



Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust

Investigative Report

Investigator:

Case No.: K13-042	Case Name: Frantz Pierre Cash Contributions	Date Open:	
Complainant(s):	Subject(s): Frantz Pierre	March 21, 2013	

Allegation(s):

COE received information alleging North Miami Beach Councilman Frantz Pierre (Pierre) made an improper cash contribution of \$200 to the campaign of North Miami Beach City Council candidate Jaime Miller (Miller) (Group 2). It was suggested or alleged Pierre structured the contribution as four \$50 contributions so as not to exceed the \$50 limit for cash contributions to political campaigns and that the councilman used "straw" donors as conduits.

Relevant Ordinances:

Florida Statute 106.09 *Cash contributions and contribution by cashier's checks.*—
(1)(a) A person may not make an aggregate cash contribution or contribution by means of a cashier's check to the same candidate or committee in excess of \$50 per election.
(b) A person may not accept an aggregate cash contribution or contribution by means of a cashier's check from the same contributor in excess of \$50 per election.
(2)(a) Any person who makes or accepts a contribution in violation of subsection (1) commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

Investigation:

Interviews

On Sept. 17, Investigator Ross and Advocate Michael Murawski visited the address of the last known employer of Wideline Romelus (Romelus), Carsel's Ministries International, located at 165 NE 128th Ter., North Miami, FL. While there we were received by a man who identified himself as the husband of Carsel St. Fleur, president and presumed founder of Carsel Ministries. He advised that Romelus was no longer employed there. He provided her cellular phone number, (305) 321-6372. He further advised that she sometimes stays at a residence on NE 171st Street. A voice message was left for Romelus upon arriving at the address in question on NE 171st Street.

On Sept. 17, investigator Ross and Murawski visited the home of Pierre, located at 2120 NE 171st Street, North Miami Beach, FL. The door was answered by an older woman, who said she did not speak English but who seemed to affirm that she knew Romelus. A short while later, a younger man appeared at the door and advised that he would attempt to reach Romelus. He indicated that she did not live at the house on NE 171st Street. He stated that his name was Karry Joseph (Joseph), another one of the alleged campaign contributors to the Miller city council campaign. When he was advised that investigators also wanted to speak with him, he initially agreed to be interviewed then stated that he didn't feel well, saying he was "not in my right mind" because he had woken up a short while ago and just showered. He stated that he worked as a video editor and said he was getting ready for work. Asked when he could be available for an interview, he stated that later in the day at 5 p.m. or 5:30 p.m. He gave a number of (305) 617-6052.

The number provided was dialed at 5:30 p.m., and a recording indicated the number was no longer valid. It was subsequently learned Joseph's correct number is (305) 761-6053.

After speaking to Joseph, investigators went next door to the home of Miller, located at 2130 NE 171st Street, North Miami Beach, FL. Nobody answered the door. A card was left, asking Mr. Miller to contact COE. A gray VW Jetta parked on the street between the two residences had a license plate No. P49 5UC. (Note: The car was registered to an individual at 2130 NE 171st Street, Stephen F. Bonfiglio.)

On Sept. 17, investigator Ross and Murawski went to North Miami Beach City Hall and met with Assistant City Manager Mac Serta (Serta). Serta checked personnel records and determined that neither Joseph nor Romelus was employed by the city.

On Sept. 18, former candidate Miller responded to the card left on his front door and called COE. He advised he received four \$50 "gifts" from Pierre. He said he didn't recall the names of the individuals, off hand, but that Pierre left a handwritten note with the cash identifying the contributors. He said he discussed the contributions with his next door neighbor, former North Miami Beach Mayor Jeffrey Mishcon (Mishcon) and Mishcon advised him to query North Miami Beach City Clerk Pamela Lattimore (Lattimore) about the matter. He said he spoke to Lattimore and she told him that it would be okay to accept the cash contributions from Pierre. He stated that he and his wife were "nervous" about depositing cash from people they didn't know, but said that based on the reassurances from Mishcon and the city clerk, they decided

not to return the money. He said he did receive two \$50 cash contributions from Frank and Joyce Bollotta, who are his mother and father-in-law. (Note: His wife, Janice Terry, is also his campaign treasurer.) As for the people living at Pierre's home, he said he only knows his wife in passing and has seen Pierre's young children. He doesn't know the other alleged contributors. Miller further advised that he did not understand why Pierre was supporting him for city council when he had already endorsed another candidate in his group, Jean Berrouet.

Investigator Ross contacted Joseph at (305) 761-6053, and attempted to interview Joseph over the telephone. Joseph hung up without agreeing to be interviewed. He did not pick up the phone when Investigator Ross attempted to call him back.

Document/Audio/Video Review:

Accurant records were located for Romelus on May 29, 2013, indicating possible places of employment, including Carsel's Ministries at 165 NE 128 Ter., North Miami. An attempt should be made to locate her there.

State Department incorporation records show Carsel's Ministries International is an inactive Florida company, having been active from May 2000 through September 2010. Romelus was listed as an officer, and her home address was that of Councilman Frantz Pierre, 2120 NE 171st Street in North Miami Beach.

A copy of Romelus' Florida driver's license was obtained from the Elections Department database, showing that she resides at the same address listed above, 2120 NE 171st Street.

Copies of city council candidate Miller's campaign finance reports were obtained from the North Miami Beach City Clerk's Office. The reports showed that Miller reported taking in four \$50 cash contributions on March 16, 2013, from the following individuals:

1. Joline Pierre-Green, of 2120 NE 171st Street
2. Katrina Allison-Pierre, of 2120 NE 171st Street
3. Karry Joseph, of 2120 NE 171st Street
4. Wideline Romelus, of 2120 NE 171st Street

In addition, a review of the campaign finance reports found a \$100 cash contribution from Frank and Joyce Bollotta, of 1774 NE 180th Street. While this may appear to violate the \$50 limit, it is likely this could be explained as a \$50 cash contribution from Frank Bollotta and from Joyce Bollotta, thought it would seem it should have been reported as two contributions as opposed to a single contribution. The couple's identity and reported address were verified with the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser's Office.

COE reviewed a report submitted by Miami-Dade Police Det. Louis Rodriguez of the Public Corruption Investigations Bureau dated March 26, 2013, documenting the findings of a voter fraud investigation into multiple individuals registered to vote at the home Pierre. Among the six individuals interviewed were three of the alleged campaign contributors to the Miller campaign – Joline Pierre-Green, Katrina Allison-Piere and Karry Joseph. The investigation concluded that all three individuals do, in fact, reside at the home of Pierre and that they were legally registered to vote.

COE received a copy of a contribution letter submitted by Pierre to the Miller city council campaign on behalf of the four individuals listed on the CTR. The letter – addressed to Janice Terry, the candidate's wife and campaign treasurer – clearly specifies who the contributions came from, and states: "Please accept these small contributions from your neighbors, the Pierre's, for Miller campaign. We wish him the very best as we can assure him of our votes as well." It goes on to identify the alleged contributors.

On February 20, 2014, an attorney representing members of Pierre's family provided sworn affidavits from the alleged contributors, affirming that each personally contributed \$50 to the Miller campaign and that they were not coerced.

Conclusion(s):

In light of the foregoing, it was determined that the case should be closed at this time.

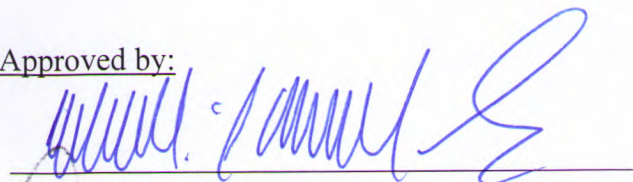
Each of the four members of Pierre's household provided a sworn affidavit as to the source of the \$200 in campaign contributions. The affidavits are consistent with the note that Pierre gave to the Miller Campaign at the time of the contributions, specifying the name of the contributor and the amount of the contribution.

**CASE
CLOSED**

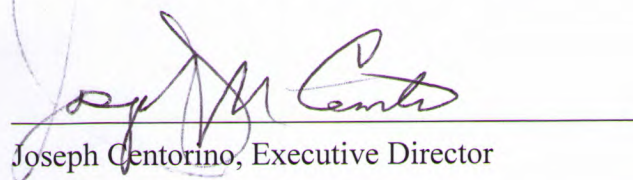


Karl Ross, COE Investigator

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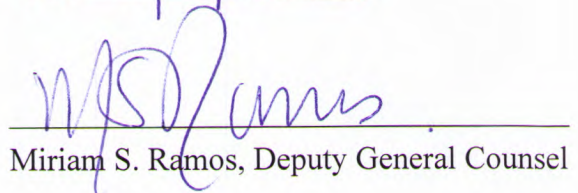


Michael Murawski, Advocate



Joseph Centorino, Executive Director

Date: 2/28/14



Miriam S. Ramos, Deputy General Counsel

2/28/14
Date