



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 13, 2023

**CONTACT: LaToya Henry**

**(313) 447-6404**

## **OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE**

By Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony

### **NOW IS THE TIME!**

**DETROIT** – Good Morning. As we approach the historic June Jubilee scheduled for June 22-25, we are reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *“Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to lift our nations from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God’s children.”* Now is the time for us to re-energize our people and to refocus our efforts on the work that still must be done. Detroit will be the scene to remind the nation of the need to maintain our vigilance and commitment to freedom, justice, and equity. In anticipation of the 68<sup>th</sup> Annual Fight For Freedom Fund Dinner, Sunday, June 25, we are tremendously excited to present both local and national honorees our special civil rights awards. These awards are presented based on service that has been done and work that is yet to be done.

Today we announce our Great Expectation Awardees. We are proud to present to Attorney Erin Keith one of two Great Expectation Awards. Erin is a staff attorney in the legal services and advocacy practice of the Detroit Justice Center. She is a co-counsel for federal and state litigation related to conditions of incarceration and confinement during the most recent COVID-19 pandemic. Our second Great Expectation Award recipient is Mr. Kenneth Nixon. Mr. Nixon is President of the Organization of Exonerees. Formerly incarcerated, Mr. Nixon now works as an advocate, counselor, and job facilitator for those exonerees seeking to rebuild and to restructure their lives as contributing citizens in our community.

We are pleased to honor Senator Stephanie Chang with our Mary Church Terrell Freedom and Justice Award. Senator Chang has been a champion for justice, an advocate to stop the proliferation of guns in our community, and one who speaks out for environmental justice and its impact on families in our community.

This is indeed a special year as we will present the Ida B. Wells Freedom and Justice Award to none other than the honorable Justice Kyra Harris Bolden. Justice Bolden has been a stalwart in the brief time she has served on our highest court in the state of Michigan and remains focused and committed to the application of justice and fairness, regardless of status, for all Michiganders.

As we celebrate 50 years of the hip hop industry, we will honor Mr. Doug E. Fresh as a representative of this genre of music that has impacted the world. He has certainly been one who has encouraged us to “keep risin’ to the top” with a “lovey dovey” feature as he has “just been having fun” causing one to say “la-di-da-di”. It is indeed a major accomplishment.

**-more-**

We in Detroit are truly blessed to have joining us for this special occasion, as we present the James Weldon Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award to former U. S. Ambassador Andrew J. Young. Ambassador Young (now 91 years young) is one of the last surviving lieutenants of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was with him from Selma to Montgomery, Birmingham to Washington D.C., and also appeared in Detroit on his behalf. He has served our nation in a way that many have not had the privilege to serve. Both he and wife will join us as we celebrate his life and the spirit he embodies reflecting our first National Executive Director James Weldon Johnson.

Finally, the Honorable Rev. Raphael G. Warnock will receive the very special Presidents Speaker Award for his service as a minister of the gospel as well as his tenure as the first African America Senator from the state of Georgia.

As you can see, this is a lineup of awardees to remember. Each one has established a pathway that leaves impact, sets a direction for others to follow, and is indeed worthy of our sincere recognition. I want to thank the members of the branch, staff, and others for these most carefully thought out and well-placed awards. You do our city and our nation well with such key awardees.

###