

Lucas Johnson

Biography

When Lucas Johnson was a junior in college, Maya Angelou stated in a letter she wrote him: "*I am convinced that you are going to do something marvelous.*"

He has not disappointed.

Lucas landed a position with The Associated Press right out of college when, as an intern, he broke the Ross Perot "*you people*" gaffe during his coverage of the 1992 NAACP convention in Nashville, Tennessee. During his 24 years with the AP, Lucas broke numerous other stories that made worldwide headlines, and one story even became a book.

One of those stories was about never-before-heard audio of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that was discovered in an attic in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 2012. Lucas broke the follow-up story of magician David Copperfield purchasing the audio and donating it to the National Civil Rights Museum. Another story that made headlines in 2015 and was picked up in its entirety (nearly 2,000 words) by *The New York Times* was about the plight of a retired white attorney to solve the murder case of an NAACP leader who was slain in 1940 for trying to register Blacks to vote. Lucas' story helped pass the Civil Rights Crimes Cold Case Law in Tennessee, the first of its kind in the nation that mandates a statewide survey of cold civil rights crimes, and directs referral of viable cases for prosecution.

A story Lucas wrote in 1999 about Fred Montgomery, the first Black mayor of Henning, Tennessee, and the childhood friend of Pulitzer Prize-winning *Roots* author Alex Haley, led to a book Lucas penned about Montgomery that was published in 2003. The book (*Finding the Good*) was featured on National Public Radio, and a screenplay has been adapted from it. Nobel Peace Prize awardee Desmond Tutu called *Finding the Good* "deeply touching."

In 2016, Lucas left AP and became director of media relations at Tennessee State University. The countless contacts he made during his more than 20 years with AP paid off shortly after his arrival at TSU. In October of that year, Lucas pitched a story about a 101-year-old TSU alum to producers at ABC World News Tonight, and she made "Person of the Week." Lucas used his AP background and excellent public relations skills to keep TSU in the national spotlight.

Currently, Lucas lives in Nashville, Tennessee, where he is a communications strategist. He co-wrote *Youth Change Agent* and his latest book is *Remembering Roots: How an American Classic Transformed the World*. LeVar Burton, the award-winning actor who played Kunta Kinte in the original miniseries *Roots*, said, "*Remembering Roots* highlights the indomitability of the human spirit; and reminds us that, like our ancestors, as long as we continue to breathe, there's hope."

