

US ambassador to Vatican named

Michael Sean Winters | May. 27, 2009 NCR Today



A dark horse emerged in the race to become U.S. ambassador to the Vatican. Miguel

Diaz, a professor of theology at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University, was named today by President Obama to represent the United States at the Holy See.

The immediate takeaway is this. Diaz is a pro-life Democrat so his mere presence at the Vatican will disprove the contention of some conservatives that there is no such thing as a pro-life Democrat. If he can articulate the President's commitment to reducing the abortion rate, those in the Vatican who appear disposed to like the President will have more ammunition when Deal Hudson, George Weigel and Co. attack L'Osservatore Romano for their pro-Obama line.

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When tipped off to the appointment, I ran to the library and am just beginning his book "On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives." It is a serious scholarly work, that's for sure. Very detailed, methodical analysis, zillions of footnotes, and a wide range of sources. It is certainly not my cup of tea; it is a little too generous in its citations of liberation theologians for my more conservative theological tastes but I have to say that he does not stray into some of the sillinesses of his forebears. I think he is not quite right on the relationship of nature and grace, but I am wrestling with it.

Appointing a theologian to the diplomatic spot is certainly rolling the dice. Any Pope but especially this Pope cares a lot about theology and it won't take GOP operatives long to find any passages that might offend. (Sonia Sotomayor is not the only one whose writings will be gleaned with a fine tooth comb!) I will point out that Pope Benedict XVI has never described himself as a Rahnerian. 'Nuff said.

THE WHITE HOUSE

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President Obama Announces More Key Administration Posts

WASHINGTON ? Today, President Barack Obama announced his intent to nominate the following individuals to key administration posts:

- Michael A. Battle, Sr., U.S. Representative to the African Union with the Rank of Ambassador
- Vilma S. Martinez, Ambassador to Argentina
- Thomas A. Shannon, Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil
- Laurie S. Fulton, Ambassador to Denmark
- Charles H. Rivkin, Ambassador to France
- Louis B. Susman, Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland
- Miguel H. D'az, Ambassador to the Holy See
- Robert S. Connan, Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland
- Timothy J. Roemer, Ambassador to India
- John V. Roos, Ambassador to Japan
- Christopher William Dell, Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo
- Patricia A. Butenis, Ambassador to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Republic of Maldives.

President Obama said, "I am grateful that these distinguished Americans have agreed to help represent the United States and strengthen our partnerships abroad at this critical time for our nation and the world. I am confident they will advance American diplomacy as we work to meet the challenges of the 21st century. I look forward to working with them in the years and months ahead."

President Obama announced his intent to nominate the following individuals today:

Michael A. Battle, Sr., Nominee for United States Representative to the African Union with the Rank of Ambassador

Dr. Battle serves as the 7th President of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia. He has been an administrator at several higher education institutions, including Chicago State University, Virginia State University and Hampton University. At Hampton University, he served as pastor to The Hampton University Memorial Church and as Executive Secretary/Treasurer of the Hampton University Ministers' Conference, the nation's largest interdenominational conference among African American clergy. Dr. Battle served as a Chaplain in the United States Army Reserve for 20 years, retiring with military honors and a rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1997. Dr. Battle served as Vice President of the American Committee on Africa from 1994 to 1998. He was an Election Observer for the first South African free election in 1994, and also served as a liaison between the Hampton University Ministers' Conference and The South African Council of Churches. He served as chair of The Robert W. Woodruff Library of The Atlanta University Center, and as a member of the UNCF Institutional Board of Directors, the Atlanta Rotary Club, 100 Black Men of Atlanta and the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Congressional Forum Steering committee. Reverend Battle holds a B.A. from Trinity College, a Master of Divinity from Duke University and a Doctor of Ministry from Howard University.

Vilma S. Martinez, Nominee for Ambassador to Argentina

Ms. Martinez has been a Partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson since 1982, where she specialized in federal and state court commercial litigation. Currently, her practice focuses on providing advice to companies enhancing their equal employment opportunity policies and building diversity and inclusion initiatives into their business plans. She served as President and General Counsel of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) for nine years. Previously, she was a litigation associate at Cahill, Gordon & Reindel in New York and also a staff attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Ms. Martinez was Chair and a Member of the University of California Board of Regents. She also chaired the Pacific Council's Study Group on Mexico and served on the advisory boards of Columbia Law School and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California. Ms. Martinez holds a B.A. from the University of Texas in 1964 and a LL.B. from Columbia Law School.

Thomas A. Shannon, Nominee for Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil

Mr. Shannon has served as the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs since October 2005. A career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Mr. Shannon entered the Foreign Service in 1984. Mr. Shannon also served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the National Security Council from 2003 to 2005. From 2002 to 2003, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the Department of State, where he was Director of Andean Affairs from 2001 to 2002. He was U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS) from 2000 to 2001. He served as Director for Inter-American Affairs at the National Security Council from 1999 to 2000; as Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela from 1996 to 1999; and as Regional Labor Attaché at the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg, South Africa from 1992 to 1996. During his career as a Foreign Service Officer, Mr. Shannon also served as Special Assistant to the Ambassador at the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia, Brazil from 1989 to 1992; as Country Officer for Cameroon, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe from 1987 to 1989; and as the Consular/Political Rotational Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City, Guatemala from 1984 to 1986. Mr. Shannon holds a Doctorate and a Master's degree in Politics from Oxford University, and a B.A. in Government and Philosophy from the College of William and Mary.

Laurie S. Fulton, Nominee for Ambassador to Denmark

Ms. Fulton is a Partner at Williams & Connolly LLP, where she has a national practice in complex civil litigation, internal investigations and white collar criminal defense. In 2004, she was named one of "Washington's Top Lawyers" by the Washingtonian magazine. Ms. Fulton is co-chair of the Criminal Litigation Committee of the Section of Litigation of the American Bar Association. She was appointed and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the Board of Directors of the United States Institute of Peace from 2004 to 2008, and serves as Co-Chair of USIP's International Advisory Council. She has been active in non-profits and community organizations such as Bright Beginnings, Inc., Girl Scouts Women's Advisory Board, Alumni Admissions Interview Program at Georgetown Law School and the South Dakota Farmers Union Foundation. Prior to entering the field of law, Ms. Fulton worked on Capitol Hill and as Executive Director of Peace Links and Access, A Security Information Exchange. Ms. Fulton holds a B.A. from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a J.D., magna cum laude from Georgetown University.

Charles H. Rivkin, Nominee for Ambassador to France

Mr. Rivkin is a Member of the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC), a Member of the Pacific Council on International Policy and is active with many other organizations. Mr. Rivkin and his family have presented the "Rivkin Award" at the U.S. State Department since 1968, honoring constructive dissent in the American Foreign Service. Mr. Rivkin joined W!LDBRAIN, an award-winning entertainment company, as President and Chief Executive Officer in 2005. In 1988, Rivkin served as President and Chief Executive Officer of The Jim Henson Company. Previously, Rivkin was a Corporate Finance Analyst at Salomon Brothers Inc. In addition, Rivkin served as an at-large California delegate to the Democratic National Convention for Senator Kerry in 2004 and for President Obama in 2008. Rivkin holds a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations from Yale University and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School.

Louis B. Susman, Nominee for Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland
Mr. Susman is retired and was Vice Chairman of Citigroup Corporate and Investment Banking, and was a Member of the Citigroup International Advisory Board. Prior to joining Salomon Brothers, Inc. in June 1989, Mr. Susman practiced law in the City of St. Louis for 27 years and was a senior partner at the St. Louis based law firm of Thompson & Mitchell. His practice focused on mergers and acquisitions and general corporate law, and as part of his practice, he was a member of the Board of Directors and Management Committee of the St. Louis Cardinals from 1975 to 1989. In 1988, Mr. Susman was appointed by President Ronald Regan to the U. S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, which provided oversight to the U.S. Information Agency. USIA's mission was "to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad." He was a Director of the Center for National Policy in Washington, D.C. a nonpartisan organization that examines national public policy issues. Mr. Susman holds an A.B. from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) from Washington University.

Miguel H. D'az, Nominee for Ambassador to the Holy See

Dr. Miguel D'az is a Professor of Theology at St. John's University and the College of Saint Benedict in Minnesota. He is the co-editor of the book "From the Heart of Our People: Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology" and author of "On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives", named "Best Book of the Year" by the Hispanic Theological Initiative at Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. D'az taught Religious Studies and Theology at Barry University, the University of Dayton and the University of Notre Dame. From 2001 to 2003, he taught and served as Academic Dean at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida. He is a Board Member of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) and Past President of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS). Dr. D'az holds a B.A. from St. Thomas University and a M.A. and PhD in Theology from the University of Notre Dame.

Robert S. Connan, Nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland

Mr. Connan has served as Minister Consular for Commercial Affairs to the US Mission to the European Union since September 2008. Mr. Connan began his international career in the private sector. In 1980, he entered the U.S. Commercial Service. His first assignment was Commercial Officer in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, followed by Johannesburg, South Africa. He was Senior Commercial Officer (SCO) in Algiers and then Stockholm, Sweden. Next, he was assigned as SCO in Kuwait from 1991 to 1992, right after the end of the Gulf War, to rebuild the Commercial Section. In 1992, he was assigned as SCO in Seoul, Korea, where he went on special detail to Beijing China as acting SCO for the first Secretary Commerce trade mission into China. From 1996 to 2000, he served as SCO in Rome, Italy. From 2000 to 2004, he was Minister Counselor for Commercial Affairs for Australia and New Zealand, at the American Consulate General in Sydney. During this period, Mr. Connan also served in Baghdad, Iraq from 2003 to 2004, setting up the Iraqi Business Center as part of the reconstruction process. From 2004 to 2008, he was the Minister Counselor for Commercial Affairs in Paris, France. Mr. Connan holds a Bachelors of Science from Carnegie Mellon University and earned his MBA from University of Pennsylvania.

Timothy J. Roemer, Nominee for Ambassador to India

Mr. Roemer is President of the Center for National Policy (CNP) in Washington, D.C. Before joining CNP, he represented the 3rd District of Indiana for six terms as a U.S. Congressman, from 1991 to 2003. Congressman Roemer served as a member of the 9/11 Commission. He was appointed to the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Proliferation and Terrorism, a bi-partisan commission created by Congress to examine how the U.S. can best address this threat to the country's national security. In addition, he serves on the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Presidential Task Force on Combating the Ideology of Radical Extremism, and the National Parks Second Century Commission. As a Distinguished Scholar at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, Congressman Roemer works with Members of Congress and staff to improve public policy outcomes by teaching on the legislative branch and policy analysis. Congressman

Roemer holds a B.A. from the University of California, San Diego and a M.A. and PhD. from the University of Notre Dame.

John V. Roos, Nominee for Ambassador to Japan

Mr. Roos serves as Chief Executive Officer at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, where he has overseen and managed the global, technology-focused law firm since 2005. Mr. Roos has been a partner at the firm since 1988 and also served in a number of other senior leadership roles. Throughout his tenure, Mr. Roos helped lead the firm during the various waves of innovation in Silicon Valley, from the growth of software and communications to the Internet Age, the emergence of biotechnology to the present focus on clean technology and renewable energy. He has been a leader in cultivating the firm's diversity initiatives, which recently resulted in its number one ranking in the country. Mr. Roos has been responsible for building consensus across all geographies and practice disciplines to develop, communicate, and execute on strategic priorities and growth initiatives for the business. Mr. Roos is a Member of the Dean's Advisory Council at Stanford Law School and at the Stanford School of Education. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Stanford University and a J.D. from Stanford Law School.

Christopher William Dell, Nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo

Mr. Dell has served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Kabul, Afghanistan since 2007. Mr. Dell, a career United States Foreign Service Officer since 1983, served as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Zimbabwe from August 2004 to July 2007. Previously, Mr. Dell served as Ambassador to Angola from 2001-2004. He was Chief of Mission in Kosovo from 2000-2001 and Deputy Chief of Mission to Bulgaria from 1997-2000. Mr. Dell has also served as Deputy Director of the Office of Regional Political Affairs in the Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs from 1994-1996 and was Special Assistant to the Undersecretary for International Affairs from 1989-1991. Mr. Dell holds a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University and a Master of Arts from Oxford University.

Patricia A. Butenis, Nominee for Ambassador to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Republic of Maldives

Ms. Butenis has served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq since July 2007. Prior to this assignment, she served as Ambassador to Bangladesh, a position for which she was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on February 16, 2006, and sworn in on March 17, 2006. She is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, rank of Minister-Counselor. Ms. Butenis was previously Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan (2004-2006), serving with Ambassador Ryan Crocker. Ms. Butenis joined the Foreign Service in 1980. She has served as Vice Consul in Karachi, Pakistan (1980-1982); Vice Consul/Political Officer in San Salvador, El Salvador (1982-1985); Consul in New Delhi, India (1985-1988); El Salvador Desk Officer (1988-1990); and Consul (American Citizen Services Chief) in Bogotá, Colombia (1990-1993). She attended the National War College (1993-1994) and also served at the Visa Office, Field Liaison, in the Department of State (1994-1997). She then served as Consul General in Warsaw, Poland (1998-2001) and Consul General in Bogotá, Colombia (2001-2004). Ms. Butenis received a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.A. in International Relations from Columbia University.

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