



Known as a man of many firsts, Lincoln MacCauley Alexander is a name synonymous with the word Legend. To simply say he lived an extraordinary life does not encapsulate his long list of accomplishments and achievements. Born in a time when being black was seen as a nothing short of a life set to be filled with misgivings, he broke those race barriers and brought attention to Black Canadians. He over-achieved but was never under-estimated which only makes his story more compelling. Yes, Lincoln Alexander was truly a Legend. To be in the presence of such greatness would have been an immense honour but instead we write about him in memoriam.

Born to West Indian immigrants – his mother was from Jamaica and his father, also named Lincoln Alexander, was from St Vincent – in Toronto in 1922, he grew up by simple means. His father, though a carpenter by trade, worked as a railway porter and his mother a maid. In 1937 at the age of 15, he moved to New York to live with his mother, but didn't stay away from home for very long. He returned in 1942 to serve his country in the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force) for World War II until 1945.

*Mr Alexander was done the honour of being appointed Queen's Counsel.* Lincoln married Yvonne Harrison in 1948 and a year later their only child, Keith, was born. As the first person in his family to pursue higher learning, he attended McMaster University and graduated with a BA in History and Political Economy in 1949. This only marks the beginning of his accomplishments; he went on to attend Osgoode Hall Law School where he was called to the bar in 1953. In 1955, he went on to achieve another first by becoming partner at Canada's first interracial law firm, Duncan and Alexander. He remained there until he became partner at a Hamilton law firm Miller, Alexander, Towika & Isaacs in 1962.

In 1965, Mr Alexander was done the honour of being appointed Queen's Counsel. In keeping with adding to his list of firsts, he then became the first Black Canadian to be elected as a Member of Parliament to the Canadian House of Commons on the Progressive Conservative Party in 1968, a seat he retained for four consecutive Federal elections. He was elected as Minister of Labour in 1979, then went on to head the Workers' Compensation Board from 1980-1985.

We have now reached what can only be described as the highest honour in Mr Alexander's career and indeed a proud moment in Canadian Black History; he was elected to serve as the 24th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. As the first Black Canadian to receive this prestigious honour, he maintained the role from 1985-1991, and focused on youth-related issues. As that term ended, he then went on to accept a position as Chancellor at the University of Guelph until 2007. During this time and already an avid member in Toronto's multicultural movement, he was also appointed Chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation in 1996.

There are a few schools in Ontario that proudly carry his name: Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School founded in 1968 in Mississauga, Lincoln Alexander Elementary School founded in 1990 in Hamilton, Lincoln Alexander Public School founded in 1992

in Ajax and Lincoln Alexander Public School founded in 2004 in Markham. An award was also established in his name to annually recognize two youth between the ages 16-25 who display leadership in eliminating racial discrimination. This award was created to commemorate his term as Lieutenant Governor of Canada. Mr Alexander was known as an activist for visible minorities and promoting education among the youth. Other landmarks to carry his name include the Ontario Provincial Police Headquarters in Orillia and a Parkway in his hometown, Hamilton.

In 2006, he tried his hand at writing and published an autobiography: "Go to school, You're a Little Black Boy: The Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander: A Memoir". He was known to explain that the book's title is something his mother often said to him as he grew up. Discovering that she was right, he has always used his education as his empowerment. The book chronicles his life from growing up with immigrants parents to his accomplishments (notably becoming Lieutenant Governor) throughout his adulthood.

His first wife passed away in 1999 after 51 years of marriage, and proving there is no limitation on when one finds love again, he announced his engagement to second wife Marni Beal in 2011 at age 89. Lincoln M. Alexander indeed lived a full life and with his recent passing, Canada is only reminded of how admirably he took on each new opportunity. Through all his accomplishments and with every award he received, he never forgot where he came from. He humbly made moves in the direction of eliminating racial discrimination, keeping the welfare of the youth on the forefront of his goals. He will always be remembered for all he has done, this modest man who simply wanted to be called "Linc". In true form of how he lived his life and represented his country, he will always be remembered as: The Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander.