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IN BUSINESS

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MARIE R. GILL

Founder & CEO

M. Gill & Associates, Inc.



COVER
STORY

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Marie Gill: The Architect of Opportunity Behind Billions in Economic Growth

On most mornings in Miami, long before the rhythm of the day accelerates, Marie Gill begins her work quietly—reviewing reports, responding to entrepreneurs, and preparing for another day devoted to helping businesses grow.

For many leaders, success is measured by financial milestones or corporate titles. For Marie Gill, success is measured differently. It is reflected in the entrepreneurs who found their footing, the businesses that expanded beyond expectation, and the communities strengthened through opportunity.

Over the course of her remarkable career, Marie Gill has helped facilitate more than \$7.2 billion in contracts and financing for small, minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses. As the Founder and CEO of M. Gill & Associates, she has spent more than three decades guiding entrepreneurs toward growth, access, and global opportunity.



Yet the roots of this extraordinary journey stretch far beyond boardrooms or billion-dollar figures. They begin in Jamaica, where Marie first learned the true meaning of resilience, community, and ambition.

Early Lessons in Entrepreneurship

Marie Gill was born in Kingston, Jamaica, but her upbringing spanned both the capital city and the rural parish of Clarendon. Life in these communities required ingenuity and perseverance. Resources were limited, and daily routines often meant long walks to school or to nearby markets.

Her earliest mentor was her foster mother, **Miss White**, a determined woman with remarkable entrepreneurial instincts. Despite having little formal education, she built a small family enterprise by growing crops, raising animals, and selling produce to neighbors.

Young Marie quickly became part of the operation. She kept records of what was planted, what was sold, and which customers owed payments. Without realizing it at the time, she was learning the foundational principles of business—organization, accountability, and trust.

Her mother also carried a vision for her daughter's future.

“You are going to go to America one day and make us famous.”

Those words stayed with Marie as she pursued her education. After earning a government scholarship, she continued her studies and later attended the University of the West Indies, where she studied economics. There, her curiosity about economic systems and development deepened, laying the groundwork for the work she would eventually undertake on a global scale.

Give selflessly, but never compromise your integrity.

Discovering the Power of Story

Before she became an economic development strategist, Marie Gill began her professional life as a journalist. In the **1970s**, she worked as a cub reporter for **Jamaica's Daily Gleaner**, later becoming a financial and human-interest columnist analyzing publicly traded companies and emerging economic trends.

Journalism sharpened her analytical perspective, but it also taught her a powerful lesson: economic progress often goes unnoticed unless someone tells its story.

One of her most impactful pieces, “**Turning Problems into Progress at Elim,**” documented one of Jamaica's early modern housing developments for sugar workers. Rather than focusing solely on construction, the article highlighted how stable housing could restore dignity and opportunity for families.

The story resonated across the country.

It was so impactful that Jamaica's Prime Minister at the time, **Michael Manley**, sent Marie a personal letter of commendation thanking her for sharing the importance of the project with the nation.

That moment reinforced a belief that would guide her career: development is not simply about infrastructure or policy—it is about people.

Talent is universal, but opportunity is not. My mission is to ensure those opportunities each the entrepreneurs who need them most.



A Defining Early Experience Abroad

Before her career in economic development expanded across continents, Marie Gill's first experience leaving Jamaica became an important chapter in shaping her work ethic and global outlook.

Her first journey abroad took her to the **Bahamas**, where the Bahamian government had invited workers from Jamaica and Haiti to support the growing hospitality sector. Marie was given a job as a maid in housekeeping at the Sheraton Oceanus Hotel—North and South—in Freeport, Grand Bahama Island.

She was trained to clean and refresh the hotel's bathrooms and bedrooms with a precision she had never seen before. Customer service was high on their list, and Marie studied the entire training manual until she was familiar with it, putting everything she learned into practice.

While many of her fellow trainees spent their free time enjoying movies and nightclubs, Marie spent her evenings studying or practicing what she had learned.

Her diligence and professionalism soon stood out.

Over time, she advanced within the organization and eventually rose to head the hotel's sales department. It was during this time that she met hotel guests **Mr. and Mrs. John Ritcey, hoteliers from Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada**. They admired her work ethic and attitude and often complimented her dedication.

Before leaving the Bahamas, they invited Marie to meet with them in a common area and offered her an opportunity to join them in Canada to manage the sales department of their hotel. They also offered to sponsor and handle immigration matters for her.

Marie accepted the opportunity and later joined them in Moncton, New Brunswick, marking the beginning of her exposure to Canada and expanding her international perspective.

Looking back, this experience highlights Marie's early foundation in operations and customer service. The precision she applies today while managing complex economic development programs and multi-million-dollar federal contracts was forged in those early years of learning discipline, detail, and service excellence.



**When you empower a small
business, you strengthen
an entire community.**

From National Projects to Global Perspective

Marie's professional journey soon extended beyond journalism. She became involved with **Jamaica's Urban Development Corporation (UDC)**, contributing to major initiatives including the **Kingston Waterfront, Hellshire Bay, and Turtle Beach Towers developments.**

Working on these projects provided her with valuable insight into the mechanics of large-scale economic development. At the same time, it revealed a challenge that would define her life's work.

Many talented entrepreneurs existed within underserved communities, yet they lacked access to capital, contracts, and the strategic networks necessary to scale their businesses.

When Marie moved to the United States and eventually made Miami her home in 1987, she carried that insight with her.

After working with the **U.S. Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)**, she saw an opportunity to help bridge this gap.

In 1990, she founded M. Gill & Associates, a consulting firm dedicated to helping underserved entrepreneurs access the financial tools, technical support, and strategic guidance needed to grow sustainable businesses.

What began as a mission-driven consultancy soon became a catalyst for economic transformation.

Empowering Entrepreneurs to Scale and Succeed

At the heart of Marie's work lies a simple but powerful belief: entrepreneurs succeed when they are equipped with both access and knowledge.

Through M. Gill & Associates, she built a comprehensive ecosystem designed to help businesses grow with confidence. The firm assists entrepreneurs in navigating complex financial systems, securing government contracts, accessing strategic capital, and expanding into international markets.

Over time, the results have been extraordinary.

The company has facilitated more than \$7.2 billion in contracts and financing, helping businesses move from modest beginnings to regional and even global operations.

Marie often emphasizes that capital alone is not enough. True economic growth requires preparation.

Entrepreneurs must be financially organized, strategically connected, and ready to navigate competitive marketplaces. Through mentorship, technical assistance, and strategic guidance, her firm ensures that entrepreneurs are not only funded—but fully prepared to succeed.

Breaking Barriers and Opening Doors

One of the defining milestones in Marie Gill's career came when she became the first Black woman of Caribbean descent to operate a **U.S. Department of Commerce MBDA Business Center**.

The achievement represented more than professional recognition. It symbolized progress for communities that historically faced barriers in accessing economic leadership and opportunity.

The response was overwhelming. Caribbean diaspora organizations, women's groups, chambers of commerce, and community leaders across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Jamaica celebrated the milestone.

For Marie, however, the greatest value of the achievement was the doors it opened.

Through expanded partnerships and collaborations, her work reached even more entrepreneurs, strengthening minority-owned, women-owned, and U.S. veteran-owned businesses across multiple communities.

Integrity is the only currency that never devalues.

Leadership Through Resilience

Every successful career includes moments of challenge. For Marie, one of the most defining came in 2015 when a catastrophic computer crash erased critical company data during a federal contract renewal process.

The loss was devastating. Years of information disappeared overnight, and the contract was initially lost.

But Marie responded with transparency and determination. Rather than retreat, she and her team rebuilt their systems stronger than before, implementing new safeguards and modernizing their infrastructure.

The difficult year ultimately became a turning point.

The company later regained the contract and experienced renewed growth, eventually earning a place on the **Inc. 5000** list of fastest-growing companies

The experience reinforced a lesson Marie often shares with the entrepreneurs she mentors:

Setbacks do not define your journey—how you respond to them does.

A Global Vision for Inclusive Growth

Marie's career across Jamaica, the Bahamas, Canada, and the United States has shaped a uniquely global perspective on economic development.

She believes the future of entrepreneurship will be driven by three transformative trends:

Artificial intelligence and digital technology, enabling small businesses to operate with the efficiency of larger enterprises.

The expanding green economy, creating opportunities in sustainable infrastructure and clean energy. A borderless marketplace, where entrepreneurs can compete globally through digital platforms and international partnerships.

For minority and women-owned businesses, these trends represent an unprecedented opportunity. Marie's mission is to ensure these entrepreneurs have the knowledge, tools, and support needed to participate fully in the global economy.

Do not wait for a seat at the table—build your own table and invite others to join you.

A Legacy Defined by Access

Despite her many achievements, Marie Gill measures success not in numbers alone but in the lasting impact of the businesses she has helped grow.

She speaks proudly of companies that began with only a few employees and later expanded into thriving enterprises employing hundreds of people.

She celebrates entrepreneurs who secured their first government contracts, expanded into international markets, or weathered economic challenges with resilience.

To extend this impact even further, she founded the M. Gill*HER Foundation, an initiative dedicated to empowering women of color through mentorship, education, and access to funding opportunities.

Through this work, she hopes to ensure that the next generation of entrepreneurs will face fewer barriers and greater possibilities.

Advice for the Next Generation

Marie Gill's journey has been shaped by perseverance, vision, and a deep belief in the power of opportunity.

Her advice to aspiring leaders is clear:

Master the technical skills of your industry.

Build strong and supportive networks.

Lead with integrity and confidence.

And always lift others as you rise.

For Marie, leadership is not simply about personal success. It is about creating pathways for others to succeed.

FINAL REFLECTION

Marie Gill often returns to a simple but powerful truth:

Talent is universal, but opportunity is not.

Through M. Gill & Associates, the MBDA Business Center, and other MBDA Programs she later won (the MBDA Export Center, the MBDA Capital Readiness Program, and several MBDA no-bid initiatives), Marie and her team were able to open the doors and establish the MBDA Disaster-Recovery Programs, serving COVID-19 and hurricane victims in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Through her extensive work, and her nonprofit organization—the M. Gill*HER Foundation—she has dedicated her career to changing that reality and making opportunity more universal.

By connecting entrepreneurs with capital, contracts, and knowledge, she has helped transform not only businesses but entire communities.

In doing so, Marie Gill has built more than a successful consulting firm.

She has built a bridge of opportunity—one that continues to carry entrepreneurs toward a future defined by possibility.