

MLK, Jr. International Salute Announces 2026 Honorees for 34th Annual Breakfast

King Legacy Awards and Dr. Dorothy I. Height Leadership Award to Recognize Global Leaders in Service, Advocacy, and Unity

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, January 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The International Salute to the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will celebrate its 34th year on Sunday, January 18, 2026, and will present awards to a distinguished group of recipients whose leadership and service reflect Dr. King's enduring legacy.



Dr. King challenged us to build beloved community through service, courage, and unity.”

Madeline Y. Lawson

“Dr. King challenged us to build beloved community through service, courage, and unity,” said Madeline Y.

Lawson, Founder and CEO of the Institute for the Advancement of Multicultural & Minority Medicine (IAMMM). “This year’s honorees lead across government, humanitarian service, advocacy, education, and global diplomacy, and they model the impact Dr. King called all of us to pursue.”

The event will be held at The Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, D.C., and is hosted annually by IAMMM as part of the commemorative celebrations honoring Dr. King’s birthday. Symone D. Sanders Townsend, co-host of The Weeknight on MS NOW, will serve as emcee for the 2026 program.

The MLK, Jr. International Salute Committee, under the leadership of Madeline Y. Lawson, recognizes exceptional individuals whose work strengthens communities, advances justice, and builds bridges across cultures and nations. Recipients will be honored with either the Dr. Dorothy I. Height Leadership Award, presented in honor of the late civil and women’s rights leader who served as a founding member of the International Salute and advised several U.S. presidents, or the King Legacy Award, celebrating those who embody Dr. King’s spirit of courage, service, and impact.

2026 award recipients include:

- Dr. Dorothy I. Height Leadership Award: Ms. Ricki Fairley, CEO, The Black Breast Cancer Alliance
- King Legacy Award for Government and Public Service: The Honorable Jamie Raskin,

Congressman (D-MD), U.S. House of Representatives

- King Legacy Award for Global Diplomacy: Her Excellency DDr. Petra Schneebauer, Ambassador of Austria to the United States
- King Legacy Award for Advocacy and Community Service: Mrs. Nell Chennault Calloway, President and CEO, Chennault Aviation and Military Museum
- King Legacy Award for Global Unity: Bishop Brett Fuller, Presiding Bishop, Every Nation Family of Churches (under Grace Covenant Church)
- King Legacy Award for Global Leadership and Humanitarian Impact: Rotarian Ijeoma Pearl Okoro, Trustee, Rotary International
- King Legacy Award for Global Philanthropy and Service: Philip Qiu, Chairman, Chinese American Museum in Washington, DC
- King Legacy Award for Academic and Executive Leadership: Jason Wingard, PhD, Executive Chairman, Education Board, Inc.

The 2026 honorees join a distinguished group of previous recipients, including General Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State; Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations; John Lewis, U.S. Congressman; the Honorable John Conyers, Jr., U.S. Representative (Michigan); Bob Dole, U.S. Senator; and ambassadors representing nations from around the world.

The MLK, Jr. International Salute Committee was organized 34 years ago to establish an annual international day of recognition for a man who sacrificed his life for justice and equality. The celebration is traditionally held on the Sunday immediately before the federal Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday each year.

Founding members of the committee include Dr. Dorothy I. Height, Chairman and President Emerita of the National Council of Negro Women; Henry H. Brown, Senior Vice President of Anheuser-Busch Company; Freddie L. Brown, Regional Marketing Executive for Anheuser-Busch Company; and Madeline Y. Lawson, President and CEO of the Institute for the Advancement of Multicultural & Minority Medicine (IAMMM).

The committee's purpose and mandate remain today:

- Advance the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a man for all nations and one loved and honored around the world.
- Celebrate a Nobel Peace Prize laureate recognized for his stance on nonviolence.
- Honor his courage in the face of injustice, bigotry, and oppression.
- Recognize individuals whose service emulates the King Legacy.

The Committee gratefully acknowledges the sponsors of the 34th Annual International Salute, including Diamond Sponsor Host Frank F. Islam & Debbie Driesman Foundation; and Gold Sponsors AARP, Events DC, JP Morgan Chase, Maryland Sister State, Inc., McDonald's Enterprise, Potomac Community Foundation, and Wells Fargo Private Wealth Advisors. The committee also thanks its Patron sponsors and additional supporters for their generosity. Photos and honoree

bios are available upon request.

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