

Former Federal Chief Judge Gerald Rosen Hails Preeminent Journalist Bankole Thompson's New Book on America at 250

Nationally Respected Jurist and Architect of Detroit's Historic "Grand Bargain" Calls New Book a "Must Read" as Nation Confronts Meaning of Its Next 250 Years

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, August 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Gerald E. Rosen, the nationally respected former federal chief judge whose judicial career and historic role in resolving the largest municipal bankruptcy in American history placed him at the center of one of the nation's most consequential civic and financial crises, has endorsed nationally acclaimed journalist, author and public intellectual Bankole Thompson's forthcoming seventh book, "Bankole Thompson's 12 Moral Questions: Frederick Douglass and the Soul of America at 250."

Slated for publication in early 2027, Thompson's new work is conceived as a moral examination of the American experiment at a defining historical threshold. As the United States marks 250 years since its founding, Thompson turns to Frederick Douglass and the broader American democratic tradition to ask 12 questions about truth, democracy, racial and economic justice, human dignity, leadership, hope and the obligations America owes its next generation.

Retired judge Rosen said the questions Thompson raises are fundamental to the nation's future.

"Thompson's questions go to the heart of who we are and who we should be as a society as we turn the page on our first 250 years and look to our future," Rosen said, describing the book as "a must read for serious students of America and our society's promise to the world," while calling Thompson an "opinion leader and civic commentator."



Gerald Rosen, Former Federal Chief Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan.

Rosen's entire full endorsement which will be on the back cover of the book, brings together two public figures whose careers, from different institutions, have been shaped by consequential questions about American democracy, civic responsibility and the obligations of leadership.

Rosen's stature extends well beyond the federal courthouse in Detroit. For nearly three decades on the federal bench, he handled major questions of federal law and public consequence before assuming an extraordinary national role during Detroit's Chapter 9 bankruptcy—the largest municipal bankruptcy in American history.

Nominated to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan by former Republican President George

H.W. Bush in 1989 and confirmed by the United States Senate in 1990, Rosen served as chief judge from 2009 to 2015. He assumed senior status in 2016 and retired from the federal bench in 2017. He is a 1979 graduate of George Washington University Law School.

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*Former Federal Chief Judge
Gerald Rosen*

But it was during Detroit's unprecedented bankruptcy that Rosen emerged as one of the central figures in a case watched by cities, courts, financial institutions, pension systems and public officials across the United States.

Serving as the chief judicial mediator, Rosen helped engineer the historic “Grand Bargain,” the innovative public-private agreement that brought together philanthropic foundations, the State of Michigan, the Detroit Institute of Arts and other stakeholders. The

agreement helped protect municipal pensions, safeguard the internationally significant collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts and create a pathway for Detroit to emerge from bankruptcy.

The achievement made Rosen an important figure in the modern history of municipal restructuring and demonstrated the capacity of mediation, institutional leadership and civic



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

compromise to address a crisis once considered nearly impossible to resolve.

Rosen later chronicled the experience in his book, "Grand Bargain: The Inside Story of Detroit's Dramatic Journey from Bankruptcy to Rebirth."

His endorsement of Thompson's forthcoming work also rests on a relationship of mutual intellectual respect and admiration that stretches back years.

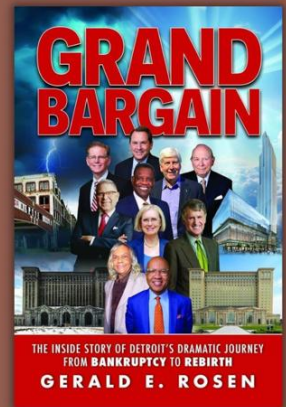
In 2012, while serving as chief judge, Rosen reached out to Thompson to host and moderate a high-level public forum that featured other federal judges in the Eastern District of Michigan as well as the U.S. Attorney as panelists examining the importance of jury diversity and the legitimacy of the American justice system. At a time when questions of representation within civic institutions were becoming increasingly urgent nationally, Rosen saw and trusted Thompson's journalistic integrity and independent public voice known for speaking truth to power as capable of convening a serious conversation across racial, legal and institutional boundaries.

That history gives Rosen's endorsement particular weight.

A federal jurist appointed by a Republican president, who spent nearly three decades within one of the constitutional pillars of American government, is endorsing a work by a distinguished journalist, standard-bearer for economic justice issues, whose work is known for upholding the legacy of Frederick Douglass, and whose career has been built around challenging institutions to live up to the democratic ideals they proclaim.



Gerald Rosen, Former Federal Chief Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan.



Gerald Rosen, Former Federal Chief Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, is the author of the book, "Grand Bargain" about Detroit's historic bankruptcy and how the city emerged from it.

The convergence is especially significant as the United States commemorates its 250th anniversary.

"Bankole Thompson's 12 Moral Questions: Frederic Douglass and the Soul of America at 250" does not approach the anniversary as an exercise in nostalgia or national self-congratulation. Instead, Thompson asks whether the principles invoked at America's founding can withstand the pressures confronting the republic today and whether the country possesses the moral imagination necessary to extend its democratic promise into another 250 years.

At the center of that examination stands Frederick Douglass, the 19th century abolitionist, journalist, orator, public intellectual and civil rights leader, who relentlessly forced America to measure its practices against its professed ideals.

Thompson's own intellectual relationship with the Douglass tradition has been recognized publicly. In 2014, Thompson received The Frederick Douglass Award from National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc. (New Metropolitan Detroit division) during their Annual Founder's Day Luncheon, an honor that underscored his work as a journalist and public voice addressing questions of freedom, equality and democratic accountability.

More than a decade later, Douglass now occupies the moral center of Thompson's seventh book. The forthcoming work also reflects a career that has increasingly crossed the boundaries between journalism, scholarship, civil rights leadership and public thought.

Thompson is a twice-a-week opinion columnist at The Detroit News, founder and chairman of The PuLSE Institute, a national non-partisan anti-poverty think and economic justice tank and host of Bankole's Nation. His writings have examined presidential leadership, poverty, economic inequality, race, democracy and the moral responsibilities of public and private institutions.

His body of work includes being one of the first Black editors in the nation to conduct a series of exclusive sit-down interviews with former President Barack Obama and extensive commentary on the meaning and consequences of American political leadership.

Thompson also holds a singular distinction within the relationship between journalism and the modern civil rights movement. In 2023, he became the first journalist in American history to serve on the National Board of Directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference



Bankole Thompson's latest book, "HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear" released earlier this year.

(SCLC), the historic civil rights organization founded in 1957 by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders.

Thompson was nominated to the SCLC National Board by his longtime mentor, legendary civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr., a Freedom Rider, leader of the Selma voting rights movement and longtime practitioner of Kingian nonviolence.

Years earlier, another towering figure of the movement recognized Thompson's journalistic work as a preeminent voice of conscience.

In January 2018, Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. personally presented Thompson with the Rainbow PUSH Coalition's Let Freedom Ring Journalism Award during a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary year of Dr. King's assassination. The recognition honored Thompson's contributions to journalism and his sustained attention to the moral and civic questions confronting American society.

His career has also entered the historical record. In 2015, the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library established The Bankole Thompson Papers, a rare honor for a living journalist by preserving his writings, journalism and public work for scholarly research and future generations. His fifth book, "Fiery Conscience," which chronicles his decades of speaking truth to power and published in 2023, was reviewed by Forbes and is in the collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York.

Thompson's latest book, "HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear," features a foreword by Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Sister Simone Campbell who has long admired and followed Thompson's work and an epilogue by Marc Morial, the president and CEO of the National Urban League. The book examines hope against the realities of poverty, healthcare, homelessness, veterans care, mental health, democracy and human dignity.

But 12 Moral Questions moves the inquiry onto an explicitly national and historical stage. Across its 12 central questions, Thompson asks what kind of economy honors human dignity; whether truth is negotiable; whether hope itself can become a civic virtue; and, ultimately, what kind of nation America is becoming. These are not questions directed at one political party, ideology, race, region or generation. They are questions addressed to the American republic.

That is what makes Rosen's endorsement especially consequential.

The endorsement of a nationally respected jurist appointed by a Republican president also reinforces the book's intention to reach beyond contemporary political divisions. Thompson's questions are presented not as partisan tests but as civic ones because they are questions about the durability of institutions and the nation's moral inheritance.

Rosen's assessment of the book is therefore more than literary praise. It is an argument for the

necessity of the conversation itself.

At 250 years, America inevitably looks backward to its founding documents, its presidents, its wars, its movements, its achievements and its failures.

Bankole Thompson's 12 Moral Questions insists that the more difficult responsibility is to look forward and what kind of democracy will it leave to generations that have not yet arrived?

For Gerald Rosen, a jurist whose career required him to confront institutions at moments of extraordinary consequence, those questions belong at the center of the national conversation. And his endorsement places "Bankole Thompson's 12 Moral Questions: Frederick Douglass and the Soul of America at 250" firmly within that conversation before the book reaches the public in 2027.

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The PuLSE Institute

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