

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lutrelle "Lu" F. Palmer, II

PERSON

Palmer, Lutrelle Fleming

Alternative Names: Lutrelle "Lu" F. Palmer, II;

Life Dates: March 28, 1922-September 12, 2004

Place of Birth: Newport News, Virginia, USA

Residence: Chicago, Illinois

Occupations: Community Activist; Newspaper Reporter

Biographical Note

Called the godfather of Chicago black political activism, Lutrelle Fleming "Lu" Palmer, Jr. was born March 28, 1922, in Newport News, Virginia, to Myrtle and Lutrelle, a school principal. While his two older sisters opted for careers in education, Palmer became a journalist when he arrived in Chicago in 1950 with a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. "The Panther with a pen" spent fifty years galvanizing and informing the black community as a reporter, syndicated columnist, newspaper publisher and radio commentator. From 1983 until his retirement in 2001, Palmer hosted an issues-oriented talk show.

Palmer came to Chicago in 1950 as a reporter for the Chicago Defender. He wrote for other newspapers, including the Chicago Daily News, where he also served as a syndicated columnist and editor for the Nashville, Tennessee, based Tri-State Defender. He founded the Black X-Press Info-Paper in Chicago. He was a recruiter, organizer and preceptor for the Associated Colleges of the Midwest from 1970 to 1990.

Sometimes Palmer's positions caused him to quit or lose a job. Illinois Bell canceled its sponsorship of Palmer's twelve-year old radio show in 1983 when he became an outspoken supporter of Harold Washington, who, with Palmer's help, became Chicago's African American mayor. As a community activist, he founded the Chicago Black United Communities in 1979, the Black Independent Political Organization in 1981, and served as chairman of the Extended Services Program for the Group Living Facilities for Boys in 1998-all of which are still in existence.

Palmer's scores of honors include: Chicago State University Black Writers' Hall of Fame, induction into the Black Journalists Hall of Fame, the Jomo Kenyatta Award for Political Activism, the Outstanding Service/ Community Information Award,

Grambling State's Outstanding Service Award, Bell Labs' Black Achievement Against the Odds Award, 1982, and the Proclamation of Unity Award, 1976.

Palmer received a journalism degree from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia in 1942 and a master's degree from Syracuse University in 1948. He and his wife, Jorja English Palmer, lived in Chicago's South Side. They have seven children. Palmer passed away on September 12, 2004.

Related Entries

Marshall Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Huntington High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

diploma

Virginia Union University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Syracuse University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.A.

University of Iowa [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

no degree

Chicago Defender [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1950 to 1957]

Reporter

Fisk University News Bureau [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1957 to 1960]

Head of news bureau

Chicago American [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1960 to 1960]

Reporter

Black X-Press [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to 1970]

Founder, Editor

Chicago Daily News [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1970 to 1972]

Reporter, Columnist

Illinois Bell Telephone Company [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1970 to 1982]

Host of Lu's Notebook

WVON Radio [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1983 to 2001]

Radio host