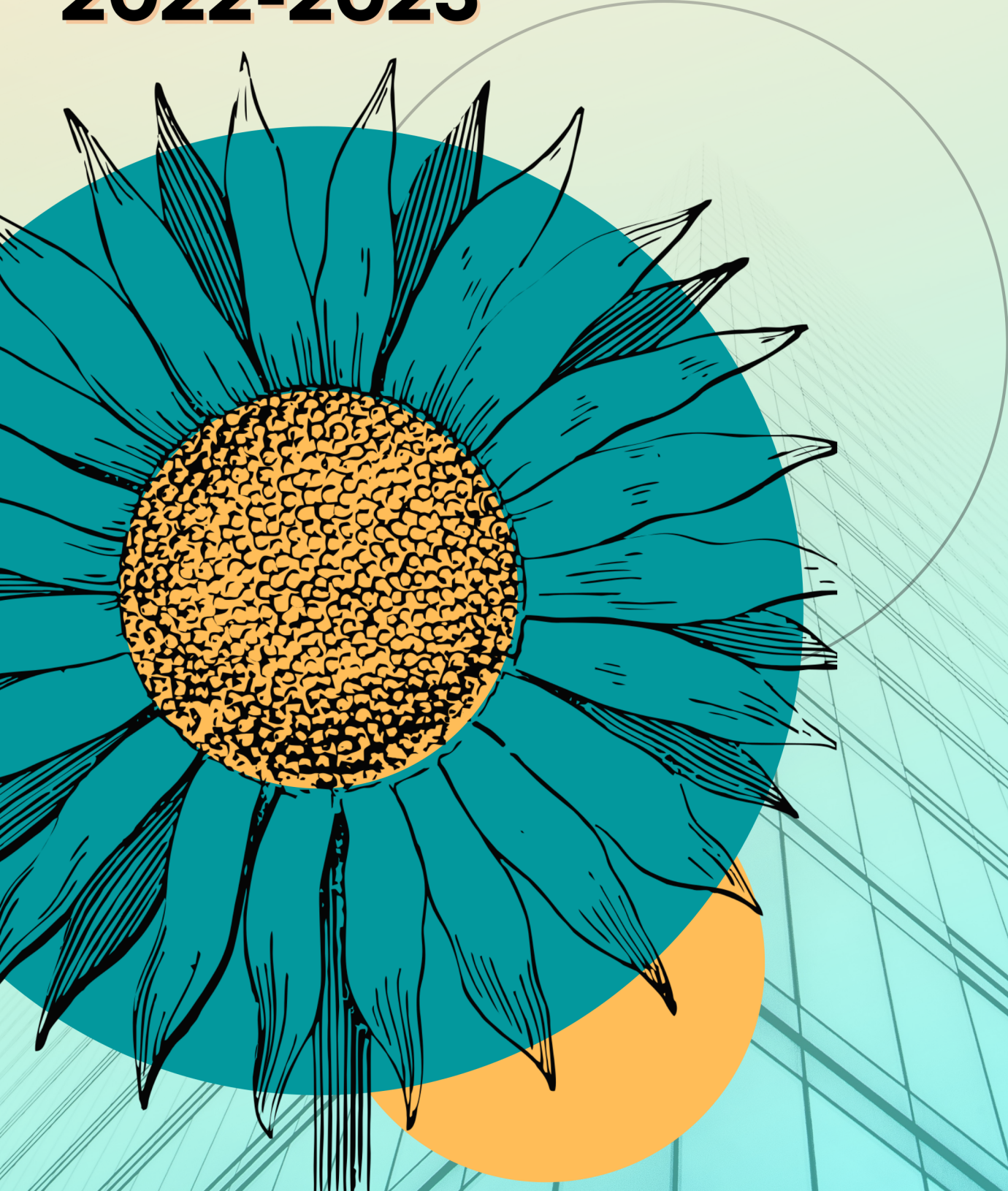




**THE MELISSA INSTITUTE**  
FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

# Reaching New Heights Through Collaboration

## REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2022-2023



# Dear Friends,



We proudly reflect on another successful year of reaching new heights. The Melissa Institute's accomplishments have made our homes, schools and communities safer and healthier. We are grateful to our supporters who have stayed connected despite the challenges we all have faced.

For 26 years, The Melissa Institute has been a trusted source of scientific knowledge on violence prevention, safe communities and mental health worldwide. Today, more than 55,000 people and countless agencies from over 125 countries have benefited from the Institute's educational resources and its trainings. Over the past year, the Institute was asked to share its wealth of information on violence prevention and treatment with multiple organizations, including the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Department of Justice, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Miami-Dade Mayor's Office and Miami-Dade County Public Schools, among many, many others. In May, our 26th annual conference on Safety, Mental Health and Healing During Uncertain Times had over 290 registered participants from four continents.

All of this has been possible only because of you and the many other supporters of the Institute. This report gives you an idea of the breadth and depth of the Institute's efforts in Florida, nationally and globally. We have been blessed to be able to offer trainings and scholarly contributions by many of our esteemed Scientific Board members. Their leadership, expertise and commitment to the Institute's mission has kept us at the forefront in the use of science for the prevention of violence and treatment of its victims.

As you have heard us say over the years, "VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE." However, we can succeed only with your financial support. Please be a part of the solution and support us now by donating using the QR code below or by visiting the Institute's website, [www.melissainstitute.org](http://www.melissainstitute.org), where you can learn more about our work and how to get involved. With your donation, you will be ensuring that the Institute will continue to be a vital resource for you, your loved ones, your community and society for years to come. Thank you in advance for your generous donation. Together we make a difference.

Be safe and well,

Lynn Aptman, M.Ed.  
Founder & President

Michael Aptman, M.D.  
Founder & Board Director

Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

To make a donation, please scan the QR code or visit our website at [melissainstitute.org/donate](http://melissainstitute.org/donate).





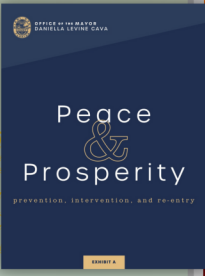
**Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D., Research Director for the Melissa Institute**

As The Melissa Institute’s Scientific Director for 26 years, I have been honored to lead the Institute’s educational and training efforts locally in South Florida, nationally and globally. The turn to virtual trainings brought forth by the COVID pandemic has allowed me to take the Institute’s mission and work to more organizations and mental health workers worldwide than ever before.

Over the past year, I had the pleasure of giving over two dozen Zoom lectures on Cognitive Behavior Therapy to approximately 3,000 psychotherapists in China and another series of 90-minute presentations on resilience to over 3,000 Chinese nationals. I also had the opportunity to train mental health professionals in Australia, Romania, Canada, the U.S. and England. The experience in England resulted in the creation of a “Legacy Course” and a website providing access to my decades-long work in therapy, resilience and violence prevention, among other things.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I made the book Roadmap to Resilience available for free on the internet to help people cope with extraordinary challenges to our lives. Since then, the book has been downloaded by over 40,000 visitors from 133 countries. During this time, I been fortunate to participate in several podcasts and webinars on ways to bolster resilience. My own resilience was tested when in April my beloved wife of 58 years, Marianne Meichenbaum, was killed in a traffic accident. She was a devoted mother and grandmother, an ardent supporter of the Melissa Institute and a beloved friend to many.

I am grateful to be able to partner with The Melissa Institute, to give my all to promote its mission and to help guide it to new heights. If you wish to learn more about my “Virtual Travels” or find out how to donate in honor of Marianne, please visit [melissainstitute.org](http://melissainstitute.org).



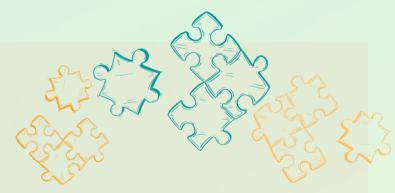
Executive Director Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D., and on-leave Scientific Board member Alexis Piquero, Ph.D., teamed up recently to serve as independent evaluators for the Year 1 of the Miami-Dade County’s Peace & Prosperity Plan, Mayor Daniella Levine Cava’s effort to prevent gun violence in the hardest-impacted communities across the County and create safer and more prosperous neighborhoods for all families.

In a historic move, \$90 million has been allocated specifically to grow and implement the plan over the course of 19 years. The initiative takes a strategic prevention, intervention and re-entry approach that encompasses the whole child, family and community. The Peace & Prosperity Plan aims to address the social and economic disparities at the root of gun violence. Also, as part of this plan Institute’s experts on trauma and trauma informed care practices will train credible messengers, natural helpers and others assisting youth in the most affected neighborhoods.

At The Melissa Institute, we are honored to serve as Official Advisers to Mayor Levine Cava in this important effort to make our communities safer now and for generations to come.



- P**revention including job creation, internships and apprenticeships, support for families, counseling and enrichment programs, and one-stop, comprehensive neighborhood service centers
- E**ntry programs for returning citizens that are focused on job training placement, supportive housing and counseling
- A**lternative programs for intervention including education, training, redirection, and treatment
- C**ommunity revitalization addressing neighborhood blight through remediation, beautification, and accelerating critical public works improvements
- E**conomic investments in housing commercial, and business development



Hospital-based Violence Intervention Summit at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Florida.



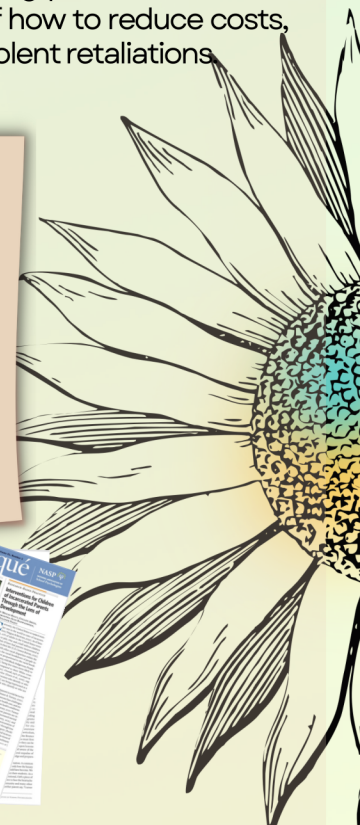
### **Wayne Rawlins**

TMI Board member Wayne Rawlins has been involved for years in developing and implementing research-based and community-focused violence prevention strategies. Along with his important work with Miami-Dade County's Group Violence Intervention initiative, Wayne recently led the charge to organize the Hospital-based Violence Intervention Summit at Jackson Memorial Hospital. Focused on educating law enforcement, clinical professionals and community-based organizations, the Summit gave participants the opportunity to explore ways of improving patient outcomes and community relations, as well as an understanding of how to reduce costs, emergency room visits, revictimization by firearms and violent retaliations.

### **Frank Zenere, Ed.S.**

As a school psychologist and District Coordinator of the Student Services Crisis Management Program for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Frank is well-known for his work as a trainer and crisis responder at state, national and international levels. In June 2022, Frank and his team were deployed to Uvalde, Texas, in response to the mass shooting that took the lives of 21 people, including 19 children. His article, "I Never Thought This Could Happen Here: A Reflection on Uvalde," was published in the September issue of the National Association of School Psychologist's publication entitled *Communique*. This eye-opening piece highlights the important yet gut-wrenching work that went into supporting students, parents and administrators at Robb Elementary School.

"This was my seventh response to a school shooting in our nation. A common denominator in all these tragedies is the loss of future. We not only lose the beauty of who these children are, we also lose the gift of who they would have become."



The Melissa Institute's toolkit for Preventing Violence & Promoting Safer Schools.



### **Michael A. Haggard**

Michael A. Haggard, TMI's newest Board Director, is a fervent advocate for victims of crime, who has dedicated his career to the pursuit of justice on behalf of his clients inside and outside of the courtroom and is continually lobbying for permanent solutions and change through local, state and federal legislation. His presentation at the ASIS/GSX 2022 Conference, "Gun Violence and Its Profound Effect on Corporate America from a Civil Liability Context," marks the 10th year he has been invited to speak on how security professionals can reduce violence on commercial properties. Along with the rest of the We are excited to have Michael in our team and look forward to collaborating with him to make our homes and communities safer for all.



### **Leena Augimeri, Ph.D.**

As Co-Founder of the Stop Now And Plan (SNAP®) Model and Director of SNAP® Headquarters at the Child Development Institute in Toronto, Dr. Leena Augimeri is celebrating 37 years of extraordinary efforts to improve efficiencies in child and youth mental health as well as crime prevention. The SNAP® Model has been implemented in over 160 Canadian Communities, and the SNAP® Youth Justice Program can be seen in action right here in Florida. To learn more about Dr. Augimeri's work, please visit our YouTube channel.





## **Sherry Hamby, Ph.D.**

During the summer, Scientific Board member Sherry Hamby, Ph.D., on behalf of The Melissa Institute, facilitated training for the Dallas County Coalition of Community Justice Agencies for its 22nd annual Probation, Parole and Pretrial Services Training and Recognition Program. Her virtual seminar, “The Resilience Promise: High Dosages of Strength Can Overcome Even High Burdens of Trauma,” enabled the more than 110 participants to understand how trauma-informed care applies within the judicial system. With a focus on evidence-based approaches and techniques, Dr. Hamby showed how to systematically build and sustain natural environments that promote well-being and recovery from trauma. Her work continues to remind all of us that trauma is everywhere -- but so is resiliency.



## **Pastor Charles L. Dinkins**

As a TMI Board Member and recognized community leader, Pastor Charles Dinkins has been on the forefront of gun violence prevention, advocacy and supporting underserved communities in South Florida for a long time. We congratulate Pastor Dinkins and his team at the Hosanna Community Foundation on being awarded the 2022 Family and Neighborhood Support Partnership Grant by The Children’s Trust. We are looking forward to collaborating further with Pastor Dinkins in this and future endeavors.



## **Alexis Piquero, Ph.D. (On Leave)**

Scientific Board member Alex Piquero, Ph.D., was recently tapped by President Biden to join the Department of Justice as Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Prior to his departure from TMI, he teamed up with Dr. Etiony Aldarondo to conduct the first-year evaluation of the Peace & Prosperity Plan for Miami-Dade County. Dr. Piquero is now on leave to take on this important role, and we are excited that he will be able to show how research-based approaches can support reform and sustainability for policies at the national level. We look forward to supporting his efforts to make communities across the nations safer and healthier.



SCAN ME

Scan QR code to learn more about where Dr. Piquero is now!



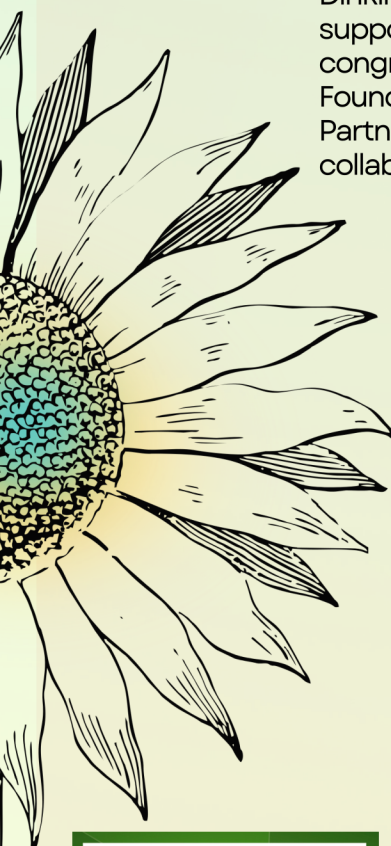
## **Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.**

Our Executive Director, Dr. Etiony Aldarondo, continues to lead the Institute’s efforts in reaching new heights through collaboration by connecting directly to members of Congress. Last spring, at the invitation of Futures Without Violence and the Bipartisan Working Group to End Domestic Violence, co-chaired by Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Young Kim (R-CA), Gwen Moore (D-WI) and Debbie Lesko (R-AZ), Dr. Aldarondo presented a research briefing on “Reinventing Interventions for People Who Use Intimate Partner Violence”. His talk on the effectiveness of interventions with abusive partners gave him the opportunity to share information with policy makers in Washington, DC and over 1,000 participants across the nation.

He closed his statement indicating that new analyses of the effectiveness of Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP) are in-line with what has been found over time from many BIP outcome program evaluations and quasi-experimental studies.



***The new research helps us appreciate the limitations of the earlier wave of meta-analyses and helps us construct a more accurate narrative about the effectiveness of BIPs. More importantly, it highlights innovative efforts taking place in the field to better respond to the multiple needs of abusive partners attending intervention programs and the positive impact of these efforts in preventing reassault.***



CONGRESSIONAL VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE

### REINVENTING INTERVENTIONS FOR ABUSIVE PARTNERS

**Speakers:**

Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D., The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention & Treatment



Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Melissa Institute. He is a clinical psychologist with over 20 years of experience in domestic violence research and advocacy, mental health services, community partnerships, and higher education administration. His academic trajectory includes appointments in the Family Violence Research Program at the University of New Hampshire, Harvard Medical School's Cambridge Hospital, the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic, Boston College, the University of Miami (UM), and Albion University. The recipient of various recognitions for educational excellence and community involvement, Dr. Aldarondo's scholarship focuses on the positive development of ethnicity and immigrant youth, domestic violence, and social justice-oriented clinical practices. His publications include the books *Advancing Social Justice through Clinical Practice* (Burlington, VT) and *Neuroscience, Health and Community Well-Being* (San Luis, Nueva Editorial Universitaria with Dr. Enrique Salazar and Mauro Muñoz).

The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment is a not-for-profit educational, research, and consulting organization that was established to honor the memory of Melissa Aptman, a Miami native who was murdered in May 1995. The mission of this Institute is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and the application of research-based knowledge.



To read Dr. Aldarondo's full research briefing, scan this QR code!

SCAN ME



# 26<sup>TH</sup> Annual May Conference

The Melissa Institute's 26th annual conference, "Safety, Mental Health and Healing During Uncertain Times," presented virtually in May, had over 290 registered participants from four continents.



## Did you know?

You can watch videos from our 26th Annual May Conference and other courses by visiting our YouTube channel here.

SCAN ME



*Creating a Safer and Healthier World: Lessons from Resiliency Research and Positive Youth Development*  
**Victoria Banyard, Ph.D. & Rev. Gena Jefferson, LCSW**

*Effective Treatment of Self-Harm in Youth: What Every Mental Health Professional Should Know and Do*  
**Daniel Santisteban, Ph.D.**

*Safety, Mental Health & Healing During Uncertain Times*  
**Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D.**

*Enhancing children's mental health services through technology: Crime-prevention programs for the digital era*  
**Leena Augimeri, Ph.D.**

*Innovations in Gun Violence Prevention: Be Part of the Solution*  
**Wayne Rawlins**

*Evidence-Based Strategies to reduce Stress and Anxiety in Youth During Uncertain Times*  
**Wendy Silverman, Ph.D.**

Among the topics presented was an innovative youth-centered violence prevention program, which was enthusiastically received. Speaker and Youth Leader Joe-Ann Mathias shared the following testimonial from her participation in the program as part of this report.

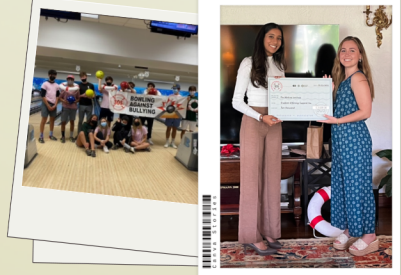
“If there is one lesson that I constantly remind myself, and the youth we work with, is to always remember that we have choices. A lot of times due to the impact of marginalization and oppressive systems, it can be very challenging for our communities to believe that you have options to begin with. JAIA reminds us that as long as you are breathing you have choices. Awareness of their choices allow youth to realign themselves with the experience they truly want to have. Youth, without the awareness of their strengths and their choices, are likely to succumb to marginalized thinking and trauma responses. Sometimes when we remind them that they have choices, they are surprised as if it isn't their birthright. After a while, youth begin to understand and correct themselves and make new choices without us having to coach them. That's how I know that the work we do here at JAIA is so intentional, that it can last forever with practice and patience with oneself.”





### **Commissioner Sally Heyman**

Commissioner Sally Heyman, of the District 4 seat of the Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners, has been a long-standing supporter of The Melissa Institute, as well as an advocate in the community. We wish her all the best in her retirement and honor all the valuable contributions she has made to violence and crime prevention in South Florida.



### **SOS 2022 Donation**

We would like to extend our gratitude to Students Offering Support (SOS) for a generous \$2,000 donation to The Melissa Institute. SOS has developed an amazing relationship with us, contributing annually to our mission with proceeds from its Bowling Against Bullying and other fundraising events. This year marks over \$25,000 made in contributions from SOS and truly serves as a testament to the organization's efforts in promoting safer communities and schools.

## **2022 Belfer-Aptman Scholarship Recipients**

Sponsored by the Belfer Family Foundation

### **Lea Marineau**

Jaquelyn Campbell, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, Adviser  
School of Social Work, Johns Hopkins University  
"Understanding Risk Factors, Including Substance Abuse, for Repeat Assault-Related Injury"



### **Melissa Renee Jenkins**

Cynthia Fraga Rizo, Ph.D., MSW, Adviser  
School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Sex-Trafficking Prevention Education for Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Promising Practices



### **Roxanna Shayesteh Ast**

Victoria Banyard, Ph.D., Adviser  
Rutgers University  
"Quality of Life Among LGBTQ+ Survivors of IPV: A Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Method Approach"



## **Suzanne L. Keeley Award**

Gang Alternative, INC.  
[www.MyGA.org](http://www.MyGA.org)



The Susan L Keeley Award was funded by: Richard Cole, Esq.

**\$5,000**

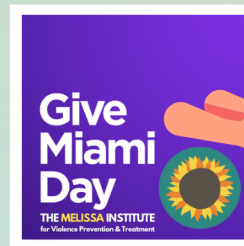
This year's recipient of the Suzanne L. Keeley Community Service Award is Gang Alternative, Inc. (GA), which was created in 2005 to provide positive alternatives to youth in South Florida living in areas that are plagued by violence and crime. GA's programs are focused on prevention and intervention approaches under five "Pillars of Service" that include positive youth development, family strengthening, health and wellness, workforce development and community upliftment and partnerships. We recognize the importance of the work being done by Gang Alternative and look forward to collaborating with them to reduce gun violence and make our communities safer.



## **After the Storm**



During the month of September, several communities in Florida were devastated by Hurricane Ian. The Institute is currently working with affected communities to help navigate where to go from here. Scientific Board member, Dr. Annette LaGreca, continues to offer her book as a free resource to boost resilience amongst families and help them navigate the aftermath of a disaster. Scan the QR code to access Dr. LaGreca's book "After the Storm", available in both English and Spanish.



Get ready to join us on **November 17th, 2022** as we take part in the biggest annual giving event in South Florida! Donate directly to our page or create your own champion page that directly contributes to TMI.



# **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):**

## **A Win-Win Proposition for Safer Schools, Homes, and Communities**

Cristina Fonseca, Office Manager & Communications Coordinator

Corporate Social Responsibility programs serve as an opportunity for companies to strengthen their ties within the community while increasing their return on investment. How exactly? By aligning their product, message and delivery with a cause or concern that resonates, companies start to see how consumer emotions tie into their profit margins.

Research shows that people care about what companies do and represent, just as much as they care about the products they are buying. With more and more people doing their own research and choosing to make purchases intentionally, there is a higher demand for engagement and accountability at the corporate level. By addressing specific issues of concern to all, such as safety, economic prosperity and well-being, companies create an open dialogue within the organization on how to do and be better. As a result, companies revitalize their own work cultures from the inside out while modeling ownership of not only the product, but the process as well.

From the COVID-19 pandemic to gun violence and intimate partner violence, it has become evident that our communities need more help, and organizations are banding up to give it. At The Melissa Institute, we are grateful for the support of individuals and a growing number of businesses committed to supporting our efforts to create safer schools, homes and communities.



### **TMI Programs & Sponsorship Opportunities**

**(ABC) Active Bystander Club**

**Bullying Prevention Academy**

**Innovations in Violence Prevention Series**

**Peace & Harmony Gala**

**Roots of Empathy Program**

**The Melissa Institute Annual Conference**

**The Social Media Safety & Mental Health Project**

**Trauma Informed Care Network**

For more information on how you or your organization can sponsor one of the listed TMI programs or partner for a new CSR initiative, **please contact [cristina@melissainstitute.org](mailto:cristina@melissainstitute.org)**.



Commissioner  
**Sally A. Heyman**  
District 4







Dr. Etiony Aldarondo & Ariel Gonzalez



The wonderful live band named Private Stock



Daniel & Yoli Santisteban



Megan Staubitz, Jesse Leon, Maggie Snyder, Karyn Cunningham, Lissette Perez-Lima, Dr. Etiony Aldarondo, Vanessa Silverman, Pastor Charles L. Dinkins & Kenneth Bloom

# Peace & Harmony

CONNECTION & COLLABORATION



Mr. & Mrs. Hogan, Armando Muns Jr., Javier Ortiz, Lenin Mercado, Tony Nunez, Joel Mahakian and guests



Vanessa Silverman, Daniela Schelbauer, Kari Vidal, Aimee Haftel and Carolina Cepero



Chanel Jefferson



Ivon Mesa & Miami Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava



Amanda Burns & Elise Suna



Attendees dancing to live music

This past March, The Melissa Institute had the good fortune of hosting its annual Peace & Harmony event in person at the Ritz-Carlton in Coconut Grove. After adapting to the challenges that came with the COVID-19 pandemic, it was exciting to come back out together on the other side. The night was filled with joy, reconnection and a true spirit of how our connections and collaborations can truly make a difference.

Thank you to all of our volunteers, donors and supporters for making this year's special event possible. Make sure to mark your calendars for next year's Peace & Harmony Gala on Saturday, March 4, 2023!



The Melissa Institute is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the study and prevention of violence through education, community service, research support and consultation. Our mission is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge.

On May 5, 1995, Melissa Aptman was murdered in St. Louis. A Miami native, she was just two weeks away from graduating with her bachelor's degree from Washington University.

One year after her death, Melissa's family, friends and violence prevention experts established The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment to honor her memory and make a difference by working to prevent violence and assist victims.



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.

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John Briere, Ph.D.  
Colleen Cicchetti, Ph.D.  
Sherry Hamby, Ph.D.  
Annette M. La Greca, Ph.D.  
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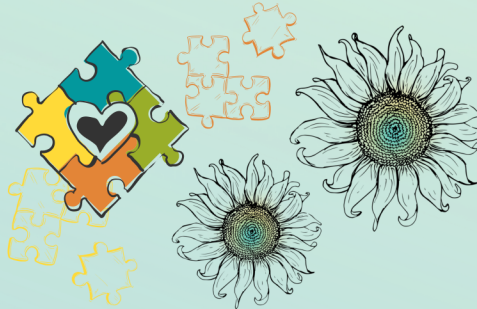
**The Melissa Institute is fortunate to have the support of several businesses. We encourage you to visit and support these businesses!**

Bagel Emporium ▪ Benihana ▪  
Book of the Month ▪ Fairchild Tropical  
Botanical Garden ▪ Fiola ▪ Fratellino  
Ristorante ▪ Giardino Gourmet  
Salads ▪ Haller Robbins Epelbaum  
Misiunas, LLC ▪ It's a 10  
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Miami Brickell Downtown ▪ Joe's  
Stone Crab ▪ Learning Express  
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FreeRunning Academy ▪ My Happy  
Cabana ▪ National Orchids ▪ Old  
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### **Staff**

Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Cristina Fonseca  
Office Manager & Communications Coordinator

Ashna Ahya  
Office Assistant



**\$10,000 and above**

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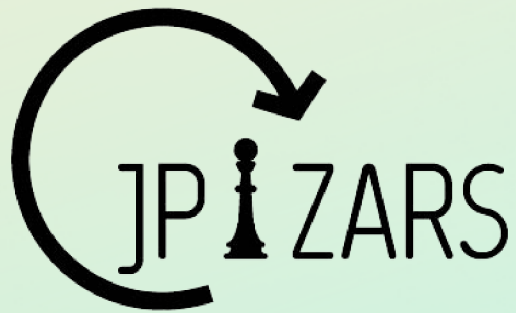
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