



**2023 Peace in the Pages
Presented by David and Monique Miller
Award Honorees**

READ TO BE FREE

Kevin Gay, Founder and Retired CEO, Operation New Hope



READ USA is proud to announce that Kevin T. Gay, Founder and retired CEO of Operation New Hope, will receive our 2023 READ TO BE FREE Award, a much-deserved tribute to his never-ending battle for equity and compassion in our criminal justice system.

A native of Jacksonville and a graduate of the University of Florida, Kevin has combined in his highly successful program his strong faith in God and his dedication to helping underserved communities find their way out of addiction, poverty, and incarceration. Since founding Operation New Hope in 1999, the organization has achieved such phenomenal advances in providing second chances to formerly incarcerated citizens that it has repeatedly earned national attention. Kevin has been invited to the White House several times during the past two decades and has personally met with Presidents and members of their staff in every administration, serving in several capacities to promote and strengthen Operation New Hope's Ready4Work Re-entry program.

Kevin currently serves on the Board Member of the Kids Hope Alliance and also The Citizens Advisory Board for the Florida Bar. Kevin has served on numerous local and state boards and in 2013, was the only CEO from a non-profit organization to be

honored by the Jacksonville Business Journal with the Ultimate CEO Award. In 2015, along with CNN's Van Jones, Kevin hosted Operation Reform in Jacksonville, a national bipartisan summit in criminal justice reform and re-entry solutions. In 2016 Kevin was the Recipient of the 2016 OneJax Humanitarian Award and was selected as the only non-attorney to receive the Medal of Honor Award from the Florida Bar Association. Kevin Gay reached out globally in 2019 when he was invited to South Africa to visit with Dr. Makaziwe Mandela, daughter of Nelson Mandela, and her daughter, Tukwini and then later in 2019 they came to Jacksonville to celebrate Nelson Mandela International Day. Kevin was honored at that time with the House of Mandela Reflecting Freedom Award for Community Impact, with Operation New Hope's Ready4Work program acknowledged as a model program for the world.

As an internationally recognized champion for the cause of criminal justice reform, Kevin believes that READ USA is critical to liberating the next generation from poverty and violence by making books available to all children and, through the teen tutoring program, teaching them to read and appreciate their books.

Today, Kevin Gay credits reading with providing him a gateway of knowledge that has allowed him to converse with people from all walks of life - prisoners to presidents - and to initiate programs that bring about positive change in this world. "When we read to be free, we develop the framework and foundation needed to succeed in life," says Kevin. "I'm excited to be honored by READ USA!"