

America at 250: Top Journalist Bankole Thompson on Hope on the Mountain of Fear and Hope for the American Experiment

Nationally acclaimed journalist and standard-bearer for economic justice calls the Semiquincentennial a defining moral test of the American experiment.

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, July 3, 2026

/EINPresswire.com/ -- As the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, nationally acclaimed journalist, public intellectual and economic justice advocate Bankole Thompson today issued a sweeping call for Americans to embrace the Semiquincentennial not merely as a celebration of the nation's remarkable achievements, but as a defining moment of democratic renewal.

Thompson's voice carries uncommon historical significance. Few contemporary journalists stand at the intersection of journalism, civil rights, public scholarship and economic justice as uniquely as Bankole Thompson.

In a rare distinction for a living journalist, the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan established the Bankole Thompson Papers in 2015, preserving his journalism, speeches and public leadership for future generations studying the evolution of democracy, race, leadership and public life in America.

His influence has also been recognized by one of the nation's premier universities. In 2022, Thompson delivered the keynote lecture, "Why Major Institutions Must Address the Fierce Urgency of Racial Justice," for the Brown University Forum on Race and Democracy. The forum opened and concluded with remarks by Brown President Christina H. Paxson, underscoring Thompson's stature as a leading voice on democracy, institutional leadership and racial equity.



Bankole Thompson, is a nationally acclaimed journalist and standard-bearer for economic justice.

In January 2018, late civil rights leader Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr. personally presented Thompson with the Rainbow PUSH Coalition's Let Freedom Ring Journalism Award, recognizing decades of courageous journalism devoted to advancing justice, equality and democratic accountability.

This year alone, Thompson delivered the opening Juneteenth keynote address at the 15th Annual National Civil Rights Conference held in Detroit. He also recently delivered a major address at St. Paul of the Cross Passionist Retreat Center in Detroit on the theme, "Pilgrims of Hope in an Age of Fear," exploring the relationship between faith, hope, democracy and economic justice during one of the nation's most consequential periods and at one of most contemplative Catholic institutions.

He is the first journalist in American history to serve on the National Board of Directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the legendary civil rights organization founded by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whom many historians have described as America's "second founding father," and led by King as its first president. King's leadership transformed SCLC into the moral engine of the modern Civil Rights Movement, a movement widely regarded by historians as America's Second Reconstruction because it expanded the meaning of the nation's founding ideals to millions who had long been denied them.

Thompson also belongs to a distinguished generation of Black journalists who reshaped representation and visibility in American journalism. He is one of the first Black editors in the United States to conduct exclusive sit-down interviews with former President Barack Obama, chronicling the rise of the nation's first Black President during one of the most consequential periods in contemporary American history.

Through decades of journalism, public scholarship and civic leadership, Thompson had emerged as one of the nation's most trusted interpreters of the forces shaping democracy, race, economic justice and moral leadership.

As founder and chairman of The PuLSE Institute, one of America's leading anti-poverty think tanks, Thompson has spent decades advancing policies and ideas centered on expanding opportunity and reducing inequality. The Institute's mission speaks directly to the defining questions confronting the nation at its 250th anniversary and that is whether economic prosperity can become more inclusive.

For years, he has challenged presidents, governors, captains of industry and corporate executives, religious leaders and institutions to measure success not only by economic growth but by human dignity.

As the twice-weekly opinion columnist for The Detroit News, Thompson has earned a national reputation for intellectually rigorous and morally consequential journalism that challenges both power and complacency. His work has come to define him as Detroit's Columnist of Conscience, a writer whose columns consistently illuminate the ethical dimensions of public life while

insisting that democracy is measured not simply by elections, but by justice.

His acclaimed fifth book, *Fiery Conscience*, which was reviewed by *Forbes* and is in the collection of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, chronicles decades of speaking truth to power through journalism and public advocacy. The work has drawn comparisons to the prophetic witness of Frederick Douglass, whose fearless insistence that America live up to its own ideals helped redefine the nation's moral identity.

His latest book, *HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear*, offers what many have described as a compelling moral framework for navigating an era marked by polarization, democratic anxiety and widening economic inequality. Thompson argues that hope is neither passive nor sentimental, but an act of civic courage capable of sustaining democratic renewal.

"America's 250th anniversary is more than a national celebration. It is not simply a birthday" Thompson said. "It is a summons to national conscience. Every generation inherits the Declaration of Independence. But every generation must also decide whether it possesses the moral courage to fulfill it."

"The Declaration of Independence announced humanity's most revolutionary political proposition that every person possesses inherent dignity and equal worth. Yet every generation has been summoned to enlarge that promise. The founders declared it. Abraham Lincoln preserved it. Martin Luther King Jr. redeemed it. Our generation must now confront the unfinished work of economic justice and human dignity with the same seriousness they confronted the defining challenges of their own eras."

Thompson said the Semiquincentennial should be remembered not for pageantry alone, but for a renewed national commitment to justice.

"No nation secures its greatness by celebrating only its victories," he said. "Enduring greatness is achieved by confronting unfinished obligations with honesty, humility and courage. Patriotism does not require the denial of America's failures. It requires the determination to overcome them."

He said the nation's defining challenge in its third century is restoring confidence in democracy by strengthening institutions and expanding economic opportunity.

"Economic justice is not a peripheral issue. It is the democratic issue. A republic cannot flourish when millions remain excluded from genuine opportunity. Freedom without opportunity is an incomplete freedom."

Reflecting on his own vocation, Thompson said journalism remains indispensable to the health of the republic.

"A free press exists not to comfort power, but to awaken conscience. Journalism, at its highest calling, serves as one of democracy's permanent moral witnesses. Speaking truth to power is ultimately an act of faith in the enduring capacity of democracy to correct itself."

Thompson concluded by urging people to approach the nation's next chapter with confidence rather than fear.

"My latest book, HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear, was written because every generation eventually arrives at its own mountain of fear. History teaches that those moments do not define us. Our response to them does," Thompson said. "Two hundred and fifty years after the birth of this republic, America remains one of history's greatest democratic experiments. The question before us is no longer whether the American experiment can endure. The question is whether we possess the moral imagination, civic courage and national unity to make liberty more meaningful, equality more authentic and opportunity more universal."

He added, "If we answer that call, the 250th anniversary will not simply commemorate America's founding. It will mark the beginning of its next democratic awakening."

BANKOLE THOMPSON

The PuLSE Institute

[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/924170252>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.