



CBTU Fact Sheet #1

About CBTU

- CBTU gives Black workers in unions an independent voice to speak truth to power. About racism. About policing Black communities. About voting rights.
- CBTU is where young workers can grow their activist wings to take the labor movement to the next level.
- CBTU is proud to claim the distinction of existing longer any other African American labor organization.

History

- CBTU was started in 1972 when 1,200 Black trade unionists met in Chicago to express the independent position of Black workers in the 1972 presidential election and to oppose U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.
- CBTU created a new role for Black trade unionists in the labor movement and in the African American communities.
- CBTU has challenged the labor movement to be more relevant to the needs and aspirations of Black and poor workers. CBTU also embraced its role as community-builder.

Presidential Leadership

Rev. Terrence L. Melvin is the current president of CBTU. He was handpicked by Bill Lucy to lead CBTU when he retired in 2012. Brother Melvin also serves as Secretary-Treasurer of the New York AFL-CIO. His union roots go back more than four decades, when he became a member of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) Local 427 in western New York. Under his leadership, CBTU led labor's successful voter campaign to defeat Donald Trump in the 2020 elections. In 2020, he was picked by the late AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka to be the executive director of the federation's Racial Justice Task Force. He has brought together labor leaders from Law Enforcement and Corrections with labor leaders from the public and private sectors to hold difficult conversations that have led to breakthroughs on policing communities of color.

William "Bill" Lucy, who is the last living founder of CBTU, was elected as CBTU's first president in 1973, and he served until he retired in 2012. Brother Lucy's stature among Black leaders and throughout the the labor movement earned CBTU a seat at the table where important decisions were made. He worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis. He led organized labor's anti-apartheid campaign that eventually freed Nelson Mandela and helped him become president of South Africa. Long before political pundits saw the magic, Bill Lucy tagged Barack Obama, a young Illinois U.S. senator who was a long-shot candidate for president, to make history. He was right. And he has been a mentor and inspiration for a generation of labor leaders around the world.

