

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUMMER PARTNERSHIP INSTITUTE FOR CUBAN-AMERICAN STUDIES STARTING THE SUMMER OF 2021**

**COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

The history of Cuban migration to the United States (U. S.) is dramatically different than that of other immigrant groups. In 1910, the number of Cubans living in the U. S. was estimated at a little more than 15,000. When Fidel Castro took power in 1959 and began his totalitarian communist regime, the Cuban-American population in the U. S. exploded: 215,000 arrived in the years immediately following the revolution. The early 1960's witnessed the mass migration and exile of middle-class Cubans who were victims of political oppression and persecution. The following summarizes some of the most significant characteristics of the Cuban migration and international political influences to the government and the people of the United States.

Due to the violent and unstable political climate in Cuba after 1959, as well as the mounting fears of political indoctrination in schools and other sectors of society, many Cuban parents opted for sending their children out of the country with relatives already living in the United States. Part of the mindset was that Fidel Castro's rule would be short-lived and soon families would be reunited back on the island. In Miami, Father Bryan O. Walsh, then director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, created Operation Pedro Pan in 1960. The operation saw more than 14,000 unaccompanied minors arrive in Miami from Cuba from 1960 to 1962. While many of the minors in the program were eventually reunited with relatives, another significant number were placed in shelters managed by the Catholic Welfare Bureau, and eventually relocated to other locations in the United States, including New Mexico, Nebraska, Delaware, and Indiana. Many children of Operation Pedro Pan grew up to become important members of society in the United States including in the world of arts and entertainment, education, science, business, cuisine, and politics.

There were two major national and international crises that the U. S. and Cuba faced in the early 1960's. The Bay of Pigs invasion on April 17, 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a failed landing operation on the southwestern coast of Cuba by Cuban exiles who opposed Castro's communist revolution.

Financed and directed by the U. S. government, the operation took place at the height of the Cold War and its failure led to major shifts in international relations between Cuba, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, was a direct and dangerous confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union and was the moment when the two superpowers came close to nuclear conflict.

On November 6, 1965, the U.S. and Cuba made formal what had already been going on for years – a mass exodus of refugees from Cuba to the United States. The Freedom Flights program went on for six years and eventually brought an estimated 300,000 Cubans to the U.S. The specific point of arrival was Miami, Florida, a city that would be drastically shaped by Cuban culture.

After the historic migration of Cuban refugees in the 1960's and 1970's, the United States, specifically Miami, Florida, was bracing itself for a third significant wave. The Mariel Boatlift was a mass emigration of Cubans, traveling to the U. S. via the Mariel Harbor in Cuba, sparked by events in Havana during the spring of 1980. On April 20, 1980, Fidel Castro made an unexpected announcement: the port of Mariel would be open to anyone wishing to leave the island, as long as someone would pick them up. Word of the announcement rapidly spread amongst the Cuban exile community in Miami and boats and other forms of watercraft started arriving daily at the port. From April to September, a total of 124,779 Cubans arrived in South Florida.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuban migration to the U. S. accelerated: In 1994 alone, over 33,000 Cubans were intercepted at sea by the U. S. Coast Guard, mostly in makeshift rafts and taken to the U. S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In response, U. S. and Cuban governments worked to establish a solution that would prevent Cubans from risking their lives at sea. The result, in 1995, came to be known as the “wet foot, dry foot” policy.

The Cuban-American population in Miami and the rest of the United States continues to change as we now enter the fifth generation of Cuban-Americans. The tragedy of the Cuban experience continues to be emotional, passionate, powerful, and inspirational. Other countries in the Americas have suffered the lies of the Cuban government, like Venezuela and Nicaragua. This proposed institute should also address the tragedy of these two countries and how the Cuban government has negatively influenced these nations.

The concept of developing and establishing a Cuban-American Summer Institute in Miami-Dade County Public Schools follows in the same footsteps as the outstanding Glazer and Lorton Writing Institute and the exemplary Holocaust Education Summer Teacher Institute. Both of these institutes are in partnership with the University of Miami. The Cuban-American Summer Institute will provide instructional personnel with fair, factual, accurate, and transparent facts about the Cuban tragedy and the cultural, political, and socio-economic factors that have positively impacted our community.

Therefore, this agenda item seeks to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to develop and establish a summer partnership institute for Cuban-American Studies starting the summer of 2021 for instructional personnel at no cost to the District; convey a task force of experts in the field of Cuban-American Studies to make recommendations for consideration to the Superintendent by March 3, 2021; ensure that attendees at the institute are eligible to receive master plan points; seek the support of State legislators for this initiative; secure a co-partnership with an institution of higher learning to assist with the development and implementation of the program; secure private funding partnerships to cover any costs that may be associated with this initiative; and provide a final report to the Board by May 4, 2021.

This agenda item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to:

1. develop and establish, as feasible, a summer partnership institute for Cuban-American Studies starting the summer of 2021 for instructional personnel, at no cost to the District;
2. convene a task force of experts in the field of Cuban-American Studies to make recommendations for consideration to the Superintendent by March 3, 2021;
3. ensure that attendees at the institute are eligible to receive master plan points;
4. seek the support of State legislators for this initiative;
5. secure a co-partnership with an institution of higher learning to assist with the development and implementation of the program;
6. secure private funding partnerships to cover any costs that may be associated with this initiative; and
7. provide a final report to the Board by May 4, 2021.