In 1996, Mayor Levine Cava founded Catalyst Miami to help low- and middle-income families through service, education, and advocacy. Catalyst helps approximately 5,000 people each year to become more self-sufficient and civically engaged.

She is the Immediate Past Chair of the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) and served as an SFRPC Council Member from 2015 – 2020. She has served on the Florida Bar Committee on Legal Needs of Children; the boards of League of Women Voters, Orange Bowl Foundation, North Dade Medical Foundation, South Florida Health Information Initiative, and several national boards. She's won numerous awards from various organizations including: the Commission on Ethics, Red Cross, American Society for Public Administration, ACLU, National Council of Jewish Women, League of Women Voters, among others.

Born in New York and raised partly in Latin America, Mayor Levine Cava received her bachelor's degree in psychology with honors from Yale University and graduate degrees in law and social work from Columbia University. She came to South Florida in 1980 to join her husband, Dr. Robert Cava, a Miami native, who returned home to join his father in medical practice. Daniella and Robert raised two children, Eliza and Edward, in Miami-Dade, supported by strong networks of friends, families, and co-workers.

RODRICK MILLER

CEO, BEACON COUNCIL



Rodrick Miller has been selected as the President and Chief Executive Officer of The Miami-Dade Beacon Council, which serves as the official public-private economic development partnership for Miami-Dade County. With extensive experience in economic development, urban recovery, trade, and project finance, Miller is poised to lead and guide the growth and development of Miami.

Before assuming his new role, Miller held the position of Chief Executive Officer at Invest Puerto Rico, where he successfully attracted business investments to the island. He also held leadership positions in economic development organizations in Detroit and New Orleans.

Miller's appointment is the outcome of a comprehensive search conducted by Korn Ferry, a global organizational consulting firm. He is commended for his proficiency in navigating complex business and political landscapes and his dedication to fostering sustainable and inclusive development.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava expressed her confidence in Miller's leadership, highlighting his capacity to generate new investments, bolster local industries, and establish a vibrant workforce within the community.

At 45 years old, Miller assumes the position of Beacon's sixth president in its 38-year history as the official economic development organization of Miami-Dade County. He has led diverse economic initiatives for various clients, including Living Cities, the Kellogg Foundation, The Fund for our Economic Future, and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Miller holds a Master of Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a graduate diploma in finance from the Monterrey Institute of Technology in Mexico, and a Bachelor of Science degree in International Business from St. Augustine's College. He has also been a Fulbright Fellow and serves as a board member for several organizations, including the New Growth Innovation Network, the Harvard Kennedy School Alumni Board, New Corp (CDFI), and St. Augustine's University.

A circular portrait of Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, a middle-aged man with short grey hair, wearing a black cassock with a red sash and a gold pectoral cross. The background of the portrait is a soft-focus outdoor scene.

MOST REVEREND THOMAS G. WENSKI

ARCHBISHOP OF MIAMI

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski, born on October 18, 1950, in West Palm Beach, Florida, grew up in Lake Worth and attended Catholic school at his home parish, Sacred Heart. He embarked on his journey in religious service by studying at St. John Vianney Minor Seminary in Miami and later at St. Vincent de Paul Major Seminary in Boynton Beach. He was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Miami on May 15, 1976. Throughout his career, Bishop Wenski has exhibited a deep commitment to serving his community and advocating for various causes.

He holds a B.A. Degree in Philosophy (1972) and a Masters of Divinity (1975) from the Boynton Beach Seminary. He furthered his education with a Master of Arts degree from the School of Sociology at Fordham University in New York in 1993. Additionally, he participated in summer courses at the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland.

Bishop Wenski's early pastoral work included serving as an associate pastor at Corpus Christi Church, a predominantly Hispanic parish in Miami. He also played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Haitian Apostolate of the Archdiocese, where he served as associate director and then director of the Pierre Toussaint Haitian Catholic Center in Miami. This center provided essential services, including spiritual guidance, education, legal aid, and social support, to the Haitian immigrant community. Bishop Wenski concurrently served as pastor of several Haitian mission parishes within the Archdiocese.

Throughout the 1980s, Bishop Wenski expanded his outreach efforts to establish Haitian Catholic communities across a wide geographic area, from Homestead to Fort Pierce and even extending to Florida's west coast. He was also known for celebrating the weekly Mass in English for shut-ins at a local ABC affiliate in Miami.

Bishop Wenski's dedication to social service led him to become the Archdiocese Director of Catholic Charities in 1996. He facilitated collaborative efforts between Catholic Charities and Caritas Cuba, the social service arm of the Catholic Church in Cuba, delivering relief aid to various countries including Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Central America.

Appointed as auxiliary Bishop of Miami on June 24, 1997, Bishop Wenski was ordained to the episcopacy on September 3, 1997. He continued to serve within the Archdiocese of Miami, taking on leadership roles in various organizations and committees, including the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' Committee on Migration and the conference's Committee on International Policy.

In 2003, he was appointed coadjutor bishop of the Diocese of Orlando by Pope John Paul II, assuming the role of the fourth bishop of the Diocese of Orlando on November 13, 2004. During his tenure, he convened the Diocesan Synod, 'Starting Afresh from Christ,' in 2005 and established multiple parishes and missions within the Diocese of Orlando.

Bishop Wenski's linguistic abilities include fluency in English, Haitian Creole, and Spanish. He is known for regularly preaching and celebrating Mass in both languages. He also possesses a limited knowledge of Polish, reflecting his family's heritage.

Throughout his career, Bishop Wenski has shown a deep commitment to his faith, community, and social justice causes. His dedication to serving diverse communities and advocating for vulnerable populations has left a lasting impact in the regions he has served.

MICHAEL “MIKE” FERNANDEZ

CHAIRMAN, MBF HEALTHCARE PARTNERS



Miguel “Mike” B. Fernandez currently serves as chair of MBF Healthcare Partners, L.P., a private investment firm located in Coral Gables, Florida, that invests in healthcare service companies nationwide. He has been the founder and/or majority shareholder of over 20 healthcare related companies, most of which have been acquired by publicly traded companies, including Physicians Healthcare Plans (acquired by AmeriGroup (NYSE: AGP)), CAC Medical Centers, PrescribIT-Rx, CarePlus Health Plans (acquired by Humana (NYSE: HUM)) and Navarro Pharmacies (acquired by CVS (NYSE: CVS)). He serves on the Board of Trustees of the University of Miami.

FEATURED SPEAKER



HONORABLE OLIVER GILBERT III

CHAIRMAN, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Oliver G. Gilbert, III is a progressive and visionary leader who believes there is no singular path to success. Born and raised in the City of Miami Gardens, he remains committed to pouring into the community that helped groom him into the public figure he is today. Chairman Gilbert is a proud graduate of Florida A&M University where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice. Upon graduating, he enrolled in law school at St. Thomas University School of Law. He later transferred to the University of Miami School of Law where he held a senate position with the Student Bar Association and was a National Board Member of the Black Law Student Association among other accolades. Upon successfully earning his Juris Doctorate with honors, Chairman Gilbert knew his calling was public service.

Chairman Oliver G. Gilbert, III is a seasoned attorney, licensed to practice law in the State of Florida; the U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida; and the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, Federal District Court. With 20 years of legal experience, Chairman Gilbert's vast knowledge extends to real estate law, municipal law, constitutional law, civil rights law and employment law.

Throughout his tenure as a practicing attorney, he gained extensive experience working as a public policymaker in areas of education, criminal justice, and urban and economic development. Chairman Gilbert has served as an Adjunct Professor at Miami Dade College, teaching courses in criminology, criminal law, constitutional law, street law, drugs and violence, computer crimes, and judicial policy.

In 2012, Chairman Gilbert reached what was then the pinnacle of his career when he was elected mayor of his hometown, Miami Gardens. During his tenure, he provided leadership to City Council and city employees, increased corporate expansion, and was the driving force behind the exponential growth and development of new businesses within Miami Gardens. His efforts led to additional job opportunities for local residents and pumped revenue back into his beloved city. As recognition of the city's tremendous growth, Miami Gardens was named an All-America City in 2020, solidifying Chairman Gilbert's city as a tri-county economic contender.

In 2019, Chairman Gilbert was elected as the Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Chairman, and under his leadership, the TPO advanced the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan, from Planning to the Program and Implementation phase, now known as the 'SMART Program'. Additionally, Chairman Gilbert and the TPO have been nationally recognized for outstanding leadership in advancing innovative mobility options that have positively impacted the traveling public and industry, including the award-winning Miami-Dade SMART STEP program, as well as the significant regional expansion of the SMART Demonstration program moving over 4 Million residents and visitors since its adoption by the TPO. In 2020, Chairman Gilbert was also elected as the Chair of the Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC) by his colleagues from the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency (TPA). Under Chairman Gilbert's leadership, the SEFTC provides a tri-county forum for regional transportation planning efforts and policy coordination.

Chairman Gilbert's civic activities extended outside of Miami-Dade County as he is a former President of the African American Mayors Association and held a seat on the Board of Directors of the Florida League of Mayors, National League of Cities, U.S. Conference of Mayors Advisory Board, as well as President of the Miami-Dade County League of Cities. His commitment to leadership has been continually recognized by his peers as they selected him as Chair of the Miami-Dade County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and Chair of Southeast Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC), two initiatives and organizations the Chairman is dedicated to advancing.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

MARÍA ELVIRA SALAZAR

(R-FL 27TH DISTRICT)



Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar proudly represents Florida's 27th Congressional District and serves on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs as well as the House Committee on Small Business. Committed to defending human rights, especially for the people of Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, she is also a strong supporter of global partners Israel, Colombia, and Taiwan. An accomplished five-time Emmy Award-winning journalist, she has gone toe-to-toe with Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro, Chile's Augusto Pinochet, and Cuban dictator Fidel Castro—being the only U.S. Spanish-language journalist to interview him. Beginning at age 22, she worked for Telemundo, Univision, AmericaTevé, MegaTV, and CNN en Español. Salazar was born in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood and studied at the Deerborne School of Coral Gables, then graduated from Miami Dade College. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from the University of Miami and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

FEATURED SPEAKER



U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
VERONICA
ESCOBAR
(D-TX 16TH DISTRICT)

Congresswoman Veronica Escobar proudly represents Texas' 16th Congressional District, and her distinguished career is marked by her dedication to public service and advocacy.

As a third-generation El Pasoan, Congresswoman Escobar has made history as the first woman elected to represent El Paso and one of the first two Latinas from Texas to serve in Congress. She is an active member of several congressional caucuses, including the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the New Democrat Coalition, the Democratic Women's Caucus, and the Pro-Choice Caucus.

Her influential role in Congress includes serving on the prestigious House Judiciary Committee, House Armed Services Committee, and House Ethics Committee. In December 2022, she was elected to Democratic Leadership as one of three co-chairs of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee (DPCC). This leadership position tasks her with developing and communicating strong messaging that articulates House Democrats' values and contrasts them with the policies of House Republicans.

Congresswoman Escobar's impact extends to key legislative areas. She is a prominent advocate for gun safety, healthcare, reproductive justice, and immigration reform. Her efforts to address immigration challenges emphasize accountability, transparency, and oversight. She has also championed initiatives to enhance security for women's healthcare providers and clinics. Furthermore, she supports military personnel and their families, working to improve their well-being.

Before her congressional service, Congresswoman Escobar served in El Paso County government, where she fought against corruption and worked to modernize and reform the organization. She played a pivotal role in expanding access to healthcare by collaborating with institutions to establish primary care clinics and the El Paso Children's Hospital, the only children's hospital on the U.S.-Mexico Border.

Her commitment to education is evident from her background as an English teacher at the University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College. She also held roles as Communications Director for former Mayor Raymond Caballero and as the Executive Director of Community Scholars, a non-profit focused on teaching high school students how to produce public policy reports and recommendations.

Congresswoman Escobar is an alumna of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and New York University (NYU). She resides in Central El Paso with her husband, Michael, and their cherished cats. The couple has two grown children: Cristian Diego and Eloisa Isabel. In her role as a dedicated representative and advocate, Congresswoman Escobar continues to make a positive impact on her community and the nation.

PILAR GUZMAN



CEO AND FOUNDER, HALF MOON EMPANADAS

Pilar Guzman Zavala serves as the CEO of Half Moon Empanadas, a thriving fast-casual food concept based in Miami that specializes in offering a diverse range of Argentinian-style empanadas. Pilar's leadership has been instrumental in propelling Half Moon Empanadas into a national expansion, aiming to establish a new food category in the United States centered around empanadas.

Before assuming her role at Half Moon Empanadas, Pilar Guzman Zavala was associated with The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, where she managed the grant process for National Programs. Her professional journey has been marked by notable achievements, including serving as the Director of the Office of International Affairs for the state of Veracruz, Mexico, as well as working as a consultant at prominent institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. Her experience also includes a role as the Marketing Director at TIYM Publishing Company, responsible for the Anuario Hispano-Hispanic Yearbook.

Pilar is an accomplished academic, having earned a Master's Degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in 2005, where she focused on international economic development. She earlier graduated cum laude from the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM, Mexico) in 2001, with a bachelor's degree in business administration.

One of Pilar's central passions is the empowerment of women and minority-owned entrepreneurs. As a dedicated community advocate, she is committed to driving positive change in Miami and supporting the next generation of Hispanic entrepreneurs and women. Pilar has received recognition for her efforts, being a recipient of the Ricardo Salinas Scholarship from the Aspen Institute and a Young American Leaders Program fellow from Harvard School of Business. She engages as a mentor for women and food entrepreneurs in Miami, contributing her expertise to programs like WIN Lab Miami from Babson College and the FIU Startup Food Lab. Pilar is also a board member for Venture Café and Impac Fund, and she was elected as a board member for the Master of Science in Foreign Service Program at Georgetown University. Her community involvement extends to being a past board member of Amigos For Kids. Pilar is also a graduate of the Miami Leadership and Miami Fellow programs. In recognition of her significant impact, Pilar was named one of the top 25 most influential women in South Florida by the South Florida Business Journal.

Pilar Guzman Zavala resides in Miami, Florida, with her husband, Juan. She is the proud mother of Diego and Sofia, and her dedication to her professional endeavors and community contributions continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of many.



ADOLFO HENRIQUES

VICE CHAIRMAN OF RELATED GROUP

With over 20 years of experience in the banking industry and extensive executive leadership experience, Adolfo Henriques's current duties include working with the executive team on strategic and organizational initiatives. Prior to joining Related in early 2017, Adolfo served as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Gibraltar Private Bank and Trust, a private banking and wealth management company headquartered in Miami, and was also CEO of the South Region for Regions Bank. A recipient of the Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate, Adolfo holds a BA in business from St. Leo College, a master's degree in accounting from Florida International University and is a Certified Public Accountant. He also serves as a member of the Executive Committee at Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (GMCVB), and was recently named among the 12 most powerful people in Miami by The Miami Herald.



DAVID LAWRENCE, JR.

FOUNDER, BOARD CHAIR, THE CHILDREN'S MOVEMENT

David Lawrence Jr. is a distinguished figure known for his significant contributions to early childhood development and social advocacy. He retired as the publisher of The Miami Herald in 1999 and shifted his focus to championing children's rights and education.

He chairs The Children's Movement of Florida, an organization dedicated to prioritizing children's welfare in the state. Throughout his career, he has held leadership roles in various initiatives, including the Governor's Children and Youth Cabinet, the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, and successful campaigns for The Children's Trust.

David Lawrence Jr. played a pivotal role in passing a statewide constitutional amendment to provide pre-K education for all 4-year-olds in 2002. He is also known for his involvement in the establishment of the David Lawrence Jr. K-8 Public School and an endowed chair in early childhood studies at the University of Florida.

With an extensive background in journalism, David Lawrence Jr. has received numerous accolades and awards, including honorary doctorates and leadership recognition. He has also been actively involved in community organizations, serving on boards for the Miami Art Museum, United Way, and more.

Together with his wife Roberta, he resides in Coral Gables and has received honors such as "Family of the Year" and "Father of the Year." His impactful work has earned him a reputation as a passionate advocate for children's well-being and education.



REBECCA FISHMAN-LIPSEY

CEO, MIAMI FOUNDATION

Rebecca Fishman Lipsey, president and CEO of Miami Foundation, has significantly grown the foundation since 2020, emphasizing equity and investing over \$100 million into local nonprofits. Prior to her role, she made history as the youngest appointee to the Florida Board of Education and founded Radical Partners, a social impact venture. She has been awarded "Best Non-Profit Executive" by the International Stevie Award for Women in Business, Best Role Model by Miami Today, and 20 under 40 by the Miami Herald. She holds a master's from Bank Street College of Education and was valedictorian at the University of Pennsylvania. She started her career as a public school teacher, influenced by her refugee grandparents' experiences. Outside of her professional life, she enjoys playing the piano and spending time with her family.

GEPSIE METELLUS



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SANT LA

Gepsie Metellus, born in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, is co-founder and Executive Director of the Haitian Neighborhood Center Sant La in South Florida, a resource center for the Haitian community in the region. With over two decades of community involvement, she serves on various Miami-Dade education boards and is an active member of organizations like the Miami Chapter of the International Women's Forum. Metellus is a talk show host, national media commentator, and author, where she discusses issues that impact the Haitian community. Metellus has been recognized with several awards for her leadership and advocacy. An alumna of the Rockefeller Foundation and Harvard Business School program, her motto is "Provide the leadership to get things done!"



PETER ROUTSIS-ARROYO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Peter Routsis-Arroyo-A native of Queens, New York, and a licensed social worker who graduated from New York University with a masters degree in social work, he was employed from 1993 until 1998 with Catholic Family Services in Hartford, Connecticut as clinical director/senior management team and director of the Institute for the Hispanic Family. Routsis-Arroyo moved to southwest Florida more than 20 years ago and served as the CEO of Catholic Charities in the sprawling Diocese of Venice from 2001 until his first day on the job as CEO for the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami (CCADM) at the end of January 2018. Peter continues to serve as the CEO of CCADM.

SANTRA DENIS



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIAMI WORKERS CENTER

A South Florida native, Santra Denis is the Executive Director of the Miami Workers Center, a power-building, member-led organization, organizing working-class care workers, tenants, women, and families for the rights, respect, and resources that we need and deserve. Miami Workers Center founded in 1999, has a legacy of fighting against the demolition of public housing and the displacement of working-class people. Tenants and organizers with the Miami Workers Center most recently won a Tenants Bill of Rights in 2022, and \$2.9 million for Eviction Diversion in 2023. Ms. Denis has developed her own leadership as a feminist, anti-classism, and anti-racism community organizer and is committed to centering the leadership of Black and Immigrant working-class people. Ms. Denis has been very active in her community, founding Avanse Ansanm, an organization that preserves culture and builds economic and political power in South Florida's Haitian-American communities. Ms. Denis is first generation Haitian-American. She graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor's in Health Science and from Florida International University with a Master of Public Health in Policy and Management. Ms. Denis is a lover of all people and her life's mission is to dismantle systems of oppression for the liberation of all people.

FEATURED SPEAKER



FATHER ELVIS A. GONZALEZ

PASTOR, ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL CHURCH

Born in Nicaragua; came to Miami at age 15; graduated from Miami Coral Park Senior High School and entered St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami. He completed his studies for the priesthood at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach.

He blogged about his journey as a seminarian before his ordination as a transitional deacon April 21, 2012. He was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Miami on May 11, 2013. He served at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Kendall until June 2015, when he was appointed archdiocesan Vocations Director.

He is currently the Pastor at St. Michael the Archangel Church.

MICHAËL'S DEBORAH SAINT-VIL



MANAGER OF LEGAL SERVICES, OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Michaël's Déborah Saint -Vil is a Native of Brooklyn, New York, raised in Haiti. Her family migrated to the United States in the early 2000s and settled in Northern California. Déborah serves as the Immigration Legal Services Manager in the Office of New American Division at the Miami-Dade County CAHSD. She is working towards the mission to help the integration of immigrants in the County. As a Supervising Attorney at Catholic Legal Service, ADOM Inc., her practice is focused on providing legal services and educating low-income immigrants about their rights Nationwide.

In law school, she was an Advisor at the United Nations, working for the permanent mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, where the focus was mainly on the law of the sea. She also was a competitor for the International Moot Court and a member of the Intercultural Human Right Law Review. Following law school, she volunteered at various firms and organizations, working with victims of crimes, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Déborah serves as the Director of the Adventurers and a Board Member at Mount Pisgah Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In addition, she serves the Haitian Lawyers Association's Board as Treasurer. Déborah is a Leadership Fellow Class VI of the Dade Legal Aid- Put Something back. She is currently a Class X Fellow for the Florida Bar William Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Academy.

Déborah earned her bachelor's degree from Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, and her Juris Doctor from Saint Thomas University School of Law in Miami, Florida.

Déborah is very passionate about her work for the betterment of the community. Her most important accomplishment is being the proud mother of her precious daughter. In her spare time, Déborah likes to travel, cook, plan and coordinate events, and spend time with family and friends.

FEATURED SPEAKER



TESSA PETIT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FLIC (FLORIDA IMMIGRANT COALITION)

Born and raised in Haiti, Tessa has always had a passion for helping others. She moved to the United States in 2001 and worked in social services with the Haitian community and with families experiencing homelessness. While overseeing various shelters, Tessa observed that direct services address symptoms of inequality and that equity and justice will only be realized through structural transformation. She brought her passion for social justice to FLIC in 2016, where she helped to expand direct services in conjunction with issue-advocacy, capacity building and consciousness raising. Tessa has a Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Leadership from Barry University, and served our coalition as Director of Finance and Operations prior to becoming FLIC's co-Executive Director in 2021. As she co-leads FLIC, Tessa aspires to foster collaboration among Black Immigrants, and to further expand FLIC's civic engagement in a continuum.

GABY PACHECO



DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY, DEVELOPMENT, AND COMMUNICATIONS AT THE DREAM.US

Maria Gabriela (Gaby) Pacheco is a nationally influential immigrant rights leader who has experienced the challenges faced by immigrant families in the U.S. firsthand. From Guayaquil, Ecuador, ICE raided her home in 2006, leading to her sister and parents being put through deportation proceedings. Committed to her advocacy, she co-led the "Trail of Dreams" walk from Miami to Washington, DC in 2010, and is credited for spearheading the efforts that led to the DACA program. In 2013, she became the first undocumented Latina to testify before Congress, advocating for immigration reform. She has been recognized for her work numerous times, including Forbes' 30 Under 30, and was celebrated in Elle Magazine. She has a degree in Music Education, Early Childhood Education, and Special Education from Miami Dade College as well as a Doctoral Degree from The New School.

FEATURED SPEAKER



OSCAR LONDOÑO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT WECOUNT

Oscar Londoño is the Co-Executive Director of WeCount!, a membership-led organization of immigrant workers and families in South Florida, including agricultural workers, construction workers, and domestic workers. As a community lawyer and organizer, Oscar's work is focused on building the power and leadership of immigrant workers to win better living and working conditions. Oscar was previously the Miami Project Director and Staff Attorney at the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), where he provided legal, policy, and organizing support to workers' centers across the country on issues of labor and immigration enforcement. Born and raised in Miami, Oscar graduated summa cum laude from Cornell University with a B.A. in Sociology and received his J.D. from New York University School of Law, where he was a Root Tilden Kern Public Interest Scholar.

JEAN MONESTIME



**FORMER COUNTY COMMISSIONER, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, DISTRICT 2**

Commissioner Jean Monestime, a longtime advocate for justice and economic development, has lived in Miami-Dade County for over 30 years and made history as its first Haitian-American Commissioner. Elected in 2010 to represent District 2, he was later unanimously chosen as Chairman of the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners and presided over the Miami-Dade Metropolitan Planning Organization. Beyond politics, Monestime, a former school teacher and adjunct professor, leads JEMO Realty and JEMO Enterprises and has been a delegate to the National Democratic Convention and was later selected as a Florida Electoral College member for the 2012 U.S. election. He's been actively engaged in various civic and professional organizations, holds an MBA from Nova Southeastern University, and is an alumnus of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

FEATURED SPEAKER

OPPORTUNITIES + NOTES

A blank page for taking notes, featuring a light blue header with the title 'OPPORTUNITIES + NOTES'. The page itself is white with rounded corners and is filled with horizontal lines. Each line is composed of a light blue top line, a thin purple middle line, and a pink bottom line, creating a three-line pattern. The page is set against a background with a vertical gradient from light blue on the left to pink and purple on the right.

OPPORTUNITIES + NOTES

A blank page for taking notes, featuring a series of horizontal lines. The lines are grouped into alternating light blue and light pink bands, creating a visually appealing and organized space for writing. The page is otherwise empty, with no text or other markings.

OPPORTUNITIES + NOTES

A blank page for taking notes, featuring a light blue header with the title 'OPPORTUNITIES + NOTES' and a large white area with horizontal lines for writing. The background of the page is a gradient of pink and purple.