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By Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony

A FREEDOM FIGHTER HAS FALLEN!

DETROIT – As the world mourns the loss of the iconic and historic life of the Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson, let us not focus on our loss, but let us focus on our gain. Through this soldier, warrior, spiritual and faithful disciple for the ultimate dignity and respect of all people, we must pledge to continue his deeds. It is the deeds of Rev. Jackson that serves as a marker for all those who believe in freedom and justice. In this so called month of Black History, it is time for us to make even more history. Jesse Jackson did what thus says the Lord, he, *“fed the hungry, clothed the naked, gave refreshing water of inspiration to the thirsty, welcomed the immigrants, visited the prisons, prayed for the sick, and above all else, fought to relieve and release the oppressed,”* Matthew 25:35-37. During his lifetime of faith and work, he led the registration for over 7 million people. These were new voters who came to participate in our democratic process. Let us remember that were it not for the groundbreaking work, first of the Honorable Shirley Chisholm as she made a run for the Presidency of this nation and the indelible, unmistakable, historic run of Jesse Louis Jackson as President, then Barack Obama would never have been privileged to become the 44th President of these United States. He freed American prisoners captured and held in nations overseas. He taught us that we are **“Somebody.”** As a lieutenant of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he helped to fulfill the dream. As an admirer and supporter of Rosa Parks, he taught us to take our seat at the table of opportunity.

Jesse Jackson was a whirlwind that blew against the indignities and the discrimination entrenched within the very body of America. His accomplishments and his victories are too numerous for anyone to enumerate. Jesse Jackson did not just create a rainbow to shine over his head. He created a rainbow of people to shine all over America. Here in Michigan, that rainbow was well in sight as he won the primary for President in 1988. At a community rally held at Fellowship Chapel Church, with people overflowing from the church into the streets, as they brought the dogs in to make certain there were no explosive devices or anything to deter from this historic occasion, I said to the audience, *“they use to bring the dogs in to attack us and now they bring the dogs in to protect us.”*

Jesse Jackson will long be remembered not only for the signature big afro that he used to wear, but for the signature he placed upon the hearts of those to demonstrate how much he did care. I am pleased and grateful that this icon of inspiration and motivation officiated the wedding of my wife Monica and I in 2005. Jesse was a friend of the poor, a true fighter for justice for those on the battlefield, a liberator of the mind to those who refuse to think. His life and work should be studied in schools and universities throughout the world. He is in a category that only a few people have ever been able to achieve. America is a better nation because of Jesse Jackson. It is for this reason and many others that we will have a special tribute to honor him at the NAACP Detroit Branch 71st Annual Fight For Freedom Fund Dinner, Sunday, April 26. Our theme is **LIBERTY OR OPPRESSION - THE CHOICE IS OURS!** If we really want to honor him and continue his legacy, we must commit to do what he charged us all to pursue, **“Keep Hope Alive,”** by our faith and most importantly, by our work.

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