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Panel Discussion and Jazz Presentation:

"The Lasting Impact of the Jazz Ambassadors Program in the Americas"

Held in Celebration of Pan American Day and Jazz Appreciation Month

- [Register here to attend!](#) -

Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2024; **Time:** 3:00 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Location: The National Museum of American Diplomacy (NMAD)

Via the 21st Street Entrance of the Harry S Truman building

*at 330 21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20006. **Registration required for attendance.***

*Sponsored by the U.S. Permanent Mission to the OAS,
the National Museum of American Diplomacy, the
OAS Columbus Memorial Library, and
Meridian International Center*

Cultural diplomacy, characterized by the exchange of art, music, literature, and other cultural elements between nations, has long been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting mutual understanding and cooperation. The [Jazz Ambassadors Program](#) stands as a testament to the transformative power of this approach, including in the Americas. Initiated by the U.S. Department of State during the Cold War era, this pioneering program leveraged the universal language of jazz to foster international relations, provoke discourse on civil and political rights, and promote cultural diplomacy throughout the hemisphere.

American jazz, with its roots deeply embedded in African-American communities, emerged as a beacon of cultural expression and resistance, challenging social norms and advocating for equality. The journey of jazz from the neighborhoods of New Orleans to the diverse landscapes of the Americas showcases the power of music to transcend borders, promote social equity and development, and unite cultures. The Jazz Ambassadors Program, featuring legendary musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and Duke Ellington (whose 125th birthday is April 29 of this year), undertook tours across the Americas and other regions, fostering goodwill and understanding between the United States and other nations.

As we commemorate [Pan-American Day](#) (April 14), [Jazz Appreciation Month](#) (known as JAM), and look to the 60th anniversary of the [1964 Civil Rights Act](#) later this year, it is timely to reflect on the intertwined legacies of jazz and civil rights in shaping the domestic and international narrative of the United States. The resonance between the Jazz Ambassadors Program and the Civil Rights Act lies in their shared quest for equality and justice, both at home and abroad. Through engaging expert insights, this event seeks to celebrate music diplomacy's potential to drive respect for civil and political rights in the Americas, both past and present.

Join us at the National Museum of American Diplomacy on April 17 for an enlightening exploration of the Jazz Ambassadors Program and its enduring impact on cultural diplomacy, civil rights, and regional cooperation within the Americas!

AGENDA

Introduction (3:00 p.m.)

- Welcoming remarks by **Allyson McCollum Algeo**, Division Director for Cultural Programs in the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).
- Brief overview of the panel discussion's objectives and themes, highlighting the historical significance of the Jazz Ambassadors program and its contribution to current cultural diplomacy as well as civil and human rights.
- Video message from **Secretary of State Antony Blinken**.

Moderated Panel Discussion

- **Dr. Benjamin Greene**, Historian with the Office of the Historian/Foreign Service Institute at the State Department, shares historical context and insights into the Jazz Ambassadors Program.
- **Carla Dirlikov Canales**, Senior Advisor and Envoy for Cultural Exchange, President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, discusses the strategic implications of the Program in promoting American values, advancing civil and political rights, and building bridges among nations of the Americas.
- **John Santos**, renowned percussionist and educator, reflects on the enduring legacy of the Program, through personal experiences and reflections on its lasting impact on international perceptions of culture.
- **Judge T. Michael Peay** provides his unique perspective on the intersection of legal, diplomatic, and cultural affairs, drawing from his extensive Inter-American experience and jazz expertise.
- **Moderator: Terry Harvey**, Vice President of Cultural Programs at the Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy.

Q&A Session (3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.)

- Attendees have the opportunity to engage directly with the speakers, asking questions and contributing to the dialogue.

Closing

- Closing remarks by **U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, Francisco O. Mora**.
- Summary of key takeaways from the panel discussion, and introduction to the jazz video presentation following the panel discussion.

Guided Jazz Video Presentation (4:05 p.m. - 4:35 p.m.), with Ron Kearns: With curated video highlights and commentary on [archival music diplomacy performances](#), this presentation will serve as a fitting conclusion to the afternoon's exploration of the Jazz Ambassadors Program and its enduring legacy.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Carla Dirlikov Canales is an opera singer and cultural diplomat, currently serving as Senior Advisor and Envoy for Cultural Exchange on the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. With extensive experience in cultural diplomacy and a passion for promoting cross-cultural understanding, Canales has led initiatives at various institutions including Harvard University and Tufts University. As an acclaimed performer, she has graced stages worldwide, showcasing versatility and artistry. Canales is also the founder of the Canales Project, a nonprofit organization focused on using the arts to address issues of identity and culture. Fluent in multiple languages and committed to advancing the arts as a tool for dialogue, Canales is dedicated to fostering mutual understanding and cooperation through cultural exchange.

Dr. Benjamin Greene is a distinguished historian and cultural diplomat, with a deep understanding of American foreign relations and cultural diplomacy. He holds a Ph.D. in History from Stanford University and has held academic positions at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, and Bowling Green State University. Currently serving as a Historian with the Office of the Historian/Foreign Service Institute at the U.S. Department of State, Dr. Greene continues to shape diplomatic discourse with his insights into cultural diplomacy initiatives. He is actively involved in research projects exploring the impact of American cultural outreach programs during the Cold War era.

Robin Ghertner is a musician, percussionist, and Director of the Division of Data and Technical Analysis at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). With a background in research and policy, Robin also leads *Grupo Rompe Cajón*, an ensemble dedicated to sharing Afro-Peruvian folkloric music. His diverse musical journey includes studying with jazz and avant-garde greats worldwide, emphasizing his belief in music's power to unite and educate.

Terry K. Harvey serves as Vice President at the Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy, where he has played a key role since joining in 2002. With expertise in exhibition design, business development, and financial oversight, Harvey has facilitated cultural exchanges both domestically and internationally. Over his 20-year career, he has forged partnerships with over 20 countries, contributing to Meridian's mission of fostering cross-cultural understanding. Harvey holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Art from Radford University, with a focus on studio art and art history.

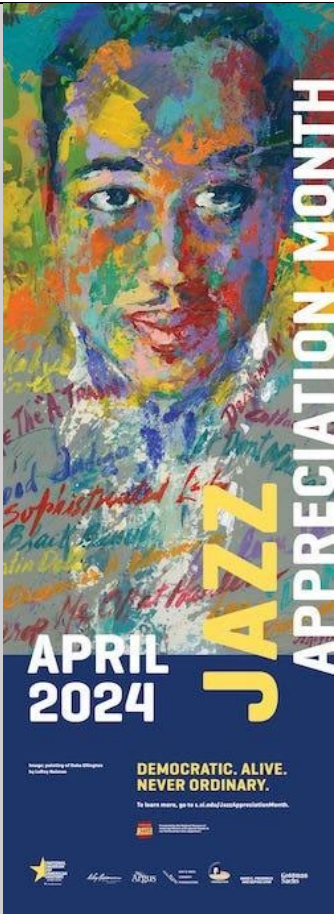
Ron Kearns is a versatile musician, recognized for his roles as a performer, conductor, composer/arranger, record producer, and educator. He holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Knoxville College in Tennessee and a Masters from Catholic University in DC. Ron's teaching career spans schools in Baltimore and the DC area, earning him Down Beat magazine's "Achievement in Jazz Education Award" in 2005. Notable returning students include

alto saxophonist Bruce Williams and trumpeter Terell Stafford. In addition to his educational endeavors, Ron is a performer in the DC Jazz scene, known for his dedication to preserving the traditions of Blue Note Records. He has released five CDs on the Foxhaven label, including "Introspective" in 2007 and "Quiet Nights" in 2012, available on various digital platforms.

Ambassador Francisco O. Mora, Ph.D., is the current U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS), with deep expertise in U.S.-Latin American relations. With a distinguished career spanning academia and government, Dr. Mora has held key positions at Florida International University and served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Western Hemisphere. A prolific author and sought-after speaker, he brings a wealth of knowledge to discussions on hemispheric security and Inter-American diplomacy.

Judge T. Michael Peay is a distinguished legal professional and jazz pianist with extensive experience in law, diplomacy, and cultural affairs. Graduating with honors from Coppin State College and receiving his J.D. from Harvard Law School, he has had a remarkable career journey. In addition to his tenure at the U.S. Department of State, where he served in various senior roles, to his international postings as a legal adviser, Mr. Peay is an accomplished jazz pianist, showcasing his talents at various events. Currently serving as a judge on the Administrative Tribunal of the Organization of American States, Mr. Peay continues to contribute his expertise to the field of international law and diplomacy.

John Santos, a seven-time Grammy-nominated percussionist, is celebrated worldwide for his pioneering fusion of Afro-Latin music. Raised in San Francisco's rich musical traditions, Santos has collaborated with icons like Cachao and Dizzy Gillespie. He's not just a performer but also an esteemed educator, historian, and advocate for cultural exchange. Santos's impact extends beyond music, earning him honors including the San Francisco Latino Heritage Award. As a trustee of SFJAZZ and advisory board member for organizations like the Afro Latin Jazz Alliance, his influence on the world of jazz and cultural diplomacy is profound and enduring.



Photograph Exhibit

An exhibit will also be on display, showcasing photographs used in the acclaimed 2008 exhibit, "[Jam Session: America's Jazz Ambassadors Embrace the World](#)," organized by [Meridian International Center](#) in Washington, DC. The photographs document the remarkable achievements of renowned American musicians who participated in the Jazz Ambassadors Program, offering a firsthand glimpse into the impact of American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War era. This display will provide an opportunity for participants to explore how music serves as a dynamic force for cultural exchange and mutual understanding, and in shaping contemporary initiatives such as the U.S. Department of State's [Global Music Diplomacy Initiative](#).

Live Jazz Accompaniment

Featuring jazz pianist T. Michael Peay and percussionist Robin Ghertner

Upon arrival to/departure from the event, enjoy the vibrant rhythms and melodies which characterized the Jazz Ambassadors as T. Michael Peay and Robin Ghertner perform a showcase of the rich and diverse tradition of jazz.

"America's arts and culture are a major source of our national strength, our musicians captivate the world." — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken

"The State Department has discovered jazz, It reaches folks like nothin' ever has! Like when they feel that jazzy rhythm, They know we're really with 'em, That's what we call cultural exchange! ... Bernstein was the darlin' of Brazil, (and isn't he here?)"
 — [The Real Ambassadors](#), album by Dave Brubeck and Louis Armstrong (1961)



Caption: *"This is a diplomatic mission of the utmost delicacy. The question is, who's the best man for it - (U.S. Secretary of State) John Foster Dulles or Satchmo (Louis Armstrong)?"*
(The New Yorker; April 19th, 1958)