Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to honor Charlotte Keys, who was recently honored as a 2001 Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leader. Ms. Keys is one of only 10 individuals from around the country to receive this distinguished award, which includes a $100,000 grant to help further her work.

Ms. Keys is the founder of an organization called Jesus People Against Pollution, located in Columbia, Mississippi, which works to mobilize the community to improve health and environmental justice. Her early efforts focused on those in the community who suffered severe health problems as a result of a major explosion at a chemical plant in Columbia in 1977. She mobilized the community and advocated for them.

As a result of her activism, she was asked to leave her job and she endured threats on her life. Undaunted by this experience, and moved by the extensive health needs of her neighbors, many of whom were children or senior citizens, Ms. Keys formed Jesus People Against Pollution, or JPAP, in 1992. She created JPAP to help educate the community about environmental health threats and to advocate for cleanup and redevelopment.

Today, JPAP offers training and advocacy programs and has co-hosted a regional summit on environmental justice with participation by both the state and federal governments. In addition, Ms. Keys has become a trusted leader, and the community looks to her as a resource for assistance in other social issues, such as housing, food stamps and disability benefits.

One of her nominators described Ms. Keys as a “long distance runner who possesses a profound commitment to the cause of justice.” It is my hope that she continues to run this race for justice. It is clear that she has covered quite a distance, but the road still stretches out ahead.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to honor Charlotte Keys for this well deserved leadership award. I am confident that it will help to strengthen and sustain her important work.