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**FREEDOM IS EXPENSIVE BUT TYRANNY IS UNAFFORDABLE!
MESSAGE DELIVERED BY REV. DR. WENDELL ANTHONY at the
67TH ANNUAL FIGHT FOR FREEDOM FUND DINNER
May 1, 2022**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, my brothers and sisters in the cause of freedom and justice. I greet you on this occasion of the 67th Annual Fight For Freedom Fund Dinner of the Detroit Branch of the NAACP. As we also celebrate the 110th Anniversary since the founding of our branch, it is with high privilege that we stand on the shoulders of Father Richard Bagnall, Rev. Robert L. Bradby, Sr., Benjamin Willoughby Lambert, William Osby and many others. It was born and emerged out of a crucible of oppression. It was a time of police brutality, “colored” restrooms and water fountains, segregated housing, and employment discrimination. Lest we forget! It was born out of a necessity to preserve our freedom, affirm our dignity and fully participate in our democracy. Beloved, Frederick Douglass taught us well when he said, *“find out just what any people will quietly submit to, and you have the exact measure of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them.”* Well let me be clear, in 2022 it is up to me and you. We will not be silent and watch those in our nation who seek to divide us from each other roll back the progress of our struggle, choke the life out of our activism, and distort the vision of a people with their eyes stayed on equity of opportunity.

While we are concerned indeed about democracy being eliminated in Ukraine by a Russian invasion, we are even more concerned about democracy being eliminated here at home by an ideological, mean spirited, authoritative, and even violent American invasion of itself. As the world joins together to help save Ukraine, perhaps they also need to join together to help save America. You see we still have to fight against brutality and abuse by too many in police departments across the country. How many more times must our children and grown folks wake up to be traumatized by another execution style death like what we have seen of Patrick Lyoya in Grand Rapids, Michigan, or George Floyd and Amir Locke in Minneapolis St. Paul Minnesota? A Detroit Free Press study even indicated that Black men in Michigan are six times more likely to be charged with resisting and obstructing police under state law than white men. We will not be silent about this. The study done by Michigan State University outlining the disparity in arrests of Black people by the Michigan State Police will not allow us to be silent.

The only thing that has stood between the implementation of 39 Voter Suppression Bills here in the state of Michigan, introduced by Republican legislators is a governor by the name of Gretchen Whitmer. And no, I’m not being partisan. I’m being factual. If the rascals were Democrats, I’d call them out just the same. We will not be silent as our districts are re-drawn to reduce the impact of Black and brown voters in select communities. We will not be silent while a governor’s life and that of her family is threatened with execution and the individuals get off without being held accountable for their dangerous actions. We cannot be silent while a rogue former losing president roams the country and openly lies about our national elections. As he stirs up the cauldron of mistrust and misdeed in every institution of accountability for the nation, possibly leading to another attack on the capital. This time successfully as they have already had a practice run at the insurrection. We will not be

silent as we witness the banning of books like George Orwell's 1984, Beloved by Toni Morrison, Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain, and The Color Purple by Alice Walker. Efforts are being made against Black Boy by Richard Wright, The Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison, Michelle Obama: Political Icon, Stamped Racism, Antiracism, and You.

Freedom Is Expensive But Tyranny Is Unaffordable.

We will not be silent as those who profess to favor freedom but merely agitate deprecation use Critical Race Theory as a political strategy which they can't spell, can't define, can't teach, and is not taught in any schools in the country. Yet they are using it just to win votes in the next election. *"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free!"* This is why we are here. This is why we must fight back. This is why we cannot surrender the cause for freedom on the scaffold of an evil and pernicious injustice. As Dr. King said, *"he who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it."* *"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends."* So, until the George Floyd Justice In Policing Act is law, until the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act is law, until freedom is secured, and democracy is really understood, we shall not be silent. For we are a people who are not without hope. Our faith and our work have kept us whole. To see a young brother from Staten Island, New York go up against a giant called Amazon and knock open the door for workers' rights gives us hope! To see a young sister from Lansing go up and put a crown on the head of Black women saying *"it's alright to be who you are"* gives us hope! To see my 10-year-old daughter stand on the same steps of the U.S. Supreme Court where her father was arrested 24 years ago for protesting peacefully, demanding that the court hire more Black law clerks for each justice, because less than 2% had ever been Black in their 232-year history gives us hope. To see her stand in celebration holding a picture of admiration for one who served as a law clerk to Justice Stephen Breyer because her daddy and many others were jailed in protestation gives us hope. Now we see the elevation of the first Black woman on the U.S. Supreme Court by the African name of Ketanji (meaning lovely one) Brown Jackson who said, *"I am the dream and the hope of the slave,"* quoting Maya Angelou. This gives us hope.

So, thank you President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris because elections have consequences. Thank you to all the martyrs who sacrificed before us. Thank you for the struggle. We shall not be silent. We shall not go back on the plantation. We shall not be moved. We will *Take Our Souls To The Polls and continue to Vote*, like our lives depended upon it because quite frankly they do. And I have the audacity just as Dr. King to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits, even though...

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