

The Pioneer:

Justice Miriam Naveira Merly



SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Graduated from the University of Puerto Rico Law School
- Earned a Law Clerkship for the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico as a result of impressive Bar Exam performance
- Appointed the first woman to hold the position of Assistant Secretary of Justice in charge of Antitrust Affairs
- Graduated with post-graduate degrees from Columbia University and Leiden University
- Appointed to be the first female Solicitor General of Puerto Rico
- First Puerto Rican woman to litigate in the Supreme Court of the United States
- Served as the first female Associate Justice and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Miriam Naveira Merly was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on July 28, 1934. She attended the English-speaking Saint John's School and graduated from Mount St. Vincent School, a Catholic boarding school in New York. She stayed in New York to attend Mt. St. Vincent College. After graduating with a degree in Chemistry and French, she returned to Puerto Rico. She spent a year at the University of Puerto Rico and, in 1957, Ms. Naveira decided to enroll in law school. Due to her exceptional performance on the bar exam, Miriam was invited and became a law clerk for the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico. Four years later, in 1961, she married an attorney named Victor Rodon Elizalde. They had two children together. In 1966, Naveira became the first woman to be Assistant Secretary of Justice. Two years later, she earned a master's degree at Columbia, then a postgraduate degree at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Naveira became the first woman to serve as Solicitor General, Associate Justice, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico. Advocating for privacy rights, gender equality, and judicial reform, she completed her life's work mainly in Puerto Rico and never stopped teaching and learning. In 2014, she moved in with her daughter and passed away on April 13, 2018.



"We need to continue working until the scales are balanced. We must have equal opportunities."

-Justice Miriam Naveira Merly

MIRIAM NAVEIRA MERLY WAS A COURAGEOUS, TRAILBLAZING PUERTO RICAN JUSTICE KNOWN FOR HER SHARP INTELLECT, DEEP SENSE OF JUSTICE, AND UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY. SHE BECAME THE FIRST PUERTO RICAN WOMAN TO ARGUE BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE FIRST WOMAN TO SERVE AS ASSOCIATE JUSTICE AND CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE PUERTO RICO SUPREME COURT.

EXAMINING BOARD V. FLORES

As the Solicitor General of Puerto Rico, Miriam Naveira played an important role by leading the legal team on behalf of the government. She argued that U.S. citizenship was a necessary licensing requirement for civil engineers to ensure public safety and professional accountability. She also argued that the Puerto Rican courts should have had original jurisdiction to resolve the dispute. Although the Supreme Court of the United States ultimately sided with the plaintiffs and ruled that the law was unconstitutional, Naveira's involvement in the case demonstrated her knowledge of difficult constitutional matters. Justice Naveira is widely regarded as a pioneer. She is a symbol of perseverance and progress in the face of institutional barriers.



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