

MITCH MAIDIQUE: What greater Miami can do to achieve greatness

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MAIDIQUE

Few cities in the nation seem to evoke both awe and disbelief as frequently as Miami. In 2011 we were ranked the eighth "most walkable" city in America and the following year among its "most dangerous." We have been among the "most optimistic, the "most overpriced" and our skyline was named "most impressive." Groups have ranked our citizens as "most attractive," "most vain," and "most unhealthy." In addition, our community's potential and challenges have long been the topic of discussion over a cafecito at Versailles or lunch at the Capitol Grille.

In late 2011 I spoke about the Miami conundrum with Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter. In her 1990s book *World Class*, Rosabeth noted that Miami's location and promising role as a connector for global traffic in business and the arts was unparalleled. However, the challenges to achieving greatness in Miami remained as big as its opportunities; it seemed dazzling possibilities were seldom fully realized.

So with Rosabeth's help, we developed a case study about Miami-Dade. We looked at Miami's history: its social and ethnic adaptation, its diversity and fragmentation, political scandals, boom-bust economic cycles — and its resiliency. The outcome was "Miami: Leadership in a Global Community," a wrinkle-your-forehead piece replete with our community's shining successes, head-shaking failures and unrealized opportunities.

In January 2012, the FIU Center for Leadership took the Miami case and convened the Miami Leadership Summit — a group of Miami's civic leaders invited to tackle some important questions: "How can Miami become a globally competitive city of the future?" And "Why would I want to call this 'Home'?" Dozens showed up. Unfettered comments and passionate opinions gave rise to the consensus that Miami is a great global city because — or in spite of — its challenges.

At the session's close, we thought our work of jump-starting a debate was done. Instead, there was an overwhelming demand to continue the conversation, and to create a vision for Miami's

progress. The summit I had set the stage for identifying the economic and social issues confronting Miami. Subsequent summits hosted the Knight Foundation's Alberto Ibargüen, who charged us to mentor a new generation of leaders and Harve Mogul, CEO of United Way challenged us to get more involved in our community.

After several Summits it came down to, "What can I, as a proud Miamian, do? What can everyone get behind?"

We found that of the top three issues identified, education was being addressed through community task forces; and One Community/One Goal was driving economic development and providing strategic focus. We decided that the theme of civic engagement could provide a means to an end to attack the other challenges.

Miami, however, had also made another list: the "most likely to *not* be engaged." According to recent studies, attachment to community is linked "to strategic outcomes such as local economic growth. . . . and residents' perceptions of the community are more strongly linked to their level of community attachment than to their age, ethnicity, or work status."

We know that a community's level of civic engagement is directly tied to its prosperity and overall health. So, how to build attachment? Well, you encourage citizens to volunteer, give, vote, talk to a neighbor, find their own ways to engage.

Yet according to studies, Miami's civic involvement is dismal, and our excuses are plentiful: it's a transient community, we have a dearth of political leadership, we are too fragmented, and so on.

As the "least engaged" of the 26 communities served by the Knight Foundation, Miamians have a lot of work to do. But it's doable. We are diverse, but we share common ground, including the desire to make our community a better place to live, work and raise our families. We don't have to accept this designation.

With co-chair Katy Sorenson, a former Miami-Dade County commissioner and CEO of the Good Government Initiative at the University of Miami, we are working to redefine and enhance civic engagement. We are launching an effort to identify and map our civic engagement assets. Powered by Catalyst Miami, the civic-mapping project will provide the foundation. This is exciting because it will enable us to look at what we already *have*, which is substantial, and build from there by identifying opportunities for further involvement — through arts and culture, participation in one of our many governments, on environmental issues, through philanthropy, volunteering in human service organizations and other ways yet to be imagined.

That will be the best product of the summits, the execution of "doable deeds" that will engage our community and put us on a new kind of list: the global greatness list.

So what does Miami need? All of us. Volunteer, give, share, vote, learn more. I invite you to join me and "Engage, Miami!"

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