



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Andrea M. Ghez, 2020 Nobel Prize winner and astrophysics expert, named honorary member of Zonta International

[OAK BROOK, ILLINOIS, 6 October 2021]— Zonta International announced today that it would award physics and astronomy professor Andrea M. Ghez, one of the world's leading experts in observational astrophysics, an honorary membership in the organization, which works around the world to empower women through service and advocacy. Ghez is Lauren B. Leichtman & Arthur E. Levine chair in Astrophysics at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and heads UCLA's Galactic Center Group.

"It is a great honor and privilege to welcome Professor Ghez to Zonta International honorary membership in recognition of her efforts to elevate the status of women in her field and for serving as a role model for other women scientists and girls across the globe who are interested in pursuing education and careers in STEM fields," said Zonta International President Sharon Langenbeck.

Best known for her groundbreaking work on the center of our galaxy, which has led to the best evidence to date for the existence of supermassive black holes, Ghez has received numerous honors and awards. In 2020, she became the fourth woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, sharing one half of the prize with Reinhard Genzel (the other half of the prize being awarded to Roger Penrose). Ghez and Genzel were awarded the Nobel Prize for the independent discovery of a supermassive compact object, now generally recognized to be a black hole, in the Milky Way's galactic center.

"I'm delighted to become an honorary member of Zonta International," Ghez said. "The very first award I ever received came from Zonta. With only 10% of my class in graduate school being women, this was an important affirmation, as it helped me understand that I had potential to compete and succeed in science."

Ghez has also received the Crafoord Prize in Astronomy from the Royal Swedish Academy of Science—becoming the first woman to receive the prize in any field—the Bakerian Medal from the Royal Society of London, a MacArthur Fellowship, and election to the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. In 1987, she was a recipient of Zonta International's Amelia Earhart Fellowship, which awards women pursuing advanced degrees in aerospace engineering and space sciences.

Committed to the communication of science to the public and inspiring young girls to pursue careers in science, Ghez can be found in many public outlets including TED, NOVA's *Monster of the Milky Way*, Discovery's *Swallowed by a Black Hole*, TED, and Griffith Observatory.

The Zonta International Board awards lifelong International Honorary Membership to individuals who have helped to change societal attitudes about women or have improved conditions for women beyond the national level. Since 1970, Zonta International has recognized 41 women for their significant contributions to advancing the status of women worldwide.

Zonta International (www.zonta.org) is a leading global organization of professionals empowering women worldwide through service and advocacy. More than 27,000 members in 63 countries work together to make gender equality a worldwide reality for women and girls. Zonta International has provided more than US\$59 million to empower women and girls and expand their access to education, health care, economic opportunities and safe living conditions.

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