

La Renaissance Française, USA Awards Ceremony and Reception

under the auspices of

Cédrik Fouriscot

Consul Général de France à New York



Thursday, April 16, 2026

**Consulate of France in New York
934 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021**

La Renaissance Française: Its History, Mission, and Evolution

La Renaissance Française was founded in 1916 as a private cultural organization by French president Raymond Poincaré in anticipation of the allied victory in World War I. Its original mission was to facilitate a return to French language and culture in the regions of Alsace and Moselle after years of instability. As this objective was accomplished between the two world wars, the association was recognized as a public non-profit organization benefiting from the patronage of the Head of State and the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of the Interior, of Defense, and of Education and authorized to confer honors and decorations.

In the 1980s, the organization expanded its mission to embrace the promotion of the French language and francophone cultures worldwide, affirming its role as a foundation of humanism and respect for all beliefs and nationalities. Its motto is *Culture, Solidarité, and Francophonie*.

Today, La Renaissance Française fosters peace by promoting knowledge and culture while protecting heritage and reflecting customs. Guided by dialogue and mutual respect, it supports regional traditions, traditional crafts, and francophone communities worldwide through its 57 delegations across five continents. The international delegations actively encourage meaningful encounters between francophone cultures and those of the countries in which they themselves operate.

The American Delegation: Its Founding, Leadership, and Purpose

The American Delegation of La Renaissance Française was founded in 2009 through the initiative of Antoine Guerrier de Dumast, former President of La Renaissance Française, together with Jane Robert of St. Louis, Missouri. Jane Robert served as the Delegation's founding president, and its first official meeting was held on October 9, 2009, at La Maison Française at New York University, hosted by Professor Tom Bishop.

In recognition of her leadership, Jane Robert was named Honorary Life President. She was succeeded in 2014 by Bernard Duhaime of Omaha, Nebraska, under whose tenure the organization achieved 501(c)3 non-profit status, launched the Delegation's website, and established a small grants program supporting projects aligned with the mission of La Renaissance Française. In February 2025, Margot Steinhart of Glenview, Illinois, became president, continuing close collaboration with the Paris organization and awarding small grants, while expanding partnerships with French-related organizations to strengthen visibility and engagement.

Founded in the spirit of cultural exchange, **La Renaissance Française, USA**, is a non-profit 501(c)3 educational and charitable organization dedicated to promoting the French language and francophone cultures throughout the United States. It fosters global understanding by honoring individuals whose actions and achievements uphold these values.

La Renaissance Française, USA
Delegation of La Renaissance Française in the United States

Awards Ceremony

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Program

Welcome by Cédrik Fouriscot
Consul Général de France à New York

Legacy of La Renaissance Française by Margot Steinhart
President, Delegation in the United States

Recognition of Honorees and Presentation of Medals
Consul Général Fouriscot and President Steinhart

Vin d'honneur

Medal Recipients

La Médaille d'or du Rayonnement culturel—Linda Witt

La Médaille d'or des Valeurs francophones—Agnès Ndiaye Tounkara

La Médaille d'or de Solidarité et Valeur—Francine Saltoun

La Médaille d'or de La Renaissance Française—Donald Zilkha

La Renaissance Française, USA, expresses its appreciation to Consul Général Cédrik Fouriscot for his warm welcome at the Consulate of France in New York.



Donald Zilkha

La Médaille d'or de La Renaissance Française

This medal distinguishes persons who have rendered eminent and exceptional service in areas supported by this institution. Eligibility depends on previous awards bestowed by France.



Donald Zilkha, born in New York, has cultivated a lifelong connection to French culture. Educated at the Lycée Français de New York, he spent summers with his family in Paris, Normandy, and the Pays Basque. He later attended Wesleyan University (Connecticut), where he wrote his senior thesis in French—*Paris 1789-1792: Une Révolution manquée*—analyzing the shift of power from elite institutions to popular rule through research into contemporary police reports and arrest records.

After graduating, Donald joined JP Morgan in New York and eventually moved to Paris as co-head of the Mergers and Acquisitions department. Living in France deepened his interest in food and wine: he took courses at La Varenne cooking school, studied at the Académie du Vin, and traveled widely to explore regional traditions. Upon returning to New York, he maintained a studio apartment in the *7ème arrondissement* in Paris and continued to divide his time between the two cities. His enthusiasm for wine led him to join several distinguished societies, including Les Chevaliers du Tastevin and La Commanderie de Bordeaux, where he served as *Maître*. In 2008, he co-founded la Commanderie des Costes du Rhône. He also chaired Les XXVI, a food and wine society that invited leading figures in art, literature, and politics to speak at its dinners. His passion culminated in the publication of *Les Crus Bourgeois du Médoc*, a guide highlighting under-recognized Bordeaux wines.

Donald served on the Board of the French Institute Alliance Française (FIAF), where he helped shape a strategic plan to enhance the use of its 60th Street building, developed a sustainable model for its *maternelle*, and championed efforts to bring the Cannes Film Festival to New York. In recognition of his contributions to Franco-American cultural ties and philanthropy, he was named *chevalier dans l'Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur* and was later awarded *l'Ordre du Mérite agricole* by the French Ministry of Agriculture.

He remains active in finance and investments and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a trustee emeritus of Wesleyan University, and a member of the Business Council of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Francine Saltoun

La Médaille d'or de Solidarité et Valeur

This medal distinguishes persons who have devoted themselves to public service, or to social works of a charitable, philanthropic, civic or sporting nature, intended to improve the quality of life.



Francine Saltoun, born in Paris, received a Fulbright scholarship to come to the U.S. after graduating from the Sorbonne. Francine has dedicated most of her life to promoting French culture and language in the U.S. as well as fostering Franco-American friendship and understanding through public service. For her exceptional service, she was named *chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques* and *chevalier dans l'Ordre national du Mérite*.

Francine's dedication to enriching her community is best reflected in her involvement at the Alliance Française de Chicago. Francine was named to the Alliance's Board of Directors in 1982. Francine's experience was instrumental in creating the Award Towards Excellence Scholarship Program, establishing an unprecedented partnership with Chicago Public Schools. Each year, over 60 public high school students from under-resourced communities meet weekly at the Alliance for French language and cultural enrichment classes. Students compete to receive scholarship trips to France. Through this program, students with diverse backgrounds improve their academic performance and increase their self-esteem while perfecting their foreign language skills. The program has served as a model for other Alliances Françaises. Francine continues to spend countless hours leading this program.

In the sixty years Francine has lived in the U.S. as a teacher, wife, and parent, she has passionately launched initiatives to expose students to her French heritage. Settling in Chicago after graduating from the University of Wisconsin with a Master's in French, she was hired as a teacher at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois. Shortly thereafter, the school learned it was illegal to hire a non-U.S. citizen. This prompted Francine to work with Illinois Senator Charles Percy to modify the law so a non-citizen could work in public schools. Francine also taught at Lake Forest College (Illinois) and the University of Maryland. Francine was the founder of the Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES) program in Montgomery County, Maryland, in 1974, a program which thrives today. For 10 years, she organized and led small groups on cultural trips in search of la France "profonde" and beyond—to the Pays Basque, Dordogne, Provence, and Paris. Visits to Paris included VIP receptions at the Hôtel de Ville with a welcome by Mayor Jacques Chirac, the Assemblée Nationale, and the Sénat.

Francine raised three daughters and now shares her cultural heritage with her six grandchildren, who





Agnès Ndiaye Tounkara

La Médaille d'or des Valeurs francophones

This medal recognizes those who devote themselves to the development or tightening of linguistic or cultural ties between France and other countries sharing the French language, or to the development of the French language and culture in their country.



Agnès Ndiaye Tounkara is an educator, program leader, and advocate whose career has been dedicated to promoting linguistic diversity, French language education, and the richness of francophone cultures around the world. With over 15 years of experience in teaching, program design, and educational leadership, she has consistently championed the inclusion of immigrant and French heritage speakers in U.S. schools, ensuring that their cultural and linguistic identities are recognized as assets. In recognition of her accomplishments, she has been awarded the rank of *chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques*.

Born in Senegal and educated in France, Agnès brings a global perspective that informs her work in building inclusive educational communities. As Education Expert at the French Embassy in the U.S., she oversaw more than 10 programs nationwide serving francophone immigrant youth. She expanded access to the Seal of Biliteracy, created mentoring and college readiness programs with French companies and leading universities, and elevated the visibility of French heritage speakers through national advocacy and conference presentations.

Earlier in her career, she transformed language and after-school programs at the Alliance Française of Boston and the French-American School of New York, growing enrollment and establishing sustainable initiatives that blended academic rigor with cultural enrichment. She later continued this work as a high school French teacher and World Languages Assistant Department Head in New York City, and now at Sacred Heart Greenwich, where she blends classroom teaching with fostering engaging and culturally sustaining curricula.

Agnès has contributed to works such as *French All Around Us* (2022) and *A Bilingual Revolution for Africa* (2023), and she regularly presents at conferences of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL), and the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) to share strategies for equity-centered language education. For her, the teaching of French is not just about grammar or vocabulary but about celebrating diversity, building intercultural connections, and preparing students to thrive in a multilingual world.

Linda Witt

La Médaille d'or du Rayonnement culturel

This medal recognizes persons who have rendered distinguished service in the following fields: French language, literature, fine arts, science and technology, artisanship, promotion, and visibility of the French patrimony (including traditions and artistic heritage).



Linda Witt has dedicated her career to advancing French language and culture across education, business, and the non-profit sector. With academic training in French and economics, she began her professional path in international product marketing in the high-tech industry, where she helped launch some of the earliest French-language versions of office software suites. Her fluency in French supported collaborations with major French banks and institutions, and she represented her company at global technology expos in La Défense, the business district of Paris, as well as in Hannover, Germany.

In the early 2000s, Linda shifted toward bilingual French-English immersion education. She led the development team at what is now the French International School of Oregon, which has since become the largest French-immersion school in the Pacific Northwest. Her work included managing fundraising efforts, organizing cultural events celebrating French wine, food, and music, and successfully advocating for Portland's first public French-immersion charter school.

Linda later served for a decade as executive director of the Alliance Française of Portland. Under her leadership, it rose to be the 7th largest in the U.S. She launched city-wide film and cultural festivals, and produced the largest Bastille Day celebration on the West Coast. From 2009 to 2024, she also served as vice president of the Seattle-based French-American Chamber of Commerce of the Pacific Northwest, coordinating the region's largest annual Beaujolais Nouveau festivals in both Portland and Seattle. She currently is an officer on the board of the Alliance Française of Seattle, now the 3rd largest Alliance Française chapter in the United States.

Since 2015, Linda has served on the board of the national Fédération des Alliances Françaises USA, including terms as president and vice president. She established a national endowment initiative, negotiated a cooperation agreement with the Embassy of France, and created a series of free online cultural programs during the COVID-19 pandemic—programs that continue today.

Her honors include the titles of *chevalier* and *officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques*, along with honorary membership in the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF).





Kristin Espinasse

La Médaille d'or des Valeurs francophones

This medal recognizes those who devote themselves to the development or tightening of linguistic or cultural ties between France and other countries sharing the French language, or to the development of the French language and culture in their country.



Kristin Espinasse is an American writer whose work has made a lasting contribution to the promotion of French language and culture among anglophone and francophile audiences. In recognition of this achievement, she was named as a recipient of the *Médaille d'or des Valeurs francophones* in 2020. The award ceremony, postponed due to global circumstances, was held on June 12, 2025, at the Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer de France in Paris, under the auspices of La Renaissance Française. Denis Fadda, International President of La Renaissance Française, presided.

Living in the French countryside, Kristin Espinasse is best known as the founder of *French Word-A-Day*, a literary project launched in 2002. Originally conceived as a personal reflection on language and daily life in France, the project developed into a widely followed newsletter read internationally. Through short narratives centered on carefully selected French vocabulary, *French Word-A-Day* has fostered sustained interest in linguistic nuance, cultural exchange, and everyday French life.

Her writing has led to the publication of several books, beginning with *Words in a French Life: Lessons in Love and Language from the South of France*. She has also contributed regularly to *France Today Magazine* since 2005, where she writes a personal column combining narrative essays with bilingual vocabulary. In addition to her publications, she has presented at literary and cultural institutions in both France and the United States.

Kristin Espinasse's work reflects a long-standing commitment to cultural dialogue and literary expression. By sharing French language and culture from an American perspective, she has created an enduring body of work that exemplifies the values recognized by the *Médaille d'or des Valeurs francophones*.



Cédrik Fouriscot

Consul General of France in New York

Mr. Cédrik Fouriscot took office as Consul General of France in New York on June 24, 2024. A career diplomat and specialist in European affairs, he served until January 2024 as an advisor for European affairs in the office of the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ms. Catherine Colonna, and as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary of State for Europe, Ms. Laurence Boone.

Cédrik Fouriscot is a graduate of the Institute of Political Studies of Toulouse (Class of 2000) and holds a master's degree in international negotiations.

He began his diplomatic career at the French Embassy in Cyprus (2007–2009) as Vice–Consul–Chief of Chancery, and subsequently worked for several years on political issues at the Directorate of the European Union at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. From 2009 to 2014, and again from 2019 to 2022, he notably oversaw the European Union's external relations with America, Russia, and Asia, as well as relations with Mediterranean neighboring countries. In this capacity, he contributed to the preparation and implementation of the priorities of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union from January 1 to June 30, 2022.

Between these two periods, from 2015 to 2019, Cédrik Fouriscot served in Brussels, Belgium, at the Permanent Representation of France to the European Union, as a counselor–negotiator on issues related to North Africa and the Middle East, as well as on European defense and security matters, also undertaking a mission as a detached national expert to the European institutions (European External Action Service).

Originally from the southwest of France (Hautes-Pyrénées), Cédrik Fouriscot is a former soccer player for the Tarbes Pyrénées Club and has also competed in tennis. In addition to these two sports, he is passionate about literature, poetry, and cinema.



Daniel Rondeau

Honorary President of La Renaissance Française

Daniel Rondeau is a French writer, editor, and diplomat, born in Mesnil-sur-Oger in the Champagne region. The author of more than twenty books, his work spans fiction, reportage, literary criticism, and political commentary. He was honored with the *Grand Prix de littérature Paul-Morand*.

A former journalist with *Libération*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and *L'Express*, he also founded Éditions Quai Voltaire and directed the “Bouquins” collection at Éditions Laffont. He served as France’s ambassador to Malta and to UNESCO, and was elected to the Académie française in 2019. In 2025, Daniel Rondeau was named *Président d’honneur de La Renaissance Française*.

Denis Fadda

President of La Renaissance Française



Denis Fadda is the *Président international de La Renaissance Française*, a position he has held since 2012. He is a university professor and senior international civil servant with a distinguished academic and institutional career. He has served as an administrator of Université Senghor d’Alexandrie and as Secretary General of the Institut des sciences juridiques du développement. He is an honorary president of the Académie des Sciences d’Outre-Mer de France and a member of the Académie des Arts, Lettres et Sciences de Languedoc.

Under his leadership, La Renaissance Française has expanded its international presence by 22 chapters across Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas, in addition to numerous delegations in France, and has established both its literary prize and the Cercle universitaire international francophone (CUIF), uniting scholars from all continents.

Ambassador Laurent Bili

Honorary President of La Renaissance Française, USA



Laurent Bili is a career French diplomat who has served as Ambassador of France to the United States since March 2, 2023. After graduating from the French National School of Public Administration (ENA), he began his career working on strategic and defense issues within the French government. Over the years, he has held a wide range of diplomatic roles in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas, including postings in Ankara and Brussels and senior advisory positions within the French presidency.

He has served as ambassador to Thailand, Turkey, Brazil, and China, and later became Director-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education, and International Development at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, as well as France's G7/G20 Sous-Sherpa, before taking up his current post in Washington. Mr. Bili also serves as *Président d'honneur de la Délégation américaine de La Renaissance Française*.

Jane Robert

Honorary Life President of La Renaissance Française, USA



Jane Robert, a resident of St. Louis, Missouri, is a Webster University (Missouri) alumna and a nationally recognized leader in French-American cultural and educational exchange. With a degree in French Language and Literature, she has devoted her career to advancing the French language and strengthening international partnerships. She served as president of the Saint Louis-Lyon Sister Cities, Inc. and completed six years as national president of the Federation of Alliances Françaises USA. In recognition of her exceptional service, she was awarded the *Légion d'honneur* by the French government and was also named *chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques*.

Her career included teaching French at universities and secondary schools and leading initiatives focused on education, peacebuilding, and community integration. Jane participated in the founding of the American Friends of the Musée d'Orsay and the St. Louis Language Immersion School for disadvantaged learners to study French and Spanish. She was the founder of the American Delegation of La Renaissance Française and served six years as president and serves as *Présidente d'honneur à vie de La Renaissance Française, USA*.

La Renaissance Française, USA extends its sincere appreciation to those who have contributed generously since our last ceremony to sustain the mission of the American Delegation.

Sorbonne \$50-\$99

Claudia Hommel and Cappy Kidd

Reid Lewis

David Reithoffer

Nicole Yancey

Versailles \$500-\$999

Bernard and Rosemary Duhaime

Mary and John Emory

Liza Forshaw

Margot Steinhart

Linda Witt

Chantilly \$100-\$249

Lance and Mary Evans

Michael Neiberg

Julie Ripoll

Elizabeth Stribling Robinson

Madeline and Richard Turan

Élysées \$1,000+

Adèle Bufford Baker

Sherry and Robert Johnson

Elaine Uzan Leary

Jane and Bruce Robert

George and Jeri Sape

Matt Wyatt

Fontainebleau \$250-\$499

Rebecca and Jean-Paul Valette

Eileen Walvoord

We gratefully acknowledge George Sape for his generous sponsorship of the 2026 reception of La Renaissance Française, USA.

La Renaissance Française, USA, Past Honorees

La Médaille d'or de La Renaissance Française

- Eileen Walvoord, Evanston, Illinois (2024)
Margot Steinhart, Ph.D., Glenview, Illinois (2023)
Elizabeth Stribling, New York, New York (2023)
Bernard Duhaime, Omaha, Nebraska (2021)
Miles Morgan, New York New York (2019)
Yann Coatanlem, New York, New York (2018)
Ariane Daguin, Union, New Jersey (2017)
Spencer Hays, Nashville, Tennessee (2016)
Nicole Yancey, Newport News, Virginia (2015)
Ronald W. Tobin, Ph.D., Santa Barbara, California (2014)
Élyane Dezon-Jones, Ph.D., Sarasota, Florida (2014)
Robert D. Peckham, Ph.D., Martin, Tennessee (2013)
Elizabeth Rohatyn, New York, New York (2012)
Jane and Bruce Robert, St. Louis, Missouri (2012)
Ambassador Craig Roberts Stapleton, Greenwich, Connecticut (2011)
Amory Houghton, Corning, New York (2010)
Rebecca Valette, Ph.D., Newton, Massachusetts (2010)

La Médaille d'or du Rayonnement culturel

- Cara Black, San Francisco, California (2024)
Dennis Stroughmatt, Albion, Illinois (2020)
James Baker, Ste. Geneviève, Missouri (2019)
Michael Neiberg, Carlisle, Pennsylvania (2018)
Florent Masse, Princeton, New Jersey (2017)
Daniel Brondel, New York, New York (2016)
Daniel Johnnes, New York, New York (2015)
Jerome Henry Rudes, New York, New York (2014)
Bernard Métais, Ph.D., P.E., Berkeley, California (2013)
Ryan Brown, Washington, DC (2012)
Katharine Branning, New York, New York (2011)
Hugh Macdonald, St. Louis, Missouri (2010)

La Médaille d'or de Solidarité et Valeur

- Fabrice Jaumont, New York, New York (2024)
Sherry Johnson, Santa Fe, New Mexico (2019)
David Reithoffer, Chicago, Illinois (2018)
Barbara Fales de Bragança, Boston, Massachusetts (2017)
Rebecca Brodarick, Louisville, Kentucky (2016)
Jacqueline Gupton, Gordonsville, Virginia (2016)
Adèle Boufford Baker, Manchester, New Hampshire (2015)
Elaine Uzan Leary, New York, New York (2014)
Claude Lambert, San Francisco, California (2013)
Robin Masee, Brooklyn, New York (2012)
Reid Henri Lewis, Elgin, Illinois (2011)
Lance Armstrong, Austin, Texas (2010)

La Médaille d'or du Mérite francophone

- Gladys C. Lipton, Ed.D., Bethesda, Maryland (2015)
Carl J. Ekberg, Ph.D., Winchester, Virginia (2014)
William C. Carter, Ph.D., Birmingham, Alabama (2013)
Mary B. Emory, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (2012)
Christopher Paul Pinet, Ph.D., Bozeman, Montana (2011)
Albert Valdman, Ph.D., Bloomington, Indiana (2011)
Adam Steg, New Orleans, Louisiana (2010)
Robert L. Miller, New York, New York (selected by Delegation in Italy) (2010)

La Médaille d'or des Valeurs francophones

- Kristin Espinasse, La Ciotat, France (2025)
Claudia Hommel, Chicago, Illinois (2024)
Robert Selig, Holland, Michigan (2019)
Lance Donaldson–Evans, Media, Pennsylvania (2018)
Marie–Christine Weidman Koop, Ph.D., Denton, Texas (2017)
David Graham, Morrisonville, New York (2016)

La Renaissance Française Delegation in the United States

Board of Directors



Margot Steinhart
Glenview, Illinois
President



Matt Wyatt
Nashville, Tennessee
Treasurer



Eileen Walvoord
Evanston, Illinois
Vice President



Jane Robert
St. Louis, Missouri
Honorary Life President



Liza Forshaw
St. Louis, Missouri
Secretary



Adele Boufford Baker
Manchester, New Hampshire



Elaine Uzan Leary
New York, New York



Mary Emory
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



George Sape
New York, New York



The Emblem of La Renaissance Française

The goddess Victoria is the equivalent in Ancient Rome of the Greek Nike, who personifies triumph.

For La Renaissance Française, she represents victory over ignorance and action for peace, for the dissemination of knowledge and culture, encounter and exchange.

At La Renaissance Française, the leitmotif is “Peace through knowledge and culture.”

La Renaissance Française, USA

Website: <http://larenaissancefrancaiseusa.org>

Email: bonjour@larenaissancefrancaiseusa.org