

## **Eddie Williams and the Foreign Affairs Scholars Program**

A little-known aspect of Eddie's pioneering work was his leadership of the Foreign Affairs Scholars Program (FASP), a Ford Foundation-funded initiative to increase the woefully small number of blacks in the Foreign Service. It was 1966. While many young people were preoccupied with marching and working for equal rights, 20 young blacks from across the country were working at the State Department and the United States Information Agency (USIA), while taking classes in the evenings at Howard University. Discussions ranged from one-party democracy to math and English drills as we prepared to take the infamously difficult Foreign Service Exam.

For young black students hungry for international careers, the FASP, was a lifeline, providing graduate fellowships to young blacks seeking graduate degrees in foreign affairs. Eddie was inspiring because of his own achievements—a black protocol officer at State, skilled in the mores and intricacies of foreign affairs—yet he was always approachable, affirmative, encouraging.

Prior to the program, when I interviewed with him hoping to be accepted, after grilling me on various foreign affairs doctrines and then-global issues, he gave me what I have always considered the finest compliment of my now-long life. He called me a gentlewoman and I have aspired to live up to his faith in me ever since.

Deepest condolences to his family and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies from one of the more than 40 black professionals who modeled lives of service, professional excellence and integrity from Eddie's sterling example.

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