

# Top Journalist, Racial Justice Champion Bankole Thompson Keynotes Nation's DEI Leaders Historic Summit

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, February 5, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- How are cities that have Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Departments going to fare in the era of the anti-DEI campaign? Do they have a strategy for navigating the current landscape and for charting a new way forward to continue the mission of inclusion that has been the backbone of their DEI departments?

Those questions and many more took center stage in an opening keynote address delivered by Bankole Thompson, the nationally acclaimed journalist and standard-bearer for economic justice issues at a national forum attended by dozens of chief diversity officers- about 55 municipal leaders- from around the country who heard from Thompson and other speakers discuss the current attacks on DEI policies, and what to do to continue the inclusive vision of their various cities.

Other speakers included Pastor Velma Jean Overman, founder of Operation Refuge and 1st Vice President of the Western Wayne NAACP, Mike Belanger, a community leader and disability rights advocate, Lauren Sowell, a DEI advocate, author and a 12-year sex trafficking survivor and Ryan Klotz, a prominent disability rights advocate.

The virtual gathering dubbed the National Forum on the Future of Municipal DEI, held on Tuesday, Feb. 4. and convened by C. Paschal Eze, the chief diversity officer for the City of Westland in Michigan, is the first publicly-known conference of its kind in the nation since the incessant attacks on DEI policies began recently.



Bankole Thompson, is a nationally acclaimed journalist and standard-bearer for economic justice. His work inspired the founding of the anti-poverty think tank, The PuLSE Institute.

The cities and leaders that participated in the national summit include Detroit (Michigan), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Dallas (Texas), Columbus (Ohio), Bellevue (Washington), East Lansing (Michigan), Cincinnati (Ohio), Chandler (Arizona), Tempe (Arizona) Wilmington (North Carolina), Shaker Heights (Ohio), Elk Grove (California), Aurora (Illinois), Hampton (Virginia), Peoria County (Illinois), Rochester (Minnesota), Naperville (Illinois), Durham County (North Carolina) and Buffalo (New York) among cities.

Thompson, a journalistic thought leader and sought after keynote speaker stressed the need for DEI leaders not to give in to the campaign to dismantle DEI during his keynote address. Instead he said they should become salesmen and women for inclusion and equity in their cities. Sounding the alarm that the nation is at a crossroads and echoing the words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., when he told his confidant and friend Harry Belafonte during a conversation before he died that Blacks were integrating into a burning house and that more firemen and women are needed, Thompson, told the nation's DEI directors, "You must hold the line," urging them to become firefighters in this era against the efforts to discard DEI.

Thompson, who is the founding dean of the anti-poverty think tank, The PuLSE Institute, a twice-a-week opinion columnist at The Detroit News and host of the weekly national podcast, Bankole's Nation, cited the commendable actions of companies like JPMorgan Chase, Costco and other companies that have publicly affirmed their commitment to upholding their DEI policies. He called for more "unlikely allies," in the battle to embrace a program that is rooted in the belief that no one should be excluded from opportunities in the workplace.

Thompson, who recently called for a boycott of companies like Target (<https://thepulseinstitute.org/2025/01/26/companies-defending-dei-show-moral-courage-says-top-journalist-economic-justice-standard-bearer-bankole-thompson/>) for announcing that they are ending their DEI programs, questioned the logic of seeking to end a program that benefits historically marginalized groups including women, Blacks and other people of color as well as the disability and the LGBT community.

Thompson's pointed remarks also came on the observance of the United Nations International Day of Human Fraternity, which according to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, is a moment to "celebrate the values of equality, unity and mutual respect."

To the nation's DEI leaders, Thompson, admonished the conference participants to seize every opportunity to discuss the redeeming values of DEI because it centers around building inclusive communities where those who have been the victims of exclusionary policies access opportunities to grow and thrive.

"It was such a delight bringing together dynamic leaders like Bankole Thompson who have been in the trenches fighting inequities and injustice," said C. Paschal Eze, Westland's first-ever chief diversity officer and convener of the conference. "Bankole's speech was masterful and inspiring,

helping municipal DEI leaders develop strategies to navigate the anti-DEI crisis."

Thompson's latest book, *Fiery Conscience*, published in August of 2023 documents his decades of speaking truth to power as one of the most outspoken voices for racial justice in the nation. The book which was featured in *Forbes* lays out a blueprint for effective and social impact leadership and is also listed in the Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, considered the premier repository on the global Black experience.

A sought after speaker and public intellectual, Thompson, writes and speaks with the force of history about public leadership, corporate social responsibility, equity, inclusion and political economy.

For example, in February of 2022, he delivered a powerful keynote lecture for the Ivy League School Brown University Black History Month Forum on Race and Democracy, in which he warned that American democracy was on life support while explaining the role of major institutions in advancing racial equality. (<https://www.browndailyherald.com/article/2022/02/our-democracy-is-on-life-support-bankole-thompson-discusses-role-of-institutions-in-addressing-racial-inequity>). His lecture which was attended by Brown President Christina Paxson, who delivered the introductory remarks and stayed throughout the presentation Thompson touched on the many facets of our national life including the death of George Floyd while making the case for economic justice in the modern era.

"Bankole is a passionate advocate in the fight against poverty and racial and economic inequality. He gives respect, voice and agency to those affected. This truly makes Bankole a social prophet," said former U.S. Ambassador Anne Derse in describing Bankole Thompson.

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