

1971-72. Among his numerous other activities, he was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York and the Committee on Foreign Relations in Detroit, a consultant to the U.S. Department of State, an adviser to the Council on International Exchange of Scholars, and a member of the editorial board of *Asian Survey*. Toward the conclusion of his career, Professor Park was very active in fund raising for the American Institute of Indian Studies and in development of courses in international law in the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan.

Almost to the very end Richard L. Park found it difficult to say no to requests for assistance from colleagues in the profession and students in the classroom despite the fact that much of the time he was bravely concealing that he was not feeling at all well. He did not complain, he did not rationalize—he set an example that few can truly follow.

Russell H. Fifield  
University of Michigan

## **William P. Robinson, Sr.**

A measure of the uniqueness of William P. Robinson's life was his ability to correlate a scholarly and creative involvement in higher education with a productive and dynamic political career.

Robinson was born in Norfolk, Virginia, and enjoyed a happy childhood in the old Huntersville section of the city when it was one of the centers of all that was best in the black community. Robinson credited his mother, who taught business and English at Booker T. Washington High School, with molding his mind, teaching the love of language and ideas, and laying before him the philosophic principles of life.

He graduated from Booker T. Washington High School, received the A.B. and M.A. degree from Howard University, and earned the Ph.D. degree from New York University. Dr. Robinson also studied law at Howard University and pursued postdoctoral studies at a number of leading institutions including Harvard and the University of Michigan.

At Howard University, an earlier interest in botany gave way to a consuming at-

traction for the study of the behavior of people—especially political behavior. His intellectual acumen won the commendation of professor Ralph Bunche and Robinson was tapped to take charge of Bunche's class while he was on assignment abroad. Interestingly, the topic, "The Political Philosophy of Ralph Bunche" was the last research effort to gain his scholarly attention.

During his career as an academician, Robinson had been professor of government at Southern University, Dean of Alcorn College, assistant to the President and business manager of Morris Brown College, Chairman of the Department of Political Science at Texas Southern University in Houston. Finally, beginning in 1962, he first established and then headed for a period of 16 years the Department of Political Science at Norfolk State University. From 1969 to 1979 he also served as chairman of the division of social sciences. In its first two years the department grew in enrollment from 6 to 98.

Robinson's numerous publications reflected his interest in the role of blacks in local, national and international politics.

Dr. Robinson had many organizational affiliations. Among them were the American Political Science Association, the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, the American Sociological Association, the International Platform Association, the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists, the NAACP, and the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Notable among his memberships and services were his tenure on the APSA Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession and on the APSA Council.

In 1980, the American Political Science Association's Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession, in cooperation with the Association, recognized Dr. Robinson. The tribute from President Warren Miller noted William Robinson's work as a scholar, teacher, leader in the profession of political science and as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates.

The call of public office became irresistible.

ble and the professor plunged into politics in 1965 by running for the Virginia House of Delegates. Robinson lost by approximately 1,200 votes, due in large measure to a split in the black political leadership. To correct this major disadvantage, he immediately set about the task of mending the split. In 1969, with united black support, he won the seventh and last seat. Robinson became Norfolk's first black legislator since Reconstruction. Initially there was skepticism regarding the effectiveness of a black legislator in a white-dominated legislature. Robinson's belief in the reasonableness of men coupled with his forthright approach soon won him both respect and legislative victories and put to rest any questions concerning his effectiveness. His attitude toward his fellow legislators was reflected in his comment that "I came to regard them as honest men, individuals of reason, who cared about other people."

Robinson piloted several pieces of landmark legislation through the General Assembly. One of his most important bills, passed in the early 1970s, was the one that equalized the retirement pay of black teachers who for decades had received only half of the salary of their white counterparts. Dr. Robinson was instrumental in winning passage of a fair housing bill that permitted blacks to live where they pleased. Governor Holton was to cite this piece of legislation as the most significant of his administration. Legislatively, Robinson contributed to the whole field of education and welfare. The quality of his leadership became more evident and his political influence steadily increased as he came to chair the powerful Health, Institutions and Welfare Committee of the House of Delegates, and The Conference of Black Elected Officials of Virginia, and the Steering Committee of the Concerned Citizens of Norfolk. The latter's "Golden Rod Guide Ballot" became the symbol of the black community's "official" endorsement of a candidate.

Robinson is credited with having helped to bridge the gap between black and white Virginians and Governor John N. Dalton had already described him as "a champion of the disadvantaged and a tireless advocate of truly equal opportunity."

On Sunday, January 18, 1981, Robinson's four-year battle with bone cancer came to an end. His courageousness made "Doc" or "Billy," as he was affectionately called, one of those cancer victims who gave you much more than you could ever return. As J. Harvie Wilkinson III, the editor of the daily *Virginian-Pilot*, confessed, "He's someone I can turn to for inspiration and refreshment." Further, in admiring Robinson's position that Reagan deserves from blacks an open mind and a fair chance, Wilkinson reflectively said of Robinson that: "He is a leader not willing to despair politically, but not able to take hope. He is a man who has seen great prejudice but also great progress. He is proud to be black and proud to be American—a man whose perceptions display the most disciplined balance, a man fully conversant with the darker dimensions of America, but also its glorious gateways of hope."

The people of Norfolk and Virginia have lost a valuable public servant and Norfolk State University has lost a great champion and a master teacher. A teacher who was concerned both with students as individuals and with their individual development. He inspired and encouraged a legion of students.

A William Robinson, Sr. memorial scholarship fund at Norfolk State University has been established to honor Dr. Robinson. Gifts to the fund, which are tax deductible, should be made out to the William Robinson, Sr. Scholarship Fund and sent to Dr. Rudolph Gordon in care of the Department of Political Science at Norfolk State University.

While saddened by the passing of "Doc," we are nonetheless heartened by the realization that the tenacious and compelling spirit and the constant pursuit of truth and justice which exemplified the life of William P. Robinson, Sr. will serve both as a model and as a continuing source of inspiration to us all.

Rudolph Gordon  
Norfolk State University

## Richard Carlton Spencer

Richard Carlton Spencer died on October 26, 1980 as a result of congestive heart failure following many years of poor