# Melanne Verveer

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**Melanne Verveer** is the executive director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security at Georgetown University,<sup>[1]</sup> a founding partner of Seneca Point Global, a global women strategy firm,<sup>[2]</sup> and a co-founder of Seneca Women.<sup>[3]</sup> She is also the co-author with Kim Azzarelli of the book *Fast Forward: How Women Can Achieve Power and Purpose*.

Most recently, she served as the first United States Ambassadorat-Large for Global Women's Issues, nominated by President Barack Obama in February and confirmed by the United States Senate in April 2009.<sup>[4]</sup> In that role, she directed the Office of Global Women's Issues.

Previously, Verveer served as the Chair and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership, which she co-founded with Hillary Clinton in 2001.<sup>[5]</sup> Vital Voices is a global NGO that supports emerging women leaders who are advancing economic, political and social progress in their societies.

During the Clinton Administration, Verveer served as Assistant to President Bill Clinton and Chief of Staff to the First Lady Hillary Clinton. [6] Among her duties was overseeing Hillary Clinton's global initiatives on women's rights as human rights. [7]

Prior to serving in the White House, she was executive director of People for the American Way, a progressive advocacy group, [8] where she was involved in the passage of civil rights legislation. Earlier, she was Coordinator for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs for the U.S. Catholic Conference. [9] She served on the staffs of US Senator George McGovern and Representative Marcy Kaptur.

Verveer holds a B.S. and M.S. from Georgetown University.<sup>[10]</sup> She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations,<sup>[11]</sup> the Trilateral Commission and the World Bank Advisory Council on

# Melanne Verveer **United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global** Women's Issues In office April 6, 2009 - May 8, 2013 President Barack Obama Preceded by Position established Succeeded by Catherine Russell Personal details Born June 24, 1944 Pottsville, Pennsylvania, U.S.

Democratic

Georgetown University

Political party

Alma mater

Gender and Development.<sup>[12]</sup> She served as the 2013 Humanitas visiting professor at Cambridge University.<sup>[13]</sup> In 2008, the President of Ukraine awarded her the Order of Princess Olga.<sup>[14]</sup> She holds several honorary degrees and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the U.S. Secretary's Distinguished Service Award.<sup>[15]</sup>

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#### **Clinton Administration**

Verveer served as Deputy Assistant to President Clinton (1993-96) and then as Assistant to the President Clinton (1997-2000). (See: Executive Office of the President of the United States) As a member of the White House Senior Staff, she provided advice and implemented a wide range of substantive policies, including judicial selection and legal services, arts policies, health care and women's issues.<sup>[16]</sup> She was instrumental in the adoption of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 and led the effort to establish the President's Interagency Council on Women.

First as Deputy Chief of Staff (1993-1996) and then as Chief of Staff to the First Lady (1997 2000), she served as Mrs. Clinton's chief assistant for her international activities. (See: Office of the First Lady of the United States) These included overseeing her global initiatives on women's rights as human rights, democracy-building micro enterprise, girls' education and other development programs. She organized the first lady's foreign trips to over 70 countries. She helped to create the US government's Vital Voices Democracy Initiative to promote women's economic and political progress. The initiative grew out of the US response to the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing in 1995. It was in Beijing that Hillary Clinton made her historic Women's Rights Are Human Rights speech." Verveer was responsible for much of the planning for the US participation in the Beijing conference.

Author Greg Rushford noted in "Appointments with Power" (1994, Legal Times Books), "No first lady has ever been as deeply involved in the substantive issues of government as Hillary Rodham Clinton....and no first lady's staff has ever had a political operative of the caliber and experience of Melanne Verveer."<sup>[17]</sup>

In her White House memoirs, Clinton notes, "A true policy wonk who loves the complexities and nuances of issues, Melanne had worked for years on Capitol Hill and in the advocacy world. I used to joke there wasn't a single person in Washington she didn't know. Not only was she a legend in the nation's capital; so was her Rolodex...There is no way to catalog the many projects that Melanne masterminded... She also became a key player on the president's team, advocating for policies affecting women, human rights, legal services and the arts."<sup>[18]</sup>

## **Vital Voices**

Verveer co-founded the international NGO, Vital Voices Global Partnership in 2001 to continue the work – begun by then First Lady Hillary Clinton – to support emerging women leaders in building vibrant democracies and strong economies. Vital Voices focuses on expanding women's participation in politics and civil society, increasing women's entrepreneurship and fighting human rights abuses, particularly the trafficking of women and children.

The Vital Voices Global Leadership Network connects thousands of women leaders who have participated in Vital Voices conferences and training programs around the globe. Verveer served as Chair of the Board and Co-CEO until early 2009.<sup>[19]</sup>

Hillary Clinton addressed the Vital Voices annual awards gala at the Kennedy Center every year since its inception. In 2013, Clinton honored Verveer for her service to advancing women's progress.<sup>[20]</sup>

#### **Obama administration**

In 2009, President Obama nominated Verveer to be the first United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the United States Department of State. She was confirmed by the Senate in April 2009.<sup>[21]</sup> She served as Ambassador from 2009-2013, working closely with Hillary Clinton to coordinate foreign policy issues and activities relating to the political, economic and social advancement of women and girls, traveling to nearly 60 countries, including Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She worked to fully integrate women's participation and rights into U.S. foreign policy and to mobilize concrete support for women's political and economic empowerment through public–private partnership, participation in bilateral strategic dialogues, the agendas of multilateral organizations and policy initiatives. During Clinton's tenure, women's issues were recognized as integral to foreign policy and a number of new policies were adopted, including Secretarial Policy Guidance on Gender Equality and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Their work recognized the role of women's economic participation in multilateral organizations, including leadership on "Women & Economy in APEC. Verveer also met frequently with women who were on the front lines of the "Arab Awakening". President Obama appointed Verveer as Ambassador to the Commission on the Status of Women. Security. She also served as the Co-Chair of the US-Afghan Women's Council.

To mark Women's History Month at the White House in 2013, President Obama recognized Verveer's achievements and noted that he was making the position of Ambassador for Global Women's Issues permanent. He issued a presidential memorandum to that effect. [26]

Obama said, "We're also seeing expanded opportunity for women to reach their full potential around the world. That's in large part because four years ago, a former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a tireless advocate for women herself, designated an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues whose sole job it is to make sure that women and girls are a central part of every aspect of our foreign policy, that their concerns are considered at the highest level of our diplomatic decision-making. For four years, the incredible Melanne Verveer held that role. We're so grateful for her service, along with the millions of women around the world that she helped to amplify and helped to fight alongside on the causes that are so important." [27]

## Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security seeks to enhance national and global security by documenting the crucial role women play in peace-building and security through research and scholarship and by engaging global leaders from government, civil society and the private sector in conversations on the urgent issues of our times. Hillary Clinton is the honorary founding chair of the Institute. [28]

### **Fast Forward**

Fast Forward: How Women Can Achieve Power and Purpose is co-authored by Verveer and Azzarelli and will be published in October 2015 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. The book features a foreword by Hillary Rodham Clinton and showcases how some of the world's most powerful women are using their growing economic power to

create success and meaning in their lives while building a better world. [29]

## Recognition

- US Secretary of State, Award for Distinguished Service (2013)
- Global Partnership for Afghanistan, Seeding the Future Award (2013)<sup>[30]</sup>
- International Center for Research on Women, Champions for Change Leadership Award (2013)<sup>[31]</sup>
- Virtue Foundation, Humanitarian Award (2013)<sup>[32]</sup>
- Earth Day Network, Women Green Economy Leadership Award (2013)<sup>[33]</sup>
- IREX, Founder's Day Award (2013)<sup>[34]</sup>
- Achiana, Leadership Award (2013)
- I Live 2 Lead Trailblazer Award (2013)
- Global Fairness Award (2012)<sup>[35]</sup>
- Nizami Ganjavi International Award (2012)<sup>[36]</sup>
- Fast Company, 60 Influencers Who are Changing the World (2012)<sup>[37]</sup>
- Francophone Ambassadors Award (2012)
- Newsweek, 150 Fearless Women in the World (2012)<sup>[38]</sup>
- Enterprising Women Hall of Fame (2012)<sup>[39]</sup>
- Futures Without Violence, Global Impact Award (2012)<sup>[40]</sup>
- Jewish World Watch, I Witness Award (2012)<sup>[41]</sup>
- Oxford University Said Business School, Womensphere Global Award (2011)<sup>[42]</sup>
- Somaly Mam Foundation Award (2011)
- Newsweek, 150 Women Who Shake the World (2011)
- Emily Couric Women's Leadership Award (2011)<sup>[43]</sup>
- Interaction Breakthrough Award (2011)
- Innocents at Risk, Woman of Courage Award (2011)
- Delivered the NYC Bar Association Justice Ginsburg Distinguished Lecture on Women and Law (2010)<sup>[44]</sup>
- AVON Public Service Champions Award (2010)
- Boston World Affairs Council (2010)
- Christian Herter Memorial Award from the Boston World Affairs Council (2010)
- Women's Foreign Policy Group Award (2010)
- National Council for Research on Women, Making a Difference Award (2010)
- Meridian International Center, Meridian Award (2009)<sup>[45]</sup>
- Birmingham Southern College, Women of Achievement (2008)
- President of Ukraine, Awarded the Order of Princess Olga (2008)
- Basilian Humanitarian Award (1998)
- National Council of Ukrainian Women, Public Service Award (1997)
- People for the American Way, First Amendment Award
- American Association Of University Women, Woman of Distinction Award

## Honorary degrees

- Ulster University, Northern Ireland (2013)
- Franklin and Marshall (2013)
- Smith College (2013)
- Agnes Scott College (2011)

# Boards of directors and distinguished membership

- Asia Foundation (Board)
- Atlantic Council (Board)
- Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (Board)
- World Bank Advisory Council on Gender and Development (Board)
- National Endowment for Democracy (Board)
- Trilateral Commission (Member)
- Council on Foreign Relations (Member)

#### **Published articles**

- "Closing the Internet Gender Gap," Huffington Post<sup>[46]</sup>
- "Why Women Are a Foreign Policy Issue," Foreign Policy<sup>[47]</sup>
- "Lift Up Women to Lift Up the World," CNN<sup>[48]</sup>
- "At Davos: Investing in Women Emerges as a Business Strategy," The Daily Beast [49]
- "Our Commitment to Afghan Women," The Huffington Post<sup>[50]</sup>
- "Eleven Words," The Huffington Post<sup>[51]</sup>
- "Celebrating the Power of Collaboration," Business Fight Poverty<sup>[52]</sup>

#### Personal

Verveer was born in Pottsville, Pennsylvania.<sup>[53]</sup> She is married to Philip Verveer, a Washington communications lawyer who served as Ambassador and U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information policy (2009-2013). They have three grown children and two granddaughters.

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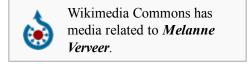
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## **External links**

- Bio at Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (http://gi wps.georgetown.edu/about/staff/)
- Seneca Point Global (http://www.senecapointglobal.com/pages/Who WeAre)



Diplomatic posts		
New office	United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues 2009–2013	Succeeded by Catherine Russell

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