

# **Love and Respect for Self and Community**

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## **Struggles for Justice in Three Miami-Dade Neighborhoods**



## Acknowledgements

This book is the result of a year-long project conducted in three Miami-Dade neighborhoods, Overtown, Little Havana, and Homestead/Florida City. FIU Labor Center Researchers and local community organizers worked together to shape the project in each area, beginning with the understanding that low-income people often face particular environmental challenges in their neighborhoods and must struggle to define and bring attention to these challenges. Community organization members and neighborhood residents were asked to photograph 1. Things they like and want to keep in their neighborhoods, and 2. Things they don't like and want to change in their neighborhoods. With funding from the Dade Community Foundation and the assistance of David Zalben, photographer and artist with the Art Center South Florida, participants were instructed in the basics of photography, and then given simple film cameras. These works were exhibited at community spaces in each neighborhood and at Florida International University. The results exceeded our expectations, and we hope you enjoy the images of dignity, history, action, hope, while also contemplating the neglect and struggle for recognition. We invite you to see these neighborhoods through the eyes of community members.

– *Emily Eisenhauer*

## Some words for a beginning

These neighborhoods may not be in existence for the people who live there very soon. So I think it is a good thing to let the people who live there now tell *their* stories about their struggles for justice and against injustice, and not someone else. So that in the near future whether things turn out good or bad for them, at least there will be documentation from them to be compared with the outcome.

I wonder whose fault it is when the needs and concerns of people are not heard or met. People who live in the Greatest Country on Earth. Whose constitution states “a government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth.” We live in a democracy and that means we can change our situation and that of others, but the only way you can do that is from the heart. John F. Kennedy said “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” You have to be a patriot from the heart because this is a country of people, not things.

So in these neighborhoods, I wonder why do we continue to remodel, tear down, add too, and subtract from them to the detriment of their economy and their people? I think we need to preserve, respect and understand the people and things that came before us. And to remember that we’re all in the same boat.

Reginald C. Munnings  
Overtown Resident



# I. Overtown



## *The First Low Income Housing in Overtown*

**Reginald C. Munnings**

I took this photo because it's still standing. I used to live in one of these first low-income housing. They were called shot gun houses. Workforce housing is what they were. They were once everywhere in Overtown. It is a historical site. It reminds me of the days of reservation and segregation. Some people think that only the American Indians are on reservations, but not so. Black people were too. I think we should keep this shack, restore it and preserve it for people to see.



## **The Light Plant**

**Joann Love**

This is our light plant around the corner. I took this picture to show what we have in our community. Probably it's owned by FPL, and we need electricity, but I've heard someone say it's dangerous. I'm not sure why.



## **Our Neighborhood**

**Joann Love**

This is on 3rd Ave., around the corner from PowerU. It's a neighborhood with houses, apartments, stores, wash-houses, shoe shiners, hard working people and retired people. It's a community and I think it should stay. I used to stay right down the street. It was alright but I couldn't afford the rent. Now I pay \$395 and this ain't nothing but a room. They won't fix anything, for example when the strong winds come I have to push the window back in. It's hard, especially on a fixed income. They all want to sell the property to developers.



## Gone Forever

### Reginald C. Munnings

I took this photo because it reminds me of so much of what is going on in my community with public housing and low-income housing. It represents something we should keep, preserved, and restore. This destruction is something I do not like to see. The last occupant had to move while all else around him is being destroyed.

#### TOWNERS

This represents to me everything that is happening right now, all around us. Will we sit and wait? This is not something that I want to see going on in Overtown, sitting and waiting. LET'S JOIN THE FIGHT WITH OTHERS WHO ARE FIGHTING FOR US.





## **Constructing Over Community**

**Jabril Ivory**

This is a painting on a warehouse next to a bus garage and an overpass. It's the Wizard of Oz, which shows that a lot of people cannot afford condos and too much construction is being built right on top of us, crushing the Overtown community until there's nothing left. The people of Overtown can't afford expensive condos. I would like to see a change—the overpass cuts off parts of Overtown and splits the community.



## Empty Lots of Promises

### Reginald C. Munnings

I took this photo because on this lot there was once a community of perhaps hundreds of people living, working, playing, and supporting their families. In this community there was entertainment by well known actors of their day. Very famous people performed and stayed on this lot. The Rockland palace was one of a few places that provided a place for them to come.

This lot has been vacant for over 20 years or more. Everything on it— the homes, the businesses, the entertainment centers, the hotels and restaurants, the stores, the rooming houses, the apartments buildings, family and friends homes. All removed by a law they, the City of Miami, called Eminent Domain. Why, I do not know, only the City knows. The City has promised to build on the lot something for the community. Twenty -something years or more has passed by and the only thing they can think of is a 17 story condo with amenities for the very well-to-do. There was mixed income people on this lot before, but none to the tune of what the city calls affordable. Not then and not now. What this vacant lot represents to me is public property, for the current public use. It belongs to the community of Overtown and the Towners, and should be used for that purpose.



## **More Lack of Respect for a Community**

### **Reginald C. Munnings**

I took this photo because those apartments were destroyed even though a mini police department station was present on its compound. The residents complained of the smell of gas which was coming from a gas main that working repairmen hit and broke, and then ran off. No one saw to the residents' complaints while the smell of gas was present. There was an explosion and four children and several adults were badly burned. No repairs were made to the complex as of yet. I feel these types of things should and could have been prevented. This represents something that should not happen in NO ONE'S community.



## **My Cousin's Ice Cream Truck**

**Bea Gilbert**

This is my cousin's ice cream truck. They painted that themselves; they're artists.



## **Overtown at Day**

**Joann Love**

This is the daughter of one of the Power U members and her friend. I took this picture to show the neighborhood is still vibrant, with people walking through. People make things seem like it's a ghost town, but there's people living here. The young people are very involved in Power U and it's good—we need to get young people involved and thinking different, instead of getting involved in violence



## **Brothers Trying to Do Something**

**Bea Gilbert**

"They're entrepreneurs from Overtown – they have a Metro PCS Store. They started out doing DJ work... brothers trying to do something. People say people in Overtown don't do anything and it's not true."



## **Another Dirty Treatment of My Community**

**Reginald C. Munnings**

I took this photo because it made me mad the way my community is neglected over and over again. This represents a lack of respect and concern for Overtown and it's people. Period. The post in this picture has been that way for over 3 years.

Since I took this picture and showed it to several people, the post has been recently replaced.



## **Two Sides of the Truth Equals Three**

**Trevae Brown**

This shows both sides of Malcolm X. His “dark” side, which is shown in the corner when he had a more violent/aggressive approach to segregation. Then it shows him after he joined the Nation of Islam when he had a more realistic view of segregation. This picture also shows an assassin who is about to kill someone for the government. But mentally, the government has already killed him, signified by the hole in his temple. I like this because it shows facts about the past in different ways. It also gives people the opportunity to express different views of history.





## **Shoe Man, Mr. Lovell**

### **Reginald C. Munnings**

I took this photo because I have seen this man all my life in my community doing what he do, repairing, shining shoes, perhaps making shoes. I remember he had a shop alongside a drug store for a very long time, until it was replaced by the metro rail, which is exactly where he is standing in this photo. His new shop is down the street to the right of the car in the photo. It's there to this day, and he's still doing his thing. This represents to me the love and respect for self and community.



## **Purvis Young Mural**

**Bea Gilbert**

"This is our library. I like the mural. I don't know what I like about it...it's weird...it's motion. It's not somebody posing. It seems like movement. It is like Overtown. Everyone's the same, but they're different."



## **Future Fighters**

### **James**

Not only are these our future fighters, but they're supporting the ARTS of Overtown with their discipline!!!



## Youth Taking Action

### Devoniar Turner

I've been involved in Power U for two years, and I like it—the emotional part, the rallies and actions. We chant and all the people come... it's like a family. I took this picture because I feel like people in the world really do not listen to the youth's word. What we're going through right now with the school board, trying to get a Restorative Justice program. They're not listening to us. But we're fighting.



## **Boarded Up Housing That Could Be Lived In**

**Joann Love**

Part of this public housing complex is boarded up so nobody can live in it. But people need housing. Power U did an action where we went in and cleaned up one of the vacant units and moved someone in. They were a homeless person that couldn't get housing. But the police came and moved them out. They said nobody was allowed to live there. That was six months ago and the units are still vacant.



## **A Change Must Come**

**Reginald C. Munnings**

I took this picture because change is important and should be to every one of us. These businesses were given a makeover by the City of Miami—stakeholders they call them. What about the people of this community? The people have been in the community just as long or longer than the businesses. If the law says that possession is nine-tenths of the law then are Towners are not stakeholders too, and are entitled to the same representation?



## **Our New Kids**

### **Reginald C. Munnings**

I took this photo because it represents who we are today, and what we should be. In my mind, we are united and should be always. Towners.





## II. Little Havana



### Familia

#### Escarlet

Esta foto es cerca de la bahía por el parque Jose Martí. Me gustó como el abuelo carga a su nieta y sobre todo me pareció lindo que son una familia a pesar de tener diferencias.

This photo is close to Jose Mari Park along the bay. I like the way the grandfather carries his granddaughter and above all i thought it was nice that they are a family despite their differences.



## **Fútbol**

### **Betty**

Esta foto es de unos jóvenes que en su tiempo libre van a jugar football en un parque de la Pequeña Habana. Me llamó la atención de ver un parque descuidado, sucio, y ser un país tan rico. Este parque está cerca de una clínica médica.

This photo is of some young men who go to play soccer in a park in Little Havana in their free time. It struck me that the park is so uncared for, dirty, and in this country which is so rich. The soccer field is next to a medical clinic.



## Jugar

**Elizabeth**

Yo tomé la foto para demostrar que los niños nunca deben jugar en la basura porque eso es peligroso. El mensaje es para los encargados de mantener la ciudad limpia. ¿Por qué evitan estos lugares?

I took this picture to show that children should never play in the trash because it's dangerous. The message is for those in charge of maintaining the city clean but they forget these areas.

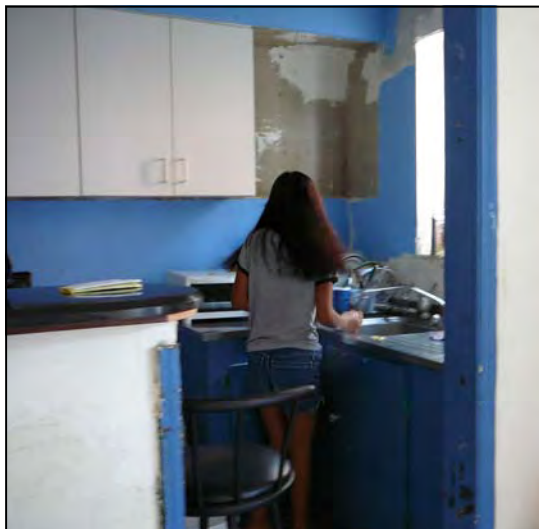


## **Casa Abandonada**

### **Maria**

Como está deteriorada y abandonada la casa porque no pueden pagarla. Da mal aspecto al barrio. Hay mucha pobreza, el alquiler es muy caro. Necesitamos trabajo para salir adelante y vivir mejor. Pero me gustaron los colores, me pareció bonito. Me encantan las cosas de colores vivos. Pienso algún día en tener una casa. No pierdo la esperanza.

This house is run down because no one can pay to fix it. It's a blight on the neighborhood. There is a lot of poverty, and renting is very expensive. We need work in order to get ahead and live better. But I like the colors because they're pretty. I like bright colors. I want to have a house someday; I don't give up the hope.



## **Hija**

### **Betty**

Esta foto fue tomada en la cocina de Laura, una compañera de escuela. En la foto está su hija. El motivo que me llevo a mi tomar esta foto, es que al parecer el dueño del apartamento no lo arregla, y se veía que la cocina estaba a punto de caérseles encima.

This photo was taken in Laura's kitchen, one of my classmates. It's her daughter. I took it because it appears the owner of the apartment does not fix anything and you can see the kitchen is just about to fall in on itself.



## **Vendedora**

### **Betty**

Esta es una foto de una señora vendiendo comida enfrente del Orange Bowl. Yo tomé esta foto, porque me parece interesante que en los Estados Unidos haya ventas en la calle, y esto se ve sólo en los países nuestros. Aquí en los Estados Unidos está peor que en nuestros países.

This is a photo of a woman selling food in front of the Orange Bowl. I took it because it's interesting to me that in the U.S. they sell things on the street. This is something you only see in our countries, but here in the U.S. it's worse than where we come from.



## **Auto shop**

### **Maria**

Yo tomé esta foto porque es diferente, y muestra lo escrito por la gente que no cuida su ciudad y no respeta la propiedad ajena. Creo que es de las Maras.

I took this picture because it's different and it shows how people write on walls. Some people don't care about their city and don't respect private property. It was probably a gang.



## **Diversión**

### **Escarlet**

Esta foto la tome en el parque de la SW 8 Ave y 3 Calle. Me gusta como mi hijo se divierte deslizándose, y cómo se divierten él y su compañero.

I took this photo at the park on SW 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. I like how my son has fun descending down the colored slide, and how he and his friend are really having fun.





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## **Old Folks Home**

Odelinda



## Árbol

Odelinda

Esta foto es una celebración del árbol en nuestro edificio y del trabajo arduo de nuestros vecinos, que trabajamos pavimentando nuestro estacionamiento, que se ve también en la foto. La foto muestra el orgullo que sentimos del trabajo que realizamos para mejorar nuestra comunidad.

This picture celebrates the wonderful tree at our building and the hard work residents put into paving the parking lot which is also seen in the photo. This picture shows the pride we feel from the effort we make to improve our housing complex.



## **Progreso**

### **Humberto**

Las buenas obras públicas producen algo espléndido y de gran utilidad, y la sabiduría es un árbol que siempre da frutos.

Good public works produce splendid and things of great need. Human wisdom is a tree that always gives us fruit.



## **Globo**

### **Tomasa**

El hombre construyó ese globo con su inteligencia. El hombre sabio tiene potencia, el hombre de ciencia aumenta su fuerza.

Man constructed this globe through his intelligence. The wise man has power, the man of science grows in strength.



### **III. Homestead & Florida City**



#### ***Embellecimiento de Homestead #2 – Ornamentales (The Beautification of Homestead #2 – Ornamentals)***

**Juan De León**

Esta es una photo de una palma y una aronía. Se ven en muchos lugares en Homestead. Yo trabajo donde salieron las plantas. Los vendemos en distintos lugares para que se miran los lugares bonitos por las plantas.

This is a photo of a palm and a chokeberry. You see them like this in many places in Homestead. I work where these plants came from. We sell them to different places so that those places can look beautiful.



## **La Modernidad (Modernity)**

### **Juan Cahuec Bolvito**

En Guatemala trabajamos en el campo pero no conocemos los tractores. En Estados Unidos aprendemos nuevas cosas, cosas más modernas. Era experiencia nueva para mí, manejar tractores.

In Guatemala we work in the fields but we are not familiar with tractors. In the United States we learn new things, more modern things. It was a new experience for me, driving a tractor.





## **Noche Buenas (Poinsettias)**

**Magdalena Medina**

Me gustan los colores vivos de la naturaleza. Cuando tome esta foto estaba en el trabajo duro con muchas personas para que lleguen a la comunidad y pueden disfrutar de la belleza de sus colores. Esta planta representa al igual en mi país México la belleza de la Navidad. Me gustan la diversidad de culturas y gente y el progreso de la ciudad.

I like the bright colors of nature. When I took this photo we were working hard so that the plants could get to the community to enjoy the beauty of their colors. This plant represents the beauty of Christmas in my country, Mexico, as well. I like the diversity of cultures and people and the progress of this city.



## **La Inocencia (Innocence)**

**Susana Pozos**

Tomé esta foto porque me gustó la cara de inocencia de estas niñas. Me gustaría que instalaran más parquecitos con juegos para niños pequeños.

I took this photo because I like the faces of innocence on these girls. It would be nice if they would create more small parks with playgrounds for small children.



## ***Nuestro Trabajo (Our Work)***

**Andrés Jiménez**

Tomé estas fotos viendo como los hispanos inmigrantes trabajamos en este país y no se nos reconoce este esfuerzo dándonos una amnistía.

Me gustaría que en Homestead arreglaran las vías peatonales ya que en la actualidad ofrecen mucho peligro a los transeúntes.

I took these photos to show how Hispanic immigrants work in this country, yet they don't recognize this effort and give us amnesty.

I would like it if Homestead would fix the sidewalks because in reality it's quite dangerous for pedestrians.



***Del Nacimiento a la Muerte de los Mayas de  
Homestead  
(From Birth to Death in the Life of Mayans in  
Homestead)***

**Miguel Diego**

He tomado una idea basada en mostrar los campos de siembra tropical y las frutas santuosas. Representa la forma tradicional de la vida maya— que nacen, crecen, reproducen y mueren. Son seres vivos. La vida humana es como los vegetales que producimos. Pero los campesinos desposeídos, los pueblanos de Homestead son tratados inhumanamente aunque historicamente la tierra pertenecía a los americanos y hay que respetarlos. Todos los pueblos de Homestead no pueden mantener silencio sobre esta injusticia.

I had an idea based in showing the fields of tropical cultivation and sacred fruits. This represents the traditional form of Mayan life – birth, growth, reproduction, and death. They are living things. Human life is like the vegetables we grow. But the dispossessed farmers, the residents of Homestead, are treated inhumanely although historically the land belonged to the Native Americans and they ought to be respected. The people of Homestead cannot keep silent about this injustice.



## La Virgen de Guadalupe

**Brenda Narvaez**

Tomé esta foto porque quería que el mundo sepa que los Estados Unidos es multicultural. Mi pensamiento era que la Virgen de Guadalupe es de México y en los Estados Unidos había una foto de ella. Representa mi religión católica y me da gusto saber que le rinden mucho honor aquí. Es algo que debe seguir en Homestead.

I took this photo because I would like for the world to know that the United States is multicultural. My thought was that the Virgin of Guadalupe is from Mexico and there are also photos of her in the United States. This represents my Catholic religion and I like knowing that they honor her a lot here. It is something that should continue in Homestead.

## Auto Retrato (Self-Portrait)

Pedro Mejía Guzmán

Nuestro compañero Pedro Mejía Guzmán falleció en un accidente automovilístico en el mes de noviembre de 2007. Trabajador, padre de familia, maya de habla Ixil, dejó su esposa e hijos en su nativo Guatemala. Como tantos otros seres humanos que forman la gran masa de proletarios transnacionales en nuestro país y en nuestro Homestead, fue obligado, por la falta de oportunidades en su país, a buscar la vida lejos de sus seres queridos. Aquí encontró un poco de familia haciendo causa común con los compañeros de WeCount!. Cuando falleció, trabajaba en una nursería local. Como tantos otros trabajadores indocumentados, se arriesgaba la vida para ganarse el pan de cada día y mandar algo a su familia. Sin transporte público para llegar a las nurserías en los Redlands, sin posibilidad de tener una licencia de conducir, pagaba a un compañero de trabajo para que le “raiteara”. El compañero, un joven guatemalteco sin licencia de conducir, perdió control de su vehículo en la lluvia una tarde cuando regresaban del trabajo a su renta en Homestead, y los dos fallecieron. Pedro Mejía Guzmán, que descansa en paz.



Our friend Pedro Mejía Guzmán passed away in an automobile accident in November of 2007. Worker, father of a family, Maya who spoke Ixil, he left behind his wife and sons in his native Guatemala. Like many other human beings who form the great masses of the transnational proletariat in our country and in our Homestead, he was forced, by the lack of opportunities in his country, to seek a life far from his loved ones. Here he found a little bit of family working for a common cause with the members of WeCount! When he passed away, he was working in a local plant nursery. Like many other undocumented workers he risked his life to earn his daily bread and send something to his family. Without public transportation to get to work at the nurseries in the Redlands, without the possibility of having a driver's license, he paid a coworker to give him a ride. The coworker, a young Guatemalan without a driver's license, lost control of the vehicle in the rain one evening when they were coming back from work to Homestead, and both died. Pedro Mejía Guzmán, rest in peace.<sup>46</sup>





***Embellecimiento de Homestead #1 –  
Los Trabajadores  
(The Beautification of Homestead #1 – the  
Workers)***

**Juan De León**

Tomé la foto trabajando en este lugar donde supe muchas cosas, cosas que son beneficios como agricultor. Me gusta el trabajo porque ahí crecen plantas mejores que la gente necesita y que le gustan por distintos adornos.

I took this photo while working at this place where I have learned many things, useful things for a farmer. I like the work because we grow high quality plants that people need and like to use for decorating.



## **Cuidemos lo Verde (Let's Take Care of Nature)**

**Serafín Durán**

Esta fotografía fue tomada para que el que tenga la oportunidad de intervenir o el poder de hacer algo en favor de la naturaleza intervenga lo más pronto posible, pues claramente se observa el descuido total de nuestros canales de agua los cuales estan a más no poder con la basura. Urge intervención a favor de conservar la naturaleza.

This photograph was taken so that whoever has the opportunity to intervene or the power to do something good for nature should intervene as soon as possible. Clearly we can see the total disregard of our canals which almost can't hold any more garbage. I urge solutions that will conserve nature.





## **Homestead Television**

### **Elna Miclisse**

Mwen kwè se yon bon bagay pou nou genyen stasyon televizyon pa nou nan Homestead. Mwen tande stasyon radyo anpil, mwen kwè genyen chanèl televizyon kapab fè nou aprann de miltikitrèl kominote nou genyen nan Homestead.

I think it is a good thing to have our own local television station in Homestead. I listen to the local radio stations a lot, and I think having a television channel can stimulate learning about the multicultural community we have in Homestead.



## **Mi Camarada (My Comrade)**

### **Juan Cahuec Bolvito**

Es una foto de un amigo – un camarada – de mi pueblo. Es tranquilo el muchacho, y es un lugar bonito en frente de los tanques que guardan materiales.

This is a photo of a friend, a comrade, from my town. He's a quiet guy, and this is a pretty spot in front of the storage tanks.



## **Debò Nan Homestead (Two Sides of Homestead)**

### **Dieula Cardotte**

#### **Top**

This is my burgundy van in front of my friend's house. After work I like to go to my friend's house to hang out. He doesn't live too far away but his neighborhood is nicer. The vegetation is flourishing and the houses are nicer. His friend has beans, mangos, and avocados in his yard.

#### **Bottom**

This is my apartment complex. My house is not as nice as my friend's but I like my apartment. It has three bedrooms and like the most people in his complex, we have cable. Out of the 16 units in the building, two of the apartments are resided by Haitians and the rest are Hispanic. We get along, no problem.



## **Autoretrato con Sopladora (Self-Portrait with Blower)**

**Francisco De León**

La tomé esta foto porque me gustó el lugar donde trabajé con mi sopladora, o “blower.” El lago es bonito, y me gusta dejar las casas y lugar limpia. Trabajo hace 14 meses en Homestead, Kendall, y Miami.

I took this photo because I liked this location where I worked with my blower. The lake is beautiful and I like to leave the houses and areas clean. I’ve worked at this for 14 months, in Homestead, Kendall, and Miami.



## ***Obrero (Worker)***

### **Julio Víctor Patá**

A pesar del trabajo fuerte el trabajador encuentra un momento para sonreír.

Despite how hard the work is, the worker finds a moment to smile.



## **Lekòl du Dimanch (Sunday School)**

**Rev. Marise A. Florvil**

Mwen te pwan foto sa pou youn kado pou legliz pou enfli-yans yo. Nou ede youn lòt epi nou genyen renmen e swen ka fe youn diferan.

I took this picture as a gift for our church for their leadership. By helping one another and showing love and compassion they make a difference.



## **La Naturaleza (Nature)**

### **Martín Abendaño**

Tomé esta foto porque me gusta complacer a los niños y sentir lo que ellos sienten también, como se relacionan con los animales. Estaba pensando que como ser humano tengo que valorar lo que vale la naturaleza y al ser humano. Lo que me gusta que permanezca en Homestead: los parques, y que construyan más, principalmente para proteger toda la naturaleza.

I took this photo because I like to be with my children and feel what they feel, such as how they relate to animals. I was thinking that as a human I have to value both nature and humans. I hope that the parks in Homestead remain forever, and that they create more, especially to protect all of nature.



## **Jardinero Realizando Su Sueño (A Gardener Realizes His Dream)**

**Mariano Paz**

Me gusta el trabajo que realizo. Tengo una compañía y hacemos esculturas como esta por jardines. Deseo en Homestead que hubiera más jardines y más parques para disfrutar más de la naturaleza.

I love the work I do. I have a company and we make garden sculptures like this one. I wish that in Homestead there were more gardens and more parks so that people can enjoy nature.





## **NanVwazinaj Mwen (My Neighborhood)**

**Bernadette Gilles**

[Anlè] Mwen renmen kay sa paske li genyen tout bèl pyebwa say yo. Se la tout travayè habite nan vwazinaj mwen. Kay yo trò piti e chemen sa pa ranje. Yo pa ka plenyen paske yo pè move bagay kapab pase.

[ABOVE] I like this house because of the beautiful trees. This is where most of the day laborers live in my neighborhood. The houses are too small and the roads are not fixed. But they can't complain because they fear the consequences.

[Anba] Sa-se vwazinaj mwen. Pweske chak swè ou wè yo avek fanmi yo ak rejwi ansanm kisa yo genyen. Pawfa wala anpil bri.

[BELOW] This is my neighborhood. Almost every night you see people with their families enjoying what they have, and sometimes it's quite noisy.



## **Vergüenza 1 (Shame 1)**

## **Vergüenza 2 (Shame 2)**

**Lucia M. Quiej de la Cruz**

Estas fotos representan la miseria en que viven estas familias, y la niña se tapó la cara porque le da vergüenza vivir en ese estado. Me gustaría que una entidad gubernamental supervisara el estado de estos apartamentos.

These photos represent the misery that these families live in, and the girl is covering her face because she is ashamed to be living in this state. I would like it if the government would monitor the state of these apartments.



## **Anvironman (Environment)**

### **Nelicia Humes**

Sa pa byen nan kominote nou. Tou jou genyen tòchonnen ici, e vil la pa vini pou netwaye sèlman si ou rele epi plenyen. Moun vini deyò-la epi yo jete pil fatra, e kon moun nan konstwi-la. Si ou pa genyen youn ken kote pou jete bagay ou, ou bezwen peye yon lot-moun pou jete bagay-la. Konstwi sa bezwen mete youn notis, men yo bezwen konprann moun yo pi bon. Nou bezwen youn anviwèman pi bon epi youn kominote pi bon.

This is not appropriate in our community. There is always trash here, and the city doesn't come to pick it up unless you call and complain. Sometimes people come from outside and dump trash, and sometimes it's people in the building. If you have no where to get rid of your stuff you have to pay someone to get rid of it, so people dump it. The building office should put up a notice, but they need to get to know the people better. We need a better environment and better community.



## **Buenas Noches, Homestead (Good Evening, Homestead)**

**Serafín Durán**

Tomé esta fotografía creo que en el momento justo cuando el sol se ocultaba dando una impresionante vista, que al mismo tiempo te pone a reflexionar o meditar lo hermoso que es vivir en esta tierra bendita por Dios.

I took this picture I think in the moment just when the sun was going beyond the horizon, making an impressive scene. That's the time when you reflect or meditate on the beauty that it is to live on this earth blessed by God.



## **Labor Ardua de Manos Hispanas (The Hard Work of Hispanic Hands)**

**Serafín Durán**

Es una clara imagen de las actividades que realizan los trabajadores aun bajo cualquier inclemencia del tiempo, pues hay familia detras de cada uno de nosotros que debemos de mantener, siempre con la idea de que se superen en un futuro y no tengan que sufrir lo que uno padece.

This gives a clear picture of the activities that workers do in all kinds of weather. There are families behind each one of us that we have to maintain, always with the idea that the future will be better and they will not have to suffer what we have.



## **Kay Mwen (My House)**

**Claire Cange**

**Claire has been in the United States for 27 years. She took this picture because she loves her neighborhood (Florida City). It's calm and people have recently been taking care of the neighborhood by repairing the roads and yards. She is proud of her house. It has plenty of vegetation in her yard: coconuts, flowers, beans, avocados, and mangos. She does not own her home, but she rents it for a fair rate. She has lived in her home for the past 6 months and in this neighborhood for 14 months. She has seven children and worked to bring all of them to the United States. When they entered the country, all of her children worked in the fields. Her children purchased the car for her. She was hurt from a fall at her job, and does not work anymore.**

*Notes from the FIU Exhibit*

## ***Past, Present, and Future in Overtown***

Overtown means many different things to different people. Outsiders often perceive it as dangerous and blighted. To city officials it represents space for new downtown residential development. To current and former residents it is a once glorious cultural mecca, the Harlem of the South, where show-shine boys could catch a glimpse of Ella Fitzgerald or Mohammed Ali who would stay in Overtown guest houses for Miami performance4s during the days of segregation. For some it is just the last place to find affordable rent.

Although it is one of the founding neighborhoods of the city, being a historically Black neighborhood has meant a constant struggle for recognition and respect. Lack of investment from the very beginning led to deteriorating conditions and after the cultural heyday the city decided to clear out the “slum” by routing the new interstate directly through Overtown, destroying some 20,000 homes and displacing many more thousands of people. In these photos the boarded up units, vacant lots, and deliberate destruction of housing show the forces that continue to cause population decline.

Overtown shares the environmental challenges of other inner city low-income neighborhoods – poor air quality, toxic industrial facilities, lead paint in the buildings. Since Power U came on the scene in 2000 they have fought for clean up of the cement plant emissions, sound barriers for the highway, and to stop the city from dumping toxic sediment from the dredging of the Miami river. But as these fights were being won, residents



were being displaced by the forces of gentrification – low income apartments, which typically only offered month to month leases, were being torn down and residents evicted. The lands were being sold to developers and now, more expensive units being built.

The members of Power U who participated in this project are long-time residents who enjoy being active in the community. These photos show their frustrations and also their sources of pride – arts, activism, history, local businesses, and the youth. This struggle for the future is personal but also very public. All eyes are on Overtown. Will Overtown residents have a say in determining the future of their neighborhood?

## ***At Home Away From Home in Little Havana***

Little Havana continues to be a gateway for people arriving from Latin America. While it is still home to many long-time Cuban residents the more recently arrived residents come from Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Most come from towns much smaller than metropolitan Miami, and in Little Havana they find a familiar culture and sense of community that helps in the adjustment to the new urban environment. Grocery stores within walking distance that carry familiar items, playgrounds and schools for children, and homes with familiar architectural styles provide some comfort to the homesick.

Residents' concerns about their new neighborhood reflect typical urban problems—safety, cleanliness, green space, recreational opportunities for children, and the fear of being displaced again by rising rents and gentrification. Residents of mobile home parks are particularly vulnerable to this displacement as park owners sell the land and evict tenants. The irony is that even as abandoned houses are a common eyesore in Little Havana and a safety concern for residents, many families live in sub-standard apartments and dream of owning homes.

Another major concern is jobs, as many residents have been employed in construction and are now out of work with the downturn in the construction boom. Jobs with Justice has begun organizing residents to fight for benefits for the local community from the redevelopment of the Orange Bowl, jobs that pay well and offer benefits, training and apprenticeship programs, and using small and local contractors.

One of my favorite tributes to Little Havana came from a resident who viewed the photos at the exhibit we held at the Jobs with Justice office. She came to Miami from Central America and has lived in different parts of the city, but feels most at home in Little Havana. She said that when she walks on the street and greets strangers (in other neighborhoods people do not greet each other) she knows that they too are missing friends and loved ones who are far away in the home country, and that provides some comfort. What can we learn from people who can recognize their own suffering in that of strangers? Can we also learn to value a sense of community?

## ***Work and Family in Homestead and Florida City***

Homestead and Florida City lie 30 miles southwest of Miami, and have long played an important role in Florida agriculture. The last decade has brought rapid growth and suburbanization, and those who made a living from agriculture, both growers and workers, are having to adjust. Asked to photograph their neighborhood “environments” the members of WeCount!, mostly Central American and Haitian immigrants, produced striking images of dignity, struggle, and hope. These photos were exhibited at ArtSouth in Homestead in February 2008.

Some of the most compelling images are those of work. As construction workers, plant nursery workers and landscapers the members of WeCount! play a role in shaping the South Dade environment in a way that is seldom recognized by mainstream society. One of my favorite moments in this project came when Juan de Leon was presenting his images to the group. He had taken a whole series of self-portraits in various locations around Homestead, in front of stores, churches, and parks. As we looked through the images, he pointed out the ornamental palms and shrubs that were like those that came from the nursery he worked at. The narration changed everything. What had been just a picture of a man standing in a well-manicured landscape became a picture of a man next to his handiwork. Juan was able to drive around Homestead and see examples of his work everywhere. That these workers contrib-

ute to the beauty of our surroundings is something most of us hardly consider—we seldom notice the decorative palms and shrubs in our shopping centers and neighborhoods, but we would miss them if they weren't there. They are a defining characteristic of a well-kept, well-to-do area, and it is an irony that many of the neighborhoods where WeCount! members live do not have decorative landscaping.

The contrast that we see between the well-manicured Homestead, maintained by people like Juan, and the neighborhoods where Juan and other WeCount! members live is a comment not just on the immigrant experience, but on the worker experience, and on the experience of anyone who's work is unnoticed until it is gone. The images in this exhibition remind us to take a second look at the world we take for granted, and to ask ourselves, what would it look like without these people?

