



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

Since March I have been giving you regular video updates explaining how this virus has been impacting our community.

Today, and especially with the holiday season upon us, I'd like to tell you how this virus is not impacting our community.

While it's true that it has taken an enormous toll in lives and livelihoods. So many have been impacted by the trauma of hospitalizations. And the loss of so many moments with loved ones. So many life events, and passages. Lost, or abbreviated or dramatically changed.

But with all its dislocation, shock and stress, and even with all this tragedy, what this virus hasn't changed is who we are.

This past weekend, I visited our City's Saturday food distribution effort. We have two a week, one in South Beach and one in North Beach. My Commission colleague David Richardson and his aide Luis Callejas, along with City staff providing logistic support, have organized 182 of them since March. Over 1,000 of our residents have volunteered for distributions which have given out over \$5 million in foodstuffs. Saturday marked the 100,000th household that David's crew has provided food to. My family and I have participated in a handful and seen firsthand this effort. Our volunteers, families, organizations, show up in droves to not only distribute these necessities of life, but to do it with compassion and respect. To let everyone in that line know we are in this together.

That Saturday evening, I attended with my family, the opening night of Seven Deadly Sins, a live play performed on Lincoln Road. Michele Hausman and Miami New Drama produced the performance with support from the City of Miami Beach and The Knight Foundation. It was incredibly innovative as the audience, sitting outside and socially distant with masks, rotated in front of seven different vacant storefronts to watch vignettes performed by actors from inside the display windows. It is the first live performance in the Nation, and done fully compliant with CDC guidelines. After we left the theatre, walking down Lincoln Road we were passed by golf carts carrying world class musicians from the New World Symphony performing holiday songs for those eating and strolling outside. The Lincoln Road BID has organized this effort along with other outside cultural activations.

And it goes on. Throughout December, even without Art Basel this year, hotels are programming spaces to display public art, in a safe manner, in their No Vacancies initiative. And our City Commission has curated over 70 amazing gallerists, each with financial support, to temporarily occupy nearly 40 vacant stores throughout the City with cultural popups. The idea is to give some oxygen to our arts community who like so many sectors of our economy are finding these times exceptionally challenging.

It's interesting. If there was a single community most tested by this pandemic it is ours. Our local economy is built on a business model of people gathering. We want people to come here to convene. To celebrate. To eat at amazing restaurants, stay at hotels, visit our venues, see something they won't see anywhere else. We create moments, unforgettable moments, shared moments for visitors and our residents. We're not exactly built for social distancing. But these times, these extraordinary times, have required us to do exactly that.

But along the way and notwithstanding the pain of this ordeal, what is clear, is that this virus is not changing who we are. When I watch our volunteers and our City Staff giving out food, not as an assignment, but as a mission, I see the deep empathy that makes me so proud to be your mayor. And when I marvel at the genius of our cultural and business community, who refuse to let this pandemic quash who we are. Our love of culture and connections. I have no doubt that as horrible and tragic as this pandemic has been, it will not win. It will not change us. In fact, it is more likely to simply reveal who we really are. A community whose resiliency and character will ultimately never bow to any challenge. Even this one.

So, yes, please wear a mask, please, be smart about what you do, it's so important to realize we are in a precarious moment with the current surge of the virus. But don't think for even an instant that we won't emerge from this better and stronger.

Thanks for the privilege of serving as your Mayor. And thanks for your patience, calm and sacrifice. And stay safe and, mostly, at home. And have a wonderful holiday season.