



**Miami-Dade Branch**

**National Association For The Advancement of Colored People**

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July 10, 2014

**Questions for candidates in Commission District 8 with responses from Daniella Levine**

- (1) As Black contractors get only a miniscule amount of county business and the current disparity study may be inconclusive because of poor data records, how would you propose to address this inequity. The lack of visible presence of Black workers on county funded projects is a flash point.**

Investing in local businesses, many of which are owned by historically disadvantaged groups, is good business sense for Miami-Dade County. Local businesses are more likely to invest in their community for their growth, their charitable donations and their commitment to creating good and sustainable employment. To create the desired inclusivity and opportunity for the county's African-American-owned companies, we must focus our technical assistance on those businesses, thereby enabling them to compete on a more level playing field. If we must contract with a major company from out of town, local subcontracting should be incentivized and required with incentives for participation of under-represented groups.

The county's current efforts to provide opportunities for African-American owned businesses offer insufficient support to historically disadvantaged companies. The county's prior set-aside programs for these businesses were repealed after a court challenge. The Miami-Dade County Public School (MDCPS) system recently launched the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Program, which provides a promising model for the county's consideration of future efforts. Using funding from publicly issued construction bonds, MDCPS conducted a disparity study to determine need, then conducted workshops and provided assistance to help these groups get certified and approved for contracts.



- (2) Community Policing often seems to be secondary to special units particularly in African American Communities and the Commission had had resolutions before it supporting community policing would you comment on this issue?**

Community policing is a critical aspect of a secure community. It gives people in our neighborhoods the confidence to report crime or potential crime. It is the most important means of building trust with residents. Intimidation from area gangs or criminals can take hold without community policing, and residents need to feel as though they can provide tips and form a relationship with the police. It is also better for the police- it creates less animosity and more engagement. These facets are essential to a safe community and close to impossible without community policing.

- (3) A few years ago the county de-funded the Independent Review Panel which provided an independent office which could receive complaints and provided a public review of the internal investigation. Would you support re-establishing this small unit? It was staffed with three people.**

Absolutely. A place where people can voice their concerns and report issues is essential to a safe and thriving community. Independent review creates the perception and reality of public accountability.

- (4) The Miami –Dade Commission has addressed the issues of a living wage and of wage theft through the passage of ordinances. How would you propose the Commission determine whether or not these ordinances are achieving their objectives?**

The Living Wage Commission, established by county ordinance, plays a critical role in monitoring the implementation of this law. There needs to be reporting not just to the Commission but to the public as well. There should be social research surveying of affected populations to determine the effects of this ordinance. Unfortunately the living wage ordinance is not adequately monitored at this time as the county itself is in violation of provisions having to do with county employees covered under the law. The living wage provisions for county employees requires someone to monitor these wages and benefits internally and this isn't happening- the county has continued to hire workers part-time on a "temporary" basis which extends to permanent but then does not afford the protections of the law, including access to health insurance or the equivalent in wages. I am very proud of having helped to get this ordinance passed, however I am concerned about lack of enforcement. We have had to fight the state legislatures to prevent preemption of our local law and we have worked hard to create awareness of the benefit.



- (5) The Black community has long been dependent on the public sector for the better available jobs. For many years this employment was concentrated in areas such as solid waste and certain social service positions serving the Black population. With enactment of civil rights laws better positions became available particularly in social services. Recently other persons have become interested in positions earlier considered “Black jobs”, public employment jobs have decreased and some work is now contracted. These declines have not been balanced by significant increases in other fields in the public sector or major new openings in the private sector. What can the Commission do to address this imbalance?**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenge approach by the school board is a wonderful model that the county can utilize to help small businesses owned by African-Americans compete fairly. We could also promote housing redistribution to make more integrated neighborhoods according to socio-economic status. If you have less division in neighborhoods and schools, this leads to less balkanization in the work place and creates more natural relationships of comfort and trust along racial and ethnic divides. We need to invest more in job creation and training that will level the playing field. Local hiring at the neighborhood level will assure that wherever a government funded project exists in a neighborhood, the residents will have some preference in hiring.

- (6) What is your opinion about the use of the Confederate Flag in government sponsored events?**

The display of racist symbols is despicable and actionable. There should be legal consequences for using a symbol that is so divisive and contrary to our democratic principles and protections in a public event.

- (7) How will you address the library crisis, with particular reference to closures in low income Black areas?**

I have been a stalwart champion for full library funding, recognizing the tremendous value of libraries particularly in lower income communities. They provide homework, employment, and social service support and open the doorways to skill, learning and community involvement. Libraries are among many important places that provide a community center for children to go after school and spend their time constructively.