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These 20 emerging South Florida leaders promise a bright future for all, combining their savvy, successful business acumen with community-minded thinking

If passion and creativity are critical to success, South Florida's future as a culturally rich metropolis is in good hands. That's the takeaway from 300-plus nominations for the 2014 Miami Herald 20 Under 40 class of emerging leaders.

Those chosen as honorees share a strong bond with the area; many grew up here, and all embrace the diverse culture. Unlike prior generations of leaders who often sought to climb corporate hierarchies, these emerging leaders are self-starters who are creating their own niches, then influencing the larger community.

The 2014 awards are made possible by support from CityYear, whose executive director, Saif Ishoof, was honored in 2010. Says Ishoof, "City Year is committed to unlocking the potential of the students we serve through the transformational service of our AmeriCorps Members. We felt it only right to highlight what emerging leaders are doing in our community, especially to showcase to our students what they can accomplish in the future."

The 20 leaders under 40 honored today are making a difference in the technology, entrepreneurial, arts, law and real-estate communities. They are involved in multiple projects and find a way to balance business passions with community service in a region where ingenuity and diligence can make a significance difference.

Ernie Hsiung, who moved to Miami from San Francisco, recognizes South Florida's unique opportunity. Hsiung has helped organize the tech community, bringing together bright minds to work toward im-

proving the way governments operate: "A lot of us have started to realize the amazing things we can start here and the demand for it. What's great is that we are able to run with it."

Savvy young leaders like Hsiung and Xavier Gonzalez are working to position Miami as a global technology hub. Zalmi Duchman, founder of The Fresh Diet; Wifredo Fernandez, co-founder of The LAB Miami; and business owners Jon Sastre, Fabiola Fleuranvil and Tom D'Eri highlight South Florida's position as an entrepreneurial hotspot. Scott Cunningham, Kareem Tabsch and Emily MacDonald-Korth are working through the culture-sphere to enrich the region. Elisa D'Amico, Alison Smith and Jane Muir are using legal careers as the basis for change. Rebecca Fishman Lipsey, Robin Scott Martin Jr., Jessica Kizorek and Francesca Menes are working in the nonprofit sector to improve life for many who often are voiceless. And Nitin Motwani, Jose Antonio Hernandez-Solaun and Manny Antonio Varas are literally re-shaping our earth.

Even as they stand out for combining business acumen with community-minded thinking, most are making time to mentor the generation below them.

Clearly, this is a group of doers who put into practice the leadership philosophy of Fabiola Fleuranvil: "When I see a problem, I fix it. I don't wait for someone to tell me about the problem." Already recognized leaders, expectations are high for what this talented group of up-and-comers can accomplish.



### Honorees share strong bond with area, embrace diverse culture

#### NITIN MOTWANI

*Persistence leads to success.*

**Age:** 35

**Occupation:** Managing principal of Miami Worldcenter Associates and managing director of Encore Housing Opportunity Fund

**Lives in:** Coral Gables

**Family Status:** Married with two sons

His current project may be controversial in some circles, but there's no disputing that Nitin Motwani is one of South Florida's most persistent real-estate investors.

After spending a decade assembling land north of downtown Miami and losing pieces of it during the recession, Motwani

and his partner are finally moving forward with the massive Miami Worldcenter. The planned mixed-use project is located west of downtown, stretching from Northeast Sixth to Eleventh streets, and from North Miami Avenue to Northeast Second Avenue. Its first phase covers 27-acres and is estimated to cost \$2 billion.

The sheer size of what Motwani proposes, along with the partnerships he has formed to get it done, promises to put him in the lime-light for years to come as the development's public face. Motwani is responsible for every facet of the project, including land acquisition,

zoning and entitlements, financing (public and private), joint ventures and development planning.

"It's an exciting project in a transformative city," Motwani said. "As Miami evolved, so did our vision. It's not easy to get done, but it will make a huge difference."

Motwani's community initiatives have included space and buildout for Venture Hive, a hub for start-ups in downtown Miami that has been used by tech entrepreneurs from 23 countries.

His support of start-ups and his passion for transformation through real-estate development comes from his upbringing. A longtime South Floridian whose family operated numerous motels in Fort Lauderdale Beach, Motwani saw firsthand his mother's enthusiasm and pride in helping to transform the post-Spring Break beachfront.

In a unique way, Motwani has gone back to his base. On the site of the former Howard Johnson hotel, Motwani's Encore Housing Opportunity Fund is developing a \$100 million-plus condo called Paramount Fort Lauderdale Beach. It will be the first oceanfront luxury condo community to be built in Fort Lauderdale since the housing crash, with 95 units starting at \$1 million each. Construction is scheduled to begin next month.

Beyond his business, Motwani is on the board of the Miami Downtown De-

velopment Authority, where he chairs both the economic development and marketing committees. He also sits on the board of advisors for the University of Miami's Real Estate program.

**From Motwani:** "My company [Encore] is developing across the country, but there is not a more exciting project in a more exciting market than this one in Miami."

**About Motwani:** "I have great respect for people like Nitin Motwani who take risks. I am not aware of too many people who could have persisted for so many years with such a complex project. It takes a special person to stay focused, be persistent and get things done."

— **Ezra Katz**, CEO and founder of Miami's Aztec Group  
**CINDY KRISCHER GOODMAN**

