



OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

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There Is Still More Work To Do Installation Statement by Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony

DETROIT -- Let me thank all of you for your presence here today. Our very special guests, Judge Judith Levy of the U.S. District Court (Eastern District) and also Justice Richard Bernstein of the Michigan Supreme Court. A very special thanks to the staff of the NAACP, our board members, volunteers and to you my brothers and sisters. I certainly want to acknowledge and give many thanks to my church home, Fellowship Chapel, and to the members and friends of this sacred institution for your prayers and support in allowing me to do what I have done over all of these years. For had it not been for the church, which was on my side, I would not be here today. To my family and wife and children for the time and the work that is compelled by the NAACP, I am very grateful for your understanding, support, and participation in that work. We have all worked together over these past two decades. We all have sacrificed and played a part in this journey called the NAACP. The Honorable Marcus Garvey once said:

“God does not give people positions or jobs or good conditions such as they desire. They must do that for themselves. God does not build cities nor towns nor nations, nor homes, nor factories. Men and people do that and all those who want, must work for themselves and pray to God to give them strength to do it.”

This admonition from Garvey gives us a substantive connection to a spiritual dimension of our God found in Psalm 127:1:

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.”

He has no hands but ours. We have no strength without that in which He imparts to each of us. I have prayed to God on many occasions to give me the strength to do the work. The work is advocating for the least of these. The work is pronouncing to the powerful that there are still those of whom you must remain mindful. The work is staying focused when the world seeks to cloud your vision. The work is to build up what many often try to tear down.

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The work is to use the time that we have while we have it, to move the marker for freedom, justice, and equality further down the pathway towards people achievement and to the ultimate victory.

Some have often asked me, “Why do you do what you do?” My answer is because I don’t have a choice. If it were not the NAACP, it would be something else. If it were not the church, it would be something else. For there is a spiritual dynamic to that which has forged my life in the crucible of struggle. For power even today still concedes nothing without a demand. Yet, it is imperative that what we demand is clear and is essential. It must continue to grow us and never, ever diminish us.

While we all revel in the ascension of Barack Obama to the White House, all is still not well within our own house. We celebrated Brown vs. Board of Education after 60 years last year. We still must work to develop a better educational system for our children this year. It is not a question of shall we do it, it is the mandate that we have no choice but to do it.

While we have witnessed the first African American Attorney General in the history of our nation, Eric Holder, in charge of the Department of Justice, black and brown boys and girls are still being killed in the streets due to injustice. We must still work to make it justice for all. Our call is indeed for justice, and not just us. While we have obtained the right to vote and will celebrate this year, 50 years since that signing of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, we still have to act to preserve our vote in 2015. While we can now view through the lens of history, Selma to the Edmund Pettus Bridge crossing in motion pictures, we still have the constant picture to remind us that there are still more bridges to cross in Detroit, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and California.

Yes we certainly must claim all victories, for this journey has not been a mere exercise in futility. As we stand here tonight, it is at the threshold of history when another African American Loretta Lynch, may yet become the nation’s second African American Attorney General. While we claim some victories at the top of the political spectrum, our people must not be stuck at the bottom of most of our political priorities. Black Mayors have taken cities and municipalities and lifted them up and out of both social decay and economic deprivation. Black Congress people have been at the forefront of the nation’s conscious related to justice and civil rights, led by our first African American Dean of the U.S. Congress, our own John Conyers, Jr. We have seen businesses and political empowerment, the likes of which we have never seen before, thrive and succeed. Yet, the challenge for us today is to hold on, expand the economic opportunities, and to empower a new generation. WEB DuBois said it well:

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“To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars, is the very bottom of hardships.”

Political power without economic capacity still leaves you most empty. This is why there is still more work to do. The challenge is to not be pushed back so far, that we are no longer at the table, but that we are not even in the room. The challenge for us is to come together with those who have the ability, those who share the vision, and those who recognize that their security is in our collective security. The best way for us to guarantee our future, is for us to design the future. Detroit cannot be Detroit unless we all share in her revival. Our nation cannot be a true nation unless all of her sons and daughters are respected, protected, and projected as necessary to the nation, as it lives up to all of its creed. Now it may not have included us when it was written, but it sho’ nuff has to include us now, because the history of this nation has been written with the blood, sweat, and bones of our very lives, souls, and spirit.

So we stand prepared, not just for today, but also for tomorrow. The NAACP is not just me, but it is also you. It is not them, but it is us. It is not a cavalry waiting to come. It is an army that is already here. In the words of the late Shirley Chisholm:

“You don’t make progress by standing on the sidelines, whimpering and complaining. You make progress by implementing ideas.”

There are still many more ideas to implement. There are still more victories to achieve. There are still more causes to overcome. There is still a major work for us to do. I urge everyone not to stand on the sidelines, whimpering and complaining, but rather join the battle, to engage in the working and ultimately the transforming of our current community into a new community. Won’t you join us? Let the work continue. Thank you for listening!

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