

**WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET LU PALMER**  
**By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill (March 21, 2014)**

We should always remember some of our great ancestors. One such ancestor is Lu Palmer.

On Sunday, September 12, 2004, Lu Palmer made his transition to eternity. Lu Palmer was an unquestioned leader, and dedicated soldier in the struggle for Black Liberation and independence. His spirit will remain among us forever.

As I began to think about the tremendous contributions Brother Lu made, over the years, I found myself traveling down memory lane. I knew Lu for thirty-two years and worked closely with him on innumerable projects. During this period we became very good friends and I considered him as one of my fathers in the movement.

Lutrelle Fleming Palmer, Jr. was born on March 28, 1922 in Newport News, Virginia. To understand something about Lu Palmer, you have understanding the tremendous influence his family had on him, particularly his father. Brother Lu was named after his father who was an outstanding Black educator and institution builder.

Lu Palmer, Sr. graduated from Wilberforce University in 1911 and received a second degree from the University of Michigan in 1912. In reading an April 1923 edition of the Alpha Phi Alpha journal, *The Sphinx*, I ran across a biographical sketch of Lu's father. In discussing his role as an educator and Principal of the Huntington High School in Newport News, *The Sphinx* commented that "A big element in the success that has

attended Brother Palmer's efforts is his rare faculty of securing the united support of his community.”

Over the years, Brother Lu Palmer, Jr. secured that same kind of support in Chicago and other places around the country for his dedicated work in the Black Liberation Movement. In this regard, the old adage, “Like father, like son” applies.

After his graduation from high school Lu attended and graduated from Virginia Union University. Upon completing of his B.A. degree, Lu entered Syracuse University and finished his M.A. degree in journalism. Lu didn't stop there. He attended the University of Iowa in pursuit of a Ph.D. in communications. Lu finished all of the necessary requirements for this degree except for the writing of his dissertation. Lu told me years ago that he had done extensive research in preparation to write his dissertation, but unfortunately his notes were lost on a train. After that mishap, Lu just kind of gave up on the idea.

From the early 1950s, Lu worked in a variety positions as a journalist, communicator, writer, and educator. The name Lu Palmer is synonymous with the quest of Black people's efforts in Chicago and around the country in our fight for self determination and independence.

For over fifty-three years Lu worked in the field of communications as a journalist, as the Director of the News Bureau, as an editor at Fisk University, as a reporter at the *Tri-State Defender*, as senior writer at the *Chicago Defender*, a reporter in the Peace

Corps, a reporter at *The Chicago American*, and as a columnist at the *Chicago Daily News*.

It was the racism and white supremacy of the *Chicago Daily News* that caused Lu to resign his lucrative position in 1972 and start his own newspaper called the *Black X-Press*. Although the life of this newspaper was short-lived, the idea and example that Lu set by taking this bold step was indicative of his character as a true freedom fighter.

Like his father, Lu fought for the dignity, freedom, self determination, and independence of Black people most of his life. Through “Lu’s Notebook,” a radio program that aired on most Black radio stations for some ten years, he articulated many of the key issues that impacted on the heartbeat of the Black Community in Chicago and the United States. You might remember it was Lu who said, “It’s enough to make a Negro turn Black.” Also, for many years Lu served as the host of the popular WVON night time radio show, “On Target.”

Through Lu’s Notebook and forums, he was instrumental in mobilizing and organizing Black people to take action around our own self interests. Perhaps his greatest organizing venture was the establishment of his organization, Chicago Black United Communities (CBUC), which more than any other organization laid the foundation for the election of Chicago’s first Black Mayor, Harold Washington.

If you recall, it was Lu Palmer and CBUC that convened the Citywide Political Conference at Malcolm X College on August 15, 1981, “To examine, to explain, to

explore old and new strategies that will enable us to chart new paths toward full political representation and full political empowerment— in Black precincts, in Black wards, in Black congressional districts, in Black state legislative districts, in City Hall and throughout this country.” It was Lu Palmer that declared at this conference, and subsequently popularized the slogan that became a reality, “We Shall See In `83.”

We miss Lu, but his spirit remains with us.