Bankole Thompson to Make First Appearance at Downtown Detroit Synagogue for Talk on Hope and Samantha Woll's Legacy

Nationally acclaimed journalist and author brings his continuing moral inquiry on hope, human dignity and the American conscience to Jewish Detroit



Samantha Woll was President of the Isaac Agree Downtown Detroit Synagogue before her tragic death in 2023 at the age of 40.

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, September 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Nationally acclaimed journalist, author and public intellectual Bankole Thompson will make his first appearance at the Isaac Agree Downtown Synagogue in Detroit on Tuesday, October 13, for a special conversation centered on his latest book, "HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear," and the life and legacy of the late Jewish leader Samantha Woll.

The event is being hosted by the Samantha Woll Center for Jewish Detroit, located within the synagogue and named in honor of Woll, the respected Detroit Jewish leader and former president of the synagogue, whose tragic death in 2023 reverberated throughout Michigan and beyond.

Woll's legacy holds a significant place in the book, "HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear." Her parents, Dr. Douglas and Margo Woll, contributed an essay to the book reflecting on their daughter's life, values and commitment to humanity. Both physicians, the Wolls have developed a high regard for Thompson and have expressed deep admiration for his work and his commitment to questions of conscience, justice and human dignity.

The October appearance will therefore extend beyond a traditional author talk. Thompson will discuss the central moral arguments of "HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear," while reflecting on Samantha Woll's life and what her example asks of communities confronting grief, division and

an increasingly fractured public square.

“This gathering is ultimately about the kind of hope that refuses to surrender to fear,” Thompson said. “Samantha Woll’s life reminds us that our deepest obligations to one another transcend the boundaries that too often separate us. To discuss HOPE in a center bearing her name carries profound meaning.”

The synagogue appearance is the latest in a consequential series of invitations placing Thompson before different religious, civic and generational audiences to address questions of hope, justice and the human condition.

In June, Thompson appeared at St. Paul of the Cross Passionist Retreat and Conference Center in Detroit, where he addressed his first Catholic audience for "HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear," in a presentation titled "Pilgrims of Hope in an Age of Fear."



Bankole Thompson's latest sixth book, HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear, was released in May of 2026.

Then, on August 25, Thompson was entrusted with delivering the eulogy for Dr. William G. Anderson, the legendary 98-year-old civil rights leader, pioneering Black physician, founder and president of the Albany Movement in Georgia, who worked alongside the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The invitation placed the 47-year-old Thompson in the consequential position of interpreting for a new generation the life and moral witness of one of the giants of the King-era movement.

Taken together, the Catholic appearance, the Anderson eulogy and now Thompson’s first appearance at the Isaac Agree Downtown Synagogue, the engagements underscore the widening reach of his work as a leading voice on the American experiment. For more than two decades, his journalism, books and public addresses have interrogated power while examining democracy, racial and economic justice and the moral worth of the human person.

Published in May, "HOPE: On The Mountain Of Fear" examines hope not as sentiment or easy optimism, but as a moral response to poverty, inequality, illness, homelessness, mental health struggles, threats to democracy and the broader crises confronting human dignity. The book features a foreword by Sister Simone Campbell, the Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient and nationally prominent Catholic social justice leader.

The appearance also comes as Thompson prepares his forthcoming seventh book in 2027 titled, "Bankole Thompson’s 12 Moral Questions: Frederick Douglass and the Soul of America at 250," an examination of democracy, truth, racial and economic justice, human dignity, leadership and

the moral obligations confronting the United States at its 250th anniversary. With Frederick Douglass serving as a central moral voice, the book extends an inquiry that has increasingly defined Thompson's work regarding not simply what America has become, but what kind of nation it is morally prepared to become.

The October 13 gathering will bring these intersecting questions into one of Detroit's important Jewish spaces while honoring a young Jewish leader whose life embodied the possibility of building relationships across communities.

For Thompson, the appearance represents another chapter in an expanding public conversation across books, journalism, faith traditions and generations around a question that reaches beyond any single community: What does hope demand of us when fear, loss and division would have us retreat from one another?

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