

Over a career spanning more than seven decades, William "Bill" Lucy had repeatedly been at the crossroads of history -- from Memphis to the Middle East to South Africa; from King to Mandela to Obama.

His legacy is global. His longevity is phenomenal.

Mr. Lucy is universally admired as an iconic change agent in the America labor movement and around the world. He carved his niche as a labor leader in the early 1960's. After training as a civil engineer at the University of California at Berkeley, he went to work as assistant materials and research engineer for Contra Costa County California and became involved in his local union.

Like the legendary A. Philip Randolph, Mr. Lucy emerged as a tall, charismatic consensus-builder who rose quickly through the ranks. In 1965, he became President of AFSCME Local 1675, Contra Costa County Employees. A year later, he joined the staff of AFSCME International as the Associate Director of Legislation and Community Affairs Department. He then was appointed Executive Assistant to AFSCME's late president Jerry Wurf.

In 1972, Mr. Lucy was elected AFSCME's international secretary-treasurer and became the nation's highest ranking Black elected leader. In that role for nearly 40 years, Mr. Lucy helped AFSCME grow from 200,000 to over 1.4 million members in 3,500 local unions nationwide.

He also helped redefine the role of African Americans in labor unions when he co-founded the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) in 1972 with Nelson Jack Edwards, Charlie Hayes, Cleve Robinson, and William Simons. Many had predicted CBTU's quick demise. Instead under Mr. Lucy's steady hand as president, CBTU grew in size and stature -- from a handful of chapters to more than 50 today, including a chapter in Ontario, Canada. **Mr. Lucy is the last living founder of CBTU.**

Along the way, he has stood with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis and Nelson Mandela in opposition to apartheid in South Africa. Mr. Lucy co-founded the Free South Africa Movement, a grassroots campaign that sparked widespread opposition to apartheid across the United States.

After the release of Nelson Mandela – the South African leader who had been imprisoned by the apartheid

government for 27 years – Mr. Lucy led a fundraising effort to bring Mr. Mandela on a United States tour. Four years later, when South Africa held its first post-apartheid elections, Mr. Lucy traveled there as part of an AFL-CIO monitoring delegation. After twenty years of fighting apartheid, Mr. Lucy was present when Nelson Mandela was elected the first black president of South Africa.

Throughout the 1990s, Mr. Lucy continued to move through the upper ranks of international labor. In November of 1994, he was elected president of Public Services International (PSI), the world's largest union federation. The first African American to hold this position, he oversaw 10 million members from over 100 nations.

In 1995, the AFL-CIO appointed Mr. Lucy to its executive council, the federation's highest decision-making body. Mr. Lucy also served as vice president for several of the AFL-CIO's departments, including the Industrial Union, Maritime Trades, and Professional Employees.

In 2007, Mr. Lucy once again showed his shrewd, bold leadership. He became an early believer in a young, smart, charismatic junior U.S. Senator from

Illinois -- Barack Hussein Obama. He had the audacity to believe Obama could become the nation's first African American president. Mr. Lucy created a labor outpost through CBTU to raise funds and mobilize tens of thousands of Black voters and Union households in key states on behalf of Obama's historic campaign that put him in the White House as the 44th American president.

In 2012, Mr. Lucy bade farewell as CBTU president and welcomed a much deserved retirement after his remarkable 40-year tenure. But retirement didn't mean he was going to watch TV reruns all day. Hardly, Mr. Lucy continues to counsel leaders and activists around the world who value his strategic perspective and experience. He played a key behind-the-scenes role in persuading Joe Biden to choose Kamala Harris as his VP running mate in the 2020 presidential election. Indeed, a nudge from Bill Lucy still matters as he turns 90!

Honors

- For most years when he was an elected leader at AFSCME and CBTU, Mr. Lucy was perennially named one of "The 100 Most Influential Black Americans" by ***Ebony*** magazine.
- He has received a Doctorate of Humane Letters from Howard University and Bowie State University -- two historically black universities.
- In 2018, the NAACP honored Mr. Lucy with its prestigious Chairman's Award, which is bestowed in recognition of individuals who demonstrate exemplary public service and use their distinct platforms to create agents of change. Leon W. Russell, Chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors, who presented Mr. Lucy with the Chairman's Award on the live broadcast of the NAACP Image Awards, said, "I am personally inspired by William Lucy's activism on civil and human rights issues, and particularly, that he has not forgotten what it is like to be a person of color in America."

No, Dr. William Lucy has not forgotten his people or his purpose. Nor will the world ever forget this living legend.