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July 11, 2023

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OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

By Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony

REV. DR. JOANN NICHOLS WATSON A FIGHTER FOR FREEDOM PAR EXCELLENCE

DETROIT – Maya Angelou made it very clear when describing certain individuals. “When someone shows you who they are believe them the first time!” JoAnn Watson made me a believer the first time I saw her. She was taking care of her siblings and she was outspoken at Macculloch Elementary School in Detroit. She showed me who she was as the president of the Central High School student chapter of the NAACP. She showed me who she was as the editor for the *Central Student*, our high school newspaper. She showed us all who she was as the first woman to be appointed as Executive Director of the Detroit Branch NAACP from 1990-1997. Her examples are legendary. Freedom Fighter, Writer, Orator, Organizer, Talk Show Host, Pastor, Wife, Mother, and Grandmother. She had been elevated to the royal position of ‘Queen Mother’ based on her revolutionary, universal recognition as one who un-apologetically speaks Truth to Power. This woman of God even inspired me to go the NAACP way. She has now gone by the way of our Lord. She now rests in Eternal Power. From the halls of the Detroit City Council to the Divine Council of the Ancestors she will continue to be a supreme example. One of truth, courage, determination and faith for the forward progress of our people.

As an aide and counselor to the Dean—the late Congressman John Conyers, Jr., she helped bring forth H.R. 40. This was the signature bill to provide reparations to repair some of the historic damage and trauma committed against Black people in this nation. The Detroit Task Force for Reparations is an example of what she lived and worked to help bring into fruition. JoAnn Watson, from the civil rights work of the NAACP to the human rights work of the United Nations, challenged us all to *Wake up and Stay up!* While we mourn her loss physically, we remain inspired by her life spiritually. Let me be clear for those who really and truly want to remember JoAnn Watson. If you sincerely wish to do something for JoAnn I encourage you to continue her work. Stay focused on Justice. Speak up for the least of these. Fight for the rights of the people. Take your Souls to the Polls and vote! Re-ignite your belief in God. Know that her life and her legacy were not in vain. There is an old African proverb which says, “Those whom we love die only in the physical sense. Their Spirit will live on in the will and determination of those whom they leave behind.” May the spirit of our dear Sister, Freedom Fighter and Queen Mother JoAnn Nichols Watson live on within each one of us!

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