

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Merck CEO Kenneth C. Frazier Honored with Ronald H. Brown American Journey Award

Charlottesville, Virginia – April 5, 2018 – Merck CEO Kenneth C. Frazier was honored by the Ron Brown Scholar Program with the 2018 Ronald H. Brown American Journey Award in Washington, DC, at a dinner attended by more than 500 guests on Friday, March 23, 2018. CNN Chief Political Analyst Gloria A. Borger hosted the program, and Attorney General of the District of Columbia Karl A. Racine gave the keynote address. The evening was characterized by an optimism for the future represented by the Ron Brown Scholars and a celebration of Ron Brown’s ideal of “keeping the door open and the ladder down for others to follow.”

“These Scholars and Captains may seem like just students today, but they can be the catalysts for progress... to connect with others in such a way to bring about new ideas, new insights and a deeper, richer perspective on life that can unite us all,” said Mr. Frazier in accepting the award. Mr. Frazier’s life story, career path, and commitment to the community all served as inspiration to those in attendance. Since 2011, Ken Frazier has been CEO of Merck, a leading, global pharmaceutical company that brings forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world’s most challenging diseases. Mr. Frazier received his bachelor’s degree from The Pennsylvania State University and holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School. He was a partner with the Philadelphia law firm of Drinker Biddle & Reath prior to joining Merck. Mr. Frazier taught law in apartheid-era South Africa and represented death row inmate James Willie “Bo” Cochran. “When we were able to establish Bo Cochran’s innocence... it was the single greatest accomplishment I ever had as a lawyer and that I think I’ll probably ever have as a professional,” says Mr. Frazier.

“Ken’s story—which starts from a place where he didn’t have a lot of resources, but had a lot of support in his community—is exactly the trajectory the Program is hoping for all of us,” said 2000 Ron Brown Scholar Angela Smedley in a video profile of Mr. Frazier that premiered at the event.

Among those in attendance at the dinner were the 25 Finalists for the 2018 Ron Brown scholarship, chosen from approximately 4,500 applicants. Mr. Frazier shared his advice with these high schoolers and the current Scholars and alumni in attendance: “Act with confidence in what you can and will achieve, not out of a fear of failure. You have been given a voice and earned the means to use it. Your success is important not only to you and your family but also to your communities and the broader nation. So please believe in yourselves as we all believe in you.”

Two Ron Brown Scholars were also honored at the event. Dr. Amanda S. Alexander, 2000 Ron Brown Scholar, received the 2018 American Journey Award for Emerging Leadership. Dr. Alexander is founding Executive Director of the Detroit Justice Center, a non-profit law firm that works alongside communities to create economic opportunities, transform the justice system, and promote just cities. Crystal N. Boyd, 2006 Ron Brown Scholar, received the inaugural Christopher A. Pilaro Fellowship in the Arts Award. Ms. Boyd is currently developing a TV show *Downtown Girls* with Warner Brothers Studios.

Additional resources:

Video profile of Kenneth C. Frazier

<https://vimeo.com/261589110>

Photos (credit Jen Fariello Photography):

Photo 1: Merck CEO Ken Frazier accepts the 2018 American Journey Award from host Gloria Berger, CNN Chief Political Analyst, and Jack Leslie, Chairman of Weber Shandwick and member of the Ron Brown Scholar Program Board of Trustees.

http://www.ronbrown.org/Media/Default/AJA2018/AJA2018_Photo1.jpg

Photo 2: Merck CEO Ken Frazier with his wife Andrea Frazier and Ron Brown Scholar Program President and CEO Michael Mallory

http://www.ronbrown.org/Media/Default/AJA2018/AJA2018_Photo2.jpg

Photo 3: 2017 Ron Brown Scholar Rusty Fields II, Merck CEO Ken Frazier, and 2017 Ron Brown Scholar A.J. Rucker

http://www.ronbrown.org/Media/Default/AJA2018/AJA2018_Photo3.jpg

About the Ron Brown Scholar Program

Named for the late Secretary of Commerce and inspired by his dedication to public service, the Ron Brown Scholar Program was established in 1996 to provide academic scholarships, service opportunities, and leadership experiences for young African Americans of outstanding promise. The program seeks to accelerate their progress into the mainstream of leadership positions in business, education, government, and a wide spectrum of professions, while instilling a dedication to leadership and service. For more information, visit www.ronbrown.org.

About the Ronald H. Brown American Journey Award

The Ronald H. Brown American Journey Award was established in 2009 to honor outstanding Americans who exemplify the vision and transformative ideals of Ronald H. Brown (1941–1996). Ronald H. Brown American Journey Awards are granted to individuals who have developed opportunities and fostered the achievements of others. Like the late Ron Brown, these role models demonstrate through their life experiences the importance of mentoring, service, and nurturance of a network of leaders in America. Past honorees include 2017: Robert F. Smith, Founder, Chairman and CEO, Vista Equity Partners; 2016: Eric H. Holder, Jr., 82nd Attorney General of the United States, Partner, Covington & Burling LLP; 2016: Earvin “Magic” Johnson, NBA Legend, Chairman & CEO, Magic Johnson Enterprises; and 2012: Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, Former Surgeon General of the United States.

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