



The Melissa Institute  
For Violence Prevention and Treatment

**2014 Report to the Community**

**END THE SILENCE. END THE VIOLENCE.**





### **A Mass Killing Every Two Weeks**

About every two weeks in the United States, four or more people (not including the killer) die in a mass killing. As frequent as they are, however, mass killings make up only about 1 percent of the roughly 15,000 people murdered in this nation each year.

— *USA Today*

## END THE SILENCE. END THE VIOLENCE.

There's a machine whose purpose is to propel pellets of lead into living flesh.

There are other machines. They project violent images onto screens. Children can watch or interact with these images and become desensitized. The young and impressionable may believe that the shooting machines are toys, and that the people whose lives they destroy are not important.

There are more machines. Some allow us to vote for our leaders. Some deliver news and information. Some help us communicate.

We have easy access to guns and a culture that romanticizes violence. We have the means to share knowledge and resources to make our neighborhoods and our nation safer. If we need a reminder of how urgent it is to do this, we need only two words: Sandy Hook. Or two other words: Naval Yard.

The tragedy in the Washington, D.C., Naval Yard is only the most recent of its kind, nine months after the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. For some, violence like this is becoming the norm. Already many of us are numbed into inaction.

But not all of us.

For 17 years, The Melissa Institute has been on a mission to find the causes of violence and develop real-life strategies to prevent it. We've turned a microscope on bullying. We've explored the link between literacy and violence. And we've implemented programs that address these problems. Our world-class professionals use their expertise to address violence prevention from many angles: suicide prevention, parent training, literacy and bullying education and prevention, public policymaking and advocacy. And through our innovative websites, we provide educators, school administrators and parents with tools and information to help them make a difference.

In the aftermath of tragedies like Sandy Hook and the Naval Yard, we know that it is appropriate to observe more than a moment of reflective silence. But after the silence, we need to produce a deafening roar that rails against such acts and against policies and cultural influences that help fuel them. That roar needs to be heard in houses of power and followed by action. The lives of our children should be our only special interest.

The Institute exists for this purpose. Your support helps us end the silence and end the violence.



# South Floridians Strongly Support Gun Restrictions

The shootings of Sandy Hook school children and teachers in Newtown, Conn., last year not only horrified the nation, they galvanized The Melissa Institute into action. At an emergency meeting, the Board of Directors named a task force to come up with an action plan to prevent gun violence. The Institute's prestigious Scientific Board weighed in with a variety of ideas, and the plan was distilled into actionable policy.

The thrust of the plan was to communicate the necessity for better laws that would keep guns out of the hands of criminals through background checks for all gun sales; a federal ban on assault weapons and large ammunition clips; and increased funding for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to inspect gun dealers, so

## South Floridians' opinions on requiring background checks for all gun purchases\*



\*Percentages totaling less than 100% reflect those who said they don't know.

that current regulations are enforced and illegal gun sales reduced.

The policy statement was communicated via direct mail, letters to the editor and congressmen, and social media. The Institute's Facebook page frequently reaches more than 50,000 people each week, and more than 2 million of the posts have been read. (If you are not a Facebook follower, it is easy and free to sign up. Just go to *Facebook.com*.)

In addition, the Institute works with other organizations aimed at stemming gun violence, including the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence; Gabby Giffords' Americans for Responsible Solutions; One Million Moms; and Mayors Against Illegal Guns (see related story). The Institute participates in a gun violence round table formed by Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez and School Superintendent Alberto Carvalho to address specific community issues.

The Institute also commissioned a survey of South Floridians on gun attitudes. The independent research discovered that an overwhelming majority of residents in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties support background checks for all gun purchases as well as registration of guns. Ninety percent of the tri-county area residents are very much in favor of background checks, while 86 percent are very much in favor of requiring gun owners to register their guns.

"The survey points to the tremendous groundswell in South Florida, as across the nation, for action to help prevent another Sandy Hook,"



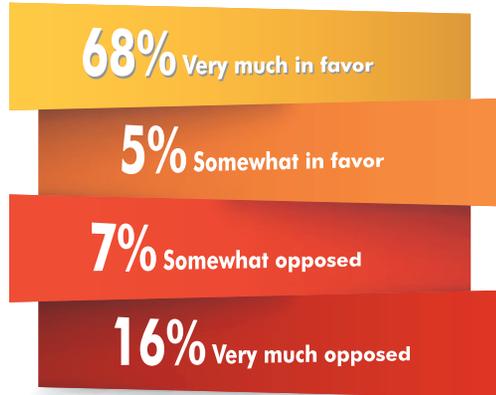
Jessica Aptman lost her sister Melissa to gun violence in 1995, when Melissa was murdered in a St. Louis carjacking. Last February, Jessica joined a group of victims' families from Newtown, Conn., and Aurora and Columbine, Colo., in Washington, D.C., to lobby for background checks on all gun sales. She told a sympathetic First Lady Michelle Obama that she was Sasha's age when she lost her sister, and she hoped the President and Congress would act to reduce the toll of gun violence.

said Lynn Aptman, president of The Melissa Institute. "We must not let Congress' inaction be the final word. We must continue to let our government leaders know that we cannot accept the status quo."

She noted that there was strong support from

Republicans, Democrats and independents, and surprising support from members of the National Rifle Association. “Nearly three-fourths of South Florida NRA members say they very much favor background checks on gun sales, and another 14 percent favor them somewhat,” Ms. Aptman said.

**South Floridians’ opinions on reinstating the ban on semi-auto and automatic weapons\***



“Even a majority of NRA members (52 percent) strongly favor requiring registration of guns.” The statistically valid survey was co-sponsored by the University of Miami’s Community & Educational Well-being Research Center. It was conducted in March by Insights, Inc., a Stuart, Fla., research company.

The survey also demonstrated strong support for reinstating the ban on semi-automatic and automatic weapons and for limiting ammunition magazines to 10 rounds, with two-thirds in favor

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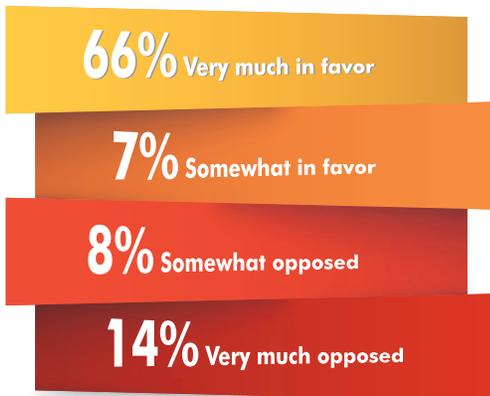


Carlee Soto, front, and Jillian Soto, sisters of slain teacher Victoria Soto, embrace during a June ceremony on the six-month anniversary honoring the 20 children and six adults gunned down at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., in December, 2012. Townspeople held a moment of silence for the victims of the massacre at a remembrance event that doubled as a call to action on gun control, with the reading of names of thousands of victims of gun violence. (AP Photo/Jessica Hill)

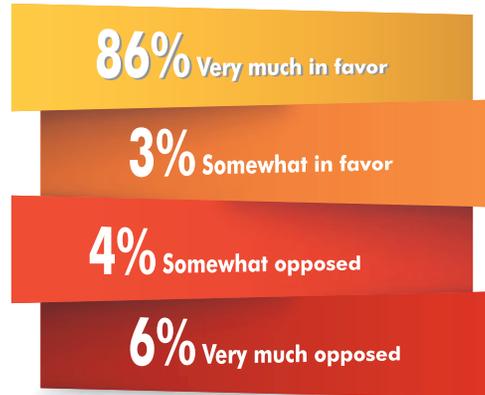
of those proposals. NRA members were less likely than the population as a whole to favor reinstating the ban on automatic weapons (42 percent were very much in favor), and limiting ammunition magazines (31 percent in favor).

Twenty-six percent of South Floridians said the Sandy Hook school shootings had changed their opinion about gun legislation, and this was equally true of people of all political persuasions. “People said the Sandy Hook school shootings made them want stricter gun controls,” Ms. Aptman said. “This is a huge change in our society’s outlook about guns. We need to listen to the majority of citizens who support gun legislation. Eighteen percent of South Floridians say they or someone in their household owns a firearm. Nationally, less

**South Floridians’ opinions on limiting ammunition magazines to 10 rounds\***



**South Floridians’ opinions on requiring registration of guns\***



than 2 percent of the population are NRA members. The NRA wields an undue influence on our government leaders. Our elected officials have to start listening to their constituents, not the NRA.”

Some 18 percent of the population said someone in their household owns at least one type of firearm, with a handgun the most prevalent type. Most (63 percent) said they owned a gun for protection, with hunting and target shooting other top reasons for owning a gun.

The survey was conducted in March of 600 residents in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties over the age of 18. It has a margin of error of +/- 4 percent. The Miami Herald and WLRN Radio reported on the results of the survey, which were similar to results in national polls conducted by the Pew Research Center and Quinnipiac University.

\*Percentages totaling less than 100% reflect those who said they don't know.

## “No More Names” Action Summit



On July 19, 2013 — seven months after the shootings in Newtown, Conn. — The Melissa Institute partnered with Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIG) as sponsors of the “No More Names” Action Summit to Prevent Gun Violence. More than 50 community stakeholders attended the summit at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Miami.

Institute President Emeritus Suzanne L. Keeley, Ph.D., welcomed attendees. Linda Vaughn, MAIG’s regional director, outlined her organization’s goals to require background checks for all gun purchases, keep military-style weapons and high-capacity weapons off the streets and pass federal legislation against gun trafficking. To counter the inaction of our lawmakers in Washington, D.C., MAIG launched an ambitious 100-day, 25-state “No More Names” bus tour. Participants stood in front of the offices of various members of Congress and read the names of 5,000-plus Americans murdered with guns since Newtown.

At the Miami summit, Miami-Dade Public School Police Chief Ian Moffett discussed goals for the development of a gun violence curriculum for students, and the need to expand crisis intervention training.



Miami-Dade School Police Chief Ian Moffett discussed plans to increase school safety.



Eduardo Lombard, head of the Miami Beach Coalition for a Drug-Free Community, Pinecrest Mayor Cindy Lerner (center) and Melissa Institute Vice President Karyn Cunningham were among community leaders attending the summit.

You can help The Melissa Institute and MAIG end the silence and end the violence. Visit our website, [melissainstitute.org](http://melissainstitute.org) and make a donation, and go to [demandaction.org](http://demandaction.org) and sign MAIG’s petition to demand that Congress take action.

# Teaching Kids to Be 'Upstanders'



Children cheer for an end to bullying.

Despite the amount of attention bullying has received in recent years, it remains a serious problem. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2007 nearly a third of students age 12 to 18 reported having been bullied in school, some almost daily. The damaging effects can last a lifetime.

Bullying starts in elementary school and peaks in middle school. That's why a focus of The Melissa Institute's bullying prevention efforts is geared to elementary school students. This year, at the Institute's 10th Youth Conference on Bullying Prevention, 120 fourth and fifth graders from 12 Miami-Dade schools shared how it feels to be a witness or a target of bullying. The children wrote poems, songs and cheers about ways to become "upstanders" rather than just bystanders when they see someone being bullied.

"Through our research, we've learned that in 57 percent of cases where a witness to a bullying incident intervenes on behalf of the victimized child, the bullying stops within 10 seconds," said Trish Ramsay, the Institute's Education Director. Ms. Ramsay conducted the bullying prevention conference along with Palmetto Elementary counselor Julie Astuto.



Palmetto Elementary School counselor Julie Astuto advises students working on empathy maps. Ms. Astuto has helped organize the student conference on bullying for 10 years.



Students wrote and performed a rap song about bullying.

Gulliver School's 111 fifth graders also participated in an anti-bullying program conducted by Debra Pepler, Ph.D., a member of The Melissa Institute's Scientific Board who is co-director of Canada's national bullying prevention initiative. Afterwards, 97 percent of the students said they would be more likely to avoid bullying others in the future, and 90 percent said they would be more likely to intervene if they saw someone being bullied.

The Institute also gave presentations on bullying prevention to parents, teachers, university students and family court attorneys throughout the year.



Creative posters encourage peace and the end of bullying.



Teresita Roman teaches language arts to her kindergarten class in a new program called Extended Foreign Language, which is 60 percent English and 40 percent Spanish.

## Video lessons aid teachers

Using the talents of Dale Willows, Ph.D., a member of the National Reading Panel and the Institute's Scientific Board, The Melissa Institute created a website with more than 500 video lessons for teachers to help them teach reading. The Institute's emphasis on literacy is because of illiteracy's link to crime: 85 percent of juvenile offenders cannot read.

More than 1,000 teachers subscribe to the free website, [www.readingteacher.net](http://www.readingteacher.net), and 25,000 teachers visit the website annually. In addition to videos, teachers can get ideas from free lesson plans and virtual tours of classrooms. New material is added to the site frequently.

"I love using the website," said Teresita Roman, who teaches kindergarten at Royal Green Elementary. "I know I can always get a good idea for the different things I want to do. It has been a valuable resource during the past couple of years. I recommend it!"

# Carvalho: “Too Many Funerals”



Miami-Dade School Superintendent Alberto Carvalho gave the keynote address at the Institute’s 17th annual conference in May. “I’ve been to too many funerals of students,” the school chief told the crowd, noting that most were killed by guns. “I’ve seen too much pain of crying parents who have lost their child.”

He thanked The Melissa Institute for its work to reduce violence and encourage literacy. “The people who profit from building prisons know they can forecast the need for beds for future prison inmates by looking at third grade proficiency results in reading and writing,” Mr. Carvalho said. “They know it is unlikely that the child who can’t read and write at grade three will catch up and be able to graduate (and get a job). We must do better.”

About 175 teachers, school counselors, social workers, mental health workers and law enforcement personnel attended the conference, which focused on ways to ameliorate stressful early life

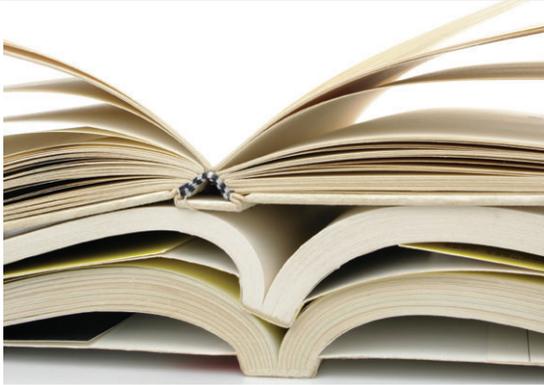
experiences of at-risk children. Conference faculty included Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D., the Institute’s Scientific Director, and Annette La Greca, Ph.D., Guerda Nicolas, Ph.D., Isaac Prilleltensky, Ph.D., and Wendy Silverman, Ph.D.



School Superintendent Carvalho: “We must do better.”

Left to right: Dr. Frank DeLaurier, Melissa Institute executive director; Dr. Suzanne L. Keeley, president emeritus; Julia da Silva, recipient of the Community Service Award; Dr. Donald Meichenbaum, conference director; Dr. Annette La Greca, presenter; Lynn Aptman, Melissa Institute president; Dr. Michael Aptman, board member.





### Research focuses on aggressive youth

The Melissa Institute awards scholarships to doctoral students who are conducting research relating to violence. The Institute has partnered with the Belfer Family Foundation to create a permanent endowment for the Belfer-Aptman Scholars Award. This year, the \$2,000 award went to Sara L. Stromeier, who is studying at the University of Alabama. Her research is focused on factors that contribute to aggressive behavior in youths ages 11-14.

### Community Service Award

To honor her service of 16 years at the helm of The Melissa Institute, the Board created the “Suzanne L. Keeley, Ph.D., Community Service Award.” Dr. Keeley, now President Emeritus of The Melissa Institute, presented the first Community Service Award to Julia da Silva at the May conference. Ms. Da Silva is director of the American Psychological Association’s Violence Prevention Office, and she developed the ACT — Raising Safe Kids Program in 2000. The program is offered in almost 100 sites in the United States and in five countries. The award recognizes Ms. Da Silva’s “dedicated service to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge.”



Julia da Silva, Director, APA Violence Prevention Office, and Dr. Suzanne L. Keeley, President Emeritus

### Teaching Parents Positive Discipline

Good parenting isn’t instinctive; we learn to be good parents, often by the examples our own parents set. Conversely, we can also mimic bad parenting behaviors that we experienced when we were small. To help parents learn positive parenting skills, The Melissa Institute’s Trish Ramsay serves as the Southeast Regional Director for ACT (Adults and Children Together) Raising Safe Kids. ACT is a research-based violence prevention program that teaches parents to cope with anger, provide positive discipline without harsh punishment and monitor their children’s exposure to violence in the media.



Studies show that the younger the parent, the more ill-equipped emotionally the person is to cope with the demands of parenting. Teenagers are particularly unprepared to be parents, because of their own immaturity. For the past two summers, Ms. Ramsay was invited by the Memphis, Tenn., school system to train social workers and psychologists as ACT facilitators. This year, these Memphis ACT facilitators worked with 371 pregnant teens and 25 male partners.

ACT programs are also offered in Key Largo, Homestead, Orlando and Puerto Rico. Next year, ACT programs will serve parents in Overtown, Miami Gardens and Coconut Grove.

# Peace, Harmony and Moonlight

More than 200 people schmoozed with old friends, made new friends and bought 164 silent auction items at The Melissa Institute's annual fundraiser in March. The setting for Peace, Harmony and Moonlight was the gorgeous Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. Guests enjoyed moonlight tram tours of the garden, followed by delicious hors d'oeuvres and dinner.

Grace Carricarte again chaired the silent auction, and her committee obtained a vast array of items including trips, jewelry, Miami Heat tickets and wine baskets. Honorary co-chairs of the evening were Ken O'Keefe, Jason Stephens and Board member Karyn Cunningham. Altogether, the event raised nearly \$60,000 for Institute programs.

You won't want to miss next year's Peace, Harmony and Moonlight. It will be Thursday, March 13, at Fairchild.



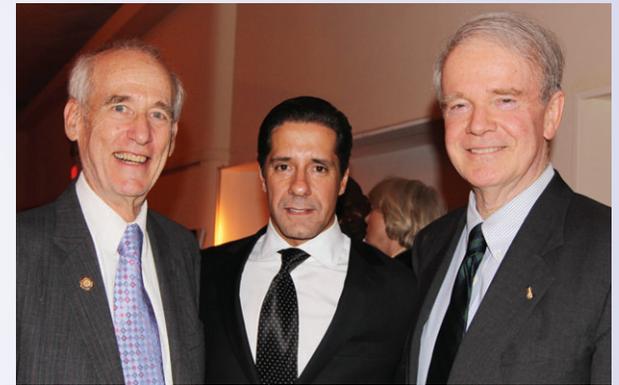
Honorary co-chairs Kenneth O'Keefe and Karen Cunningham  
(Not pictured, Jason Stephens)



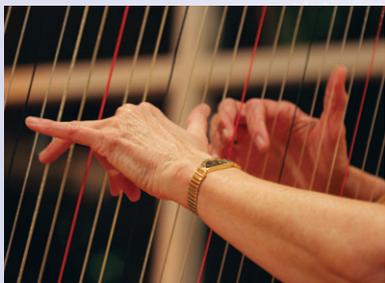
Board member Kenneth and Dr. Barbara Bloom



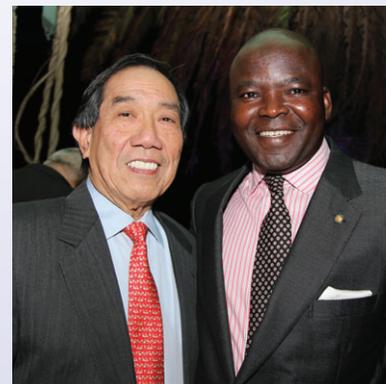
Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sally Heyman and Assistant Public Defender Marie Osborne



Dr. Michael Aptman, Alberto Carvalho and Brian E. Keeley



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## OUR VOLUNTEER BOARDS

Without the participation, expertise and leadership of our volunteer boards, the Institute could not accomplish its goals. These include the Board of Directors, Scientific Board and Honorary Board.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dedicated individuals who volunteer their time to oversee the operation of the Institute, assist with fundraising, plan projects and represent the organization at community events.

**Lynn Aptman, M.Ed.**, President of the Institute, Melissa's mother and one of the founders of The Melissa Institute.

**Michael Aptman, M.D.**, neurologist, Melissa's father and one of the founders of The Melissa Institute.

**Jo Baxter, MBA**, former Baptist Health South Florida marketing and public relations executive.

**Kenneth M. Bloom, Esq.**, Attorney-at-Law, Bloom & Minsker, P.L.

**Grace L. Carricarte, M.S. Ed.**, Executive Director of the Ganley Foundation and a Licensed Mental Health Counselor.

**Penn B. Chabrow, Esq.**, Attorney-at-Law.

**Karyn I. Cunningham, B.A.**, Vice President of the Institute, Government and Community Engagement Specialist, United Teachers of Dade.

**Lisa M. Goldberg, Esq.**, Secretary of the Institute, Office of General Counsel, Internal Revenue Service.

**Remi J. Kajogbola, MBA**, healthcare consultant, Objective Health, a McKinsey & Company Unit for Healthcare Providers.

**Suzanne L. Keeley, Ph.D.**, President Emeritus of the Institute, a founder of

The Melissa Institute, and a psychologist in private practice with extensive clinical experience in treating victims and perpetrators of violence.

**Philipp N. Ludwig, M.S., MBA**, Treasurer of the Institute, Vice President, Baptist Health Medical Group.

**Darian J. Martin, Esq.**, City of Miami Gardens, Legislative Aide to the Mayor.

**Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D.**, Research Director of the Institute, a founder of The Melissa Institute, a clinical psychologist, and a Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo, Ontario.

**Lisette M. Perez-Lima, Ph.D.**, Interim Director, Institute for Individual & Family Counseling, University of Miami, School of Education and Human Development.

**Marguerite Snyder, Esq.**, attorney, Weil Quaranta McGovern, P.A.

**Javier F. Vilasuso, M.D.**, Vice President of Miami Pain Specialists.

**Atlee W. Wampler III, Esq.**, attorney, Former President, Wampler Buchanan Walker Chabrow Banciella & Stanley, P.A., former U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Florida.

## SCIENTIFIC BOARD

This board comprises international experts in the areas of violence prevention and treatment of victims.

**Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.**, is Associate Dean for Research, Director of the Dunspaugh-Dalton Community and Educational Well-Being Research Center and an Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Miami. The recipient of various recognitions for academic excellence, his scholarship focuses on positive

development of ethnic minority and immigrant youth, domestic violence, and social justice-oriented clinical practices. His publications include the books *Advancing Social Justice Through Clinical Practice* (Routledge) and *Programs for Men Who Batter: Intervention and Prevention Strategies in a Diverse Society* (Civic Research Institute with Fernando Mederos, Ed.D.).

**Wendy Craig, Ph.D.**, is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at Queen's University in Ontario. She has published widely on the topics of bullying and victimization, peer processes, sexual harassment and aggression in girls, and was editor of a volume on childhood social development. She is an author and co-editor of *Understanding and Addressing Bullying: An International Perspective*. Together with Dr. Debra Pepler, Dr. Craig leads PREVNet (Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network), a Networks of Centres of Excellence — New Initiative.

**Jim Larson, Ph.D., NCSP**, is Professor Emeritus of Psychology and former Director of the School Psychology Training Program at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater. He has more than 35 years' experience in the study and treatment of anger-related behaviors in children and youth. He also has extensive experience in the area of parent management training, and is the co-author of *Parent to Parent: A Video-augmented Training Program for the Prevention of Aggressive Behavior in Young Children* and co-author of *Helping School Children Cope with Anger: A Cognitive-behavioral Intervention*, 2nd. Ed. His most recent book is *Think First: Addressing Aggressive Behavior in Secondary Schools*.

**Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D.**, is Research Director of The Melissa Institute and Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. He has served as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the School of Education at the University of Miami. He is one of the founders of cognitive behavior therapy. North American clinicians voted Dr. Meichenbaum "one of the 10 most influential psychotherapists of the 20th century." He has published extensively and his most recent book is *Roadmap to Resilience*. Other books include *Treatment of Individuals with Anger-control Problems* and *Aggressive Behavior; Treating Adults with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder; Nurturing Independent Learners* and *Stress Inoculation Training*.

**Dr. Guerda Nicolas, Ph.D.**, is Chairperson of the Educational and Psychological Studies department and Associate Professor at the University of Miami, School of Education and Affiliated Faculty with ISPRC. She obtained her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from Boston University. She has published several articles and book chapters and delivered numerous presentations at national and international conferences in the areas of women issues, depression and intervention among Haitians, social support networks of ethnic minorities, and spirituality. Her most recent book is *Social Networks and the Mental Health of Haitian Immigrants*, published by Caribbean Studies Press.

**Clifford R. O'Donnell, Ph.D.**, is Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Founding Director of the Community and Culture Psychology Graduate Program at the University of Hawaii. He is past President of the Society for

Community Research and Action (APA Division 27) and has published on topics such as delinquency prevention, school violence, firearm deaths among children and youth, cultural-community psychology, and education and employment in community psychology. His most recent work is a theoretical integration of community and cultural psychology and a 35-year follow-up of a youth mentoring program. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Intermountain Centers for Human Development.

**Debra J. Pepler, Ph.D., C. Psych.,** is Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology at York University, Toronto, Ontario, and co-director of Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet), Canada's national initiative for bullying prevention. Dr. Pepler is an internationally recognized expert on bullying and childhood aggression and an authority on school-based interventions. She is an author and co-editor of *Understanding and Addressing Bullying: An International Perspective*. She was honored with the Contribution to Knowledge award from the Psychology Foundation of Canada.

**Isaac Prilleltensky, Ph.D.,** is Dean of the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami. Prior to that he was Director of the Doctoral Program in Community Research and Action at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. Dr. Prilleltensky is concerned with value-based ways of promoting personal, relational and collective well-being. He is the author, co-author or co-editor of several books, including *Community Psychology: In Pursuit of Liberation and Well-Being*, *Doing Psychology Critically*, *Critical Psychology*, *Promoting Family Wellness and*

*Preventing Child Maltreatment*, and *The Morals and Politics of Psychology*. The book *Promoting Well-Being: Linking Personal, Organizational, and Community Change* was co-authored with his wife, Dr. Ora Prilleltensky.

**Wendy K. Silverman, Ph.D., ABPP,** is the Messer Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology and Director of the Messer Anxiety Disorders Program in the Yale Child Study Center at Yale University School of Medicine. Dr. Silverman's research on developing and evaluating evidence-based assessment and treatment procedures for children with anxiety disorders has been funded for the past two decades by the National Institute of Mental Health, including a mid-career award. She has published extensively in the area of childhood anxiety disorders, including five books. She is Co-Editor of *Clinical Psychology Review* and past Editor of *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, Associate Editor of *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, and President of the Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology.

**Ron Slaby, Ph.D.,** is a developmental psychologist, research scientist and educator who serves as a Senior Scientist at both the Education Development Center and the Center on Media and Child Health at Harvard University and Boston College. He has helped to shape national and global strategies for preventing youth violence and bullying. Known for introducing a "bystander strategy" into the field of bullying prevention, Dr. Slaby has coauthored the CDC's first national plan for preventing violence in America; the World Health Organization's global program for preventing violence in schools; the American Psychological Association's *National Reports on Violence and*

*Youth; Early Violence Prevention: Tools for Teachers of Young Children*; an evidence-based program for middle school students, *Aggressors, Victims & Bystanders*; and a multimedia bullying prevention program, *Eyes on Bullying: Preventing Bullying in the Lives of Children*.

**Dale Willows, Ph.D.,** is a Professor in the Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She is also a registered psychologist. Dr. Willows has devoted herself to implementing change in early literacy education through in-service professional development for primary grade teachers and school administrators. She is the only international member of the National Reading Panel, which was commissioned by the U.S. Congress, and was invited to attend The White House Assembly on Reading in 2001.

**Marleen Wong, LCSW, Ph.D.,** is Assistant Dean, Clinical Professor and Director of Field Education at the University of Southern California, School of Social Work. She is a U.S. Department of Education (DOE) consultant who assists schools impacted by violence and disaster. She helped develop and evaluate Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) for children exposed to trauma. She co-authored *Psychological First Aid for Students and Teachers: Listen, Protect, Connect*, which is available on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. DOE websites. Dr. Wong was recently appointed to the National Advisory Council of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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## Our Support Will Help

My wife, Debi, and I have supported The Melissa Institute since its founding. Initially, our support grew out of our love for and fond memories of Melissa, a friend throughout our years together at Washington University.

While those motivating factors remain in place today — and will forever — they are strengthened by our sense of awe at what the Institute has accomplished since its founding. Unfortunately, they are also buttressed by our distress about the acts of violence that we read or hear about nearly every day.

We believe firmly that our support for The Melissa Institute will help future generations make better and more informed choices about preventing violence. And, just as important, we believe that our support will help to treat the victims. The birth of our own two children — the second of whom is named, in part, in memory of Melissa — has only reinforced these feelings.

I remember when, not long after Melissa's passing, I was asked to prepare an emotional impact statement describing the toll that her death had taken on me. I can think of no stronger statement to make today than to proudly support The Melissa Institute.

Sincerely,  
Josh Rednik

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The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The Institute was established by Melissa Aptman's family and friends a year after her death. Our continuing efforts reflect the belief that each of us has the power to effect change and that we must work together for the betterment of our society.



Melissa Aptman

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**The Institute's mission is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge.**



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