

Ex-White House Spokesman Bob Weiner Applauds National Launch of The Bankole Thompson Center

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, April 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a bold and visionary tribute, Bob Weiner, a former White House spokesman has praised the national launch of a new youth empowerment leadership initiative called, The Bankole Thompson Center, which was announced to commemorate the April 18 birthday of a pioneering journalist whose life and work have been defined by truth-telling, justice and the relentless pursuit of equity.

The center is named Bankole Thompson, the nationally acclaimed Detroit journalist, author and standard-bearer for economic justice issues. Thompson is one of the first Black editors in the nation to conduct a series of historic exclusive sit-down interviews with President Barack Obama. He is a twice-a-week opinion columnist at The Detroit News and the host of the podcast, Bankole's Nation. A member of the National Press Club of Washington D.C., where he co-hosted a national forum on the balance of power in the U.S. Senate, Thompson is an accomplished author of several books, including his latest *Fiery Conscience*, about his decades of speaking truth to power reviewed by Forbes and listed as a reference in the Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division of the New Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. He has appeared severally on CNN and other major news outlets.



Bankole Thompson is a nationally acclaimed journalist and standard-bearer for economic justice. The Bankole Thompson Center is named after him.

In a rare honor, the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library in 2015 established, the Bankole Thompson Papers, a comprehensive physical and digital collection to document his

work for posterity alongside the papers of every Michigan governor. His next book, HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear, which will be released soon has received significant endorsements from leading figures in academia, Congress, major business and the economic justice movement.

Thompson is also the founder and chairman of the board of The PuLSE Institute, the national anti-poverty and economic justice think tank.

The announcement of The Bankole Thompson Center intentionally aligns with Thompson's birthday symbolizing the need to prepare a new generation to continue the legacy of speaking truth to power. The center will create an opportunity where young voices are amplified and transformed into agents of change.



Bob Weiner, former White House spokesman is the Chairman of The Bankole Thompson Center

The initiative, which Weiner is leading as chairman of the center as well as a member of the board of directors is designed to cultivate the next generation of leaders by providing young people access to mentorship, leadership training, media literacy and civic engagement opportunities.

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Bob Weiner, Former White House Spokesman

"I am proud to be named a Board member and Chairman of the Bankole Thompson Center at the invitation of Bankole. No one in America has done more to create a culture of justice and economic opportunity than Bankole Thompson, with his national journalistic leadership as an editor-- one of the first to interview President Obama, and

with his editorship of the Michigan Chronicle and creation of the PuLSE Institute defining and fighting to change the roots and repercussions of poverty. He also carries on this critical battle in his regular columns now in The Detroit News and on national radio in many ways," Weiner said in a statement. "I am so honored to be a part of The Bankole Thompson Center for youth leadership empowerment. Involving and empowering young people has been the guts of my career from creating the first mock presidential convention at my high school, being a youth

coordinator for U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy in the 1970's, to serving as the youth voter registration director for a major national political party immediately following the enactment of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution giving 18-21 year olds the vote, to being the youngest staff director of any congressional committee (ironically the Aging Committee) under Chairman Claude Pepper, to bringing in college and high school interns to White House public affairs in my agency there (National Drug Policy), to recently winning the National Press Club President's Award for recruiting young journalists who have helped me write 1100 op-eds in major media -- an ongoing program."



Chris Collins, the President and Artistic Director of the Detroit International Jazz Festival is a member of the Board of Directors of The Bankole Thompson Center

He added, "I've considered no voice more important on major issues than young people's. I am so pleased that I can continue this priority for The Bankole Thompson Center, and I thank Bankole for making this possible. I look forward to working with all the other Board members, staff, and Bankole himself."

The core pillars of The Bankole Thompson Center which is open to young people between the ages of 14 and 21 are:

Leadership Development: Training young people in public speaking, critical thinking, decision-making and ethical leadership.

Academic and Intellectual Excellence: Writing lab, policy discussions and exposure to ideas that sharpen their minds.

Civic Engagement and Justice: Teaching advocacy, community organizing and economic justice.

Personal Discipline and Character: Focus on integrity, resilience, accountability and purpose-driven living.

Career and Innovation Pathways: Mentorship, entrepreneurship training, and exposure to careers in media, public policy, medicine, law, technology and business.

Chris Collins, the President and Artistic Director of the Detroit International Jazz Festival, the largest free jazz festival in the world, who is the Valade Chair in Jazz at Wayne State University is on the Board of The Bankole Thompson Center.

"At some point, we all have the responsibility to become mentors. A flourishing society relies on

one generation passing their wisdom and experience on to the next while providing opportunities for youth to discover and exercise skills, ideas and the power of communication. The Bankole Thompson Center will play a meaningful role in the evolution of our society through mentoring, supporting and empowering our future leaders," said Collins, an eminent music scholar who has performed at worldwide jazz festivals in Glasgow, Ireland, Panama, Nice and Switzerland — and won numerous awards, including the first American to receive the Brusoni Award in Italy in 2011.

Collins who has long admired the work and impact of Bankole Thompson contributed a chapter to the journalist's book, *Fiery Conscience* published in 2023 about his decades of speaking truth to power. In it, Collins discussed Thompson's commitment to providing young people with opportunities and described him as "a truth-seeker acting on his beliefs and making a difference."

For his part Thompson the founder of The Bankole Thompson Center said, "The Center is more than an initiative. It is a commitment to legacy. A commitment to building a future where young people are not participants but architects of a more just and equitable future. At the core of The Bankole Thompson Center is the idea that every young person regardless of background or ethnicity deserves access, opportunity and dignity. So this is not just a center. It is an incubator for courage and a living commitment to equality."

BANKOLE THOMPSON

The PuLSE Institute

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