

FOR THE PEOPLE,  
*Always*



**WILLIAM "BILL" LUCY**

SUNRISE: NOVEMBER 26, 1933 - SUNSET: September 25, 2024

October 16, 2024

Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church

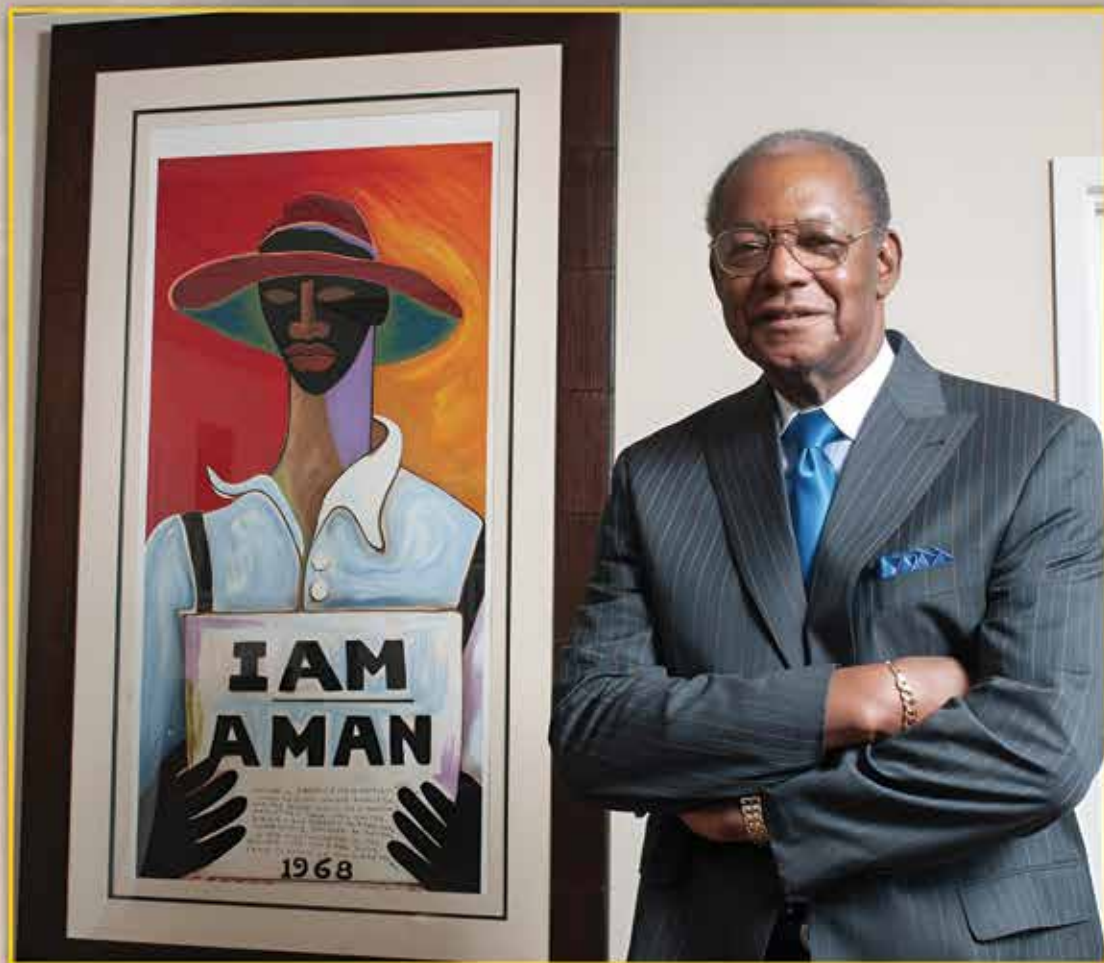
1815 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005

Rev. Dr. William H. Lamar IV, Officiating



# I AM A MAN

Message Heard 'Round the World



**M**ost people who know the story of the 1968 strike by Memphis sanitation workers -- a labor dispute that became a pivotal moment in the fight for civil rights -- are familiar with their defiant slogan: I AM A MAN. Those four words became the unwavering bond among the 1,300 strikers and with the Black community who supported their cause.

But few know that Bill Lucy helped coin that iconic slogan. He had been assigned by AFSCME International President Jerry Wurf to help the striking members of AFSCME Local 1733. He quickly showed he was effective in forging fruitful relationships with the Memphis community. Bill, then only 34 years old, collaborated with a local minister, Rev. Malcolm Blackburn, to create a slogan small enough to fit on a placard but powerful enough to inspire the strikers and unify the city.

They nailed it. "I AM A MAN" deeply touched the core in black boys and black men and black grandfathers who grew up in the Jim Crow South without being treated like a man. Bill Lucy helped to give voice to their pride and humanity. And decades later, the spirit of this simple slogan still strikes a powerful chord in the heart of Black folk and other people asserting their humanity around the world.



# Obituary



The time is now to teach and celebrate the Bill Lucy Era. Yes, the Bill Lucy era in labor history and the global fight for freedom and justice. In a career that spanned more than seven decades, Dr. William "Bill" Lucy was at the crossroads of history repeatedly -- from Memphis to the Middle East to South Africa; from King to Mandela to Obama.

His legacy is global. His longevity was phenomenal and inspiring. He remains the gold standard for courageous, visionary leadership.

Bill Lucy was a transformative leader in the America labor movement and around the world. He carved his niche as a rising labor leader in the early 1960's. In 1965, he became President of AFSCME Local 1675, Contra Costa County Employees.

In 1972, Bill Lucy was elected AFSCME's international secretary-treasurer and became the nation's highest ranking Black elected leader. Bill revolutionized the position. He skillfully transformed what was ordinarily a passive, ceremonial post into a powerful platform to advocate on behalf of AFSCME members and oppressed people worldwide. In that role for nearly 40 years, Bill Lucy helped AFSCME grow from 200,000 to over 1.4 million members in 3,500 local unions nationwide. He retired from AFSCME in 2010 as secretary treasurer emeritus.



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 Bill 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. In 2012, Bill retired from CBTU as president emeritus, passing the baton onto Rev. Terrence L. Melvin.



By then, he had become a living legend. He had stood with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis during the AFSCME sanitation workers strike in 1968. He stood with Nelson Mandela in opposition to apartheid in South Africa. Bill Lucy co-founded the Free South Africa Movement, a grassroots campaign that sparked widespread opposition to apartheid across the United States, rallying elected officials and civil rights organizations. But Bill also championed other liberation movements throughout Southern Africa. He made the freedom struggles on the African continent matter within the American labor movement.

After the release of Nelson Mandela -- the South African leader who had been imprisoned by the apartheid government for 27 years -- Bill Lucy led an unprecedented fundraising effort





to bring Mr. Mandela on a United States tour. Four years later, when South Africa held its first post-apartheid elections, Bill Lucy led an AFL-CIO monitoring delegation. He was also present when Nelson Mandela was elected the first black president of South Africa in 1995.

Throughout the 1990s, Bill Lucy continued to rise into the upper ranks of organized labor. In November of 1994, he was elected president of Public Services International (PSI), the world's largest union federation. He was the first African American to hold this position, and he over-

saw 30 million workers from over 100 nations. In 1995, the AFL-CIO appointed Bill Lucy to its executive council, the federation's highest decision-making body.

In 2007, Bill 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. In spite of the fierce political heat, he still had the audacity to believe Obama could become the nation's first African American president. Through CBTU, he raised more money and mobilized 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.

**E**ven in retirement, Bill Lucy played a key behind-the-scenes role in persuading Joe Biden to choose Kamala Harris as his VP running mate in 2020. And right up to his death, he closely followed her campaign for the presidency.

He generously counseled and mentored the next generation of labor leaders and activists around the world, people who valued his sharp strategic perspective and global relationships.

Bill Lucy left his footprint not only on the national and international terrain but also on the city he loved -- Washington, DC. He was chairman of the Democratic Party in the District from 1972-78. He helped to pave the way for the first generation of elected officials in D.C. under the Home Rule Charter. From Walter E. Washington's election as DC's first Black mayor in 1974 to Marion Barry's legendary reign as "Mayor for Life," Bill Lucy shaped the local political landscape for decades.

Bill Lucy preferred to work behind the scenes, shying away from fickle fame in front of the cameras. But other leaders and activists knew *exactly* who he was. Bill was a "people person." He could relate to big city mayors as well as street cleaners; to members of Congress as well as striking workers on a picket line. As the late Roger Wilkins put it so succinctly:





***“Here’s the thing about Bill Lucy: he shows up. Not just any old time, but when he’s needed.”*** True indeed. Bill Lucy often would show up quietly for folks who needed a lifeline to keep the lights on or to help pay a past due bill. To the end, he never forgot his purpose or his people.



### Honors

- Dr. William Lucy 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.
- 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.



William "Bill" Lucy was born November 26, 1933, in Memphis, Tennessee. He spent his childhood growing up in Richmond, Calif., before pursuing a degree in civil engineering at the University of California at Berkeley. Later, he would take a job as an engineering aide in the Contra Costa County government where he would begin his long, distinguished labor career.

Bill Lucy passed away peacefully at home on September 25, 2024, just shy two months shy of his 91st birthday.

Preceded in death are his parents Joseph and Susie Bell Lucy, and his brother Joseph Lucy, Jr., his wife Dorothea and son William Lucy, Jr. Bill is survived by his devoted daughters Benita Lucy Marsh (Terry) and Phyllis Lucy; grandchildren: William Christopher Scott Morris, Kenneth P. Manual, Dorothea Chae Manual, Thaddien Shon Manual, and a host of wonderful relatives and friends. Bill fulfilled his mission and passed the baton on, knowing we would carry his legacy forward with pride and gratitude.





# **Celebration of Life**

## **Order of Service**

**Rev. Dr. William H. Lamar IV, Officiating**

### **Musical Prelude**

### **Processional**

Clergy, Family, Friends

### **Opening Hymn**

The William "Bill" Lucy International CBTU Fellowship Choir

### **Scripture Readings**

Old Testament	John 14: 1-3
New Testament	Job 19: 25-27

### **Prayer of Comfort**

**Rev. Mark Thompson**

Host, "Make It Plain" podcast and social justice activist

### **Recognition of Clergy, Dignitaries and Guests**

**Pastor, William H. Lamar IV, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church**

### **Tributes**

**By Lee Saunders**

International President, American Federation of State, County  
and Municipal Employees

**By the Honorable Maxine Waters (D-CA)**

United States House of Representatives

**By Liz Shuler**

President, AFL-CIO

**By Derrick Johnson**

CEO, National President, NAACP

**By Cecil Roberts**

President, United Mine Workers of America

**By the Honorable Bennie Thompson (D-MS)**

United States House of Representatives

## **Acknowledgments**

**Willie Baker**, Exec. Vice President, CBTU

**Dave Claxton**, UFCW Retiree

**Christine Macklin**, CBTU Canada

## **Special Tribute**

Embassy of South Africa

## **Musical Selection**

The William "Bill" Lucy International CBTU Fellowship Choir

## **Tribute**

**By Fred Redmond**

Secretary Treasurer, AFL-CIO

## **Tribute**

**By Rev. Dr. Iva Carruthers**

General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

## **Tribute**

**By Chris Gardner**

Motivational speaker, author, founder, Christopher Gardner International Holdings

## **Video Tribute**

**By Marcia Fudge**

Former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (Biden)

## **Tribute**

**By Clayola Brown**

CBTU First Vice President and Senior Adviser for Strategic Partnerships  
and Racial Justice, AFL-CIO, President, APRI

## **Tribute**

**By Melanie Campbell**

President/CEO National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and convener  
of Black Women's Roundtable

## **Tribute**

**By Judy Beard**

Political Director, American Postal Workers Union

## **Musical Selection**

The William "Bill" Lucy International CBTU Fellowship Choir



## **Obituary**

(silent reading)

## **Video Remembrance**

## **Family Tribute**

By Benita Lucy Marsh, Phyllis Lucy, Gary Lucy, Grandchildren

## **Tribute**

By Rev. Terrence L. Melvin

International President , Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and  
Secretary Treasurer, New York State AFL-CIO

## **Eulogy**

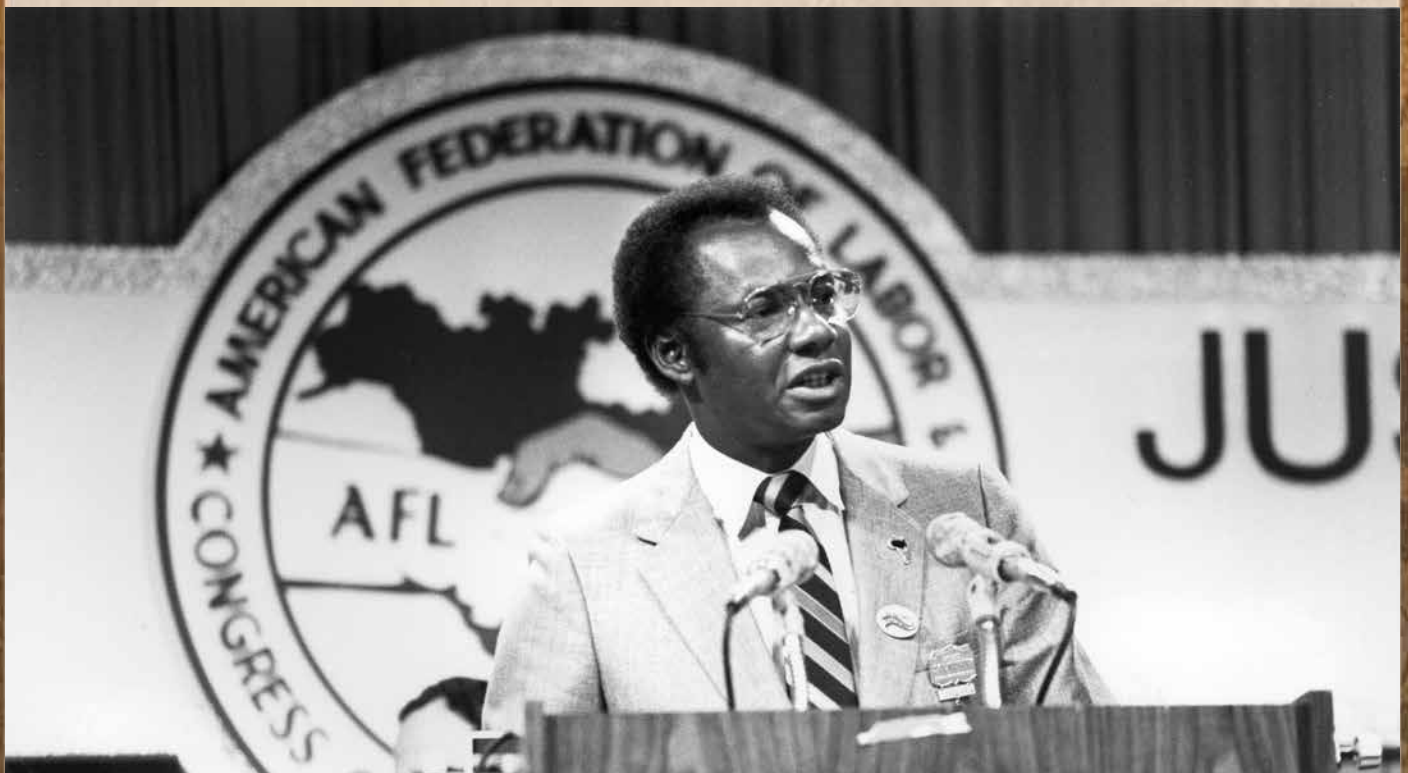
By Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II

Civil Rights Activist and Pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church,  
Disciples of Christ, Goldsboro, NC

## **Benediction**

Rev. William H. Lamar IV

## **Recessional**







THE WHITE HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

# Statement from President Joe Biden on the Passing of William “Bill” Lucy



► BRIEFING ROOM ► STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

Bill Lucy was a courageous labor leader who dedicated his life bending the arc of history toward justice.

Of his seven decades as a giant in the movement, Bill spent nearly forty years as Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. He also founded the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. No matter the title or the place, he worked tirelessly to advance civil rights and labor rights for all Americans, changing the course of history and redeeming the soul of America.

His dedication led to increased benefits and protections for America’s public servants who keep our communities safe, care for the sick, and so much more.

A native of Memphis, Tennessee, he marched with Dr. King to secure the rights of sanitation workers. Bill’s decree, “I Am a Man,” shed light on the humanity of our Nation’s laborers and became a nationwide rallying cry for dignity and equality, two of our most sacred American values.

Over the course of his towering leadership, I saw Bill in action. He believed, like I do, that working class issues and civil rights issues are deeply intertwined, as he strengthened the role of Black Americans in our Nation’s unions and fought to dismantle apartheid in South Africa.

He will forever be remembered for his unrelenting commitment to justice, fairness, and equality—at home and abroad.

Jill and I send our love and condolences to his family, the labor movement he empowered, and every worker whose life he made better.

May God bless Bill Lucy, a great American, and a good man.





THE WHITE HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

# Statement from Vice President Kamala Harris on the Passing of William “Bill” Lucy



› BRIEFING ROOM › STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

William “Bill” Lucy was a giant and a patriot who spent his life fighting for freedom, justice, and fairness.

As a leader of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), he dedicated his life to improving conditions for working families and advancing the cause of civil rights, human rights, and labor rights. In 1968, alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lucy helped lead the Memphis sanitation workers strike, where AFSCME members marched under the iconic declaration “I Am A Man,” a term he coined. Lucy believed in the universal values of freedom, dignity, and solidarity, forming the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and working to end apartheid in South Africa.

Generations of working people and their families continue to benefit from his work and legacy. Doug and my thoughts are with Bill’s family and loved ones.





# NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS

**MOTTO: LABOUR CREATES WEALTH**

**NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:**

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Tel: 0811 707 7418, 0811 707 7419  
E-mail: gsec@nlcng.org Website: www.nlcng.org

**LAGOS OFFICE:**

29, Olajuwon Street,  
Off Ojuelegba Road,  
P.O.Box 620, Yaba,  
Lagos - Nigeria.

## TRIBUTE TO BROTHER WILLIAM 'BILL' LUCY

It was with a heavy heart that the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) received the news of the passing of Brother William 'Bill' Lucy who departed the shores of planet earth on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at his home in Washington DC. It is comforting that Brother Bill was surrounded by family, care, love and solidarity at the end of his journey on this side of heaven.

The Nigeria Labour Congress pays homage to the stellar and exemplary life of commitment to working class struggle by Brother William 'Bill' Lucy. In a life career spanning more than six decades, Brother Bill who was employed as a materials and research engineer at Contra Costa County subsequently embraced trade unionism when he joined the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Brother Bill through incredible commitment to working class ideals rose to the heights of Secretary-Treasurer of the AFSCME from 1972 until his retirement in 2010. During his years of active service, Brother William Lucy was instrumental in the formation of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) – a veritable platform which he and other black trade unionists like Nelson Edwards, William Simons, Charles Hayes, Cleveland Robinson and others championed popular causes especially the struggle to dismantle apartheid in South Africa and the campaign for the expansion and mainstreaming of civil liberties in the United States of America.

Succinctly put, the life of Brother Bill was a life of impact as attested by trade unionists who climbed on his giant shoulders to attain great heights in trade unionism and accomplish their life dreams and goals. Brother Bill would be remembered by all for his sense of Pan-Africanism and Pan-Americanism beautifully and seamlessly woven into one colourful fabric.

Comrade William 'Bill' Lucy has doubtlessly lived a colourful life which has beautified and elevated all who came across him. Working people all over the world are blessed to have this memory of him. Thus, Brother Bill never really died... He transited to take his well-deserved seat with the ancestors.

We offer our condolences to Brother Bill's family, the CBTU and AFSCME. Adieu, Brother Lucy till we meet on the bright and colourful morning.

Comrade Emmanuel Ugboaja, mni  
General Secretary, Nigeria Labour Congress

**President: JOSEPH AJAERO General Secretary: EMMANUEL UGBOAJA, mni Treasurer: AMBALI AKEEM OLATUNJI**





SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

3051 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20008 • Tel: (202) 745-6651 • Fax: (202) 986-9482

**The Embassy of South Africa, Washington, DC pays tribute to the  
Life of Labor Leader William "Bill" Lucy and his contribution to South Africa**



*Photo by [New York State AFL-CIO](#) licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)*

The Embassy of the Republic of South Africa in Washington, DC extend its heartfelt condolences and prayers to the bereaved family, friends and to the respective labour movements in American and around the world, on the passing of William "Bill" Lucy, a trailblazing Black union leader, who for over four decades was the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Secretary-Treasurer emeritus and a revered labour, human rights and civil rights leader.

In this time of loss, as we reflect on William Lucy's unwavering commitment, leadership, and extraordinary accomplishments, it can be rather challenging to eulogize any man - to appreciate in words not just the facts and the dates that make a life. There is a word in South Africa - Ubuntu - that can describe William's greatest gift, the word literally means that a person is a person through other people. Ubuntu encapsulates ideas of human kindness, mutual caring, connection, community and how all our actions have an impact on others and on society. Mr. Lucy was instrumental in popularizing a four-word evocation of self-esteem and dignity - "I Am a Man," which doubled as a demand for respect - that was embraced by striking Memphis sanitation workers in 1968 and evolved into a national hosanna of praise and for salvation.

As part of Mr Lucy's advocacy efforts and trade union work, he brought a wealth of knowledge and experience into the global labour movement, his legacy is intertwined with some of the most monumental civil rights struggles of our time. As one of the most influential leaders, William Lucy, fought for the rights of working-class people and disenfranchised people, leaving an indelible mark not only on the American labour and civil rights movements but also on the people of South Africa.



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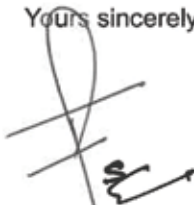
Mr Lucy set his activism sights and tireless work outside the United States, as the co-founder and longtime leader of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), in 1974 passed resolutions calling for an economic boycott of South Africa. A decade later, Mr. Lucy helped launch the Free South Africa Movement, a broad coalition that mobilized grassroots support and organized regular protests, including at the South African Embassy in Washington. Those protest featured calls to free political prisoners including the iconic South African Statesman, Nelson Mandela. Following Mandela's release from prison in 1990, Bill led efforts to bring the leader on a tour of the United States, a testament to his unwavering commitment to justice and equality. He was also present during South Africa's historic first post-apartheid elections, witnessing Mandela's election as the country's first Black president.

A fierce grit and unwavering commitment to the freedom struggle anchored William Lucy's entire activist life, leaving a legacy in both national and international organizations. May his decades of exemplary service and leadership, putting workers & equality for all front & center, be everlasting. From Lucy's leadership in the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike, to his role in defeating and dismantling the apartheid system in South Africa, we also celebrate his life, his vision and passion, his ideals of political, social and economic emancipation that he stood for, will remain and inspire and shape future generations.

Hamba kahle – go well William 'Bill' Lucy

May His soul rest in peace and rise in glory.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ismail Esau', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ismail Esau  
Charge d'Affaires a.i.

9 October 2024



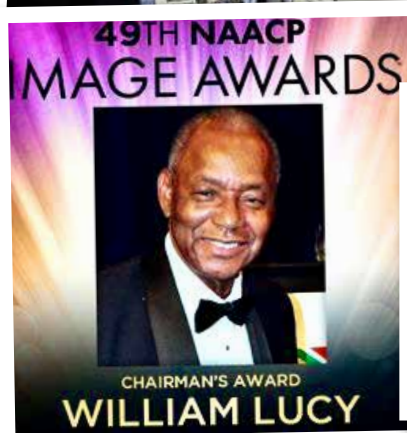


**STEERING COMMITTEE**

 Robert Jack Edwards, N.Y., (United Negro College)	 Charles Davis, N.Y., (Congressional Black Caucus)
 Robert Davis, Kentucky (Congressman - D-KY)	 Charles Johnson, N.Y., (Executive Director)
 William French, President - Local 5, A.F.C.	









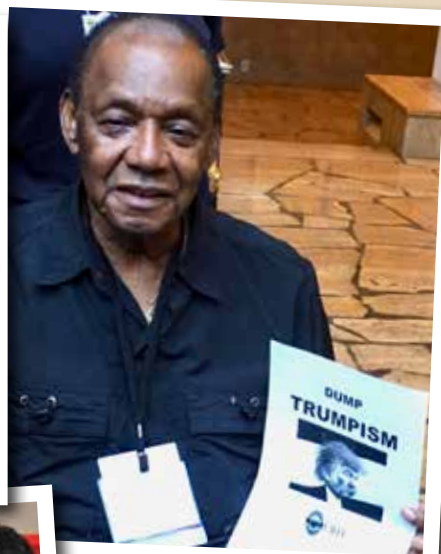
# Family













## Acknowledgements

The family of William Lucy would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank you" and deep gratitude for all of the prayers, calls, visits, food, Facebook or Twitter (X) posts and other countless acts of kindness during this time of profound loss and sadness. Thank you to the attentive doctors and nursing staff at Holy Cross Hospital and Suburban Hospital. Thank you to the rehab staff at Autumn Lake Healthcare.

## Special Recognition

Having Bill Lucy in your life was a blessing. He, too, was blessed to have angels across the country across the country and around the world. They prayed for him, cooked for him, took him to appointments, called to check on him, dropped by to keep him company and lift his spirits. There are too many of you to thank here, but a few names should be mentioned here, including Jessie Ball, Willie Baker and Arlene Holt Baker, Tony Harrison and Pat Tyson, Dave Claxton, Sharman Townsend, Josephine LeBeau, Rose Daylie, Tish Taylor, Mary Finger, Lelia McMullen.

## In Appreciation

For this historic and momentous occasion, the family is forever grateful for the genuine and generous support offered by the labor community, led by CBTU President Rev. Terrence Melvin, AFSCME President Lee Saunders, NEA President Becky Pringle and AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Fred Redmond. You stepped up without hesitation to make this day worthy of Bill Lucy's life and legacy. Finally, the Lucy family is humbled and uplifted by the love and compassion shown by the extraordinary staff and volunteers at Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, under the leadership of Pastor William H. Lamar IV. The history and bond between the family and this hallowed house of worship and resistance made this the most righteous place to celebrate William "Bill" Lucy.

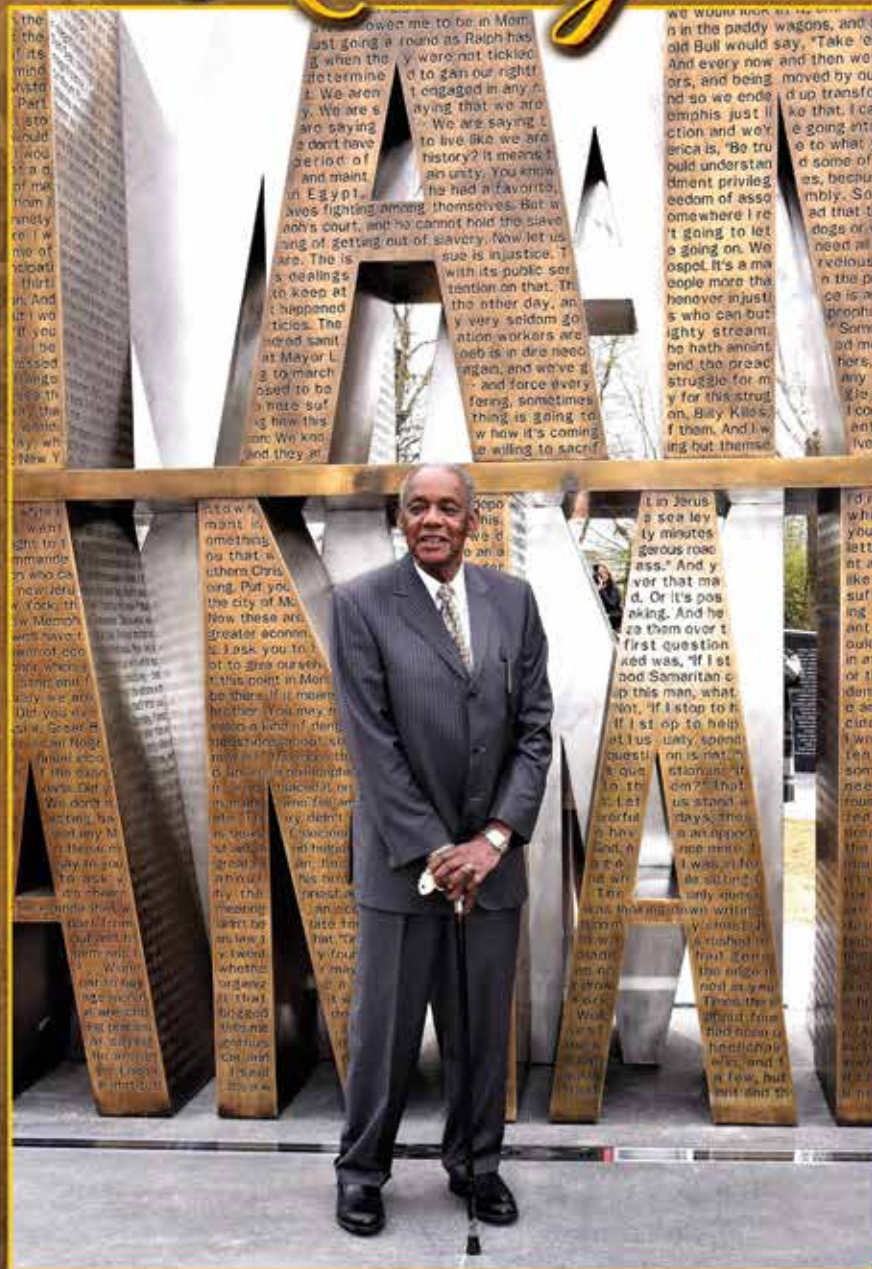
## Professional Services Entrusted to:

McGuire Funeral Service  
744 Georgia Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20012





# FOR THE PEOPLE, *Always*



To see more highlights of Bill Lucy's legendary life and career or to leave a note of condolences for the Lucy family, please visit CBTU's special website -- [lucy90.com](http://lucy90.com) or scan this QR code.



Memorial program designed by  
William Maxwell - WM Graphics  
202-439-6169