# BUILDING COMMUNITY PROSPERITY IN MIAMI-DADE

*Civic Engagement, Dialogue & Action*

**Dr. Anita Cava**
Business Law Department,
University of Miami School of Business &
Co-Director, University of Miami Ethics Programs



**Dr. Kenneth W. Goodman**
Co-Director, University of Miami Ethics Programs

*Dr. Anita Cava, Associate Professor of Business Law at the University of Miami's School of Business Administration and Co-Director of University of Miami Ethics Programs, received her J.D. from New York University School of Law, where she was a Hays Fellow. Cava teaches courses and is widely published in the areas of business ethics, legal and ethical aspects of healthcare administration, and employment issues including women's rights and sexual harassment.*

*Kenneth W. Goodman, Ph.D., is Co-Director of the University of Miami's Ethics Programs and is founder and Director of its Bioethics Program and its Pan American Bioethics Initiative. He has published several books, the most recent about ethics and evidence-based medicine for Cambridge University Press. His articles on bioethics, the philosophy of science, and computing have appeared in the Chicago Tribune, Miami Herald, New York Times and South Florida Sun-Sentinel.*

**Linking the "Gown" with the "Town" in Creating Community Prosperity**
For more than a decade, the University of Miami Ethics Programs have been actively involved in efforts to increase understanding and raise the level of ethics and integrity in business, government and the professions. Research, symposia, seminars, student internships and community dialogue have all been used to stimulate and foster an environment in which discussion of these issues can flourish. In our view, the conversation matters and, from it, real change can emerge.

For reasons made clear throughout this volume, real change needs to occur in our region, but it cannot happen without the assistance and participation of a business community that embraces both sound business practices and sound business ethics. These principles are not complicated or difficult, but rather are relatively simple: respect others, recognize the dignity and worth of each individual, create more good than harm in daily decisions and understand that success is not measured in the moment but in the long-term reputation of a business, its employees and its policies.

While these principles may be easily enumerated, their application can pose exciting challenges.

Translating these ethical principles into a business environment requires a willingness to think critically about long-accepted norms. Achieving the lofty goal espoused in the Community Prosperity Initiative of creating "an economy and a community that works for all" will also require meaningful collaboration. The UM Ethics Programs are proud to be a partner is this effort and stand ready to play our part in forging a strategy that blends effective business decision-making with business ethics principles to yield a new formula for a "principled bottom line" in Miami-Dade.

To start the conversation we regard as essential for any change, we should consider some basic business ethics questions. For example, how does a company express its "bottom line?" While traditional accountants might simply add up the numbers, recent scandals nationally underscore the need for a much greater degree of accuracy, reliability and transparency in the figures than ever before. Going more deeply, business ethics may now also require an assessment of the well-being of those employed by the firm. Is a fair wage being paid? Is the environment a safe one in which to work? Is the atmosphere free of racial and sexual hostility so that all can work to their best potential? These are simple questions but they raise critical issues that reflect the changing nature of the work environment in South Florida and throughout the country.

In addition to concern for employees, the business maxim, "Make a profit today," is currently viewed by many as being extremely shortsighted and problematic when the profit comes at a huge cost to the surrounding neighborhood and community. The notion of creating "good" does not simply mean a positive figure on the bottom line. It also requires meeting standards of respect, dignity, honor, trust and integrity for stakeholders within and external to the company. We would not need government regulations on discrimination, pollution, accounting and worker health/safety if businesses would embrace these standards on their bottom line. Similarly, we would not have to lobby for a "living wage" if we would each begin to assess "how much is enough" for any one employee. Business ethics challenges us to review our assumptions. The questions posed here are not exhaustive, but they offer plenty of opportunity for further conversation.

"The project should be seen as an opportunity to think critically and creatively, to foster educational tools and forums, and to encourage and reward those who ask difficult questions and are willing to accept difficult responsibilities."

Phase One of the Greater Miami Prosperity Campaign enlisted the aid of employers to provide information to their low-wage employees about the Earned Income Tax Credit and Food Stamps. Several authors in this volume describe the enormous success of this effort and the fact that it created a "Win-Win-Win" result for the employees, their employers and the greater community – with little or no cost to the business sector. Now we are moving to the next level. It is one that recognizes that doing the right thing might cost something in dollars today, but that the effort is worth making because it will yield enormous tangible and intangible returns – economic sustainability and self-respect and dignity – tomorrow.

Efforts to advance community prosperity do not constitute an opportunity for facile moralizing, as if "doing the right thing" were as easy to accomplish as it is to say. Neither is it a mission to smite evildoers or heap scorn on embracers of any of a variety of moral shorthands and shortcuts. Instead, the project should be seen as an opportunity to think critically and creatively, to foster educational tools and forums, and to encourage and reward those who ask difficult questions and are willing to accept difficult responsibilities.

Business, professional and government ethics asks us to consider the value of our individual and collective reputations in our homes, our workplaces and our greater community. We in Miami-Dade, both downtown and in gown, are being asked now to look ahead and consider our community's reputation and the value of a prosperous citizenry a decade from now. The free flow and high quality of intellectual discourse, research and education will be critical in finding the way from an unhappy here to a prosperous there. University of Miami Ethics Programs are pleased and proud to collaborate on and facilitate these efforts.