15th Annual Ford Freedom Award Honors “Quiet Heroes”

- Event to honor civil rights activist Johnnie R. Carr and Congressman John Lewis, with a special Humanitarian Award presented in honor of Viola Liuzzo

- Award Program to be held at Max M. Fisher Center with special performance by Grammy Award-nominated singer and songwriter Eric Benét

- Proceeds of the ticket sales benefit Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

DEARBORN, Mich., May 6, 2013 – To commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Ford Freedom Award program, Ford Motor Company, in partnership with the Charles H. Wright Museum, will honor Congressman John Lewis, and civil rights activists Johnnie R. Carr and Viola Liuzzo. The Ford Freedom Award program will take place on Friday, May 10, at 6 p.m. at the Max M. Fisher Music Center. This year’s theme - Quiet Heroes - salutes the honorees for their humility, commitment and contribution to the African-American community.

As part of the Ford Freedom Award educational outreach, Congressman Lewis will address nearly 2,000 elementary and middle-school students from around the state. The 2013 Ford Freedom Award Scholarship finalists also will be presented during the program. The evening reception and Award program will include a special performance by Grammy Award-nominated singer and songwriter Eric Benét.

“Today we honor African Americans who have changed our world as Quiet Heroes without any intention of recognition,” said Ziad Ojakli, group vice president, Government and Community Relations, Ford Motor Company. “Their lasting legacy challenges us all to do more to make a difference in our everyday lives.”

The Ford Freedom Award program recognizes two recipients each year. The Ford Freedom Honoree Award is presented posthumously to a distinguished African American who has dedicated his or her life to improving the African American community and the world at large through their chosen field, such as arts, humanities, religion, business, politics, sports, science and entertainment. The Ford Freedom Award Scholar is an African American who has excelled on a national or international level in the same field as the Ford Freedom Award Honoree. The Scholar serves as a living legacy, carrying forth the ideals of the Honoree and furthering those achievements for a new generation.

The 2013 Ford Freedom Award Honoree is civil rights activist Johnnie R. Carr, who joined childhood friend Rosa Parks in organizing the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott. In 1967 Carr succeeded Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, a post she held until 2008 at her death at age 97. As the Association’s president,
Carr helped lead several initiatives to improve race relations and conditions for Blacks. She was involved in a lawsuit to desegregate Montgomery schools, with her son, Arlam, the named plaintiff.

This year’s Ford Freedom Award Scholar is Congressman John Lewis, who has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and building what he calls "The Beloved Community" in America. Recently an Alabama police chief apologized to Congressman Lewis for failing to protect the Freedom Riders during a trip to Montgomery, Ala. in 1961. Lewis and fellow civil rights activists were beaten by a mob after arriving at a Montgomery bus station.

Ford Freedom Humanitarian Award also will be presented posthumously to Michigander Viola Liuzzo, who was killed by the Klu Klux Klan in 1965 for helping Blacks to register to vote.

"In an age when the desire for notoriety seems universal, the Wright Museum is proud to acknowledge the quiet courage and determination of this year's honorees," says Juanita Moore, the museum's president & CEO. "In their own astonishing and unheralded ways, they have each committed, or given, their lives for the cause of equality - which is all the more reason for their recognition."

As part of the celebration, Ford will honor 50 local Quiet Heroes who were nominated by members of the community. Tickets for the Ford Freedom Awards are $40 per person or $35 for Wright Museum members. A special "VIP Meet and Greet Experience Package" for $75 includes an afterglow and photo opportunity with the honorees and Eric Benét.

The Ford Freedom Award program is made possible by a grant from Ford Motor Company. For additional event and ticket information, call the Max M. Fisher Box Office at 313-576-5111 or visit www.fordfreedomaward.com

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**About Ford Motor Company**

*Ford Motor Company, a global automotive industry leader based in Dearborn, Mich., manufactures or distributes automobiles across six continents. With about 166,000 employees and about 70 plants worldwide, the company’s automotive brands include Ford and Lincoln. The company provides financial services through Ford Motor Credit Company. For more information regarding Ford’s products, please visit [www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com)*

**About the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History**

*The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History provides learning opportunities, exhibitions, programs and events based on collections and research that explore the diverse history and culture of African Americans and their African origins. Founded in 1965 and located at 315 East Warren Avenue in Midtown Detroit’s Cultural Center, The Wright Museum is the world’s largest institution dedicated to the African American experience. For more information, please visit [www.TheWright.org](http://www.TheWright.org).*

**For media credentials or interviews**

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