

MARTHA WASHINGTON ★ ABIGAIL ADAMS ★ MARTHA JEFFERSON  
 ★ DOLLEY MADISON ★ ELIZABETH MONROE ★ LOUISA ADAMS ★  
 RACHEL JACKSON ★ HANNAH VAN BUREN ★ ANNA HARRISON  
 ★ LETITIA TYLER ★ JULIA TYLER ★ SARAH POLK ★  
 MARGARET TAYLOR ★ ABIGAIL FILLMORE ★ JANE PIERCE ★  
 HARRIET LANE ★ MARY TODD LINCOLN ★ ELIZA JOHNSON  
 ★ JULIA GRANT ★ LUCY HAYES ★ LUCRETIA GARFIELD ★ ELLEN  
 ARTHUR ★ FRANCES CLEVELAND ★ CAROLINE HARRISON ★  
 IDA MCKINLEY ★ EDITH ROOSEVELT ★ HELEN TAFT ★ ELLEN WILSON  
 ★ EDITH WILSON ★ FLORENCE HARDING ★ GRACE COOLIDGE ★  
 LOU HOOVER ★ ELEANOR ROOSEVELT ★ ELIZABETH "BESS" TRUMAN  
 ★ MAMIE EISENHOWER ★ JACQUELINE KENNEDY ★ CLAUDIA "LADY  
 BIRD" JOHNSON ★ PATRICIA "PAT" NIXON ★ ELIZABETH "BETTY  
 FORD" ★ ROSALYN CARTER ★ NANCY REAGAN ★ BARBARA BUSH  
 ★ HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON ★ LAURA BUSH ★ MICHELLE OBAMA ★  
 MARTHA WASHINGTON ★ *Conference Series* ★ MARTHA JEFFERSON  
 ★ DOLLEY MADISON ★ ELIZABETH MONROE ★ LOUISA ADAMS ★

# THE LEGACIES OF AMERICA'S FIRST LADIES

*Conference Series*



RACHEL JACKSON ★ HANNAH VAN BUREN ★ ANNA HARRISON  
 ★ LETITIA TYLER ★ JULIA TYLER ★ SARAH POLK ★  
 MARGARET TAYLOR ★ ABIGAIL FILLMORE ★ JANE PIERCE ★  
 HARRIET LANE ★ MARY TODD LINCOLN ★ ELIZA JOHNSON  
 ★ JULIA GRANT ★ LUCY HAYES ★ LUCRETIA GARFIELD ★ ELLEN  
 ARTHUR ★ FRANCES CLEVELAND ★ CAROLINE HARRISON ★  
 IDA MCKINLEY ★ EDITH ROOSEVELT ★ HELEN TAFT ★ ELLEN WILSON  
 ★ EDITH WILSON ★ FLORENCE HARDING ★ GRACE COOLIDGE ★  
 LOU HOOVER ★ ELEANOR ROOSEVELT ★ ELIZABETH "BESS" TRUMAN  
 ★ MAMIE EISENHOWER ★ JACQUELINE KENNEDY ★ CLAUDIA "LADY  
 BIRD" JOHNSON ★ PATRICIA "PAT" NIXON ★ ELIZABETH "BETTY  
 FORD" ★ ROSALYN CARTER ★ NANCY REAGAN ★ BARBARA BUSH  
 ★ HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON ★ LAURA BUSH ★ MICHELLE OBAMA ★



SCHOOL of PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
 AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC



Dear friends,

Throughout our nation's history, America's first ladies have influenced our politics, domestic policy, and global diplomacy. American University has a proud history of hosting first ladies on campus and of recognizing their valuable role.

In March 2011, American University held the inaugural Legacies of America's First Ladies conference to honor the significant contributions these women have made, and continue to make, toward promoting change and improving our society. That event led to a partnership with the White House Historical Association and the National Archives and its Presidential Libraries, launching the Legacies of America's First Ladies conference series. This important series features distinguished guests—White House staff, historians, authors, national media personalities, former presidents and first families, and current and former first ladies—who reveal firsthand accounts and historical perspectives on the work and lives of our nation's first ladies.

Texas—the only state that is home to three presidential libraries and two living former first ladies—provided the perfect place to start. In November 2011, the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum at Texas A & M University held the first of three conferences in that state. The George W. Bush Presidential Center at Southern Methodist University hosted us in March 2012, and the final conference of the Texas series took place in November 2012 at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum.

The conference series continued at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on April 8, 2013.

It is my honor to lead this important initiative for American University and to take these conferences to presidential libraries and academic and historical institutions around the country.

This brochure highlights some of the fascinating insights gleaned from this historic series. I hope you will find it enjoyable and inspiring. And I hope, too, that you can join us at a future conference in honor of these remarkable women.

Anita B. McBride

ANITA B. MCBRIDE  
CONFERENCE CHAIR  
EXECUTIVE IN RESIDENCE, CENTER FOR CONGRESSIONAL  
AND PRESIDENTIAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

## What people are saying

"I applaud American University for bringing together former White House staff, smart historians, journalists, children of presidents, and my favorite former first lady, Laura Bush, to help educate people about the role of first ladies."

—Barbara Bush,  
former first lady  
of the United States

"American University's outstanding series on the first ladies illuminates an area of American history that often is overlooked. The [conference] forums have offered scholars, students, and history buffs a unique insight and some fascinating storytelling."

—Steve Scully,  
senior political director,  
C-SPAN

"The 2013 Legacies of America's First Ladies Conference in Grand Rapids was superb."

—Susan Ford Bales,  
daughter of former first  
lady Betty Ford and former  
president Gerald R. Ford

"[The conference at the LBJ Presidential Library] proved to be one of the most substantive and popular programs in the institution's 40-year history."

—Mark K. Updegrave,  
director, LBJ Presidential  
Library

"I am a proud supporter of and participant in the series."

—David Ferriero,  
archivist of the  
United States

## Sampling of conference panelists

- ★ Catherine Allgor
- ★ Susan Ford Bales
- ★ Allida Black
- ★ Former first lady Barbara Bush
- ★ Former president George W. Bush
- ★ Former first lady Laura Bush
- ★ Steve Ford
- ★ Doris Kearns Goodwin
- ★ Jenna Bush Hager
- ★ David Hume Kennerly
- ★ Dee Dee Myers
- ★ Lynda Johnson Robb
- ★ Cokie Roberts
- ★ Richard Norton Smith

## Past conferences

★ April 8, 2013  
**GERALD R. FORD  
PRESIDENTIAL MUSEUM**

*Grand Rapids, MI*

Former first ladies Barbara Bush and Laura Bush participated in a luncheon discussion with Archivist of the United States David Ferriero. The conference commemorated Betty Ford's 95th birthday and kicked off centennial celebrations honoring former president Gerald R. Ford. Participants included presidential historians and former first children Susan Ford Bales and Steve Ford, who shared intimate accounts of public life and private moments in the White House.

★ November 12, 2012  
**LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON  
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM**

*University of Texas—Austin  
Austin, TX*

This conference featured historians, advisers to former first ladies and presidents, a veteran White House photographer, representatives from the LBJ and American University libraries, former first children, and former first ladies Barbara Bush and Laura Bush, who offered personal reflections on Lady Bird Johnson to mark her centennial birthday. The panelists offered perspectives on the legacies of these women and on family life in the White House.

★ March 5, 2012  
**GEORGE W. BUSH  
PRESIDENTIAL CENTER**

*Southern Methodist University  
Dallas, TX*

Presidents of SMU and American University opened the conference, which featured presidential historians, social secretaries and presidential

advisers, White House photographers, national media correspondents, former president George W. Bush, and former first ladies Barbara Bush and Laura Bush. Through lively discussions and historic images, they examined the vital role first ladies have played throughout our history.

★ November 15, 2011  
**GEORGE BUSH  
PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM**

*Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX*

Presidential historians, senior advisers to first ladies, and former first ladies Barbara Bush and Laura Bush discussed the challenges and opportunities of this unique position. They offered a behind-the-scenes look at work in the East Wing and life in the White House residence. This event also was the first public forum in which these women shared their experiences as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law serving in this role.

★ March 1, 2011  
**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

*Washington, D.C.*

This conference launched a national dialogue on America's first ladies in partnership with the National Archives, Presidential Libraries, the White House Historical Association, and academic institutions. Participants included renowned historians, former presidential advisers, first ladies' chiefs of staff, veteran members of the White House press corps, and American University faculty. They offered insiders' perspectives on first ladies throughout our history, their private lives and public roles, and the impact they have had on politics, policy, and global diplomacy.

- Eleanor Roosevelt visits American University in February 1945. Photo: AU Archives
- Rosalynn Carter delivers a speech at American University in February 1985. Photo: AU Archives
- Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin moderates a conversation with former first ladies Laura Bush and Barbara Bush. Photo: Eric Draper
- Lisa Caputo, former press secretary to Hillary Rodham Clinton; Anita McBride; Dee Dee Myers, former press secretary to president Bill Clinton; and historians Allida Black and Richard Norton Smith. Photo: David Valdez
- Former first children Barbara Bush, Jenna Bush Hager, Steven Ford, and Lynda Johnson Robb. Photo: David Valdez
- Former president George W. Bush speaks at the March 2012 conference. Photo: Eric Draper
- AU president Neil Kerwin addresses the responsibility of academic institutions to take seriously the role of first ladies in our system of governance. Photo: Eric Draper
- Laura Bush and Barbara Bush candidly reflect upon their unique experiences as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law former first ladies. Photo: Eric Draper
- Betty Ford delivers a speech at American University in January 1985. Photo: AU Archives
- Cokie Roberts on a panel at the March 2012 conference. Photo: Eric Draper
- Former first lady Laura Bush and Chief of Staff Anita McBride in the Oval Office, September 2005. Photo: Eric Draper
- Conference participants, from left, Susan Sher, Anita McBride, and Melanne Vermeer—chiefs of staff for first ladies Michelle Obama, Laura Bush, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, respectively. Photo: Jeff Watts



“Legacies of America’s First Ladies conferences are filling a cavernous hole in American politics and history. No place else has the crucial role of presidential wives been so thoroughly and entertainingly presented.”

—Cokie Roberts, political commentator and author of *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation* and *Ladies of Liberty: The Women Who Shaped Our Nation*

“The Legacies of America’s First Ladies conference series is an inside view into the lives of our first ladies. The series showcases how these women used their official role to the benefit of American citizens. Congratulations to Anita McBride, my former chief of staff, who conceived of this program and brought together historians, White House photographers, presidential advisers, and social secretaries to tell the stories through personal accounts of life in the White House. The presidency is about all of the people who join with that president in service to our remarkable nation, from their first lady to their staff. I appreciate American University and the White House Historical Association for their support of this fascinating series.”

—Laura Bush, former first lady of the United States

“I cannot imagine a better way to promote understanding and interest in the experiences of our first ladies.”

—Doris Kearns Goodwin, presidential historian

## About Anita McBride



Anita B. McBride is executive in residence at the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University’s School of Public Affairs in Washington, D.C. She directs programming on the legacies of America’s first ladies and their influence on politics, policy, and global diplomacy. Prior to this appointment, she served as assistant to former president George W. Bush and chief of staff to former first lady Laura Bush. In the latter role, McBride advised the first lady on a diverse platform of domestic and international initiatives, and she directed the first lady’s foreign travel to nearly 70 countries in four years, including historic trips to Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the border of Thailand and Burma.

McBride’s public service spans two decades and three U.S. presidential administrations, with positions at the White House, the U.S. Information Agency, and the U.S. Department of State. She currently is a senior advisor to the George W. Bush Institute and an advisor to several global nonprofit organizations. McBride co-founded the RAND African First Ladies Initiative and Fellowship to strengthen the offices of first ladies across the continent of Africa.

McBride also serves on the board of several organizations, including the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, the U.S.–Afghan Women’s Council, and the White House Historical Association.



4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016-8143

Anita B. McBride, conference chair  
mcbride@american.edu | 202-885-6604

[american.edu/firstladies](http://american.edu/firstladies)

Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies  
[american.edu/spa/ccps](http://american.edu/spa/ccps)