

Mr. Mayor,  
Ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the City of Coral Gables,  
Madam Deputy for Attractiveness and International Relations of Aix-en-Provence, dear Karima,  
Mr. President of the Paul Cézanne Society, dear Denis,  
Dear agents of the City of Coral Gables,  
Dear citizens,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with immense joy and great enthusiasm that I stand before you today. The centennial of your municipality gives us the opportunity to celebrate our historical ties and to revitalize this cherished Franco-American partnership.

Just like our two countries, which celebrated the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings last summer and maintain strong bonds of friendship built on profound respect and shared values, the actions of local governments serve as an essential foundation for preserving world order.

Accompanied by my Deputy in charge of International Cooperation, Karima Zerkani Raynal, who is also President of the Tourist Office, my visit here is part of the continuation of this cooperation. Together with your mayor, Vince Lago—whom I warmly thank for this invitation—we aim to redefine the areas of collaboration between our two cities, particularly in the fields of culture, the economy, and youth.

Despite the distance that separates us, Aix-en-Provence and Coral Gables share many similarities. We are both southern cities. Your “City Beautiful,” as it is called, was built with Mediterranean inspirations. Indeed, I can sense here that Provençal atmosphere, characterized by terracotta tile roofs, wrought iron, and patios—an art of living that we cultivate with delight in Aix-en-Provence.

Both of our cities combine human-scale urbanism, active economic and academic development, and internationally recognized artistic identities.

Culture is indeed a strong driving force in Aix. This year, it will shine in the colors of Cézanne—an iconic painter of our region whose legacy’s preservation is closely linked to the United States.

It was thanks to the historian John Rewald that Cézanne’s painting studio at Les Lauves was preserved, donated to the city, and transformed into a museum—made possible by the contributions of 114 American patrons.

The greatest American museums and collectors have also supported us and placed their trust in us by lending artworks that will be exhibited starting June 28 at the Granet Museum in the exceptional exhibition, “Cézanne at Jas de Bouffan.”

The United States has a long history with France—and with Aix as well. I am deeply committed to continuing this history. By celebrating with you the centennial of your city—an anniversary that comes just before the 250th anniversary of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence—this other historic event will reaffirm the democratic ties that unite France and the United States, leading to joint celebrations and cultural exchanges.

The year 2026 will also mark an anniversary in Aix-en-Provence: the 70th anniversary of the Vasarely Foundation. Another iconic artist from our region, the father of Op Art, whom we will be pleased to introduce to you through upcoming cultural projects.

I am convinced that this mission, rich in encounters and exchanges, will strengthen our cooperation in many areas.

Once again, thank you, Mr. Mayor Vince Lago, for your invitation and for honoring us by celebrating Coral Gables' 100th anniversary with a tribute to Paul Cézanne. Perhaps you will have the pleasure of visiting Aix-en-Provence this summer to discover this exhibition, as well as the places where Cézanne painted and lived. I would be delighted to welcome you there.

I wish all the residents of Coral Gables a happy Centennial. Be proud of your city.  
Long live Franco-American friendship!  
Long live Coral Gables and long live Aix-en-Provence!