



# MY LIFE, MY STORY

## EDNA

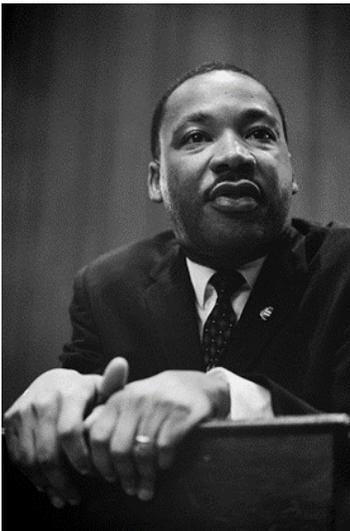
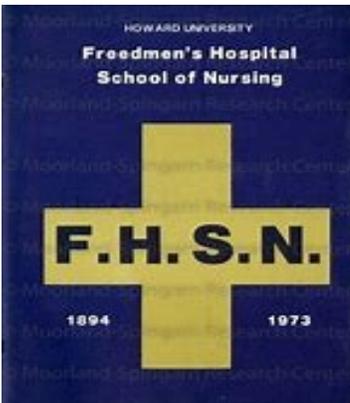


### UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

1956– 1959



# A Life of Activism



## Edna

I was born in Wilmington, Delaware - in an era where segregation was the norm - I spent the first 11 years of life raised by my grandfather, who had been born a slave. However, with hard work and diligence, my grandfather became a successful landscape gardener, after the Emancipation Proclamation. My grandmother was part Lenape Indian-she was very proud of her tribe.

Even though I applied to and received rejections from nursing schools all over Delaware (due to the color of my skin), I never gave in to the discrimination. In 1953, I graduated from nursing school at Freedmen's Hospital School Of Nursing at Howard University. In 1956, I joined the United States Airforce Nurse's Corp.

When I first entered the Air Force Nurse's Corps for basic training, I was sent down to Montgomery, Alabama, during the time of the bus boycotts after Rosa Parks' arrest. I was there and I saw. They continued for one year and 15 months.

## Edna

I saw the people walking and car pooling and after a year and 15 months, that's when they finally broke. While there, I got to witness Martin Luther King delivering speeches every Thursday at the local church. He was just starting out and he was as eloquent as ever. And he kept exhorting them to keep going. This sparked my extensive and lifelong activism for affirmative action and equal rights.



In 1964, I went on to become the first African American nurse in the clinics of Mass General Hospital, Boston. But I did not stop there - in pursuit of further academic excellence, I went on to Boston University where I received a Bachelors degree in Health Education and a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology.

I have paved the way chairing several committees.

I was the Board Chair of the Boston YWCA, Vice President of the Board of Trustees of Bunker Hill



Community College, Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Statewide Head Injury Program, President of the Board of Boston Senior Home Care Services and current President of the Mass Senior Action Council. It is the only grass roots organization led by seniors of it's kind and will be 40 years old this year.



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 Edna

I am most proud of my work with this council, resulting in approximately 40,000 more seniors being able to access the Medicare Savings Program. My favorite part of advocacy is working together with legislators to improve access and resources for others.

I have reflected on the progress I have made throughout my life. I hope others can see the progress of African-Americans and recognize the resiliency required to lead a successful life of advocacy and activism during segregation.

My advice to healthcare providers is to consciously work at being more open-minded in order to gain an appreciation about people from different backgrounds, cultures, and religions.

Most importantly, I believe one should cherish one's family. My son lives in New York but has taken after me with the same passion for helping others and advocating on behalf of veterans and civilians who have experienced traumatic brain injuries.

**“I hope others can see the progress of people of color and recognize the odds of leading a successful life of advocacy during segregation.”**