

# Pope Francis Was A Surgeon Of Freedom, Says Top Journalist, Economic Justice Standard-Bearer Bankole Thompson

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, April 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bankole Thompson, the nationally acclaimed Detroit journalist and standard-bearer for economic justice issues, whose work sits at the intersection of journalism, history, and social change as a truth-teller, a historian of the present, and a force for justice and equality in our time, has called the death of Pope Francis a sad chapter in the annals of modern history. The Vatican reported that the 88-year-old

Francis, who spent 12 years as the leader and the 266th pontiff of the 1.4 billion-member Catholic Church as well as its first from Latin America, died earlier on Monday on April 21.



Pope Francis

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*Bankole Thompson, founder  
and dean of The PuLSE  
Institute*

"Pope Francis was a surgeon of freedom who was truly concerned with the maladies of economic injustice facing the world's poor and marginalized. Because of that he sought to attend to the emergency rooms of inequality and cruel indifference by rightfully taking on the cases of wounded justice. That is why his papacy will be remembered as one of the most consequential not only for the Catholic Church but for all of Christianity in the modern era," said Thompson, who is the founder and dean of America's independent and anti-poverty think tank, The PuLSE Institute, which was established several years ago based on his influential work on race, democracy, and

poverty.

Thompson who is a twice-a-week opinion columnist at The Detroit News, where his column on the presidency, culture and socioeconomic issues appear on Mondays and Thursdays in the

newspaper, and is considered the leading Black opinion journalist in Michigan, said Francis was an exemplary figure of foresight and concern for those who have been deliberately locked out of the inn of economic buoyancy and shut out of every opportunity to improve their lot in life.

"More than just being concerned about morality and doctrine in the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, moved beyond the four walls of the Church and challenged institutions and leaders of all kind to do more for those who have

the been victims of poverty and economic exclusion," Thompson said. "From Main Street to Wall Street, he powerfully moved the cultural tectonic plates in favor of those who have been excluded and left on the margins of society. In so doing, he tried to inculcate a deep international sense of justice for a new world order. A more inclusive Catholic Church meant that leaders of the faith community can no longer look the other way in the face of such great need in places ravaged by political and cultural conflicts."

Thompson added, "In a real sense, Pope Francis had the undying love for humanity of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and he possessed the remarkable courage of Nelson Mandela in speaking out fiercely for what he believed in and in pricking the conscience of the powerful. All of us owe it to Pope Francis' legacy to continue to build upon what he left behind. We are a better society because of Pope Francis. From where I sit in Detroit, I have been a great admirer of his ministry and I have been inspired by it. Those of us who are on the battlefield for economic justice feel a deep sense of loss because Pope Francis not only led with light, but he chose the road less traveled. But more importantly, he made those who were invisible visible."

Thompson is the host of the weekly national podcast, Bankole's Nation. His 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 by *Forbes*, and lays out a blueprint for bold and impactful leadership, 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.

Sister Simone Campbell, leader of the historic "Nuns on the Bus" campaign, and one of the leading anti-poverty champions in the modern American Catholic Church, and a social justice advocate has followed Thompson's work over the years.



Bankole Thompson, the nationally Detroit acclaimed journalist and standard-bearer for economic justice.

"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," said Campbell, recipient of the 2022 Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Thompson was the first African American newspaper editor in the nation to conduct a series of exclusive sit-down interviews with former President Barack Obama and wrote a pair of books on Obama.

A member of the National Press Club of Washington D.C., where he's led discussions on topical issues affecting the nation, Thompson is a sought after speaker and public intellectual who has addressed and keynoted leading institutions such as Brown University, Dillard University, American Jewish Committee, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission among other leading institutions. He writes and speaks about public leadership, corporate social responsibility, equity, inclusion and political economy.

In August of 2023, Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr., a veteran civil rights leader and one of the last remaining top lieutenants of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who currently serves as the Chairman of the National Board of Directors of the historic Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), tapped Thompson to sit on the National Board of SCLC, the signature civil rights group Dr. King founded, and which played a major role during the Civil Rights Movement. Thompson's appointment made him the first journalist in American history to sit at the highest decision making body of the civil rights group that Dr. King led and infused his personal legacy into.

In 2015, the University of Michigan Bentley Historically Library, officially established the Bankole Thompson Papers, a comprehensive digital and physical collection to document his work for students and for posterity. The Bentley houses the papers of every Michigan governor.

Bankole Thompson  
The PuLSE Institute  
[email us here](#)

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