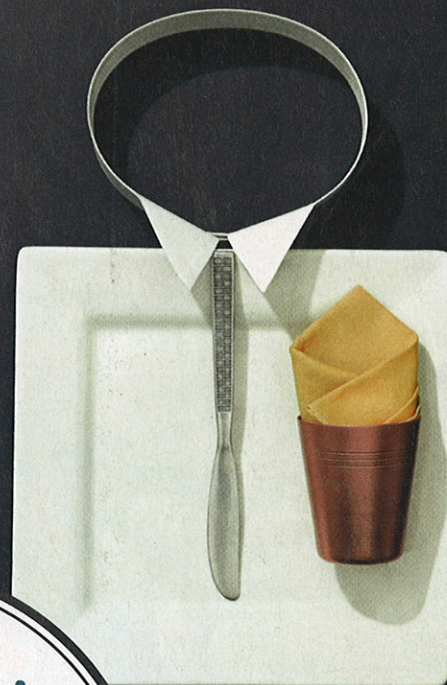


JUNE 10, 2012



∞ ∞  
**The 'new'  
Washington  
dinner party**

BY DENEEN BROWN P.10

*Plus Sally Quinn  
on the end of power*



**CAN SHE BAIL OUT?**  
**@WORK ADVICE** P.4

**TREND REPORT**  
**DRESSING FOR**  
**A D.C. PARTY** P.6

**THEN AND NOW**  
**IN DATE LAB** P.8

**TOM SIETSEMA**  
**CURRY MANTRA,**  
**DOUBLY NICE** P.27



# The 'new' Washington dinner party

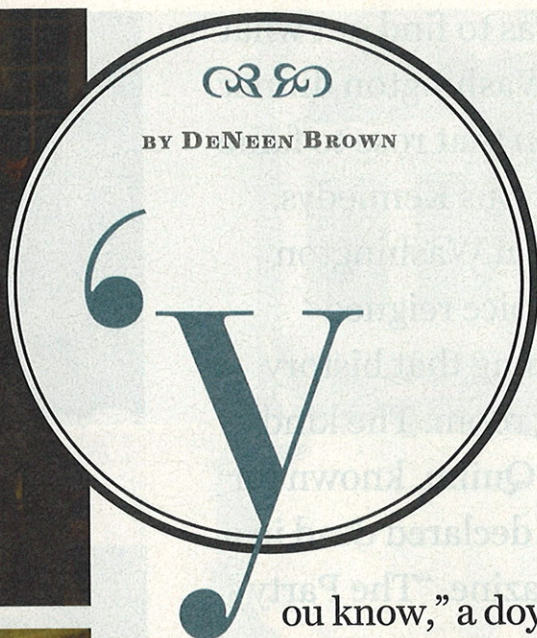
Forget making history.  
Today, it's about making headway.



There may be fewer formal Georgetown sit-downs full of big names, and the goal today is often to promote something or someone rather than to make news. But Washington still parties at dinner. **From top:** Guests converse at an art party at Winston Lord's house; a server prepares for a political party hosted by Juleanna Glover; guests mingle with actress Regina King at a book party at Debra Lee's.







ou know,” a doyenne of the Washington dinner party scene tells you, “this is a very dangerous story you are working on.” ¶ “This is just not something people want to talk about,” a well-known host says. ¶ “If you put my name in there,” a socialite tells you, “I will get [your editor] to kill you.” She smiles, sitting in the parlor of her lovely home. Then she rises, as powerful people often do when the conversation has ended but you do not know it, and you are cordially escorted to a grand door. You notice the maid, who announced your arrival, watching your departure. ¶ You hurry in your conservative pumps down the broken brick sidewalk,



perplexed. All you wanted was to find out what has replaced the legendary Washington dinner party — the fabled institution that rose to fame with the arrival of the glamorous Kennedys. The kind of party where a “real Washington hostess” with a champagne voice reigned supreme over guest lists, hoping that history might be made in her dining room. The kind of party that journalist Sally Quinn, known for her own glamorous dinners, declared dead in a 1987 article in this very Magazine. “The Party’s Over,” the headline read.

If *that* dinner party has been dead for a quarter-century, what are the hallmarks of today’s Washington dinner party? It seems like a simple question, but getting people to RSVP to a request for an interview about the current dinner party scene is proving almost as elusive as getting an invitation to attend one. In fact, those in the know try to convince you that a “real Washington hostess” would never deign to talk to you. “Everybody is a little guarded around Washington,” says one host.

But people used to *want* to talk about the Washington dinner party: Who was there? Who whispered what to whom? Was that his mistress or his wife? Which enemies were served from the same plate? What political deals were brokered? Which literary giants literally duked it out?

That era was defined by the generation of hostesses who made it famous, and “all the people are gone,” laments one former hostess. “Evangeline Bruce, ... Mrs. Pamela Harriman, Mrs. Katharine Graham. They had the most incredibly elegant dinner parties. Five courses. Oh, my. All that is gone. Nobody has the time now. They don’t have time to prepare that elaborate dinner or sit through it.” And guests, she says, “are all about business. They look at their

watches and go home at 9.”

The bitter split in Washington politics has sliced into dinner, too. “Nobody has manners anymore,” one hostess says. And even if politicians were inclined to mingle, Congress’s maddening never-ending campaign cycle has made it difficult.

“The fundraising machine is sucking the opportunity out of more social action,” says Tammy Haddad, chief executive of Haddad Media production company, who throws an annual garden brunch attended by politicians, business people and celebrities. “The traditional salon dinner has definitely given way to ... fundraisers and restaurant parties.”

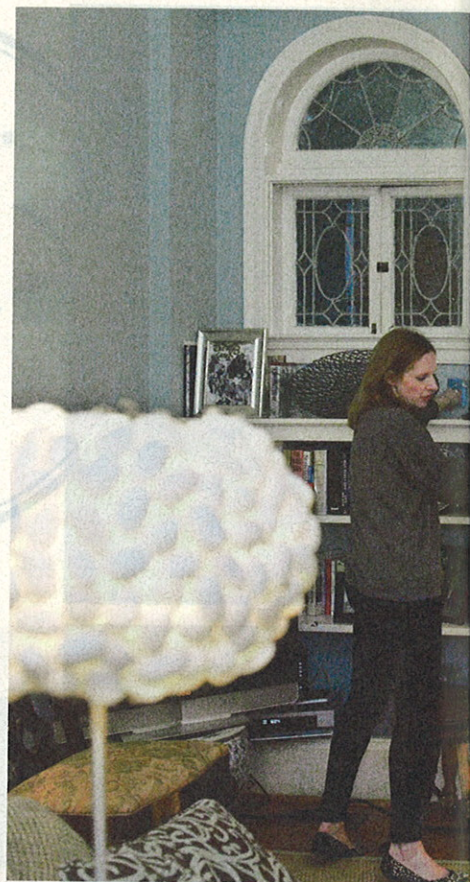
Another factor spoiling dinner: a White House administration that seems to not like to party. The Obamas rarely attend Washington dinner parties beyond their own circle of friends. “The president and folks have famously said they are not in town to go to Washington dinner parties,” Haddad says.

“Everything starts from the top,” another hostess says. “When Reagan was president, they were extremely social. It spilled over into the community at large. And the Clintons, a lot was happening then. And dramatically less

so with George W. And probably Obama has followed suit.”

“It’s a different time and different era,” another hostess says. “That world is gone. It is just like *Downton Abbey*.”

Yet, you know there must be people who still orchestrate Washington dinner parties — and, finally, you find some folks to talk about that. You learn that a new generation of hosts and hostesses has risen to fill the void left by the grande dames. Names that often come up, in addition to those interviewed in this story, include: columnist George F. Will; senior White House adviser Valerie Jarrett; Washington Mystics president Sheila Johnson; physician Sharon Malone, wife of U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder; Rima al-Sabah, the wife of the Kuwaiti ambassador, Salem al-Sabah; philanthropist Adrienne Arsht; Debbie Dingell, Democratic power broker and wife of U.S. Rep. John Dingell (Mich.); Marlene Malek, president of Friends of Cancer Research and wife of Republican presidential adviser Fred



PAGES 10 AND 11: LORO PARTY PHOTOGRAPH BY ASTRO BECKEN; GLOMER PARTY: HOSIS O'CEURES AND WINE PHOTOGRAPHS BY LINDA DAVIDSON; LEE PARTY AND FLOWER ARRANGEMENT PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT MCCLAIN





**Juleanna Glover lights her fireplace. She doesn't try to emulate Washington's legendary hostesses: "That type of lifestyle is not my lifestyle."**

but five days this month," Glover says of her boyfriend, Christopher Reiter, who owns furnishing stores in Washington and New York. "He's happy to hold the baby." (Glover, 43, who was divorced in 2008 from fellow lobbyist Jeffrey Weiss, also has a 13-year-old boy and two girls, 12 and 9, from that marriage.)

Glover disappears into the kitchen — with white granite and a stainless-steel stove the size of a small Cadillac. You grab a wineglass, and a servant fills it with sparkling spring water. You take a sip and absorb the ambiance. The dining room looks like a gallery. The thick walls are painted pale blue, draped in ivory curtains, framed by oil paintings of faraway lands.

Glover is now running around the dining room, twisting blue and white tablecloths on the formal dining table. "They are imperfect for a reason," Reiter explains. "When you lay the plates, you will see just the layers." The party is being catered by Franco Nuchese of Cafe Milano.

You take a bite of fig tart and make small talk with Reiter, 43, who is from Austria and whose stores showcase designer lighting. (Indeed, the lighting in this house is fabulous; one chandelier is made of tiny white silkworm cocoons.)

Glover appears in the dining room — again. She is in full makeup but still no party dress.

"Darling, you are not changed," Reiter says.

"I'm going to light the fireplace."  
"You need to get dressed," Reiter says.

"I am," Glover promises.

In 2008, Glover was named by Washington City Paper as "Washington's best hostess," who, with an electronic Rolodex to die for, is able to pull a bipartisan crowd into her living room. Politico once wrote, "You haven't made it in D.C. until Juleanna Glover throws a party for you."

The accolades rest lightly on her thin shoulders. She seems to have that "I don't know how she does it" life: Four

Malek; lobbyist Abigail Blunt, wife of U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.); Kennedy Center honorary trustee Buffy Cafritz; lobbyists Heather and Tony Podesta; and the ambassadorial couples from the United Arab Emirates, Britain, Italy and France.

The old guard is correct in that the parties thrown by these men and women are a bit different. If the mythic salon parties of old were about private power-brokering, those of today are about public power-backing. Today's gatherings often focus on promotion: of causes, of people, of books. They're often less exclusive, perhaps less scandalous: no Nora Ephron pouring wine on Carl Bernstein, no Norman Mailer punching out Gore Vidal. They're usually more socially diverse, more agenda-driven.

Yet, there are similarities to the salons of yore: Some parties are lavish; some are off the record; some still get big-name politicians and heads of state; most involve networking. You know this because you get yourself invited to a few.



**Hostess:** GOP lobbyist

Juleanna Glover

**Agenda:** Promote power brokers

"Please don't put those there!" People lean against the mantel and before you know it, "their hair has caught fire!"

The caterer scurries to move the votive candles from the mantel. Juleanna Glover is still running around in leopard print slippers and black slacks, only minutes before 150 guests are due to arrive at her seven-bedroom Kalorama mansion, which sits between two embassies.

Glover keeps promising she will go upstairs and get dressed for the party. But there is more to do: set out the silk tablecloths, pour a bottle for the 6-month-old with full cheeks and eyes so blue he looks as if he belongs in a National Gallery portrait.

The baby rests in his father's arms, cooing to himself. "Christopher is holding the baby because he has been gone all





Kiri Te Kanawa performs at a party held by Catherine and Wayne Reynolds. At right are Henry Kissinger and Singapore Ambassador Chan Heng Chee.

children. Good cheekbones. Porcelain skin. And connections.

In this city, connections are the greatest currency. There are only so many degrees of separation from power. Glover throws dozens of parties each year. If you keep throwing enough parties, work a room long enough, you'll get closer and closer and closer to real power. Some call it self-promotion. Glover — a onetime aide to former Vice President Dick Cheney, who has been a guest in her home — does not flinch at the word. "Everything is about promotion," she says.

Glover says she invites guests "who are unabashedly brilliant. The smartest people in the room, who are interesting and unafraid. Certainly not the folks who rely on talking points." Guests, she says, such as Jake Tapper of ABC News; Peter Bergen of the New America Foundation; Simone Bemporad, chief executive of aerospace company Finmeccanica USA.

Glover prefers to throw parties rather than attend them. "I feel obligated to make people comfortable and happy," she says, but she feels no obligation to emulate the legendary Washington hostesses. "That type of lifestyle is not my lifestyle."

You ask why she does what she does. Her answer is unexpected from a woman seen as a power broker. She does this, she says, because she is a single mother

#### READER VIGNETTE

##### The royal kiss

In 1994, long before Kate Middleton had appeared on any royal radar, Sarah Ferguson was a one-woman, redheaded, royal wrecking crew. I was working as a cater waiter and would occasionally find myself rubbing up against royalty. This particular evening I found myself at a dinner for Fergie's organization Children in Crisis, which was being held at the apartment of the mother of Sen. John McCain.

Sarah burst through the door about an hour early, and, as it was a warm, early spring evening, had a bit of a thirst about her. Vodka was produced, and rather than acting like the stodgy, dusty old-landed gentry from which she had descended, she was refreshingly, pores open, in-your-face charming.

The other guests arrived, and the dinner went off without a hitch. As the evening ended, I stood near the door, hoping to give her a wave goodbye. However, Sarah had other ideas and planted a huge kiss on my mouth, which was caught on camera.

It was deleted per her handlers' orders. I guess it was not to be.

Greg Boyd, Washington

who "can't fail" her children.

"I'm hyper-paranoid about doing my job as well as I can. And doing my job as well as I can means knowing as many people as I can. It happens to be something I'm good at." Yet she has no illusions about why her guests come: to connect. "I don't think they come to see me or my lovely children."

Those guests are finally arriving, up the walk, into a foyer papered in pale blue, beyond white French doors. A woman in black guarding the entry reminds you that there are to be no notes or photographs. The party, like so many throughout Washington history, is off the record. For the next two hours, a celebrity financier will hold court in the dining room. The guests will nibble, sip and listen with rapt attention to the powerful man at the head of the table.



**Hosts:** Philanthropists and business owners Catherine B. Reynolds and Wayne Reynolds  
**Agenda:** Promote charity

There should be paparazzi outside Cafe Milano in Georgetown on this Sunday night. Instead, Washington's A-listers slip into the famed see-and-be-seen restaurant almost unnoticed. A passerby on the street might never recognize the collective star power gathering inside.

Catherine B. Reynolds, 54, and Wayne Reynolds, 55, stand at the door of the Domingo Room, greeting guests. The Reynoldses' parties attract some of the biggest names in the city, but the parties, the Reynoldses say, are not thrown for frivolity.

"There usually is a purpose to the evening," Catherine Reynolds says. "Almost 100 percent of dinners hosted by my husband and myself, I would say at least from our perspective, are usually organized around a philanthropic purpose or a cause."

This dinner is thrown to support the D.C. College Access Program, which



provides college scholarships for D.C. schoolchildren. The party, Catherine says, is "all about the people and the conversations." The connections are choreographed. "I don't believe in open seating," Wayne Reynolds says.

Inside the Domingo Room, guests are connecting, as they are supposed to: Chris Wallace, host of "Fox News Sunday"; Rickey Minor, bandleader for "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno"; dancer and choreographer Debbie Allen. The Washington Post's Donald Graham; mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves; former U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell and wife Alma Powell, chair of America's Promise Alliance; and Post columnist Colbert King are talking to Grammy winner Dionne Warwick.

Dionne Warwick! If you could only get to her side. But unless you push and elbow and rudely excuse yourself, you will never make it to that corner where it

looks as though she and the Powells are having a very lovely conversation.

You glance over your shoulder: You see BET founder Robert Johnson; television anchor Barbara Harrison; former secretary of defense William Cohen and his wife, Janet Langhart; NPR host Michel Martin and her husband, litigator Billy Martin.

Wayne Reynolds introduces you to Billy Martin, who says an invitation from the Reynoldses is "meaningful because you really do get to meet people you enjoy talking with." Last month, at another Reynolds party, Martin met basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. "It was a dream of a lifetime to sit down and talk with him about his life and career and basketball," Martin says.

Reynolds is thrilled to hear that story. "The success of a dinner party is when you learn something new and you meet someone new," he says.

You are dying to ask more, to find out what new thing Martin learned from Abdul-Jabbar, but the party crowd shifts. Barbara Harrison kindly points out that the cap is still on your camera lens.

The Reynoldses entertain about three times a month. Last month at their corporate D.C. townhouse, they threw a party in honor of Singapore Ambassador Chan Heng Chee. The Reynoldses had the furniture removed from the top floor of the townhouse to make room for a sit-down dinner for 90, during which former secretary of state Henry Kissinger gave a toast to Ambassador Chan. After dinner, the guests moved to the second floor for a three-song performance by opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

In the room were U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt; Italian ambassador Claudio Bisogniero; U.S. trade representative Ron Kirk; former U.S. representative Susan



Some parties, such as this one hosted by Catherine and Wayne Reynolds, still involve lavish sit-down dinners, big names and bipartisan mingling: *From left:* Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.); Irene Hirano, president of the U.S.-Japan Council and wife of Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii); Italian ambassador Claudio Bisogniero; mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves; U.S. trade representative Ron Kirk; host Catherine B. Reynolds; lobbyist and former Democratic congresswoman Susan Molinari; retired Gen. Brent Scowcroft; Wilson Center Director and former Democratic congresswoman Jane Harman; and, at end of table, Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs.



Molinari; Gen. Brent Scowcroft; former U.S. representative Jane Harman; and Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell. The party was packed with power.



**Host:** Winston Bao Lord,  
founder of Venga

**Agenda:** Promote an artist

It's a Friday evening. Outside Winston Bao Lord's house in American University Park sits the Venga Bus, which Lord bought for \$1,000 on Craigslist. Lord — whose father is former ambassador to China Winston Lord and mother is Bette Bao Lord, author of the the international best-selling novel "Spring Moon" — co-founded Venga, a company that helps to manage customer loyalty for restaurants.

On this night, Lord, 44, is throwing a dinner party to promote his friend, painter Lisa Ryan. Inside the red dining room is an abundance of South African red wine. The house, where Lord spent some of his childhood, is newly renovated, designed specifically for the parties he hosts several times a month. The rooms are painted in deep reds, chocolates and blues. The furnishings are sparse, allowing guests to move uninterrupted by clutter. Step down into the great room, where Lord has planted four handmade wooden tables created by a friend's company. Ryan's realist and abstract oil paintings — including a portrait of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones — line the walls. Soon, guests will arrive, but Lord is not harried.

"Have a glass of wine," Lord says to his friend Ashley Taylor, who co-chairs the Washington Ballet's Jete Society for young professionals with him. Taylor, wearing a black babydoll top, continues to speed around Lord's house. "I'm still setting up," she says, arranging glasses.

"We're done setting up," Lord insists.

"You are such a boy," Taylor says before heading for the kitchen. Lord slips into a seat in the dining room and explains his plan for the party. It is simple: Invite guests. Demand nothing of them.

"I tell them where I live and what time it starts. It doesn't mean you have



#### READER VIGNETTE

##### Perils of parity

When Ronald Reagan was running for the Republican presidential nomination in the mid-'70s, I was at a fancy dinner party in a fancy house where the conversation, of course, was about politics and Reagan. I said I didn't think Reagan was as knowledgeable about certain things as he should be. A guest politely asked me for an example. Well, I said, Reagan was recently campaigning in Iowa and he didn't know what agricultural parity was.

Another guest, by then red-faced and angry, said, "What the hell do you know about parity?" I replied that I was born in South Dakota, raised in Iowa, and I knew more about parity than Reagan evidently did. I gave a short definition.

"You don't know anything!" the other guest shouted, and stalked away.

"Who was that?" I asked the people remaining by my side. The answer: "That was Reagan's agricultural adviser."

*Yvonne Callahan, Alexandria*

For party styles, see  
Trend Report on Page 6.

See more photos online  
at [washingtonpost.com/magazine](http://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine).



to be here at 7. They can come at 9 o'clock. I don't have rules.

"I don't tell them when to leave. I don't tell them where to sit. ... I don't tell them what to wear. I don't feel you should tell people where they should sit and who they should sit next to." There is a time and purpose for that, a state dinner, perhaps. "But to me, the secret to the success of a dinner party is for guests to come and have fun and let go."

Lord doesn't worry about the tablecloths or whether the forks match. "If we ran out of beer, that would worry me."

Lord learned to entertain from his parents. "There were heads of NSO, gourmet chefs, the ambassador from Iran. My parents ordered takeout. It was more about who was around the table and not what was on the table."

Guests tonight include young people



**Top:** Winston Lord and Ashley Taylor before a party showcasing the work of artist Lisa Ryan, right. "I don't have rules," Lord says. **Below:** Ryan's portrait of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards.

in government, the arts, design and technology.

Lord introduces Dick Sauber, the kind of guest you want at your party. Sauber, a high-profile Washington lawyer, sinks into the L-shaped sofa and regales the other guests with anecdotes about Washington dinner parties, some of them perhaps true.

"The British prime minister from the last century is supposed to have been at a dinner party where the food was terrible," Sauber says. "Finally, for dessert the doors of the kitchen fly open and the butlers are standing there with huge bowls of ice cream. And he turns to the hostess and says, 'Ah, something warm at last.'"

Laughter. The great thing about living in Washington, Sauber continues, is that your next-door neighbor could be a secretary of commerce or an ambassador to Bulgaria. A former neighbor of Sauber's worked for President Clinton, who loved dinner parties and would attend hers. "No one felt comfortable leaving before the president left. He would stay until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning," Sauber recounts. "My neighbor remembers the time he said to her, 'Can I invite everyone back for milk and cookies?' The whole thing was like a grad school social scene. They would stay up late and argue and talk and scream at each other."

The caterer announces dinner is served. She has arranged plates of pad Thai and succulent shrimp. Guests help themselves, then take seats at the tables in the great room.

Holding court at one of the tables is the artistic director of the Washington Ballet, Septime Webre.

"You are writing about dinner parties?" he asks. "Interesting. Have you read 'Babette's Feast'?"

Yes. It's a story about a woman who lives in a puritanical village. After she wins a lottery, she decides to spend her entire fortune on one wonderful, sensual meal.

"It is not an apt metaphor for a D.C.

## The younger set's agenda: new foods, companions, skills

BY KRIS CORONADO

Most Washington 20- and 30-somethings can count on having a few things in common: Leon Panetta isn't on speed dial. Cokie Roberts hasn't been in their living rooms. They won't be taking Lindsay Lohan to the White House Correspondents' Association dinner. But echo boomers are just as interested in getting together, and unlike their elders, they're more willing to socialize with strangers, try new things and seek out new ideas. With entrepreneurial and intellectual zeal, they're reconfiguring the Washington dinner party scene for themselves.

Consider this gathering in an Adams Morgan living room: Eleven people sit on a couch or crisscross style on the floor. An adjacent table is resplendent with falafel, maashi and fuul. It would seem this Egyptian-themed meal is a way for old friends to break bread and catch up. In reality, the participants in this "Feastly" event are meeting for the first time.

Oscar Scolari, 29, is one of them. Though wary of showing up at a home he has never been to eat with people he doesn't know, he soon becomes absorbed in learning about his fellow diners. "Everyone has an interesting background," he says, describing the guests as "like-minded people who want to do something different."

Feastly was launched in November by 32-year-old Danny Harris and 30-year-old Noah Karesh to provide Washingtonians with unique dining experiences. For about \$30, "feasters" enjoy repasts such as ramen or Jewish soul food at private homes. (Similar concepts include underground meet-ups such as Hush Supper Club in the U Street neighborhood and Chez le Commis in Clarendon.)

While running Feastly as a (Continued on Page 19)

**From left, guest Dana Pelzman and founders Danny Harris and Noah Karesh at a Feastly dinner featuring Egyptian food.**







dinner party," Webre says, "because the goal here is not necessarily food. It's about human interaction and networking."

The conversation spins like a ballet. What kind of artist would you rather have dinner with? Webre asks. His opinion: "The writer is a generalist and can talk a little about everything. The actor is probably the most fun, because he is the most animated. The musician is the most talented but a little bit of a geek. The dancer is the best-looking but is vulnerable," Webre says. "And looks the best in a skirt."

He laughs. Lord pours more South African wine.



**Hostess:** Debra Lee, CEO of BET  
**Agenda:** Promote conference, book

Her house is one of those OMG houses on a hidden tree-lined block in the Embassy Row neighborhood. A pale

#### READER VIGNETTE

##### Rep. Who?

Pamela and Averell Harriman once hosted an event at their beautiful, art-filled Georgetown home for then-congressman Wayne Owens (D-Utah). The "sparkly" for the event was Robert Redford, who shared Owens's concern for the environment. The actor proved to be a huge draw, and hundreds attended the backyard party.

Guests went through a receiving line. First up was former governor Harriman, then Pamela Harriman, then Lola Redford, then the star of the night, Robert Redford, to whom I'm certain I muttered something totally idiotic when he said, "Hi. I'm Robert Redford."

Finally, I got to the guest of honor, Rep. Owens. "Hello," he said, extending his hand. "I'm old what's-his-name."

*Jean Jensen, Alexandria*

yellow stucco, rising like a statement. You look, and you know that it must be the house of media executive Debra Lee.

Outside, valet attendants wait. Inside a sleek garage, caterers hurry with platters of food. Up gray slate stairs, the room opens wide. Blue lights. Big windows. Sunken living room. Sleek art. Coffee-table books on massive window seats. Gray carpet beneath an off-white sectional sofa. A keyboard, drum set and microphone near the fireplace.

A tree is growing in the middle of a terrace courtyard, overlooking Rock Creek Park. Low black bamboo cushions await guests. A high-end sound system playing Prince.

This is what Hollywood would look like if it were in Washington.

As if by magic, most of the guests appear at the same time, transported from the Ritz-Carlton via charter bus.

The women arrive in cocktail dresses, frosted pinks, tangerines, black glitter.





**Carolyn Malachi performs at Debra Lee's home. After hosting many events for BET, Lee says, her guests expect "a hot party with first-class details."**

"It is not your standard fashion," says Jeanine Liburd, executive vice president of communications at BET. There is something special about a Debra Lee party, she adds. "People will wear their best shoes, their best dress, and their hair is done. The accessories are just right. It is not your typical navy and black D.C. event."

This evening's dinner begins the "Leading Women Defined" conference, an invitation-only gathering at the Ritz for leaders in the arts, business, entertainment, politics and academia.

Running BET, which hosts dinners related to its shows and specials, gives Lee a distinct advantage in attracting A-listers, not only from Washington but from throughout the country.

*(Continued from Page 17)*

business, Harris hosts similar monthly gatherings at his Adams Morgan pad without charge. He calls them "Dinn-ovate" parties: Each guest, usually a friend of a friend or someone with whom Harris wants to get better acquainted, shares an area of expertise with the other diners, such as dancing the samba or performing an exorcism. At the end of the meal, Harris says, guests leave "with full stomachs and nine new skills or talents."

Josef Palermo, 27, a planner at Philippa Hughes's art events company the Pink Line Project, also doesn't hesitate to reach out to folks he doesn't know. Last June, he threw a potluck soiree on Hughes's U Street terrace for 30 people under 30 that he thought were "doing really cool stuff."

"We had a really good mix of people who come from the emerging D.C. tech scene, people who are doing stuff with menswear and fashion; we had activists who came from Bread for the City," says Palermo, who hosted a similar event this month. The parties are "redefining what the experience is in D.C. It's not just 'Washington.'"

Philippe Lanier, vice president of the real estate development company EastBanc, can relate to the desire to go beyond official Washington. The 34-year-old and nine friends host "Entrepreneurs Quarterly Gathering" at L2 Lounge in Georgetown. The 100 invitees to the free events include younger Washingtonians whom the hosts see as innovators and forward-thinkers, such as Eric Kessler, founder of Arabella Philanthropic Investment Advisors and Kelly Muccio, owner of the popular men's boutique Lost Boys.

When making the guest list, Lanier says he asks himself: *Is this someone I think is actually out to engage and make the world around them better? Or is this just someone looking for a cool party?*

The sixth-annual Fashion for Paws fundraiser for the Washington Humane Society in April was both: a cool party out to make a better world. The event features socialites strutting down a runway with adoptable pooches and attracts young donors; half of the \$10,000 tables were purchased by 20- or 30-somethings this year. "It really is a testament to a group of young people wanting to make a difference," says founder Tara de Nicolas, 32.

The connections de Nicolas has made through Fashion for Paws have enriched her social life in other ways. Every few months, she dines with some of the other organizers — including EarthEcho International cofounder Philippe Cousteau and Heather Guay, a public relations manager at Bloomingdale's — at one of their homes to catch up and brainstorm about Fashion for Paws, as well as to seek advice on personal goals and career moves in a friendly and supportive environment. "That's what keeps us sane, I think ... that friendship that's come out of all of this," she says.

*Kris Coronado is a frequent contributor to the Magazine. To comment on this story, send e-mail [wpleters@washpost.com](mailto:wpleters@washpost.com).*