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PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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54th Annual Fight For Freedom Fund Dinner Keynote Speaker

DETROIT -- Today we are at the threshold of another 100 years of the journey of the NAACP to bring justice and equality to all of America's sons and daughters. The last 100 years have seen great accomplishments in the areas of political empowerment, voting rights, educational advancement, fair housing and even corporate representation. As we celebrate our victories we are also reminded of our challenges. The Detroit branch NAACP remains committed to the great cause of justice and equity for people of color in particular, and the neglected and marginalized in general.

As we observe the 54th Annual Fight for Freedom Fund Dinner celebration we are called not only to look back but most importantly to go forward. Our theme, for what has become an icon in our city and region, is "Facing the Rising Sun of our New Day Begun." As we face the new day, we also look back at the days when we did not have victories but we did have people that enabled our struggle for justice to be achieved. Many have questioned the relevancy in the post-Barack Obama period of the NAACP. On Wed. April 29, NAACP units nationwide will be addressing the US Supreme Court and supporting the Department of Justice in the quest to extend the Voting Rights Act, in particular Section 5. This section blocks and deters discrimination in voting changes and requires states, counties and towns that have a history of voter discrimination to get "pre-clearance" from the Department of Justice prior to making changes. It is ironic that without the expansion of democracy to those historically disenfranchised communities, we would not have achieved the land mark election of our first African American President.

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On the very day marking his 100 days in office, the very act that opened those locked doors is being attacked and some are trying to close it in the face of unprecedented progress. Some of the states with cities and towns by which Section 5 is applicable are in fact FL, NY, CA, MI and NH. It is for this reason that we must still fight until all victories are won.

This year marks the Centennial Anniversary of the NAACP. In recognizing our honorees, the “Queen of Soul” Ms. Aretha Franklin with our James Weldon Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award, Rev. Al Sharpton, Founder of the National Action Network, with our Mary White Ovington Freedom and Justice Award, along with Rev. Edwin Rowe, Pastor Central United Methodist Church with the Ida B. Wells Freedom and Justice Award, it was essential to identify someone that crosses both time and era, political and social position to define our current condition.

Detroit is still the automobile capital of the world. The US auto industry and the hundreds of thousands of workers have come under financial attack. The auto industry now stands in the doorway of possible bankruptcy and the necessity to restructure. We will honor the auto industry and the workers on Sunday, May 3. General Motors President and CEO, Fritz Henderson, will be speaking in recognition of the US auto industry. This is the first time that Mr. Henderson will be speaking in a community capacity, the magnitude of this Fight for Freedom Fund Dinner.

We have also invited the honorable Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League, as a special guest in appreciation for their annual State of Black of America report issued to characterize the social and political condition within Black America. Last year we were pleased to have Ms. Soledad O’Brien of CNN to serve as a special guest in presenting a documentary on Black America. This year we are pleased to have Mr. TJ Holmes, CNN Anchor and Reporter, Therefore, it is our desire to have someone who has been involved with the auto industry, has worked with Aretha Franklin, been a mentor to the Rev. Al Sharpton, an inspiration to the Rev. Edwin Rowe, and an immaculate motivator for our nation in the area of voting rights, civil rights, worker’s rights, women’s rights, and quite frankly the human condition. We will celebrate civil and human rights for the past 100 years. There really is but one key individual who can bring all of these factors together. This individual has a history of service not only to the nation but to the world for peace and justice. This individual has also been a candidate for the presidency of United States. It was his candidacy twenty-five years ago, along with others, that ultimately led to the election of our current president. Therefore we are very pleased to announce that the Rev. Dr. Jesse Louis Jackson, founder and president of the Rainbow Push Coalition will be the keynote speaker for the Detroit NAACP 54th Annual Fight for Freedom Fund Dinner. We look forward to his arrival.

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