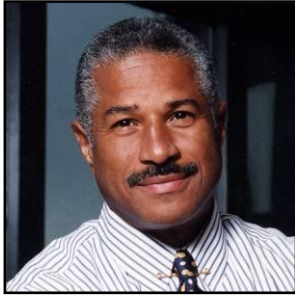


Biography



Felipe Luciano

Community Activist and Founder of the Young Lords Party

News reporter and anchor, poet, writer, activist and lecturer, Felipe Luciano is one of the most dynamic Latino public figures in the United States of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. His eloquence, vision, and passion for issues of social justice are extraordinary and reflect the courage of a generation that chose to organize, teach and struggle against the powerful institutions of discrimination.

This two-time Emmy recipient and former WNBC-TV New York news anchor, defied adversity early in life. Luciano was born in New York City and raised in poverty in East Harlem and Brooklyn by a single Puerto Rican mother. In 1966, the Harlem antipoverty agency, HARYOU-ACT, recognized his academic potential and creative talent and urged the young Luciano to apply to college. With the support of the college readiness program, SEEK, he enrolled in the City University of New York Queens College campus, where he immediately became involved in the student activism of the 1960s. Luciano soon became known within activist circles for his membership in the Last Poets, the group of black power era artists mentored by Amiri Baraka, whose politically charged live-music and spoken word poetry performances in the 1960s prefigured the emergence of hip hop and rap in the 1970s and 1980s. As a member of the Last Poets, Luciano led provocative political workshops in Harlem that attracted progressive intellectuals and activists, including leading figures of the black power movement like Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown.

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Because of his local popularity as a Harlem artist and progressive activist, in 1968 Luciano was approached by a group of mainly Puerto Rican, Latino youth who wanted to launch a radical organization oriented around fighting against Puerto Rican poverty and racial oppression. Eventually, that cohort of young students launched a New York chapter of the Chicago based, *Young Lords Organization* (YLO), the Puerto Rican counterpart to the Black Panther Party. Luciano was elected chairman of the New York group.

Under his leadership, the YLO changed its name to the *Young Lords Party* (YLP) and became one of the most influential Puerto Rican organizations of the 1960s. Luciano distinguished himself in the YLP through his natural talent for articulating the grievances and aspirations of poor Puerto Ricans in an eloquently accessible manner and by identifying issues that resonated with community residents. Luciano describes his politics during the 1960s as revolutionary nationalism evolving toward a global view of revolution. Luciano attributes the ease with which he related revolutionary politics to the East Harlem of the 1960s to his childhood immersion in the kinship networks and migrant community culture of Puerto Ricans and to his grueling and punishing prison experience as an adolescent, which helped to crystallize his understanding of the contradictions between American poverty and repressiveness and the nation's democratic promise.

His 1960's political activism and his membership in the YLP, in particular, were crucial to his political maturation and to the constructive channeling of his energies after prison, a period which he identifies as his "age of disillusionment". Luciano also attributes his success in navigating his early life's challenges and his successes in the YLP to his strong Afro-Latino identity. He credits his doting grandmother, who had a profoundly proud sense of her negritude, for conferring onto him a positive view of his Afro-Latino roots.

In the fall of 1971, Luciano left the YLP after a series of political disagreements over the YLP's de-emphasis of community and its new directions in policy, strategy, and tactics.

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Of his experience in the YLP, he recalls that the Young Lords worked hard, worked collectively, and engaged in radical activist campaigns that had a lasting effect on Puerto Ricans and New York City.

Following his departure from the YLP, Luciano again immersed himself in the city's black and Latino arts movement. From 1972 to 1975, he founded and produced the acclaimed radio show *Latin Roots*, the first English language program in the United States to feature Latin culture and music and to develop an ethnically and racially diverse audience. *Latin Roots* aired on WRVR, a New York-based radio station affiliated with the Riverside Church and known for playing Jazz and transmitting the Church's thought provoking, progressive sermons. On his watch, *Latin Roots* received an Ace Award for best show in Radio. Within 3 years, *Latin Roots* and *The Third Bridge*, Luciano's multi-cultural Saturday music show, were winning official acclaim and making WRVR one third of its annual revenue.

The late Frankie Crocker, legendary program director and host of WBLS' lucrative evening drive time show, brought Luciano on board to be his lead-in man from 12-4 p.m. Under the banner of "The Total Experience in Sound", WBLS ushered in the renaissance of urban radio and rocketed to the top of the New York City radio charts

Later, Luciano took a post at WLIB, the AM sister station of Percy Sutton's WBLS, owned by the Inner City Broadcasting Corporation. There he produced *Conversations with Felipe Luciano*, which explored the commonalities between black and Latino communities through dialogue with his listening audience and a cross section of representatives from politics, grassroots organizations and cultural, financial, and religious institutions.

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In the mid-1970s, Luciano's career evolved from radio to television when he joined the news team at NBC's New York City affiliate station as general reporter and later as weekend anchor, becoming the first Puerto Rican news anchor of a major media network station in the United States.

While at WNBC–New York, Luciano won an Emmy for best reporting, a live special report (a concept which he created) on prison life at Riker's Island, where Luciano lived and reported from for five consecutive days. For his reporting at Rikers, he also won a Silurian award. In the 1980s, Luciano anchored Channel 2 *The People* for CBS, a weekly local series featuring current events and interviews with cultural and political movers and shakers for which he also won an Emmy. He was also one of the original correspondents and morning anchors of *Good Day New York* for Fox T.V. In addition, he co-hosted and helped create the new style, fast-paced news magazine “Good Day Street Talk with Mayor Ed Koch.

Luciano's media success is attributable to his first-rate status as a communicator, his sensibility for cultural trends, and his keen grasp of the most important developments in Latino, African American, and mainstream politics.

Luciano is a lecturer and public presenter for Fortune 500 companies, colleges and universities, unions, and fraternal organizations. He offers consultation on issues pertaining to emerging markets, the Black and Latino Community, coalition building, diversity, and multiculturalism. In 2001, Luciano ran, unsuccessfully, for the East Harlem seat of the New York City Council. He ran again in 2005, against the Democratic machine and lost by 85 votes.

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Luciano believes that he is currently living his “age of reason”, wherein he is undergoing a personal reconstruction of the self and of his worldview. Today, he is more open than ever to a constantly changing global community, having travelled to China, Europe, South America, Africa and the Caribbean. As he takes on life's challenges, he does so with the understanding that “the seeds of both defeat and victory reside within the individual as well as in the external world.” His experience and sharp intellect keep him on the cutting edge of new thought and new movements.