

## MERIDIAN INTERNATIONAL CENTER LAUNCHES CULTURAL DIPLOMACY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL TO ADVANCE THE GLOBAL ARTS FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING IN TIME OF GREAT DIVIDE

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June 10, 2019  
Meridian International Center

### NEWS RELEASE

Washington, D.C. - The Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy has launched the [Cultural Diplomacy Leadership Council](#), a platform and network for leaders and institutions to strengthen the role of arts and culture in diplomacy around the world. The formation of the Cultural Diplomacy Leadership Council builds on Meridian's 60-year legacy of advancing the arts and culture as tools of diplomacy to bridge divides and connect communities around the world.

"Culture is a universal language that articulates a country's unique heritage and artistic expression," says Meridian CEO Ambassador Stuart Holliday. "Cultural diplomacy builds bridges in a unique and powerful way, and I am pleased that Meridian is strengthening US cultural diplomacy abroad while serving as a window to the world for Americans through the development of the new Meridian Cultural Diplomacy Leadership Council."

Although Meridian Cultural Diplomacy Leadership Council members represent diverse fields, they are united with Meridian in a shared belief that culture has the transformative power to bridge divides, promote mutual understanding and shift misperceptions. The Council will continue to expand in the months and years to come as a force multiplier to harness and amplify the impact of arts and culture in diplomacy and to reach new audiences around the world by:

- Catalyzing partnerships across borders and disciplines, including music, design, film, theater, food and sports
- Expanding global networks and promoting connectivity with the diplomatic community
- Building international capacity for cultural leaders and institutions through the exchange of ideas, best practices and resources

The [Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy](#) partners with the U.S. government, private sector, and the diplomatic community on cultural diplomacy programs such as photo and visual art exhibitions, performances, film screenings and exchanges. During a time of rising global tensions, these programs are important to bring cultures together through shared interests, create enduring connections and dispel common misperceptions.

The Council gathered for the annual [Meridian Diplomacy Forum](#) on Thursday, June 6, and held its inaugural meeting on Friday, June 7. A full list of Council members follows:

[Megan Beyer](#)

Advisor @ The Better Angels Society; former Executive Director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities

Victoria Butler\*

Journalist and Writer

<a href="#">The Honorable Timothy Carney*</a>	Former U.S. Ambassador to Sudan
<a href="#">Meryl Chertoff*</a>	Former Chair of the Cultural Diplomacy Leadership Council
<a href="#">Debbie Driesman</a>	Vice President of the Frank Islam and Debbie Driesman Foundation
<a href="#">Luke Frazier</a>	Founder and Music Director @ American Pops Orchestra
<a href="#">Vicki Heyman</a>	Co-Founder @ Uncharted LLC
<a href="#">Frank Islam*</a>	Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, and Civic Leader
Julie Kent	Artistic Director @ Washington Ballet
<a href="#">Gary Knell</a>	Chairman @ National Geographic Partners
<a href="#">Todd Krim</a>	Philanthropic Advisor
<a href="#">Bonnie Larson</a>	National Arts Council Member @ Meridian International Center
<a href="#">Katie Ledecy</a>	World-Champion Swimmer, five-time Olympic gold medalist
<a href="#">Stacy Lieberman</a>	Deputy Director @ The Broad LA
<a href="#">Shahin Mafi*</a>	Founder and CEO @ Home Health Connection
<a href="#">Ambassador Capricia Marshall</a>	Ambassador-in-Residence, Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center @ Atlantic Council of the United States; former Chief of Protocol of the United States
<a href="#">Kimberly Marteau Emerson</a>	Attorney and Civic Leader
<a href="#">Donna McLarty*</a>	Founding Member and Board Co-Chair @ Vital Voices Global Partnership
<a href="#">Clare Reichenbach</a>	CEO @ The James Beard Foundation
<a href="#">Jennifer Roberts</a>	CEO @ Design Miami
<a href="#">Aviva Rosenthal</a>	Senior Advisor @ The Smithsonian Office of International Relations and Global Programs
<a href="#">Deborah Rutter</a>	President @ John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
<a href="#">Virginia Shore</a>	Former Director of Art and Embassies, U.S. Department of State
<a href="#">The Honorable Ann Stock</a>	Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State @ Educational and Cultural Affairs
<a href="#">Noor Al Suwaidi</a>	Cultural Advisor and Curator
<a href="#">Mei Xu*</a>	Chair @ Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy; Founder & CEO @ Chesapeake Bay Candle®, a Newell Brands Company

*\*Cultural Diplomacy Leadership Council Patrons*

Meridian International Center is a public diplomacy and global leadership institution that strengthens U.S. engagement with the world through the exchange of leaders, culture and ideas. Founded nearly 60 years ago as a non-partisan, non-profit organization, Meridian works with governments, the private sector and the diplomatic community to develop exchange, training, culture and convening programs to help leaders better address the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly globalized society.