



Press Release

National Museum of the Surface Navy Selects Octavia Harris to Receive the 2024 Vice Admiral Samuel L. Gravely, Jr., Leadership Award

SAN PEDRO, Calif. – August 2, 2024 – The [National Museum of the Surface Navy](#) (NMSN) has selected retired Navy Command Master Chief (CMDCM) Octavia D. Harris as the recipient of the 2024 Vice Admiral (VADM) Samuel L. Gravely, Jr., Leadership Award.

The award is given annually to a leader who exemplifies the courageous service of its namesake. The late VADM Samuel L. Gravely, Jr., is broadly recognized for his trailblazing achievements as the first African American naval officer to command a U.S. Navy warship and be promoted to flag rank.

Harris, who currently serves as the subcommittee lead for the Department of Defense Advisory Committee for Women in the Services, is receiving the prestigious award in recognition of her extraordinary accomplishments over her 30-year career in the U.S. Navy, as well as her leadership in military healthcare programs, women veteran organizations, and initiatives regarding women in the military.

“Vice Admiral Gravely was a great naval leader and to receive this prestigious award honoring his legacy and accomplishments is a privilege and the honor of a lifetime for me,” Harris stated. “I am, and always will be, a proud Surface Navy sailor and am truly grateful to be able to continue serving our nation’s military. I encourage today’s youth to consider an enlistment for the adventure, education, and unmatched life experience.”

The award will be presented to Harris during the NMSN’s Annual Freedom of the Seas Gala on Oct. 19, 2024, at the museum aboard the decommissioned Battleship USS IOWA (BB-61), which is moored in the Port of Los Angeles.

“Vice Admiral Gravely’s extraordinary career and legacy as one of our Navy’s most impactful leaders were driven by his motto, ‘Education, Motivation, Perseverance’,” said NMSN Board Chairman RADM

Mike Shatynski, USN (Ret.). “Octavia’s extraordinary leadership throughout her distinguished Navy career and her unwavering dedication to advancing a variety of veteran-related issues through numerous local, regional, and national committees and organizations, makes her an ideal recipient of this recognition.”

As the sub-committee chairperson for the Department of Defense Employment and Integration for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, Harris maintains responsibility for advising the secretary of defense, assessing military challenges and productivity by its members, participating in recruitment activities, and aiding women in the U.S. military in relation to their subspecialties in areas including special forces, combat, submarine navigation, and piloting.

During her 30-year career in the U.S. Navy, Harris served as the first female command master chief of USS Pinckney (DDG 91), and as the first African American and first female command master chief of the Space and Naval Warfare Dominance Command. Following her Navy career, Harris led the Comprehensive Advance Restorative Effort program (CARE) at the Navy Medical Center in San Diego, California, and has served on the Advisory Committee for Women and Children with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as the chair of the Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. In addition to her support of The Enlisted Project, Harris served as one of three ambassadors for the Military Women’s Memorial Foundation, which recognizes women and their service beginning from the Revolutionary War.

The annual Freedom of the Seas Awards event is held in honor of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, considered to be the largest naval battle of World War II. Attendance at the award event, which is by invitation only, includes top leaders from the education, veteran, community, industry, government, and military sectors. For information on sponsorship opportunities, contact Kyle Aube, Director of Development at kaube@labattleship.com.

NMSN operates as a 501(c)(3) educational foundation promoting freedom of the seas and the important role America’s Surface Navy has played in that endeavor. The primary focus of the museum is on community, education, military, and veterans. For more information, visit <https://surfacenavymuseum.org>, or follow them on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#).

About the Freedom of the Seas Awards

The Freedom of the Seas Awards is the premiere annual event of the National Museum of the Surface Navy at the Battleship IOWA. The event is held in honor of the anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in the history of the world, which occurred during World War II. The Awards

honors those that embody the core principles of the American Surface Navy's mission to protect and defend our oceans for the benefit of the free world.

About the National Museum of the Surface Navy

Scheduled to open in 2025 aboard the historic Battleship USS Iowa Museum, the National Museum of the Surface Navy is the museum for America's Surface Navy. The museum's mission is to raise America's awareness of the importance of the United States Surface Naval Forces' role in international relations, free trade, humanitarian assistance, and technological innovation, not just in the past but today and into the future.

Located in the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro, Calif., Battleship USS Iowa Museum is one of the top five museums and attractions in Los Angeles, bringing the ship's history to life through in-person and virtual tours and educational programs for youth. In addition to providing a natural platform for veterans and patriotic civilians to come together as a community, Battleship USS Iowa Museum provides a wide array of impactful programs and resources that support the critical needs of our military and veterans.

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