

## Curlee Brown Sr. (1909-1976)

Curlee Brown, Sr. was an early pioneer and fearless warrior in the struggle for human rights. During an era of unrest and turbulence, before and after the passages of the US Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Kentucky Civil Rights Act in 1966, he led many efforts in Paducah, Ky., and throughout the state to integrate public facilities and encourage inclusiveness and equal rights for African Americans. He won the lawsuit he initiated to integrate Paducah Junior College, where his son, Curlee Brown, Jr., later became the school's first African American graduate. Brown Sr. served as president of the Paducah Branch of the NAACP for over 30 years until his death. He is well known for acting as the steady hand that helped hold together the NAACP in Kentucky during periods of various kinds of pressures and conflicts.

Brown, a native of Hollandale, Ms., moved to Helena, Ak., when he was a child. As a teenager, he moved with his family to Paducah. He received his education at Lincoln High School and Western Kentucky Industrial College, both in Paducah. Also, he completed studies in carpentry and cabinet-making at Western Kentucky Vocational School in Paducah.

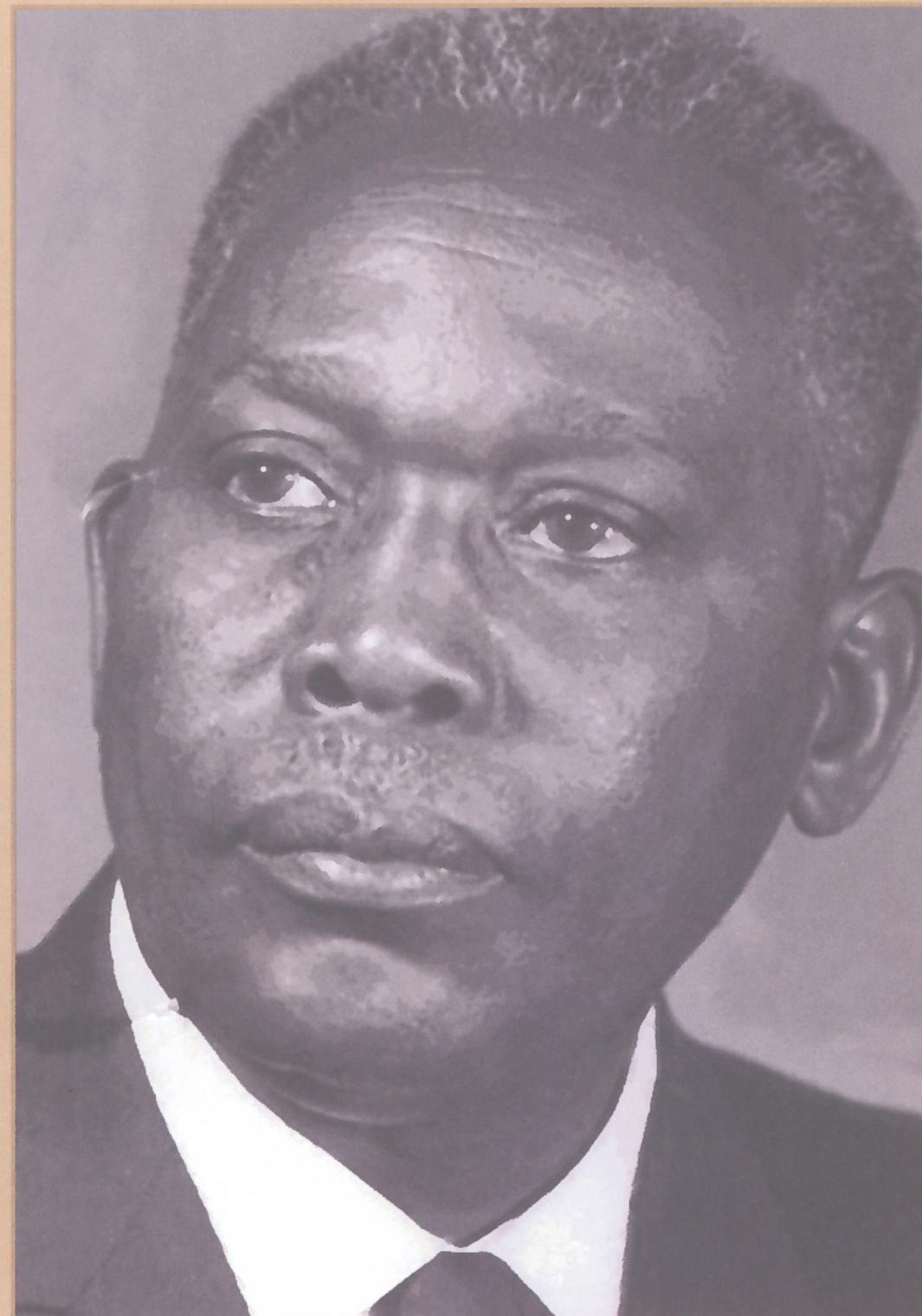
His quest for civil and human rights was the focus of Curlee's life. Devoted to his community, he loved people and, above all, wanted equal rights for every person. He also spent much of his life working to make a difference through a variety of initiatives in the lives of young people, especially in the area of education. He encouraged the African American youth of his community to make education their top goal.

He worked with adults to help address injustice and discrimination on their jobs. On many occasions, he represented individuals by speaking on their behalf at schools and at their workplaces. Brown had the respect of his family, friends, and even those who, at times, stood in opposition. The local newspaper, the *Paducah Sun Democrat* recognized Brown for his unrelenting stance and committed service in helping to address, non-violently, desegregation.

Brown received numerous awards and recognitions throughout his life. Listed are only a few of those commendations: a meritorious certificate in recognition of distinguished service and personal contributions of time and effort to the community in NAACP and human rights, presented by Stone Square, Lodge No. 5 F & AM. The "Curlee Brown Scholarship" given by the Kentucky NAACP to deserving students. The "Curlee Brown Award" given annually by the Paducah Branch of the NAACP to a deserving individual working in the field of human rights.

Once asked, "What do you want?" his response was simple: "I want the same things you want; a good job, a good education for my children, a car, and a nice home".

Curlee Brown, Sr., died on November 18, 1976, and was eulogized by his friend in the struggle, Reverend James A. Crumlin, former president of the Kentucky Conference of NAACP Branches of Louisville, Ky.



## Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians #45

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