

7 Miami leaders to know on Women's Equality Day. Here's how they changed the city

BY JEFF KLEINMAN

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The Miami Dade College Board of Trustees unanimously voted to select Madeline Pumariega as the next president of the college. Lenore Rodicio was the runner up. BY [CARL JUSTE](#) | [PIERRE TAYLOR](#)

Miami is known for pioneers. And that includes the women who helped found the city, save the Everglades and run some of the most notable institutions.

Miami-Dade County's first female mayor. The city's founding mother. A pioneering prosecutor. The primary defender of the Everglades. A civil rights leader. The general manager of the Miami Marlins. The president of Miami Dade College.

Thursday, Aug. 26, is Women’s Equality Day, commemorating the anniversary of women earning the right to vote in 1920. And while we take a moment to recognize the [historical significance of the day](#), we should also salute all of the women leaders of Miami.

They include:



Newly elected Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava speaks during her swearing-in ceremony inside the Knight Concert Hall at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Miami on Tuesday, November 17, 2020. BY [MATIAS J. OCHNER](#)

- [Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava](#): She was elected Miami-Dade mayor in November, the first woman to win the office and the victor in a campaign that upended the power of demographics in favor of partisan loyalty in a county where Democrats vastly outnumber Republicans. She’s the first candidate without Hispanic roots to win a county mayoral race since the early 1990s and the first Democrat since 2000. “Tonight with humility and gratitude I am honored to stand before you as the first female mayor of Miami-Dade County,” she said on Election Night. “Miami-Dade’s glass ceiling has been shattered.”



1/21/1988: Florida Gov. Bob Martinez signed an executive order protecting the Everglades and handed the pen to the champion of the Everglades, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, at a ceremony at Fairchild Tropical Gardens. Tim Chapman *MIAMI HERALD FILE*

▪ **Everglades savior Marjory Stoneman Douglas:** She was the pioneering environmentalist and the most ardent and eloquent champion of the Florida Everglades. Douglas, daughter of the Miami Herald's founding editor, Frank Stoneman, had lived in Miami since 1915 and was present at the dedication of Everglades National Park in 1947. She was the author of "The Everglades: River of Grass," published the same year.



Julia Tuttle statue in Bayfront Park. Miami Herald File *FOR THE MIAMI HERALD*

- **Miami founder Julia Tuttle**: No woman voted in Miami's 1896 election. Women were not allowed to vote in the United States until 1920. Ironically, Julia Tuttle acquired the land on which the original Miami was built and convinced Henry Flagler to extend his railroad to South Florida. Known as "the mother of Miami," Julia Tuttle was the first woman to start a major city in the USA.



Former President Bill Clinton remembers the first female U.S. attorney general, Janet Reno, as he gives her eulogy on Sunday, December 10, 2016. BY MCCLATCHY

- **Former state attorney and attorney general Janet Reno**: She was a prosecutor, a politician and a pioneer — a brainy South Floridian who grew up barefoot among peacocks and alligators and rose to the highest levels of government as the nation’s first female attorney general. Reno served as Miami-Dade state attorney for 15 years — establishing a Drug Court that became a national model — and worked briefly in private practice before President Bill Clinton called in 1993.



Thelma Gibson has committed her life to standing up for her beliefs while blazing a path forward and working as a black nurse at Jackson Hospital during segregation, and later becoming President of the Theodore Roosevelt Gibson Memorial Fund. BY [DANIEL A. VARELA](#)

- [Civil rights activist Thelma Gibson](#): She was the first Black Assistant Supervisor of Nursing in Commerce, the founder and first president of the Theodore Roosevelt Gibson Memorial Fund, and also briefly served on the Miami City Commission. In 1967, she married Father Theodore Gibson who, to this day, she credits with teaching her the importance of owning property, business and politics. “I tried to do the best I could in a community I love,” she told the Miami Herald earlier this year.



The Miami Marlins announced they have hired Kim Ng to be the team's next general manager. Ng becomes the first woman to be a general manager in not just MLB history, but in the history of any North American men's pro sports league. BY ERIC GARLAND

- [Marlins baseball executive Kim Ng](#): The Miami Marlins formally introduced Ng as their general manager in November in a historic, if not long overdue, moment in Major League Baseball history. Ng is the highest-ranking woman in baseball operations among MLB's 30 teams, the first to be given the chance to run a team. “I was not the kid that was always going to follow with the rest of the group,” she said at the announcement. “That was not me. I was going to do my own thing and I didn't care what people said. I was just going to do it. And that followed me through my professional career.”



Pumariega

- **Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega**: The Hialeah native who attended Miami Dade College, played and coached basketball there, became a professor and rose through the ranks to be a campus president, was chosen in January as her alma mater’s next president, becoming the first female president of the nation’s largest college. “Because only could a daughter of Cuban immigrants dream today to be back at her alma mater, where she started as a basketball player, to lead Miami Dade College,” Pumariega said at the time.

The information above was compiled from Miami Herald archives.



Thelma Gibson is one of Miami's pioneers in the field of healthcare. One of Jackson Hospital's first Black nurses, Gibson pushed for equal treatment among her Black patients, referring to them as "Mr." and "Ms." while demanding the same respect from her white colleagues. Ms. Gibson was photographed at her Coconut Grove home on Tuesday, February 2, 2021. [CARL JUSTE](#)



Janet Reno MIAMI HERALD FILE

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