I. Welcome and Introductions – Professor Kele Stewart and Commission Chair Ted Small
Prof. Kele Stewart welcomed the panelists and guests on behalf of the University of Miami School of Law. Commission Chair Ted Small thanked Dean White, Prof. Stewart, Prof. Georgie Angones and Victoria Fear of the Miami Foundation for their support, and he thanked the panelists for sharing their expertise. Next, Chair Small recognized the members of the ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty who traveled from across the country for the roundtable discussion. Chair Small framed the conversation by underscoring that the goal of the program is to foster greater interdisciplinary collaboration to implement effective strategies to address the 10 manifestation of poverty areas that will be discussed during the program.

II. Local Clients/Former Clients Panel
Prof. Kele Stewart of the University of Miami School of Law facilitated an interview-style dialogue with those with first-hand poverty experiences who shared their insights on unmet needs and innovative strategies to foster empowerment and success. Common themes included the fact that youth may end up homeless as a result of a parent’s mental illness or substance abuse as well as physical violence or being put out by parents—sometimes due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Panelists underscored the fact that youth who “couch surf” with friends/relatives are oftentimes just as vulnerable to exploitation or violence as those who sleep on the street. Panelists also discussed the difficulty youth face when transitioning out of the child welfare system, including lack of love/nurturing; lack of caregivers; frequent school changes or being kicked out of the school system; criminal records for petty juvenile crimes that stay with youth; lack of information about rights/available programs. Lastly, the panelists highlighted factors that promote youth resiliency and success, including a mentor who is consistent and believes in the youth; job skills training and
entry-level work opportunities; financial assistance; support at the college level; exposure/investment that allows youth to believe in themselves and their own potential.

Changemaker Corps Member, Educate Tomorrow at Single Stop, Miami Dade College
- Homeless since age 15, she was put out by her mother (to make room for her new boyfriend’s brother).
- Faced with the options of going to school or getting a job, she faced challenges with continuing her education. She secured a summer job placement at Tacolcy (two summers in a row) and attended Freedom School. After a brief stint in jail for stealing clothing and food due to her homeless status, she was kicked out of school for too many absences. She tried to secure a GED, but didn’t have money for the test.
- With guidance from a mentor and assistance from Educate Tomorrow, she secured her GED, enrolled at Miami Dade College and is currently one semester away from receiving her AA.
- Discussed the barriers created by a criminal record and explained the importance of assistance with expungement
- Underscored the power of the support, motivation and mentoring provided by Educate Tomorrow—noting the critical importance of having an adult in your corner.

Fellow, Educate Tomorrow at Single Stop, Miami Dade College
- Bounced around from a number of relatives and the child welfare system due to her mother’s schizophrenia, she endured school instability attending a new school every year for 12 years.
- With the support, motivation and mentorship provided by Educate Tomorrow, she is attending college (on scholarship), excelling and has a scholarship lined up for law school.
- She, too, underscored the importance of having adults/mentors to provide support, motivation and guidance.

Mentor for Transgender Youth and Peer Educator and Advocate for Youth Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Survivors’ Pathway Organization
- Highlighted the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ youth.
- Pushed out by her parents (and grandmother) and unable to find employment due to discrimination as a transgender teen, Victoria resorted to survival sex—highlighting how common this is in the LGBTQ community and underscoring the related violence and trauma.
- Now a peer educator and advocate, she emphasized the importance of greater advocacy efforts aimed at supporting the sometimes invisible LGBTQ community.
Emphasized the importance of collaboration with law enforcement, the Attorney General, the courts, etc. and proposed transgendered victim specialists to work with the community.

**Miami Workers Center**

- Two women affiliated with the Miami Workers Center chronicled Miami’s history of displacing low-income families in the name of revitalization—sharing personal accounts of the destruction of the community at Scott Homes and their fear of a similar outcome in the redevelopment of Liberty Square.
- Highlighted how displacement results in the loss of vouchers and noted the difficulty in finding comparable units—especially within the limited time frame given to utilize Section 8 vouchers; explained that vacant units at the time of counts were lost (and won’t be replaced)
- Discussed their community-organizing and advocacy efforts aimed at ensuring a right to return and 1-to-1 replacement (describing how community members tracked down the lost residents and advised them of their right to return)
- “Once you move people, you are taking their heart and soul from them. When you uplift a community, don’t do it at the expense of the people.”
- Prof. Kele Stewart commented on how disruptive displacement is not only for the families, but also for the community.

**III. Local Poverty Experts Collaborate**

How can those who are already addressing poverty in Miami-Dade-Ft. Lauderdale/Broward work more collaboratively and in a cross-disciplinary fashion?

*Highlights from the discussion:*

**Maria Rodriguez, Executive Director, Florida Immigrant Coalition**

- Emphasis that immigrant status, race and income level are main drivers of disproportionate involvement in criminal and civil justice systems and are root causes of poverty that must be addressed.
- Noted the lack of a Florida department of labor and city/county efforts to address related issues
- Highlighted 2010 efforts by the AFLCIO and a coalition of supporters to address wage theft issues affecting many sectors
- Also discussed efforts by her organization against racial profiling, private immigration prisons, and for In-State tuition.

**The Honorable Oliver G. Gilbert III, Mayor of Miami Gardens; Chair of Miami-Dade County Local Black Elected Officials**

- Underscoring the importance of prevention and early intervention, the Mayor highlighted Miami Gardens’ innovative Parks Program strategy of building
community infrastructure for young people to be engaged in positive activities in safe, supervised environments—noting special programs in academics (including STEM), the culinary arts, athletics, recording studios, etc.—with the goal of maintaining hope for children.

- Discussed the ramifications of the largest black majority city south of Atlanta receiving an influx of residents from HOPE VI without appropriate funding for critically needed programming and services
- Highlighted the importance of government leadership, not merely non-profits groups, in structural fixes
- Suggestion of increasing the amount of Section 8 and other voucher programs so that benefit recipients will have the choice to live in more communities with diverse incomes so poverty does not remain concentrated in a few communities where affordable housing is now available.

**Francesco Duberli Rivera, Chief Executive Officer, Survivors’ Pathway Organization**

- Provides assistance to victims of violence in communities that have been marginalized – people without access to the justice system.
- Collaboration and creating partnerships is key to overcoming lack of access to justice and “access to violence” for transgender and other discrete and insular minorities—noting that poverty was one of the primary causes dragging individuals into violent situations and explaining the concept (and harsh reality) of survival sex
- Explained how collaboration with those equipped to provide justice is critical, and underscored the importance of working with law enforcement, the Attorney General, the States Attorney’s Office, and the courts

**Kamalah Fletcher, Senior Director of Community Engagement, Catalyst Miami**

- Discussed the importance of empowering those experiencing poverty by teaching them about their rights and equipping them to undertake advocacy efforts
- Underscored the importance of building catalyzing networks for social change
- Highlighted the effectiveness of hiring provider staff from within the community
- Commented that programs aren’t always designed to address the actual underlying problems and discussed the effectiveness of incorporating access to legal help into programming
- Underscored the importance of including pathways to employment
The Honorable Daniella Levine Cava, Miami-Dade County Commissioner; Founder of Catalyst Miami

- Provided a framework for change with the following examples: (1) Personal (start by providing children with clear expectations—from parents and teachers); (2) Cultural (strengthening family, community and national associations); (3) Structural (not allowing companies to profit from poverty); and (4) Systemic (obstacles in transportation, employment laws (“ban the box”)

- Highlighted an upcoming vote on “ban the box” legislation (scheduled for Tuesday)

- Discussed the need to address the very real issue of systems that profit from poverty

- Suggestion of “climate change” as a potential cross-cutting issue that should be considered to foster greater collaboration to address poverty.

- Collaboration to provide food, child care and transportation to facilitate target population being able to attend programs.

Lars Gilberts, United Way of Broward County, Director, ALICE//Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed

- Leading off with the comment that the recent recession resulted in countless people entering the system who had never done so in the past, he proposed changing the conversation from “us” vs. “them” to highlight how these issues affect all of us. Discussed redefining perception of America’s “middle class” to exclude those who are on the verge of sliding into poverty (e.g. those who are have jobs but no ability to save and build assets and thus are one paycheck away from poverty or homelessness; children and grandchildren who were raised in middle class families graduate from high school or college and enter a labor market where they cannot find jobs or are underemployed and thus cannot afford their own homes and must return to parent’s homes) so that more voters think of their own interests aligned with “them” (poor people) and vote to support anti-poverty programs.

- Noted that everyone believes they are middle class but they are not; proposed changing the conversation to talk about the reality of economic factors.

- Pointed out that poverty is rising as unemployment is decreasing—noting that wages are weak.

- Underlined the importance of reaching out to the business community (and not just the provider community) as a means to educate and develop better support/services for people.
Brett McNaught, Chief Executive Officer, Educate Tomorrow

- Commented that most of the men at the Rescue Mission and in the homeless service system faced abuse and neglect as children (involvement in the child welfare system); emphasized the importance of early intervention and programs aimed at supporting students through mentoring
- Discussed the history of Educate Tomorrow, beginning with mentoring students and evolving over the years to serve as an association for the older youth (in their 20s) and becoming a community movement
- Highlighted hidden funding opportunities within existing laws to empower those experiencing poverty such as funding in Florida that allows those aging out of foster care to attend college for free; building partnerships on campus and programs that include holistic wraparound services; utilizing clients who have completed programs to become mentors of current clients.
- Now has 400 students on scholarship at MDC – 100 at FIU
- Underscored the importance of motivation and mentoring

Dr. Stephen Symes, Associate Professor – Division of Infectious Diseases; Associate Dean of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

- Led off his comments by stating that he (and his colleagues in the medical field) see the effects of poverty everyday—noting how one’s health is impacted by social structures that most acutely affect those who are least equipped financially
- Underscored the potential for substantial healthcare cost savings through programs that provide access to preventive health to those experiencing poverty, particular immigrant groups
- Provided statistics on the high number of immigrants entering the ER for work related injuries as well as the prevalence of young African American males seeking medical treatment in the ER as victims of violence (with staggering statistics on the number of African American males who are victims of gun violence)
- Discussed human trafficking and innovative partnership between the hospital/medical school and the law school for people seeking asylum
- Proposed new collaborative programming with emphasis on expansion of access to medical clinics, a center for sexual health with focus on LBGQT and educating tomorrow’s leaders
- Reminded participants that the University of Miami (medical, law, etc.) is a resource for the community
Paco Velez, President and CEO, Feeding South Florida

- Highlighted the core components of his organization: (1) providing immediate access to nutritious food; (2) providing a voice to the clients and the cause (including policy advocacy); and (3) transforming lives through education
- Noted “Feed, Lead, & Strengthen” collaboration with Kamalah Fletcher—raising awareness of how many families are going without adequate amounts of nutritious food in order to avoid homelessness
- Underscored the policy issue that results in individuals/families losing desperately needed assistance for food when their wages only increase slightly

Chuck Elsesser, Community Justice Project

- Commented that arguably race is the one common denominator in the poverty equation
- Highlighted lessons learned from displacement of the mostly black Overtown community
- Discussed the disproportionate number of black males pleading guilty to criminal charges without knowledge of collateral consequences to their rights to vote, access housing or education opportunities
- Proposed that the group prioritize programming that requires those charged to be made aware of such consequences before they can enter a plea
- Flagged the issue of housing for ex-offenders, and proposed advocacy to combat policies that push offenders out of housing

Bobbie Ibarra, Executive Director, Miami Coalition for the Homeless

- Framed the desperate housing situation by providing statistics on the high cost of living in Miami-Dade and across the state
- Underscored the critical importance of affordable housing
- Proposed that the group focus on designing new affordable housing models that feature mix-use buildings, community gardens, etc.

Dr. Ned Murray, Associate Director, Metropolitan Center at Florida International University

- Underscored the critical importance of addressing fragmentation in programs and services
- Highlighted the need to address both affordability and accessibility of housing, noting that data shows that 140,000 renters in Miami-Dade are severely cost burdened (paying 50% of income for housing)—with 300,000 individuals living in a financially stressful housing situation.
• FIU study on economic development in the black community had more to do with political structure and leadership—and the fragmentation of government—than with the people.
• Noted the impact of the community’s low wage service sector (50% of local workers)