

FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS BIOGRAPHICAL PROJECT

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ENID GORT, PH.D.

DIRECTOR

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt  
1000 Wilson Blvd.  
Suite 3105  
Arlington, Virginia  
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Dear Admiral Zumwalt,

It is always such a pleasure talking to you. I was feeling pretty glum that muggy afternoon, but your voice dispelled the doldrums.

I am seeking your help with a research question that pertains to Franklin Williams' activities from 1947-1949, when he worked as special assistant to Thurgood Marshall at the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund. One of his earliest responsibilities was representing black servicemen court martialled for crimes they did not commit or sentenced more harshly than their white counterparts for similar offenses. Franklin told me there were many instances in which he got a death sentence reduced to life imprisonment or a sentence of life reduced to 50 or 20 years. It would be interesting to review those old records to see exactly how effective he was in the process. (The "Soldiers File" at the Library of Congress, which houses the records of the NAACP, has hundreds of complaints, but no record to show which were reviewed or how they were adjudicated.)

My question is: What office of the military would have been involved in this procedure, and who do I contact to get permission to review those records if, in fact, they still exist? Since I have had no luck reaching the proper authorities perhaps you have a suggestion or two as to how I should proceed.

On a more social note, I plan to come to D. C. to do more research at the Library of Congress, probably early in 1998. Is there a chance you might spare a few minutes for me out of your busy schedule? It would be great to see you again.

Shirley send her fond regards and we both hope all is well for you and your family.

Very sincerely yours,

