

NIAF Chairman Patricia de Stacy Harrison and NIAF Vice Chair Anita Bevacqua McBride “Cavaliere” of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic



Armando Varricchio, Ambassador of Italy to the United States, presented the honor of “Cavaliere” of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic to Harrison and McBride at Villa Firenze, the Ambassador’s residence in Washington, D.C., on October 7.

NIAF Chairman Patricia de Stacy Harrison, president and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), and NIAF Vice Chair of Cultural Affairs Anita Bevacqua McBride, Executive-in-Residence at the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies in the School of Public Affairs at American University, were awarded the Italian honor of “Cavaliere” of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, the highest-ranking honor of the Italian Republic. Armando Varricchio, Ambassador of Italy to the United States, presented the honor to Harrison and McBride at Villa Firenze, the Ambassador’s residence in Washington, D.C., on October 7.

“I am particularly pleased to award, on behalf of the Head of State, Patricia de Stacy Harrison and Anita Bevacqua McBride, the Knighthood of the Order of Merit of the Republic. The decision of President Mattarella,” underlined Ambassador Varricchio, “testifies to their extraordinary personal and professional paths. Loyal to their country, these two amazing women have never stopped looking at Italy, proudly living their identity: American with Italian origins.” The Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, the equivalent of a British knighthood, was established by the second President of the Italian Republic, Luigi Einaudi in 1951, to be awarded for “merit acquired for the nation.” Those recognized stand out in the fields of literature, the arts, economy, public service, and social, philanthropic, and humanitarian activities and for long and conspicuous service in civilian and military careers.



“It is a distinct privilege to receive this honor from the President of the Republic on behalf of the Republic of Italy,” said Harrison. “My grandfather, Charles de Stacio came to this country at the age of 15 from Salerno, Italy. His love for Italy and the United States was only equaled by his love of and devotion to his family. As the leader of our family, he was a powerful role model, inspiring us to work hard, embrace education and always be prepared to explore new opportunities with courage and commitment.” “I am humbled to receive this honor from the President of the Italian Republic,” said McBride. “My thoughts go immediately to my parents and grandparents, and extended members of my Bevacqua and DePiano families, all who immigrated from Calabria and Campania seeking opportunities in America.

Their courage, resilience, hard work, and love of both countries is a constant source of inspiration to me. I can only imagine how proud they would be at this moment and I am moved beyond measure to accept this honor in their memory.” In their respective roles within the highest echelons of American public service, Patricia de Stacy Harrison and Anita Bevacqua McBride have played a key role in strengthening relations between the United States and Italy in all fields. A commitment that continues today within NIAF where both remain an essential point of reference to cement and enhance the close ties between Italy and the United States, through the vast Italian American community and the many American citizens who share a passion and love for Italy. Harrison, in addition to being CPB’s longest-serving chief executive, served in the U.S. State Department as Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, and as Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Harrison is the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Ellis Island Medal of Honor Award in 2017 and the U.S. Secretary of State’s Distinguished Service Award. The author of two books, *A Seat At The Table: An Insider’s Guide for America’s New Women Leaders* and *America’s New Women Entrepreneurs*, she received her B.A. from American University, in Washington, D.C., and honorary doctorates from the American University of Rome in 2002, and from the School of Public Affairs, American University, in 2017. She is a member of the Board of Advisors at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

In 2019, Harrison was appointed to the voting council for the inaugural Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Woman of Leadership Award, which recognizes the achievements of exceptional American women of positive and notable influence on society. In 2020, she was nominated by the U.S. Department of State to serve on the International Task Force of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission, established by Congress to organize the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States. Prior to McBride’s role at American University, her White House service spans two decades and three presidential administrations under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush; and several positions at the U.S. Department of State and White House Management and Administration for President George W. Bush. From 2005 to 2009 she also served as Chief of Staff to First Lady Laura Bush. She is an advisor to the Laura W. Bush Women’s Initiative at the George W. Bush Institute, and to the Sine Institute for Policy and Politics at American University. McBride is a member of the U.S.-Afghan Women’s Council, the International Republican Institute’s Women’s Democracy Network, and the Government Affairs Task Force of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission.

She serves on the Boards of the White House Historical Association and the National Symphony Orchestra. She was one of the longest serving members of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board in its history and served as Vice Chair and Chair of the Board. McBride is a frequent news commentator on first ladies, presidential transitions and the operations and history of the White House. McBride received her B.A. in International Studies from the University of Connecticut and studied at the University of Florence in Italy and at American University in Washington, D.C. She is the recipient of numerous awards and commendations including the U.S. Department of State’s Meritorious Service Award; the United States National Guard and Reserve’s Patriot Award; the University of Connecticut’s President’s Award of Distinction; American University’s Alice Paul Award, and The Ellis Island Foundation Medal of Honor.

About NIAF The National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to preserving, promoting, and protecting the Italian American heritage and culture. NIAF is the nation’s premier Italian American organization serving as a bridge between the United States



and Italy, strengthening mutual understanding through governmental, economic and cultural ties. Education is the core of our mission as the Foundation provides scholarships and grants to institutions and high achieving students to further their education in all fields and connect to their heritage. To learn more about the Foundation and become a member, please visit www.niaf.org [2].

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