



Mary Anne Franks at Krav Maga Brickell.

INSIGHT
 What else can we learn from you?
 “I used to teach and perform belly dance.”
 Favorite Miami hot spot: “Café Sambal on Brickell Key. I love its pad Thai.”
 Favorite novel: “*Malina* by Ingeborg Bachmann. It’s a meditation on love, language, and death.”

increasingly popular criminal and family law professor. Action-heroine stuff aside, Franks has been making a name for herself as an engaging teacher and appeared on television and radio programs as a commentator on the legalities surrounding an individual’s right to defend his or her personal space. It’s a realm of particular importance to women, who—despite living in an “evolved” society—regularly have to deal with the threat of explicit online retaliation, harassment, and domestic abuse.

“Society puts a lot of focus on women as objects as opposed to women asserting their subject-hood,” Franks says. “I’m concerned with ways that women can create a relationship with their bodies that’s about making them stronger, faster, as well as more secure.”

Franks has always been especially cognizant of the need to defend oneself. She grew up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, which was called “The Most Dangerous Little Town in America” by the British newspaper *The Independent*. “One of the things that was very present for me growing up was that I have to get out of a place like this,” she explains.

Her road out of Pine Bluff would lead to her securing an academic arsenal every bit as impressive as her Krav Maga moves: first a doctorate in modern languages and literature at Oxford University, as a Rhodes Scholar no less. Next came a law degree from Harvard, where she would later take a poorly compensated teaching position. There, she found purpose. “I was working for a famous feminist law professor, and she asked me to rethink what a legal academic could be,” says Franks. Being a professor resonated. She could turn good students into great lawyers, legislators, politicians.

That journey brought her to Miami, but not before a teaching interlude at The University of Chicago. Living in often dangerous Hyde Park, she decided to pursue a lifelong interest in martial arts, specifically Krav Maga. Used by the Israeli Defense Force, the system teaches hand-to-hand combat for controlled defense.

“What troubles me about Florida when it comes to the psychology of self-defense is that our answer for defending ourselves is always a gun,” Franks says. “Krav Maga is a nuanced approach to defending oneself and protecting one’s space. You can respond effectively, but no one gets shot, no one dies.”

You might not realize it from her sunny demeanor, but Franks is always fighting. “I think if you look at any newspaper every day, you’ll see there’s still so much to fight for,” she says. “We can’t afford to become complacent. We’re not there yet.” 1241 Dickinson Dr., Coral Gables, 305-284-5433; miami.edu/wellness **OD**

mary anne franks

THIS UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI LAW PROFESSOR WILL SCHOOL YOU NOT ONLY IN CRIMINAL LAW BUT ALSO IN THE DEADLY SELF-DEFENSE OF KRAV MAGA. BY JASON FITZROY JEFFERS

Mary Anne Franks could shatter your kneecap if she felt the need to. Cracking a rib might even be easier. As an expert in the Israeli martial art Krav Maga, these moves are reflexes to her, which is why she recently started teaching classes at the University of Miami’s Patti & Allan Herbert Wellness Center, which are open to the public.

The classes are punishing and empowering. They’re also a surprise for UM students when they realize the ass-kicking instructor is Ms. Franks, an

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