

Miami Herald

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Consider the White House Fellows program

Democracy should never be taken for granted. Regardless of what occurs in Washington or Tallahassee, we, the people, retain a voice, an individual responsibility for the health of our democracy. In fact, democracy is often messy and shaded by partisan rancor. But it remains a system, colored at its roots, in hope and possibility. This is a cardinal belief that each of us needs to sustain. Our participation is the expression of that belief, bringing the system to life and turning hope into meaning and value in a democratic society.

When President Lyndon Johnson established the White House Fellows program in 1964, he said, "A genuinely free society cannot be a spectator society." He sought to draw people with a desire to contribute, with a respect for the possibilities of a great democracy, to Washington for one year of personal involvement in the process of governing the nation.

This is an extraordinary opportunity for the men and women of our community. White House Fellows become full-time paid employees, working with senior staff at the White House, with Cabinet secretaries and other top-ranking officials in Washington, D.C. This non-partisan fellowship is also an education program including roundtable discussions with renowned leaders from the private and public sectors, and trips to study United States policy in action both at home and abroad.

I have the privilege to chair the Miami regional panel that will select White House Fellows from our community. It is, without question, one of the most exciting responsibilities I have ever been offered, and I encourage people throughout our community to apply for these fellowships. Applications are now being accepted online until Jan. 15, 2014 at 5:59pm (EST). Please visit the website <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/fellows> to learn more about the program and submit your application.

Our community is rich with people already making a difference in many walks of life. I encourage you to consider this wonderful opportunity.

Eduardo J. Padrón, president, Miami Dade College