



Miami-Dade Urban Debate League trains tomorrow's leaders

Common sense isn't common. Clear thinking and the articulation of those thoughts are even more of a rarity.

That's why it was such a treat recently to have Reinaldo Cardenas, a freshman at Miami Senior High School, on the show to talk about the new Miami-Dade Urban Debate League (MDUDL).

As a local chapter of the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues, MDUDL is aimed at building a local community of active individuals committed to teaching urban youth to think, communicate, collaborate and love learning through the academic activity of policy debate.

The MDUDL launched in October and now includes 10 Miami-Dade high schools and five middle schools, said program director Nalisa Saati.

In addition, partner colleges include Florida International University, Miami-Dade College, and the University of Miami. They host MDUDL tournaments on their campuses monthly.

For his part, Cardenas said he loves being a part of the organization.

"I've always liked engaging discussions. And I'm really good at debating, just naturally. I thought it would be a great academic experience. I'm an academic athlete, in a sense," he said.

The tournaments are on Saturdays, giving Cardenas an opportunity to get together with his friends and take on other teams in the league.

The most recent tournament had more than 100 kids from all over Miami-Dade County.

Cardenas said he hopes to be in college within the next five years and has aspirations to be a attorney. No doubt his experience in the MDUDL will prove valuable.

The next Miami-Dade Urban Debate League tournament – the FIU Panther Challenge – is set for April 30 on the campus of FIU.

Folks, I think Reinaldo Cardenas is an absolute superstar. He makes me feel optimistic about the future – despite everything I see on TV these days. When I look at him, I know the future of America is in good hands.

My hat's off to everyone involved with the Miami-Dade Urban Debate League, especially board chair **Cliff Schulman of Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman** and Cardenas' teacher, Miami Senior High School Debate Coach Davalyn Suarez