

# CABA BRIEFS

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27 YEARS OF CUBAN AMERICAN ADVOCACY

# President's Speech

I am honored and grateful for the trust the members of the Cuban American Bar Association (CABA) have placed in me as their elected leader. I have been blessed to be surrounded by a talented and dedicated group of individuals on our Board this year. Together with our membership, CABA stands ready to meet the challenges that await us in 2001.

Last year's president, Oscar Marrero, and the CABA Board worked tirelessly and unselfishly to serve our diverse community. Their commitment to community service and the administration of justice ensured that CABA's rich history of leadership continued. For all of those efforts and sacrifices, I thank the 2000 CABA Board and its President.

CABA's obligations and service to the community grows exponentially with each passing year. The demands and challenges on our organization and its elected leaders are perhaps greater now than ever before. With last year's events including, the presidential election, and the Elian Gonzalez crisis, South Florida once again took center stage in the national spotlight. Our city and state came under enormous scrutiny and political pressure. Tensions flared and divisions across ethnic and political lines were drawn and grew further apart. South Florida's combustible multi-ethnic relations were on the verge of exploding and ending the tedious and delicate progress the leaders of this diverse community had worked so hard to achieve.

Today, CABA's leadership steps into this vacuum and inherits the challenges of bringing our community together. Only history will fairly judge whether we were successful in our efforts. As we look forward to the challenges that face us, we should pause and take a moment to remember where we came from.

As we begin the new millennium it is an appropriate time to reflect not only upon last year's events, but also, the events that have shaped our community over the last forty (40) years.

The influx and immigration of Cubans and other minorities to South Florida has permanently changed the political, social and business landscape of our community for generations to come. As we reflect upon the last forty years, Cuban Americans in particular have reached unparalleled success.

This great country opened its doors to us and provided Cuban Americans with the opportunity to live the American Dream. Through hard work and a dogged determination, Cuban Americans have made the most of that opportunity. For this we are grateful.

Today in South Florida, Cuban Americans have achieved the highest levels of business and public leadership in our community.

We have a lot to be proud of, having accomplished so much in so little time.

With our success however, we also inherit the responsibility and challenges of leadership. As leaders in our community,

we must learn how to truly lead. Sam Ervin once defined a leader as "someone who helps improve the lives of other people and the system they live under". Accordingly, if we are to be effective leaders, we must be mindful that we serve the entire community. We must help to improve the lives of others in our community so that they too will have the same opportunity at success that we have so richly enjoyed. We must share our knowledge, experiences and resources with other sectors of our community in joint efforts which promote a true sense of respect and understanding.

Last year for example, CABA formed various alliances with other voluntary bar associations including the Black Lawyers Association and Florida Association of Women Lawyers in order to achieve a common goal. We must continue to encourage and forge these relationships with other groups in south Florida if we are to truly succeed and progress as a community. This effort moreover, should be encouraged and promoted across more general and philosophical lines and not simply for a single, discreet, and one-dimensional goal-oriented project.

It is my humble opinion that CABA is in a unique position to be an effective engine of leadership in our often divided community. Our efforts this past year demonstrate that we can work together as a community toward a common goal while appreciating and respecting our differences. We must continue to learn how to agree to disagree with one another without destroying the relationships that have been forged. At times that will require that we sacrifice our own personal interests and concerns for the benefit of the community as a whole.

CABA's leadership will be tested this year as various legislative initiatives at the state and national level will indeed spur debate amongst South Florida's multi-ethnic groups and traditional political parties.

I believe CABA's leadership has the talent, insightfulness and commitment to meet these challenges. I ask that our members join us in this critically important endeavor.

Through our "true" leadership in the community, we can ensure that opportunity and the fair administration of justice will be available for everyone in our community.

To that end, CABA has planned in addition to its traditional services to the community, various projects throughout the year to help foster and strengthen our bonds with other groups in our community. I encourage our membership to fully participate not only by attending these events, but also actually participating in the preparation of our scheduled events. Together we will ensure the success of our organization and the progress of our community.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Diaz, Jr." The signature is stylized and cursive.

MICHAEL DIAZ, JR.