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By Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony

REMEMBERING REVEREND DR. CHARLES G. ADAMS “THE HARVARD HOOPER”

DETROIT – Every now and then we are blessed to receive a melody from heaven. Dr. Charles Gilchrist Adams, known to many of us as the “Harvard Hooper” was indeed a melodious, majestic voice from on high. As a minister, I am reminded of the words found in Romans 10:14, “*How shall they know unless they hear it from a preacher.*” Charles Adams was not just a preacher of the gospel. He was a preacher’s preacher. He was not just an alumnus of Harvard. It was Harvard that was an alumnus of Charles Adams. From the pulpit of the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church to the Mayor’s office, Governor’s mansion, halls of Congress and Senate, to the office of the President of the United States, Charles Adams was a force to be reckoned with. Every politician wanted him on their side. Every adversary was concerned when he was not on their side. But for our community, Charles Adams was always on the side of justice, truth, and equity of opportunity.

He was a forerunner and visionary for neighborhood and economic development. Today, we witness the Hartford Village, a senior living community. He rose up during an era of ministers that stood in the breach to protect Black rights and to champion Black freedom. The hallowed halls of heaven can now add Charles Gilchrist Adams among the ranks of heroes for the hopes of a struggling and yet thriving community. Charles Adams, along with Reverends Fred G. Sampson, Charles Butler, James E. Wadsworth, Jr., C.L. Franklin, Martha Jean “The Queen” Steinberg, Obie Matthews, O’Dell Jones, Roy Allen, Bishop David Ellis, Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman, and so many others leave us a foundation made out of the solid rock of true liberation through faith and work. Whether at a Sunday morning worship service, a community funeral, a political rally, or a public meeting, Charles Adams, when he gave the people the charge, had you standing on your feet, many times after just five minutes of his oration.

The length and breadth of his ministry extends well beyond Hartford Memorial Baptist Church. Its tentacles reach into the World Council of Churches to the Detroit Branch NAACP, where he served as President from 1985-1987. The James Weldon Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award, our highest honor, was presented to Dr. Adams in 2019. He fought the battle, raising the issue of a lack of respect on the part of some in the city of Dearborn for its Black neighbors. The archaic policies of former Dearborn Mayor Orville Hubbard were often noted in the expression to “keep Dearborn clean.” For many in the city of Detroit it was simply a code to keep Black people out of the city of Dearborn. The work of Adams and so many others, both in Dearborn and Detroit, have eliminated a policy that served to divide rather than to unite. As President of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, he was a voice against South African Apartheid, addressing the United Nations in 1989. The call of Charles Adams will long ring true for those who believe in justice for all people. There is an old African proverb that says, “*Those whom we love die only in the physical sense. Their spirit and their will continue to live on in the determination of those whom they leave behind.*” Rev. Dr. Charles Gilchrist Adams will live on in both the spirit and the work of those whom he has left behind. The words of Horatio from Shakespeare’s Hamlet seem to cry out to us at this very moment. “*And now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince. And flights of angels, sing thee to thy rest.*”

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