

## March 8. Honoring Ten Women from Ten Different Countries

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On the eve of International Women's Day, ten extraordinary women dedicated to their communities were honored by the Society of Foreign Consuls in NY at the Polish Consulate. Among them director of the Gagosian Gallery, Valentina Castellani

On the eve of [International Women's Day](#) [2], the [Polish Consulate](#) [3] filled up with a very international crowd, as the [Society of Foreign Consuls in New York](#) [4] held a celebratory reception honoring ten women from ten different countries.

What unifies all of the ten honorees is their dedication and commitment to their immigrant communities. Each of the ten award recipients has excelled in her field, which range from medicine to journalism to fashion design, but most of all of them shared their success with their community.

Society of Foreign Consuls in NY, founded in 1925, has since become the world's largest consular corps, comprising 110 Consulates, Consulates General and Honorary Consulates based in New York



City.

This was certainly represented during last night's event in the presence of dignitaries from more than ten countries and a widely international audience which gathered to celebrate the achievements of the honorees.

This year's award recipients were: Croatian born, [Milka Zepina](#) [5] for her achievements in promoting the Croatian language in the United States as well as for her involvement in the organization of anti-war demonstrations and pleading the recognition of Croatia as an independent state.

The Republic of Cyprus has nominated [Effie Lekas](#) [6], the Assistant Director at Queens College Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies who actively participates in the promotion and recognition of Greek culture in the US. Similarly,

The Republic of Kazakhstan nominated Azhara Mestler for her efforts in promoting Kazakhstan culture in New York and her devotion to the immigrant community of her country.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria presented a candidate who is an innovative makeup artist, [Khuraira Musa](#) [7]. Not only is she a pioneer airbrush makeup artist and a successful business woman, but also a vast supporter of breast cancer survivors, sickle cell anemia sufferers and lends a helping hand with African youth educational programs.

[Menchu Sanchez](#) [8] was the award recipient hailing from The Republic of Philippines. Ms. Sanchez, a registered nurse is responsible for saving the lives of over 60 high risk pediatric patients by leading the evacuation of NYU Langone Medical Center during the Sandy Storm Emergency.

The hosting country, Poland, nominated [Karolina Zmarlak](#) [9], a young fashion designer whose concentration lies in modernist tailoring, refined, architectural construction and innovative fabrics while communicating the aesthetic through Eastern European minimalism. The Honorable Consul General of the Republic of Poland, Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka proudly wore one of her creations that evening.

The Russian Federation awarded [Marina Adamovitch](#) [10], the first female Editor-in-Chief of The New Review (Novyj Zhurnal), the oldest Russian immigrant publication. She is also the organizer and curator of the Russian Documentary Film Festival in NY.

[Katarina Novakova](#) [11], a Director of Relations at Blue Horizon International, a health care consulting company received the award after the nomination by her native Republic of Slovakia for her work in the non-profit organization as well for demonstrating to be a great leader in the Slovak community and a role model for young women.

The Republic of Turkey nominated [Pinar E. Atakent, M.D](#) [12]. Clinical Professor and Chairman of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn she focuses on building bridges between her native Turkey and the USA.

Italy named [Valentina Castellani](#) [13] as this year's recipient. Born in Boston to Italian parents, Valentina grew up in Turin where she graduated magna cum laude in Greek Archeology and History of Art before moving to New York twelve years ago and becoming the director of the famous Gagolian Gallery.

Valentina Castellani proudly spoke of her work and her achievements: "I have four Picasso exhibits under my belt, but what I am most proud of is the light I was able to shed onto the work of Piero Manzoni on this side of the Atlantic. The Manzoni exhibit, a first show of the artist's works in America was extremely well received by both the public and the critics." "Our exhibits are free to the public and it feels great to be able to offer that," she added.

Lucia Pasqualini, the Italian Vice Consul presented the award to Valentina. "New York is an extremely demanding city whether you are a man or a woman. One has to work and work very hard. And when you think about it, women are the ones that have to make everything work, create an equilibrium



between family life and a career, and we all know it is the woman that coordinates a household. Yet here, women have excelled in every sector, being that of finance, science or art" she stated.

i-Italy was able to interview a guest of honor Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney who told us: "I did not realize that it was a celebration for every country, it's really beautiful what happened here, to recognize leaders, especially women leaders on International Women's Day and to celebrate the culture of so many different countries. It was a lovely event, I met so many outstanding women who won the awards, so many important dignitaries, leaders in their countries. It's a very beautiful thing to bring together so many different countries to celebrate the contributions of women, we are half the population, we hold up half the sky, and to recognize that it was a lovely way to celebrate the International Women's Day."

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