

Hillsborough County  
**Women's Hall of Fame**  
Charter Class Induction Ceremony



COMMISSION ON THE  
**Status**  
*of*  
**Women**

May 26, 2011



The Hillsborough County Women's Hall of Fame was created by the Hillsborough County Commission on the Status of Women to honor women who, through their lives and efforts, have made significant contributions to the improvement of life for women and for all citizens of Hillsborough County. The Commission maintains and facilitates the permanent Women's Hall of Fame display.



The Commission is comprised of thirteen members. Seven are appointed by members of the Board of County Commissioners to represent their district, and six are permanent seats held by Hillsborough County organizations.

Susan Sharp	appointed by Commissioner Sandra L. Murman
Laura Rambeau-Lee	appointed by Commissioner Victor D. Crist
Ann Porter	appointed by Commissioner Lesley “Les” Miller, Jr.
Yvonne Fry	appointed by Commissioner Al Higginbotham, Chair
Dotti Groover-Skipper	appointed by Commissioner Ken Hagan, Vice Chair
Yvonne McDonald	appointed by Commissioner Kevin Beckner
Susan Leisner	appointed by Commissioner Mark Sharpe
Caroline Murphy	The Centre
April Monteith	Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce
Lydia Medrano, Ph.D.	Hispanic Professional Women’s Association, Inc.
Linda D’Aquila	League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County
Geraldine I. Twine	National Council for Negro Women
Joanne Olvera Lighter	The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc.

## Agenda

### Reception

### Welcome

Yvonne Fry, Commission Chair

### Blessing

### Purpose of COSW

Dotti Groover-Skipper, Commission Vice Chair

### Induction Ceremony

Yvonne Fry

INDUCTEE	PRESENTER
Mary T. Cash	Commissioner Sandra L. Murman
Betty Castor	Commissioner Al Higginbotham
Helen Gordon Davis	Commissioner Lesley “Les” Miller, Jr.
Cecile Waterman Essrig	Commissioner Ken Hagan
Pat Collier Frank	Commissioner Kevin Beckner
Sandra W. Freedman	Mayor Bob Buckhorn
Clara C. Frye	Commissioner Mark Sharpe
Adela Hernandez Gonzmart	Commissioner Victor D. Crist
Sylvia Rodriquez Kimbell	Mayor Joe Affronti, Sr.
Sadye Gibbs Martin	Mayor Dan Raulerson

### Closing

Yvonne Fry



## Charter Class Inductees

### **Mary T. Cash**

First Florida registered nurse of African American heritage

### **Elizabeth “Betty” Castor**

First woman elected to the Hillsborough County Commission and the Florida State Cabinet, First Woman President of USF

### **Helen Gordon Davis**

First woman from Hillsborough County elected to the Florida House of Representatives

### **Cecile Waterman Essrig**

First woman elected to Hillsborough County School Board

### **Pat Collier Frank**

County Commissioner, Legislator, Clerk of Court

### **Sandra W. Freedman**

First woman Mayor of City of Tampa

### **Clara C. Frye**

Founded first Negro Hospital in Hillsborough County

### **Adela Hernandez Gonzmart**

Concert pianist, patroness of Hispanic Culture in Ybor City and founder of the Ballet Folklorico of Ybor

### **Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell**

First African American woman elected to Hillsborough County Commission

### **Sadye Gibbs Martin**

First woman Mayor of the City of Plant City, the first female African American elected mayor of a major city in Florida, educator

## **Mary T. Cash** July 5, 1892 – December 25, 1993



**Mary T. Brown Cash** was born in Madison, Florida and came to Tampa from Ocala, in 1906, as an only child with her mother. Mary became an office person and maid for Dr. M.R. Winton, a white physician, who along with Clara C. Frye became her mentors. She graduated on November 16, 1916 from St. Agnes College of Nursing (Raleigh, North Carolina) and returned to work for Dr. M. R. Winton.

As Tampa’s first African American nurse, Mary also worked as a private duty nurse and midwife for the Barnum & Bailey Circus. In this position, she traveled with the family to Switzerland and throughout the United States. In 1920, she was appointed Public Health and Community nurse and thus, became the City of Tampa’s nurse and truant officer for black schools. Mary joined the municipally operated Clara Frye Hospital where she was the nursing supervisor for twenty-five years.

During the “Great Depression”, she was employed by the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) where she found herself involved in social work along with her nursing duties. Mary would continue to challenge the norm, becoming the first black nurse in the emergency room at Tampa General Hospital.

Married only once, she adopted two children, Curtis Randolph, Ph.D. and Patricia Doby, Registered Nurse Clinician. She earned the distinction of being the oldest black registered nurse in Florida.

## Betty Castor

May 11, 1941



**Betty Castor** was the first woman elected to the Florida Cabinet and the first female President Pro Tempore of the Florida Senate.

Born in Glassboro, New Jersey, she graduated from Glassboro State College in 1963 and attended Teachers College of Columbia University. President John F. Kennedy chose her to be part of a diplomatic mission in Uganda. There, she taught school and helped the first group of African women climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

Castor earned a master's degree in education in 1968, from the University of Miami (Florida). In 1972, she became the first woman elected to the Hillsborough County Commission. In 1976, she was the first woman from this area and the fourth woman ever elected to the state Senate. Castor served three terms and was elected Commissioner of Education in 1986, becoming the first woman ever elected to that body.

She led the League of Women Voters in the early 1970s and helped to establish the Save the Bay organization. As County Commissioner, she became the chair of the Environmental Protection Commission and championed growth management.

Castor was appointed as President of the University of South Florida in 1994 becoming the fifth president and first female to hold that position.

In 1999, Castor was recruited to serve as President of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and later returned to USF as Executive Director of the Patel Center for Global Solutions.

Castor has received numerous awards for leadership in education, including the Florida Education Association (FEA) Lifetime Achievement Award. In 1996 she was inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame. She is married to attorney Samuel P. Bell III, a former member of the Florida House of Representatives and is the mother of three children, Congress member Kathy Castor of Tampa, Karen Dental, a teacher in Orange County, and Judge Frank Castor of Palm Beach County.

## Helen Gordon Davis

July 5, 1892 – December 25, 1993



A legislator for almost two decades, **Helen Gordon Davis** championed the civil rights of the disenfranchised, particularly women and minorities. Born in New York City, she moved to Tampa in 1946. In 1948, she was the first white woman in Florida to join the NAACP. That year she was one of two white women to join the Woolworth Lunchroom "sit ins."

She chaired the Florida League of Women Voters Administration of Justice Study that ensured the passage of the constitutional amendment creating Florida's circuit judicial system. This work resulted in an award from the National Association of Juvenile Court Judges.

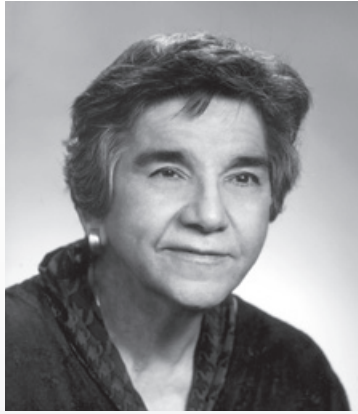
In 1974, she was the first woman elected from Hillsborough County to the Florida House of Representatives. She was re-elected for six consecutive terms and in 1988, was elected to the Florida Senate.

She created the Hillsborough Consumer Affairs Agency, the Displaced Homemakers for Divorced Women Act, Court Depositories for Child Support Payments, the Marriage License Trust Fund for Spouse Abuse Centers, and doubled the penalties for hate crime. Davis developed *Phone Friend* for latchkey children; raised funds for the study of pay equity in state government, which resulted in a \$5,000 pay increase for 36,000 women and minority state workers; placed a one cent tax for indigent healthcare in Hillsborough County; created mediation and arbitration in the courts; created the Guardian Ad Litem for Children program; added "Families" to the Department of Children; mandated two women's toilets for every one for men in public facilities and created the Florida Pre-Paid Tuition Program. She also established the first Centre for Women in Florida.

Davis is the mother of three children and the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and honors, including the Outstanding Legislator Award from the National Democratic Women's Clubs and the Nelson Poynter ACLU Award for her contributions to the advancement of civil liberties. Davis is the recipient of 110 prestigious national and state awards.

## Cecile Waterman Essrig

June 15, 1921



**Cecile W. Essrig** was born in Tampa, Florida. In 1967, she was elected to the Hillsborough County School Board – the first woman to be elected to any major political office in the county. She served on the School Board for twenty-one years, including two terms as chair, until her retirement in 1988.

Cecile was very active in PTA and school volunteer work, including serving as President of the Hillsborough County

Council of PTA's.

While on the School Board, she created the Tampa/Hillsborough County Youth Council – still in existence today. Cecile, active in many civic and community endeavors, has served on numerous boards, including the Suncoast Girl Scouts Council and the Daisy G. Waterman Lighthouse for the Blind. She also was a charter member of the Hillsborough County Council of Governments, and served on that council from 1975 to 1988.

Cecile is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the National Council of Jewish Women's Hannah G. Solomon Award; the Silver Medallion Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews; the Arts Recognition Award from the Hillsborough County Arts Council; The First Lady of Hillsborough Education award from the Zonta Club of Tampa; the Laurel Award from Golden SABLE; the Masjid Muhammed of Tampa Award for Humanitarian Efforts in Civic Affairs; the Tampa/Hillsborough County Youth Council Hank Warren Award; and the Frontiers of America Award for Distinguished Service to Community.

Cecile was married to the late Marvin Essrig and is the mother of Lee Essrig and Katherine Essrig.

## Pat Collier Frank

November 12, 1929



**Pat Collier Frank** graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Arts degree and from Georgetown University School of Law, Washington, D.C. She has had a distinguished career in public service and elective office, commencing with her election to the Hillsborough County School Board (1972-1976) and serving as chair (1975-1976).

In 1976, she was elected to the Florida House of Representatives; in 1978, she was elected to the Florida Senate, where she served until 1988. During her legislative career, she accomplished a number of firsts. Frank was the first woman to receive the Allen Morris award for "Most Effective First-Term Member" by the House and also the first woman nominated "Most Respected Senator" by her Senate colleagues.

Pat Frank has also been a member of the Tampa Hospital Authority and numerous other boards and agencies, where she was in a fiduciary position. Elected to the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in 1998, she was elected Chairman by the BOCC for three consecutive years. She was re-elected to the BOCC in 2002.

In 2004, Pat Frank was elected Clerk of the Circuit Court/Comptroller for Hillsborough County. She has received over 50 awards for her public service and volunteer activities. In her present position, she was the recipient of the Chief Judge's Award for the 13th Judicial Circuit in 2006; in 2007, she was chosen Executive Woman of the Year by the Network of Executive Women. Additional honors include, the Girl Scout Council's "Women of Distinction", City of Tampa Human Rights award and Judeo-Christian Clinic Humanitarian of the Year.

Pat Frank has been married over 50 years to Richard Harlan Frank, retired Judge of the 2nd District Court of Appeal. They have three daughters-Stacy Frank, Hillary Frank Aubin and Courtney Frank and two grandchildren.

## Sandra Warshaw Freedman

September 21, 1943



**Sandra Warshaw Freedman** was born in Newark, New Jersey and moved with her family to Tampa when she was two years old. She graduated from Plant High School and received her Bachelor of Arts degree, in government, from the University of Miami (Florida) and was a former city, state and Florida intercollegiate tennis champion.

Freedman served on the Tampa City Council (1974-July 1986) and was the first

woman elected as Chair (1983-July 1986). When Bob Martinez resigned as mayor to run for governor, Freedman, as Chair, was elected to complete the remainder of his term. She became the first woman to serve as mayor of Tampa and citizens elected her to two additional terms in office (1987-1991 and 1991-1995).

Mayor Freedman initiated a task force to halt the escalating drug crime rate; revitalized the housing and urban development agency by creating the Mayor's Challenge Fund; created community programs such as Paint Your Heart Out, and the first Women's and Minority Business Enterprise program which encouraged greater minority participation in city contracts. Mayor Freedman was instrumental in the Growth Management Act of 1985, the Community Reinvestment Act, the Tampa Heights building and redevelopment project and the construction of the Tampa Convention Center.

In 1987, Mayor Freedman was instrumental in the Province of Agrigento, Italy becoming one of Tampa's "Sister Cities." As mayor, she established citywide recycling and water conservation programs and the annual Hillsborough River cleanup. In 1991, Tampa was named "All America City." Sandy Freedman currently serves as Chair of the National Civic League.

## Clara C. Frye

April 17, 1872 - April 8, 1936



**Clara C. Frye** was born in 1872 in Montgomery, Alabama, and trained in nursing care there arriving in Tampa around the turn of the century. She committed her life to providing medical care to Tampa's black citizens.

Clara C. Frye began caring for the sick and injured blacks in her small Tampa home in 1908. In 1923, she moved her hospital into a two-story, seventeen-bed hospital on the 1600 block of Lamar Avenue. The

financial struggles she faced in trying to provide the semblance of a hospital for them was met with greatly needed donations.

In 1928, the City of Tampa purchased the hospital, then known as Tampa Negro Hospital. Ten years later, the structure, in Roberts City on the west bank of the Hillsborough River, was dedicated as the Clara Frye Memorial Hospital. Howard W. Blake School was later built on the site.

Much of the money to build the 62-bed hospital came from the Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). Political and economic struggles, lack of funding, overcrowding and insufficient staffing led to the closing of the hospital and the demolition of the building in 1973.

Clara died in 1936 and is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery. She was a great and selfless servant – a leader and a visionary humanitarian.

## Adela Hernandez Gonzmart

June 14, 1920 - December 22, 2001



**Adela Hernandez Gonzmart** was born in Tampa, Florida. She graduated from Hillsborough High School with honors. After graduation from the Juilliard School of Music with a Bachelor's of Music and Science degree, she went on tour appearing in concerts at New York's Carnegie Hall, Washington, D.C., Havana, Cuba and throughout Florida.

Adela was a founder and patron of the Ballet Folklorico of Ybor City. Adela

married her childhood partner in music, Cesar Gonzmart. She played the piano and he the violin. Adela and her husband became the third generation of owner-operators of the family restaurant founded by her grandfather, the Columbia Restaurant.

Adela co-authored *The Columbia Restaurant Spanish Cookbook* and as a business woman, launched several Adela's Gifts boutiques. Among the many awards she received were the Silver Medallion, Hispanic Woman of the Year - 1997, Vista magazine's 1997 Achievement Award which recognizes the accomplishments and community contributions of Hispanic women nationwide, the Tony Pizzo Award for "Outstanding Citizen of the Year" and she was inducted into the Hillsborough High School Hall of Fame.

A proclamation from the Governor and Legislature of Florida proclaimed April 19, 1996 as Adela Hernandez Gonzmart Day in Tallahassee. She served three consecutive terms as President of the Ybor City Chamber of Commerce. Adela and Cesar have two sons, Casey and Richard.

## Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell

April 7, 1934 - June 3, 1994



In 1990, **Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell** became the first African- American woman to win a major political office when she was elected to Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners from District 3. She later served as Chair and was re-elected in 1992.

Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell, a descendant of Afro- Cubans, was born in Tampa and attended Helping Hand Day Nursery (founded in 1924 and still operating today) in the historic Central Avenue district of Tampa.

Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell was a 1950 graduate of Middleton Senior High School; received a B.A. in education from Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) in 1954, and a Master of Science degree from Chapman College (California). After completing doctoral studies at Florida State University (FSU), she returned to Tampa and taught English and Spanish in the Hillsborough County School District. She later became a highly-respected Supervisor for Language Arts.

Kimbell's career and personal goals centered on her community and bridging racial divides. She set an example by which many would follow, representing her constituents with intelligence, integrity and passion. In May 1993, the first annual "Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell Symposium on Race Relations" was held and provided a venue for honest discussions about race in the local community.

As a concerned citizen, she founded the Seffner/Thonotosassa Council for Community Affairs, to protect the rights of the families living in her community.

In 2008, a new school in the Temple Crest neighborhood was named in honor of the late educator and civic leader. Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell Elementary stands as a tribute to a woman who was first and foremost a teacher.

A determined leader and fighter, Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell held the position as chairwoman of the County Commission even as she struggled with cancer, becoming the first person in the state to conduct government via teleconference. She lost her heroic battle to cancer at the age of sixty.

# Sadye Gibbs Martin

January 11, 1928 - November 27, 1999



**Sadye Gibbs Martin** was the first woman Mayor of Plant City and the first female African American elected mayor of a major city in Florida. She was a graduate of Midway Academy, Plant City's high school that served the black community and received her B.S. degree at Bethune-Cookman College (Daytona, Florida) and earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of South Florida.

In 1956, Sadye began her thirty-three year career in the Hillsborough County School District as a kindergarten teacher at Midway Academy. She was appointed principal of Gary Elementary School (Gary Adult School after 1988) and in 1978 as principal at Knights Elementary School.

Sadye, an active community member, ran a successful campaign for the Plant City Commission in 1982 and served for 15 years (1982-1992 and 1994-1999). She was elected Mayor for seven terms and Vice-Mayor for four terms. She served as President (1991) of the Florida League of Cities, as a member of the Ridge League of Cities, and received the Outstanding Government Service Award from the Suncoast League of Municipalities.

Sadye Martin received the Business and Professional Woman's Club's "Business Woman of the Year" award, and was the Plant City civic club's choice as Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 1997. She also had served on the Children's Board of Hillsborough County and the Boys and Girls Club Advisory Board of Plant City.



COMMISSION ON THE

## Status of Women

### Purpose of The Commission on the Status of Women

The Hillsborough County Commission on the Status of Women was created April 16, 2003 to advise the Board of County Commissioners, County administration, and all agencies and persons in Hillsborough

County with respect to all matters pertaining to the status of women including but not limited to: discrimination against women; employment of women; education of women; establishment of day care centers in the community; attitudes towards women in the community, not including abortion; and to make periodic reports and recommendations to these bodies in respect to such matters.



The Hillsborough County Commission on the Status of Women has issued four major reports:

- Children's Needs in Hillsborough County
- Women's Health Issues and Health Care in Hillsborough County
- Employment Issues for Women in Hillsborough County
- Affordable Housing Action Report





[www.hillsboroughcounty.org/statusofwomen](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/statusofwomen)