

Celebrated Journalist Bankole Thompson in Brown University Keynote Address Challenges White Institutions to Step Up

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES, March 2, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a riveting keynote

address delivered with masterful oratory on the theme, "Why Major Institutions Must Address the Fierce Urgency of Racial Justice," Bankole Thompson, the dean and editor-in-chief of The PuLSE Institute, told Brown University and the top leadership of the Ivy League institution, that it should be an unquestioned ally in the demands for racial equality in the modern era.



Our democracy is on life support. Wounded racial justice is laying in the emergency room of our institutions waiting to be attended to by justice and fairness-loving doctors of equality."

Bankole Thompson, Dean and Editor-in-Chief of The PuLSE Institute

Thompson, a nationally acclaimed Black journalist and cultural critic, who is a twice-a-week opinion columnist at The Detroit News, was the keynote speaker for Brown University Forum on Race and Democracy in the Era of Black Lives Matter, held Thursday, Feb. 24 in honor of Black History Month.

The forum, which was organized in partnership with the Providence Branch of the NAACP and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America, featured welcome and closing remarks by Brown University President

Christina Paxson, who laid out the university's efforts in tackling racial inequality.

Jim Vincent, the president of the Providence Branch of the NAACP, who introduced Thompson described him as one of the nation's leading voices on race, and a "thinker with a profound commitment to racial justice," while noting that Thompson was the 2011 speaker for the civil rights organization's Freedom Fund Dinner.

Tricia Rose, the director of Brown University's Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America, who moderated the Q&A session following Thompson's presentation, called his keynote lecture a "Tour de Force," for powerfully capturing the essence of the current battle for racial justice, and the obligation of today's major White institutions.

"The nation is at a crossroads. Our democracy is on life support. Wounded racial justice is laying

down in the emergency room of our institutions across this nation, and waiting to be attended to by justice and fairness-loving doctors of equality as Black people continue to carry with them the scars of historic bigotry and the burden of contemporary racism,” Thompson said in his speech. “There is a serious urgency right now in the nation for the surgeons of freedom to perform on the maladies of racism and the philosophy that produces it.”

He stated, “But to challenge the conscience of the nation, we must demand accountability from the institutions that bear the nation’s insignia and strength. America’s strength we are reminded repeatedly is in its institutions, which represent the hallmarks of what the nation stands for. Whether they be educational institutions, business institutions, religious institutions, the media...they represent the American credo of ingenuity and its traditions.”

The journalist went on to list top educational institutions with ties to slavery.

“Among them is Brown University, whose own connection to the history of Black enslavement is well documented. Among them is Yale University, whose involvement in slavery is documented. Among them is Harvard University, which is reckoning with its own ties to slavery,” Thompson said.

He quickly pivoted to major corporations.

“Among them are major corporations- titans of our capitalist system- that descend on the Black community like vultures to simply reap billions and millions in annual profits by marketing products to the Black consumer market, yet the captains of industry who lead some of these companies walk away from any kind of tangible commitments and action items to advance racial equity,” Thompson noted. “Even as they register enormous profits at the expense of the Black consumer market, their corporate boardrooms are insulated and isolated from serious discussions about justice and equality.”

Thompson took on foundations.

“Among them are major foundations, some of whom are notorious for choosing what I have long described in my writings as a helicopter approach: It is an approach that simply surface



Bankole Thompson, the dean and editor-in-chief of The PuLSE Institute, is one of the nation's leading Black journalists.

scratches the issues and allows foundations to impose their own vision and plan from above about how to solve issues in the Black community instead of getting into the trenches of inequality and poverty in urban centers to root out the problem," Thompson said. "To achieve racial justice, foundations must abandon the helicopter approach to solving inequality in the Black community."

He said some of the nation's institutions have failed the Black community.

"When we look at the modus operandi of some of our major institutions President Paxson, they have so far given the Black community a bad check," Thompson said. "A case in point, since the death of George Floyd in 2020, some major corporations and their foundations pledged \$50 billion to address racial inequality according to an analysis from the Washington Post, yet only about 70 million went to groups focused on criminal justice reform."

Thompson, an impassioned orator said, "History is beckoning on Brown to lead the way on institutional accountability and racial justice because your institution at different times during the Civil Rights Movement hosted Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, two of the 20th century's greatest Black leaders."

"President Paxson, it is not lost on me that Brown University with an endowment in the billions of dollars has the resources and the tentacles to move with all deliberate speed to lead in restorative and reparatory justice in the grand struggle for Black liberation," Thompson said. "Brown must see the urgency of this quest to provide bold and courageous leadership in pushing for racial equality as tied to its own destiny and future success as a transformational university. The two cannot be seen as mutually exclusive. They are mutually inclusive."

He called on the university to dramatically increase its Black student enrollment.

"Beyond establishing a memorial to slavery and publicly acknowledging it's connection to the scourge on history, Brown must work with all deliberate speed to increase its Black student population, which is currently at six percent. The future wellbeing and presence of Black students at Brown will also determine whether this institution can bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice," Thompson urged.

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