



Miami's Eiffel Tower?

I live downtown and love walking around the area on weekends, and I've been watching the progress at the Bayside Market and hope it succeeds beyond all expectations ("Not Just for Tourists Anymore," May 2018). I also enjoy watching the tourists take in Miami and our spectacular waterfront and skyline. But as Erik Bojnansky pointed out in his story, Bayside will be even better when it puts in more that caters to locals and makes us repeat customers.

But what a stupid thing to allow the 1000-foot SkyRise to block views of the water from every angle. I can't imagine that the "vertical theme park" will survive. Which is probably why there's that (potential?) high-rise skeleton the "rides" are attached to. It'll survive as something else, no doubt, long after the bungee jumping and sky domes are gone and forgotten.

I suppose that's why the city puts these "special" referendums out in the summertime, when few people bother to vote. Dios mio, if we can call that ugly thing "Miami's Eiffel Tower" with a straight face, we deserve what we get.

Yolanda Calderon
Miami

Earn It, Don't Buy It

I can't be the only one who thinks Jeffrey Berkowitz is getting sweetheart deals from the city and

the feds with prime waterfront *public* land and EB-5 visa purchasers underwriting his ridiculous SkyRise construction costs at Bayside Marketplace.

What a study in contrasts: We have immigrants seeking asylum from gang and cartel violence, and we arrest them and snatch away their kids. But just give me a cool \$500,000 (and since Berkowitz can claim that Miami's a "high unemployment area," you don't even need to hand over the usual \$1 mil) and promise to hire ten laborers, and bingo! Instant citizenship path for you and your whole clan.

Whatever happened to *earning* citizenship, not buying it?

John T. Mellman
Miami

When It Comes to Green, Miami Leaders Go Dark

Relative to Blanca Mesa's "Going Green" story on Miami's Downtown Development Authority ("A Park and What Surrounds It," May 2018), now that there is a paid expert recommending more connected green space for Miami, do we think Miami leadership will act?

I am doubtful as residents have already said the same thing for the past three decades when they have participated in comprehensive plan reviews.

More parks, more trees, more gardens to escape the heat of concrete is found in every redo of the plan, but Miami leadership is expert at ignoring free resident advice -- and even paid professionals.

Steve Hagen
Atlanta

Running the Gauntlet on Biscayne

I applaud Mesa Blanca for “A Park and What Surrounds It” (May 2018), and for her reporting on efforts to make Little Havana greener and more livable.

I also agree with urbanist Gil Penalosa in the article that Biscayne Boulevard works against making Miami a livable city. Just take a look at Bayside Marketplace, the subject of your cover story, to see how little sense it makes to force people to cross eight lanes of traffic and a center median parking lot to get to anything. Why should people go to all the trouble?

Maybe Miami could do as Hong Kong does and put in below-street crosswalks to get to the bay. But then I guess those would be the first to flood with storm surge.

You could also make a comparison with Chicago’s Lakeshore Drive, but that eight-laner has become a veritable highway, and nobody drives the posted speed limit. And it also doesn’t cut right through downtown.

If only we had the sense to build better pedestrian and bike/pedicab connectors to the waterfront, and to cut back on the concrete in favor of safe bike lanes and more trees.

Margaret Reynolds Panther
Downtown Miami

Beskin’s Blather, Part 1

In response to Jay Beskin's article "Israel on the Agenda" (May 2018), he says that Israel is a loyal ally of the United States, but that loyalty, don't forget, has a lot to do with the fact that Israel has received more U.S. aid than any other country, and that more Jews live here than in any other country, including Israel, and they buy Israel bonds and send money "home."

Foreign aid and foreign direct investment are worth remembering when Israel starts to boast that it's the eighth wonder of the modern world.

Let's also acknowledge Israel's loyalty to this administration. So loyal, in fact, that its spies -- think Black Cube, PSY-Group, Israel Cyber Shield -- have been routinely gathering info and reporting on U.S. citizens, at the very least to smear officials who brokered the Iran nuclear deal, help Trump win the presidency, and get dirt on Palestinian-American activists.

Startup Nation aside, Israel is hardly a "jewel of democracy." Arm in arm, Netanyahu and Trump have been inflicting moral, economic, and political damage on their own countries and elsewhere that will take years to undo. They're sowing hostility from allies and neighbors.

People too easily turn a blind eye to these Israeli government actions. They say, "Oh, let's not dwell on that unpleasantness. Israel will do what it must to survive. Isn't Israel a marvel?"

Shauna Meltzer
North Miami Beach

Beskin's Blather, Part 2

Jay Beskin's claim that Israel is a shining example of democracy conveniently overlooks the fact that Israel has effectively banned free speech and barred entry to individuals and groups that merely have voiced support for the boycott-divestiture movement. Not surprising when one looks at Israel's ongoing support of South Africa throughout apartheid. (Post-apartheid South Africa has finally started calling out Israel for its treatment of Palestinians.)

Not surprising, either, that Israel is conducting surveillance on BDS supporters [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions] in the U.S. and urging authorities to clamp down on them, as reported in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* back in May. "Generally speaking, Israel conducts its anti-BDS battle in relative secrecy, including through private entities. This is meant to stop its activities being formally associated with the government, which could expose it to criticism and public supervision."

Shining example? I don't think so.

*Gregory Dunsford, BDS supporter
New York, New York*

Haiti Housing Crisis

Regarding Erik Bojnansky's story "Under Siege, Little Haiti Responds" (May 2018), what's happening in Little Haiti is classic and sad, and I don't see how the residents will be able to say no to the developers who wave money in their faces.

It's a tough choice to make: taking a check and leaving, or staying for the sake of a community, even though you're not sure that your neighbors will stay. That's what happened in South Beach (Lincoln Road in particular) in the early 1990s.

They should hold firm and realize the value of their land for the future -- and remember the film *Local Hero*, about the Texas oil conglomerate that wants to buy up a small town in Scotland. The trick is to make enough people care about the place so they won't let it be destroyed.

Little Haiti may not have the charm of a Scottish fishing village, but we can do our part to support the neighborhood by visiting, shopping, and dining there.

Teri and Bill Southard
Miami

Ryder to Jungle Island: Dump the Animals

A friend sent me your story called “Cagey Business” by Francisco Alvarado and Erik Bojnansky because she knows that I am a crusader against the exploitation of animals for any reason -- but especially for profit.

I’ve never been to Jungle Island and the story convinces me I would never give the owners of that place a dime.

But I have been to another roadside attraction mentioned in the story: Myrtle Beach Safari. I had no idea the guy who runs that place, Bhagavan Antle, was renting his big cats to Jungle Island. But I’m not surprised. His animals need to make him money. Period.

Anyone who does business with Antle and Myrtle Beach Safari deserves our scorn. That makes me wonder how a licensed veterinarian like Bernard Levin [former owner of Jungle Island] could in good conscience treat tigers and lions and a “liger” like sideshow freaks.

I hope readers of *Biscayne Times* will get smart and stay away from Jungle Island. Now that they’re becoming an “adventure park,” they should just get rid of their animals. There are plenty of places that will take them and treat them humanely.

Bobby C. Ryder
Asheville, North Carolina