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Raymond A. Brown, 94, Civil Rights Lawyer

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Raymond A. Brown, a criminal and civil rights lawyer who deployed a sometimes theatrical manner on behalf of controversial clients like the Black Panthers, a Soviet spy, the boxer Rubin "**Hurricane**" **Carter**, and Dr. X, a New Jersey surgeon accused of murdering patients with an overdose of a muscle relaxant, died Friday at St. Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, N.J. He was 94 and lived in Upper Montclair, N.J.

The cause was chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, said Thulani Davis, his sister-in-law.

Mr. Brown, a tall, slender man blessed with the courtroom gifts of a strong voice, sweeping arm gestures and a prowling gait, developed his ardor for civil rights as an African-American soldier sent to Army bases in the South and seeing firsthand how shabbily and humiliatingly blacks were treated. He honed his reputation with Southern civil rights cases in the 1960s and later defended some of the black students -- including his son -- arrested for taking over a building at Columbia University in 1968.

But his talent for courtroom bravado, oratory and canny legal strategies was such that clients like New Jersey politicians, organized crime figures and union officials sought him out when issues far from civil rights were involved. He defended the mayor of Camden, N.J., Angelo Errichetti, in 1980 in one of the Abscam cases involving congressmen and other politicians accused of taking bribes in what had been a sting operation by federal authorities pretending to be wealthy Arab sheiks.

In the late 1970s, he defended Mario E. Jascavevich, an Argentine-born physician identified as Dr. X in early newspaper reports, against charges that he murdered five surgical patients at Riverdell Hospital in Oradell, N.J., with overdoses of curare. Gesturing at the jury with his gold-rimmed half glasses and quoting Shakespeare, Mr. Brown contended in his opening statement that the surgeon was framed by colleagues trying to cover up their own ineptness. Dr. Jascavevich was acquitted in 1978.

In an important sideshow, Mr. Brown accused M. A. Farber, the reporter for The New York Times who revealed the mysterious deaths, of joining with the Bergen County prosecutor to advance their careers, and subpoenaed Mr. Farber and The Times for thousands of pages of investigative notes. Mr. Farber spent 40 days in jail and The Times paid \$285,000 in fines in defending the right to protect news sources.

Mr. Brown helped Resorts International get one of New Jersey's first gambling casino licenses despite allegations of ties to organized crime -- allegations Mr. Brown characterized as going "to the third and fourth degree of remoteness." Earlier, in 1964, he defended John W. Butenko, a 39-year-old American electronics engineer accused of giving defense secrets to the Soviet Union. Mr. Brown lost that one.

But it was his representation of a series of black radicals that brought him wider fame. In 1967 he successfully defended the poet Amiri Baraka, formerly known as LeRoi Jones, on charges of carrying a concealed weapon. He defended Joanne Chesimard, a member of the Black Liberation Army, who was convicted of shooting a state trooper to death on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1973. She escaped prison in 1979 and made her way to Cuba. Three Black Panth-

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ers accused in 1970 of attacking a Jersey City police station with a machine gun and H. Rap Brown, the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and leader of the Black Panther Party, were also clients.

Mr. Brown defended the boxer Rubin Carter in his first trial on charges that he murdered three people in Paterson, N.J., in 1966. Mr. Carter and another man were convicted but the convictions were thrown out in 1975. With Mr. Brown participating as a witness, the men were found guilty a second time but that too was overturned. After serving 19 years, Mr. Carter was freed in 1985.

"He was a very dramatic figure in the courtroom," said Ms. Davis. "He had a flawless memory and could carry tremendous details of a case in his head."

Mr. Brown was born in 1915 in Fernandina Beach, Fla., the son of a railroad mechanic. When he was 2, his family moved to Jersey City. He went to college at Florida A & M University, and, paying his way by working as a long-shoreman, he received his law degree from Fordham University.

At a time when few black lawyers served in large firms, he became a solo practitioner focusing on casualties of prejudice and poverty.

He also was the president of the New Jersey chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. for 12 years and worked to integrate its schools and faculty. During the riots in Newark in 1967, he was serving with the National Guard and walked the streets to quiet the disturbances. Afterward, Gov. Richard J. Hughes appointed him vice chairman of the commission that investigated the disorder.

Mr. Brown's first wife was the late Elaine Camilla Williams Brown. He is survived by his second wife, Jennie Davis Brown; two children from his first marriage, Raymond M. Brown and Deborah Elaine Brown Bowles; two step-children, Clifton O'Neill Howell and Denise Louise Howell Randall; and seven grandchildren.

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