

Jesse Jackson Deserves Honor at DNC in Chicago for Being 'A Warrior for Democracy' Says Top Journalist Bankole Thompson

Democratic National Convention in Chicago Should Pay Tribute to Rev Jackson's 50 Years of Standing up for America's Marginalized

DETROIT, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES, August 17, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bankole Thompson, one of the nation's preeminent journalists and a standard-bearer for economic justice, says civil rights leader Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr., the president and founder of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, has been a major force to reckon with in making America a more perfect union and for championing the democratic ideals of freedom and equality, and as such the international statesman should be honored for his contributions at the 2024 Democratic National Convention, taking place Aug. 19- 22 in Chicago. Vice President Kamala Harris will officially accept the Democratic nomination for president at the convention becoming the first Black woman to reach such political height.



Civil rights leader, the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr., president and founder of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition

Thompson, a leading public opinion shaper, who serves on the National Board of Directors of the historic Atlanta-based Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the signature civil rights organization founded by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was its first president, said Jackson's groundbreaking campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988, represented a powerful and transformational moment because it gave Blacks and other disenfranchised groups a meaningful voice inside the Democratic Party.

"Not only did Rev. Jackson's campaigns register new voters, but it laid the groundwork for a

progressive voting bloc in Democratic politics. His candidacy for president coming more than a decade after another daring trailblazer Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm became the first Black person to make a serious run for the presidency sent shockwaves across the entire resistant spectrum of Democratic politics that it was not going to be business as usual. He changed the composition of the Democratic electorate and enhanced the role of Black people in national Democratic politics," Thompson said. "For this reason alone, the Democratic National Convention should pause and pay meaningful tributes to Rev. Jackson for his 50 years of political advocacy and civil rights leadership in the nation and around the world."

Thompson is the dean of The PuLSE Institute, an independent and non-partisan anti-poverty think tank headquartered in Detroit, which was founded several years ago based on his influential work on race, democracy and poverty. The institute has a National Advisory Board, made up of national and international luminaries who collectively bring more than a century of anti-poverty work to an organization that is championing equitable policies.

He is a twice-a-week opinion columnist at The Detroit News, where his column on the presidency, public leadership, social and economic issues appears on Mondays and Thursdays in the newspaper. He is considered the premier Black opinion journalist in the battleground state of Michigan and is known for pushing the envelope and holding the powerful accountable.

He is the former longtime editor and intellectual voice of the Michigan Chronicle, the state's African American newspaper. He was one of the first Black journalists in the nation to conduct a series of exclusive sit-down interviews with former President Barack Obama during the groundbreaking 2008 presidential campaign. He wrote a pair of books on the Obama presidency.

He also served as a special correspondent and analyst for Inter Press Service (IPS) North America Bureau at the United Nations in New York, doing analyses on cutting-edge global issues affecting marginalized communities as well as contributed columns for The Guardian the noted British newspaper.



Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr., president and founder of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition presents the 2018 Let Freedom Ring Journalism Award to the nationally acclaimed journalist Bankole Thompson.

In 2020, he publicly advocated for a racially diverse national ticket during the Democratic presidential campaign, and was invited by CNN anchor and chief national correspondent John King to respond to the historic selection of Vice President Kamala Harris as then candidate Joe Biden's running mate. Thompson wrote a searing column taking Biden to task and insisting that a Black person must be on the ticket as the future president was nearing the VP selection, a piece which King described as a harsh take on Biden.

"The elevation of Kamala Harris to the pinnacle of American politics that is set to take place in Chicago next week would not have happened without the role that Rev. Jackson played in expanding the table of equity in Democratic politics and putting the liberal establishment on notice that there needs to be more room in the inn for Blacks. His electrifying presidential campaigns went unmatched for decades until the historic candidacy of former President Barack Obama in 2008," Thompson said. "It is important for us to give our heroes and giants flowers while they are still with us. Rev. Jackson, a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, has long cemented his place in the pantheon of American and global history."

Thompson has had an up close view of Rev. Jackson for two decades covering and writing about the impact of his work.

The civil rights leader has great admiration for the nationally acclaimed Detroit journalist, and he would always reach out to Thompson whenever he was in the Motor City for on-the-record and off-the-record conversations about the issues.

For example, on the eve of the funeral of the Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin in 2018, in Detroit, Rev. Jackson, invited Thompson to ride together with him to lunch at Beans & Cornbread, a local soul food restaurant where they reflected on the contributions of Franklin to the civil rights movement.

In 2016, barely two weeks after Donald Trump was elected president, Thompson and Rev. Jackson sat down for a public conversation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVwnSR1q5IY&t=207s>) at the Rackham Auditorium on the campus of the University of Michigan to discuss Rev. Jackson's five decades of civil rights leadership including his take on the economic, political and social justice movement.



The "Let Freedom Ring Journalism Award" given by Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition was presented in January of 2018 to nationally acclaimed journalist Bankole Thompson to mark the 50th anniversary death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

On January 15, 2018, Rev. Jackson and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition honored Thompson with the "Let Freedom Ring Journalism Award," to mark the 50th anniversary death of Dr. King. Rev. Jackson personally presented the award to Thompson on stage recognizing his contributions as a voice of conscience and courage in the media and for serving as a force for economic justice in the tradition of Dr. King.

"As Democratic delegates, activists, policy makers converge in Chicago for the convention, they should remember that important foundations were laid to arrive at this point in our long walk to freedom. Those foundations were laid by Congresswoman Chisholm and Rev. Jackson during a period in history when it was perceived to be impossible that any Black person could knock on the doors of resistance and open it with so much audacity," Thompson said. "That is why we must never forget the history of those who fought against exclusionary politics and it should be told for generations to come."

Thompson who is known for speaking truth to power accepted the invitation of one of his mentors and top Dr. King lieutenant, Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr., to join the SCLC National Board in August of 2023. LaFayette, who is

currently the chairman of SCLC, initiated the historic civil rights campaigns in Selma, the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement, and was a co-founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, has long followed Thompson's work and once described the journalist as a "remarkable person with many talents and powerful passion."

Dr. LaFayette recruited Rev. Jackson to run the Chicago operation of SCLC during the civil rights



Civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. and nationally acclaimed journalist Bankole Thompson in a public conversation about the future of democracy at the University of Michigan in 2016. The national forum was organized to mark Jackson's 50 years in civil rights.



Civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. in discussion with nationally acclaimed journalist Bankole Thompson in 2021.

movement.

"In his life's work, he has reinforced that no matter who we are or where we come from, we have so much more in common than what separates us. The — the point is that if we as a society are to come together, to work together, to fight together in common cause for the freedom, rights, and justice of all people, we must make our communities stronger. We must build a stronger nation. And, as a result, we will have a stronger democracy and a stronger world," Vice President Harris said in a tribute to Rev. Jackson in Chicago last year when he officially stepped down as leader of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. "And it is with this understanding, this vision to see what can be unburdened by what has been, that Rev has dedicated his life to building that coalition, from Washington, D.C., to California; from the Mississippi Delta to Appalachia; from South Africa to the South Side of Chicago. He has and continues to bring together people of all backgrounds: Black Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, farmers, LGBTQ+ Americans, Native Americans, women, labor union members, people with disabilities, our young leaders, and people around the world. That has been the work of Reverend Jesse Jackson."

Harris added, "And early on — just think about it. Early on, he even had the audacity to name this coalition the National Rainbow Coalition. (Applause.) Think about that. He defined the rainbow. He was one of the first to define the rainbow."

About Bankole Thompson's Latest Work- Fiery Conscience

Bankole Thompson's latest book, *Fiery Conscience*, which documents his years of speaking truth to power was launched last October at Dillard University in New Orleans at one of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The book which was reviewed in *Forbes* magazine earlier this year, was also listed in the Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York. At the Schomburg, the world's leading repository on the global Black experience, Thompson's book is a reference for future scholars, students and individuals looking to engage issues dealing with Black existence in the modern era and for posterity.

Janis F. Kearney, who served as the first presidential diarist in the history of the White House under President Bill Clinton, and a former fellow at Harvard University's W.E.B. DuBois Institute, wrote the book's epilogue.

"It is gratifying for a native of the Arkansas Delta region and child of cotton sharecroppers to know that we still have a social commentator and leader who remains an unapologetic advocate for the poor and downtrodden. While American politics is oftentimes a murky, messy undertaking; the practical, realistic, yet hopeful Bankole Thompson knows that good politics can mean social and economic change for the masses. And, that good politics can result in policies, laws and civil actions that make life better for the least of us and addresses the dignity of all—including America's poorest," Kearney wrote. "But, good politics doesn't just happen. It needs

advocacy and fiery voices like Bankole Thompson's. Voices that worry the lawmakers at night, that remain, like 'earworms' in their subconscious as they make and act on decisions that are crucial and life-changing for everyday Americans."

Reverend Leonard L. Hamlin Sr., the Canon Missioner and Minister of Equity and Inclusion at the Washington National Cathedral is among those praising the book.

"The problems of our past are not resolved by turning a blind-eye, or by commitment to silence. Bankole Thompson's needed witness displayed a courage and faith that inspires us to move beyond complacency and into prophetic action. His 'Impactful Journalism' has raised the uncomfortable questions and exposed circumstances that were in need of transformation," Hamlin wrote in his endorsement of the book. "It is a must read for those who have a concern for where we have been but more importantly for where we are headed as a community. By reading this work I was inspired to remember the words of Maya Angelou that stated, 'You can't really know where you are going until you know where you have been.'"

Ron Fournier, who served as White House correspondent, and Washington bureau chief for the Associated Press, during which he covered three presidential administrations including Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama praised *Fiery Conscience* as a "timely tome," while calling Thompson, "the soul of Detroit" who is "prodding his readers to heed the fierce urgency of now."

Sister Simone Campbell, the leading anti-poverty and racial justice champion in the modern American Catholic Church, who received the 2022 Presidential Medal of Freedom, has followed Thompson's work over the years.

"In the midst of these turbulent times in our nation, we need *Fiery Conscience* more than ever. We are all called to speak out for the sake of truth and struggle together across divides to realize a justice that includes all. Bankole Thompson does just that and his witness can nourish our spirits," Sister Campbell wrote in her endorsement of the book.

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