G. James Fleming

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G. James Fleming was a quiet, unassuming man who lived an exemplary life, made a big difference in society, and impacted on many lives across the country and abroad. A search of the archives reveals that very little written record on this impressive individual is readily available. In discussions with many that knew him, they had only kind words to say, but nothing in writing that could be shared. It is hoped that this paper will add to the written record and further memorialize a pioneer.

G. James Fleming was born on February 15, 1904, in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands to Alexander and Ernestine Fleming. With little or no educational opportunities to advance beyond the eighth grade in St. Croix, at the age of 16 he migrated to the mainland United States (Profiles 1972). He attended public schools in New York, and completed his high school at Hampton Institute in 1926, where he was valedictorian of his class. Fleming was considered a brilliant young man who had a proclivity for writing. He attended the University of Wisconsin where he received a B.A. in journalism in 1931 (Profiles 1972). He received a Master's degree in Economics and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania in 1948 (Personnel Record 1964).

Fleming's lifetime of service inspired others, built bridges, and broke down barriers in the community and abroad. He wrote numerous editorials about issues that impact on the lives of African Americans and politics, and believed that everyone should read the newspaper on a daily basis. From 1945 through 1950, he was on the executive staff of the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization (Biographical Data 1977). His belief in the mission of Friends played an important role in his life.

Fleming was always concerned about the basic qualities of people. Since his high school days, he was active in the "American Friends Service Committee." Friends embraced the belief of "the power of love rather than violence to overcome evil, and to the basic unity and interdependence of all mankind as children of God" (Biographical Data 1977). In his application record, Fleming wrote: "Indeed, Friends' testimonies and their endeavor to live up to them have made a difference in my own life, have saved me from frustrations because of civil ills, and have helped to give me the keys to creative, affirmative living" (Personnel Record 1964, Section B, Line 5). He volunteered regularly with Friends, conducted workshops, was a speaker at their events, and helped entertain visitors from out of town (Personnel Record 1964, Section B, Line 6).

Fleming's dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania in 1948, "The Administration of Fair Employment Practice Programs," examined the presidential Executive Order issued in 1941, which prohibited "all forms of discrimination in private employment based on race, color, creed or national origin" and "against discrimination in government employment" (Fleming 1948, iii). Fleming traced the history of the Executive Order and the ways that states implemented it. He noted that "in the space of seven years, from 1941–1948, fair employment practice, has moved from an unknown concept, to wartime policy and practice, and now to peacetime law, with experience on national, state and municipal levels, and with patterns of administration induced by the respective supporting legislation or executive order" (Fleming 1948, v).

In preparation for his dissertation, he had previously worked from 1941–1945 as one of the first staff of the Federal Committee on Fair Employment Practice, where he served in various capacities, from field examiner, to director of field offices in Chicago, Texas, and Detroit. He later became regional director of the federal program, and was public information officer of the Committee on Fair Employment Practice (Fleming 1948, vi). He became an expert in the field, with experience second to none. He was vigilant in implementing the fair practices law across the states.

From 1950–1952, he was the supervising editor of *Who's Who in Colored America*. From 1952–1954, he was the supervisor and editor with the *New York Amsterdam News* (Personnel Record 1964). He was also a reporter with the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* (Obituary 1990). He used the newspaper forum to voice his opinion about the ills of the time, and was always diplomatic in his writings.

In September 1954, Dr. Fleming joined the faculty at Morgan College (now Morgan State University) in Baltimore, as an associate professor. He applied for, and received a grant with the Ford Foundation for $103,000 over four years to open the Institute for Political Education at Morgan. The purpose of the grant was to "develop citizen-politicians through a program of practical political education involving Morgan students and alumni" ("Election Campaign" 1960). The Institute allowed students and members from the community to participate in all stages of the electoral process. This included mock elections,

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participating in grassroots activities to encourage students to work as volunteers in the campaigns of local candidates, guest speakers from the major parties, mock conventions, and special works for alumni of the College ("Political Institute" 1960). Students received scholarships ("15 Given Stipends" 1960) and had the opportunity to intern with various members of Congress ("Capitol Hill" 1963).

Numerous articles in the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Afro-American* indicate that the activities at the Institute were always well attended and newsworthy. One of his students, W. Wallace Baker, remarked on the influence that Fleming had on the lives of individuals who were not social science majors. Baker noted that he was able to "get others who were not majors to experience a sense of getting involved in politics" (conversation with W. Wallace Baker). Baker reflected on how Fleming impacted hundreds of influential citizens in America, mentioning the names of the Honorable Robert G. Bell, Chief Justice for the State of Maryland, the Honorable Parren Mitchell, former member of Congress from Baltimore, and James H. Gilliam, Jr., philanthropist, businessman, and civil leader as protégés of Fleming.

The Institute was so successful that in 1963, the Ford Foundation extended the grant for another four years and increased the amount to $175,000. According to the *Baltimore Afro-American*, "the institute in a brief four years has become an organization of considerable stature and influence on campus, in the community and area . . . Top national, state and local politicians have participated in the non-partisan program at Morgan" (1963). The *Afro-American* further stated that "the program is another of the unique and valuable services Morgan State College is rendering with notable success in its role as one of the important educational institutions in this area" (1963). With the extension of the Ford grant, Fleming was able to offer new programs at the Institute which provided applied politics. He led the Institute from 1959–1966 (Biographical Data). The Institute for Political Education at Morgan College later became the Political Science Department (conversations with various professors).

Fleming was a trailblazer at Morgan. After his retirement in 1974, he was instrumental in leading the transition of Morgan State College to Morgan State University. Fleming was appointed by the Governor from 1976 through 1980 as a founding member of the Morgan State University Board of Regents, becoming Chairman of the Board from 1976 through 1980 ("G. James Fleming, 86" 1990). Fleming left a legacy in the political science department at Morgan State University and has left positive memories for those who knew him.

Morgan was not the only institution of higher education with which Fleming was associated. He was instrumental in the planning and founding of the College of the Virgin Islands in 1961. He later became a member of the Board of Trustees of that College in 1966 (Profiles 1972).

During his tenure at Morgan, Fleming was a very busy man. He was appointed by two mayors to the Baltimore Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and served from 1956 through 1962. He was a member of the Baltimore Commission on Architectural and Historical Preservation, and the Civil Service Commission. He was elected president of the Maryland Society for Public Administration in 1963, and was a member of the board of directors of Provident Hospital, the Florence Crittenden Service, and the Maryland Association of Mental Health. He served on the Board of Trustees of Good Samaritan Hospital, was a member of the Steering Committee Episcopal Church, and a life member of the NAACP, as well as a member of the Baltimore Urban League (Biographical Data).

Fleming found time for other professional societies, including the American Political Science Association, the Southern Political Science Association, and the American Academy of Political and Social Science. He was also a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Delta Chi, Sigma Delta Rho, and Phi Kappa Phi (Biographical Data).

Fleming frequently wrote editorials and articles for the *Afro-American*. He published in *La Follette's Weekly*, *Crisis*, *Quill of Sigma Delta Chi*, *Opportunity*, *Phylon* and *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. His most noted writings include "An All-Negro Ticket in Baltimore, 1960" and "Why Baltimore Failed to Elect a Black Mayor, 1972."

In 1956, he married Hazel Hampton from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They lived together until his death on August 1, 1990. Fleming was a trendsetter at Morgan State University, and in Baltimore. Most importantly, he provided a forum that educated and informed others about the political process. He recognized that it is only through participation and action in the political process that can cause change.

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