



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS STATEMENT

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**DETROIT BRANCH NAACP 54th ANNUAL
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM FUND DINNER**

DETROIT -- Today we are accelerating the march towards freedom, culminated by the Detroit Branch NAACP's 54th Fight for Freedom Fund Dinner. The Dinner is scheduled for Sunday, May 3, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. in the Cobo Conference Center.

When James Weldon Johnson, the first black Secretary to the National Board Directors wrote the words to the song, "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Little did he realize their lasting impact. Now, some 100 years later we are still using his words of "**Facing the Rising Sun of Our New Day Begun**" to move the NAACP forward for the next 100 years.

This dinner, marking our centennial celebration, will have a number of unique elements. The 2009 recipients for our Freedom and Justice Awards now named in honor of our founders, Mary White Ovington and Ida B. Wells will be awarded to the following: at the National level, the Reverend Al Sharpton will receive the Mary White Ovington Freedom and Justice Award. Rev. Al Sharpton is the founder and president of the National Action Network, a not-for-profit civil rights organization based in Harlem, New York with over 45 chapters nationwide. Rev. Sharpton is a world renowned civil rights leader. A nationally syndicated television and radio host, Rev. Sharpton has led continuously in the field of civil and human rights often times when no one else was on the national scene. He is a former candidate for the presidency of the United States of America.

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Awardees

At the local level, we are pleased to present the Ida B. Wells Freedom and Justice Award to the Reverend Edwin Rowe, pastor of the Central United Methodist Church in Detroit. Rev. Rowe is a long time social activist and peace advocate. His ministry includes the Noah Project, social services, healthcare and feeding 29,000 bag lunches to the homeless each year. He is also responsible for the Peace for Youth Project, teaching non-violence to the Detroit Public Schools students and the Swords into Plowshares Peace Gallery, a visual arts gallery dedicated to peace.

This year we are adding a very royal element to this historic event. This year's recipient of the Detroit Branch NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award has been honored by many all over the world. Yet there is no award like getting the award and total recognition from those in your own hometown. It is our privilege to present the James Weldon Johnson Life Time Achievement Award, to none other than the Queen of Soul, Ms. Aretha Franklin. Ms. Franklin the recipient of more Grammy awards than we count, also named the number one female vocalist of all time by Rolling Stone Magazine and most recently given unprecedented recognition by singing her own unique version of the anthem, "My Country 'Tis of Thee" at the inauguration of President Barack Obama, is without question a life time achiever.

We will also be announcing a special recognition to the US Auto Industry and the leaders and workers who keep American on wheels. This will be more than a dinner as National NAACP President Ben Jealous will be a special guest along with persons from across the country to join in this centennial celebration.

The new historic documentary, [The NAACP Celebrating a Century](#) will be made available to the general public. Our event in Detroit will also serve as a prelude to events that will occur at the National Convention to be held in New York City, July 11-16, 2009. We look forward to a tremendous weekend of historic and significant events that will remind us of the continuous fight to both preserve and extend the call for freedom, justice and equality.

For more information on tickets and/or sponsorships please contact the Detroit Branch NAACP at (313) 871-2087 or visit www.detroitnaacp.org.

The Detroit Branch NAACP is the nation's largest branch. It holds monthly meetings that are free and open to the public. For more information please contact us at 313-871-2087 or visit us at www.detroitnaacp.org.

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