



Honorable William Lucas

January 15, 1928 - May 30, 2022

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of The Honorable William Lucas

The Honorable William Cecil Lucas, age 94, peacefully transitioned at his home in Detroit, Michigan, surrounded by family on Memorial Day, May 30, 2022. He was born in Harlem, New York, on January 15, 1928, to immigrants Charlotte (Hazel) and George Alwyn Lucas.

William Lucas was a God-fearing man and a trailblazer ahead of his time. He had a strong spiritual commitment to serve the community and received numerous accolades and awards for his achievements as a lifelong public servant. His career would set a path of many firsts and serve as an example of compassion, integrity, and leadership. Even in the midst of his distinguished career, William believed his greatest accomplishment was raising six successful, caring children alongside his wife Evelyn (Daniel). Their vision to foster a strong family unit – centered around God, education, and service – was realized by raising four Doctors and a Sergeant in the Detroit Police Department. With Evelyn preceding him in death by only three months, William and Evelyn’s 75 years of marriage was a true love story of perseverance and commitment.

William came from humble beginnings as he was orphaned in Harlem at the age of 14. To survive, he sold newspapers and worked odd jobs but never lost the importance of education as the key to his advancement. During his youth, he would visit Harlem’s city parks and overhear conversations of older men playing chess and checkers lament “If only I had done this ...,” as they

reflected on their unfulfilled dreams. From then on, William vowed to live a life without regret. Throughout his career he took risks and seized opportunities aligned with his desire to serve others.

William recognized that hard work and discipline would allow him to overcome almost any obstacle. His work ethic was embodied as a star athlete in track and field. During one race he lost his left shoe but continued to run nearly two miles to finish third, allowing his team to medal. Ultimately, his academic and athletic achievements earned him a full scholarship to Manhattan College, distinguishing him as the first person in his family to pursue higher education. Steadfast in his

commitment to academics, William ignored the admonitions that a college degree was not useful for a man of color and graduated with honors in 1952. Even with a college degree, it was challenging for William to obtain employment. Nevertheless, he was able to secure professional work as a substitute teacher and social worker. Eventually, he broke through racial barriers and joined the New York City Police Department (NYPD). He began his law enforcement career walking the beat in Harlem and later served in the Harlem Division Vice Squad. As an undercover officer, William was assigned to high-risk cases which placed him in life-threatening situations. More than once he came under fire, but by God's grace, managed to survive. As a law enforcement officer, William both witnessed and experienced racial disparities and inequalities. These occurrences ultimately led to his decision to further his education and pursue a law degree. William attended Fordham Law school while working full-time as a police officer to support his wife and six children. In 1962, the day of his law school graduation, William worked overtime on security detail for the commencement speaker, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. Kennedy engaged him in conversation and was so impressed with William's work ethic and accomplishments that he offered William a position in Washington, D.C. Subsequently, William served in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice and helped

further the enforcement of school desegregation across the South. After the assassination of President Jack Kennedy, William was recruited into the rigorous Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) training program and was selected to serve as a special agent in the Cincinnati FBI office. He was later assigned to the City of Detroit. William's unique combination of street savviness and legal expertise enabled him to have an unprecedented apprehension rate.

William was unafraid of change and welcomed the challenges of expanding his career aspirations and opportunities to serve. In 1967, he left the security of the FBI to accept an appointment as Wayne County's first African American Undersheriff under Sheriff Roman S. Gribbs. Following Gribbs's successful campaign for Mayor of Detroit, William assumed the vacated office and became the first African American Sheriff of Wayne County. He was overwhelmingly elected to Wayne

County Sheriff in his own right in 1970, and re-elected twice thereafter, serving 13 years as Sheriff.

William inherited a Sheriff's Department in disarray, riddled with untrained staff, low morale, and jail overcrowding. In fact, local newspapers constantly urged that the Sheriff's Office be disbanded because it was an "anarchism that had outlived its usefulness." Undeterred, William directed his energy and experience to uplifting the image of the Wayne County Sheriff Department. He began at the basic level by recruiting new deputies, working with the Detroit Police Department and collaborating with the Wayne County Civil Service. Once he secured more deputies, William reinforced the high standards of the department and initiated deputy training in Quantico, Virginia, to enhance professionalism and analytical skills. To reduce jail overcrowding, he instituted a new classification system for inmates that reduced crowding without compromising public safety. Furthermore, he eliminated the practice of discouraging visitors in jail. Instead, he instituted new visiting policies, opened

the jail to tours, introduced a chaplain program and provided mandatory health care services to inmates. His compassionate policies improved the living conditions of inmates and the prestige of the Sheriff's Office. His tireless efforts resulted in the planning of a new jail and Sheriff's facilities. His accomplishments in the Sheriff Office were recognized at the national level and in 1977, he was one of three finalists to succeed J. Edgar Hoover as director of the FBI.

When Wayne County experienced severe financial difficulties and faced bankruptcy, the people of Wayne County recognized the fiscal leadership abilities of William and elected him Wayne County's first County Executive. He was charged with the responsibility of creating and establishing a newly organized government. He served for four years as the first African American Chief Executive Officer in the United States. At that time, Wayne county was the third largest county in the country. As a politician, William was soft spoken, knowledgeable, and professional. He was unflappable even when confronted with adversity, earning him the name "Cool Hand Luke." He implemented innovative procedures and helped procure funding for major projects like the renovation of the Wayne County Building on 600 Randolph Street, the expansion of Detroit Metro Airport, and the construction of the new

Wayne County Jail. He was respected for his integrity and commitment to excellence even by his adversaries.

In 1985, William switched his political affiliation to the Republican Party. He believed minorities were being taken for granted and not properly represented in high level decision-making positions. He felt minorities should have a voice and influence in both political parties to better facilitate policy decisions that would benefit the well-being of the community. He would often say, "you cannot partake in the meal if you are not at the table." William believed his policies of fiscal conservatism aligned more closely with those of the Republican Party at that time. He won the Michigan Republican gubernatorial primary in 1986, becoming the second African American to win a major party

nomination for Governor in the United States. He ran on a platform of financial responsibility, education, and diversity, but lost to the incumbent. To this day, William remains the only African American gubernatorial nominee from either major party in the state of Michigan.

In 1987, William became a Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. There he developed teaching materials and manuals on law enforcement and community policing techniques. His contributions were recognized by President George H. Bush. Bush appointed William to a liaison position in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Justice Department in Washington, DC. After Bush's tenure as president, William returned to Detroit and was twice elected Wayne County Circuit Court Judge.

As a Judge, William had the unique perspective of a former police officer tempered with compassion and legal expertise. His courtroom was known for its punctuality, proficiency, and professionalism. Though ready and willing to serve, William was unable to seek a third judicial term due to the age constraints of the position. He served the remainder of his career in private practice (Lucas and Associates), as a visiting judge, and as an arbitrator and mediator. He was often invited to present lectures on law enforcement issues, substance abuse, narcotics, and international security. As a panelist and advisor, he attended conferences in India, Italy, Belgium, and several other countries by request.

In every aspect of his life, William remained disciplined and committed to excellence. Even in his later years, he maintained his strength and

athleticism by running every morning at 5:30 AM and climbing the 19 flights of stairs to his courtroom. In fact, William continued to walk at least a mile a day until two weeks before his passing.

William is preceded in death by his wife Evelyn, brothers George, Alvin, Joseph, Howard, Reverend Fr. Lawrence Lucas, James, and son John. He is survived by his sister, Sr. Patricia Lucas, his children Dr. Stephenie Lucas (Dr.

Logan Oney), Dr. William Lucas (Rhonda Lucas, MSW), Dr. Patricia Lucas (Laval Perry, MBA), Sgt. Richard Lucas (Renee Lucas and the late Nedra Lucas), and Dr. Jo Ann Lucas (Herve Narcisse, JD), 16 grandchildren, and 20 great grandchildren.

Tribute Wall



“ *Honorable William Lucas*

January 21, 2023 at 09:34 PM



“ *Thinking of our family members during this sad time and sending our heartfelt condolences. Uncle William (Bill) was always positive in his outlook and in helping others. He will always be sadly missed and always remembered with love. He will always be forever dear to all those who knew and loved him.*

Ana and Dee Lucas - July 02, 2022 at 11:32 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Honorable William Lucas.*



June 08, 2022 at 07:10 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Honorable William Lucas.*



June 08, 2022 at 03:10 PM

AN

“ Albert N. purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Honorable William Lucas.



Albert N. - June 08, 2022 at 02:48 PM

VO

“ Vanassa OwensWarren sent a virtual gift in memory of Honorable William Lucas



Vanassa OwensWarren - June 08, 2022 at 02:01 PM

VO

“ Judge Lucas was a dear colleague and kind pert. He will be truly missed. May God give his family strength, Love, and Peace.
Vanassa OwensWarren

Vanassa OwensWarren - June 08, 2022 at 02:00 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Honorable William Lucas.



June 07, 2022 at 10:53 PM



“ *Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Honorable William Lucas.*



June 07, 2022 at 05:47 PM



“ *Honorable William "Bill Lucas" Our "Nubian King" was a Gift to your Family and countless others. Sending my sincere condolences and prayers to the Lucas Family. Mr. Lucas will forever have a special place in my ❤️ heart. I continue to cherish the opportunity of serving as a member of the "Women for Lucas" team and being Appointed to serve in his Administration working so closely with him until the very last day of his Wayne County Executive Administration. May the Family find Peace during his spiritual transition. REST IN PEACE "NUBIAN KING" Brenda Butler(Simpson) & Family*



BRENDA BUTLER (SIMPSON) - June 07, 2022 at 09:20 AM



“ *My sincere condolences to the entire family of Mr. Lucas. Your father/granddad was such a gentle giant.*

Jackie Jennings - June 06, 2022 at 05:34 AM

JJ

“ Jackie Jennings lit a candle in memory of Honorable William Lucas



Jackie Jennings - June 06, 2022 at 05:22 AM

PB

“ On behalf of Pastor Edward L. Branch and Sis. Lanell, we share our love and prayers to the family of the Honorable William Lucas!

Pastor Edward L. Branch - June 05, 2022 at 10:15 PM

BI

“ The Inaugural Wayne County Executive provided my FIRST post-college (Wayne State) job as an accountant in the Budget Dept (April 83). He was a role model for many of us. A true "Class Act" and man of integrity. Bishop Charles H. Ellis III

Bishop Charles H. Ellis III - June 03, 2022 at 06:50 PM

EF

“ We would like to extend our condolences to the family. May God comfort you through his word the Bible and the gift of prayer.

Evans family - June 02, 2022 at 04:45 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Honorable William Lucas.



June 02, 2022 at 11:11 AM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Honorable William Lucas.*



June 01, 2022 at 09:48 PM



“ *My sincerest thoughts and condolences are with the entire family during their time of bereavement!*

AC Dumas - June 01, 2022 at 09:04 PM