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[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

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[Home](#)

## **Remembering Ken Bridges Worrill's World**

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On Friday, October 11, 2002, the leaders of the National Black United Front, from around the country, began arriving in Kansas City, Missouri for our Fall Central Committee Meeting. The meeting was scheduled to begin Friday evening with a welcome reception and an all day meeting for Saturday, October 12th.

As the Chicago contingency pulled into the parking lot of the W. E. B. DuBois Learning Center, I immediately observed that many of the leaders of NBUF had arrived and were outside the Center greeting and interacting with each other. It was a beautiful day in Kansas City and it was good to see that so many of the NBUF leadership had arrived early in preparation for this important meeting.

About an hour after our arrival at the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center, I received a call on my cell phone from Lloyd Kelley, an activist from Chicago, and a MATAH organizer informing me that our Brother, Kenneth Bridges had been killed by a sniper somewhere in Virginia, while pumping gas. Needless to say, I found this hard to believe and accept. Immediately, I began to call other MATAH organizers, specifically Gaston Armour, the MATAH Regional Organizer for the Chicago and Midwest area. Brother Gaston confirmed that our friend and fellow worker in the Black Liberation Movement had become a victim of this serial sniper.

Immediately, I asked everyone to assemble and I made the announcement. Obviously, everyone was shocked. I asked that we pour libations for Brother Ken and use his spirit to begin our meeting early. We dedicated our NBUF Central Committee Meeting to Ken Bridges, the Co-Founder of MATAH.

I had begun to work very closely with Brother Ken as we prepared for the August 17, 2002 Millions For Reparations Mass Rally in Washington, D.C. Brother Ken was very helpful in making this rally a "grand success."

I must admit, for a very long time I avoided meeting with any of the representatives of MATAH who called NBUF Offices seeking to explain the MATAH program. Personally, I had become somewhat turned off, over the years, by people presenting a variety of economic schemes allegedly aimed at helping solve the economic problems of African people in America. I had become burned out from listening to these proposals.

So, I put up a barrier over the last two years and avoided meeting with any MATAH representatives. But apparently, the Creative Forces of the Universe did not want this to continue.

Without all of the lengthy background, Gaston Armour joined the NBUF Chicago Chapter and in our meeting, the evening he joined, I discovered I knew his family, specifically his aunt, who I'd worked with over the years. It dawned on me that Gaston was a member of the Armour family in Chicago who owned a very popular Black owned grocery store. The Armour family has established a tradition in Chicago of being a family of business people.

From that moment on, Brother Gaston began to lobby me to become a part of MATAH. One of our members, Sister Iris Dunmore, had been attending some of the local MATAH meetings on our behalf and suggested that we should give the MATAH concept a chance.

Finally, I broke down and agreed to meet with Brother Ken at my home earlier this year. The meeting was only to be for an hour, just to touch base. However, Ken and I hit it off so well, we met in my living room for over four hours. It was truly a meeting of the spirit of our ancestors and from that day forward, Ken and I began talking every week on a regular basis. It was out of that meeting that we made the linkage between the demand for external reparations and its relationship to what we must do to repair ourselves, which we began to call "internal reparations."

It became clear to me that Ken Bridges was as deep thinker, a brilliant organizer who had committed his life to the liberation of Black people by making his vision of MATAH become a reality.

MATAH, as Ken explained it to me, was a concept given to him by God. Ken constantly made the point that "MATAH was an economic movement of self determination for Africans in America and around the world." Ken always reminded his audiences when speaking that "MATAH emphasizes African cultural development and therefore the products and services that the organization represents would focus on the promotion of African culture."

Ken helped NBUF understand that by becoming a Network Business Center, we could help finance the work of NBUF. We had begun working on identifying one-hundred NBUF members who would be willing to purchase \$30.00 worth of MATAH products each month that would provide NBUF with a profit of \$600.00 a month. A simple but powerful formula if executed.

Ken and his friend, and business partner, Al Willington, had created a vision for products made by African people to be purchased and distributed by African people around the world. The key component of the MATAH concept, as Ken taught, is not only should we purchase products from each other that we produce, but we must also control the distribution of these products.

In the name of Kenneth Bridges, we should carry the MATAH vision forward by remembering that "MATAH are those people of African descent who know that practicing a race-first philosophy is the key to obtaining true freedom for people of African descent, and who refuse to be crushed."

Let us always honor the spirit of our Brother, Ken Bridges.

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[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

[Home](#)



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