

What is the definition of a life well lived? The many wonderful experiences of self-discovery? The vast array of personalities you encounter? Is it leaving legacy for generations yet to come? The creation of generational wealth? It has been my experience, that describing what a life well lived looks like is difficult to put into words, but I know it when I see it. This is why I want you to know about the life of Tuskegee Airman, NAACP President (for 30 years), educator, and outspoken Delawarean, Littleton Purnell Mitchell.

From an interview with the History Makers (the digital repository for the black experience), that Littleton Mitchell was born in the 1920s in Milford, Delaware, to Helen Ann Purnell and George Darnell Mitchell. His advocacy began at the age thirteen, when he joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). During the late 1930s, he attended Howard High School, the state's only high school for African Americans. Upon graduation, he spent two years at West Chester University of Pennsylvania on a track scholarship before joining the Tuskegee Airmen during War World II. While he was there, he witnessed the building of the airfield at Tuskegee in 1941. He taught future pilots the art of instrument flying. His duties sent him to the Link Trainer Facilities and Schools in New York, and Chanute Field in Chanute, Illinois, as well as the Base Instrument Command Flying School in Texas. In February 1946, he was discharged from the U.S. Army. Encouraged by his fellow Tuskegee Airmen, Mitchell returned to college, and earned his degree from West Chester University of Pennsylvania and began a career in the psychiatric treatment of children and civil rights advocacy. He also became Littleton Mitchell the first African American teacher of white children at Governor Bacon Health Center in Delaware City.

Although I could go on and on about Littleton Purnell Mitchell. I would be remiss if I did not mention that his wife, Jane Mitchell, now deceased, who became one of Delaware's first African American nurses. For many years, she served as the director of nursing at the Delaware State Hospital and along with her husband led efforts to desegregate the state's hospitals.

With Jane by his side, Littleton Mitchell fought many fights in the name of equality, but his first campaign as NAACP president was to stop the mistreatment of migrant workers in Delaware his home state. I encourage you to visit the History Makers where you can see video of Mr. Mitchell speaking about the experiences he had fighting against racism and discrimination.

I must note that one of the highlights of his life was to see the election of President Obama. According to an article written by Delaware today, "having retired from his post at the NAACP in 1991, he has lived to see what he never thought was possible: an African-American president of the United States". I can only imagine the array of emotions he must have felt given that his life's work help make Obama's presidency a possibility. So here I believe, I have laid before you a snippet of a life well lived. I am proud to have such a rich history of ancestors willing to fight fearlessly, to sacrifice so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we have today. I am aware of many things but most important is the fact that I must sacrifice for those that are coming after me. When I am gone, I hope that my life will be deemed, worthy of being viewed through a similar lens. "A Life Well Lived".