As we celebrate African American History Month, I think the achievements of a people, of a culture is very important to celebrate because not everybody knows our history. And, I think, basically, getting out the story of... of the achievements, the perseverance that have gone through the years is the most important part this time of year. You know, growing up as a military brat, my father had a lot of friends who...
who were in NASA or the Air Force at that time.

00:00:50,250 --> 00:00:52,484
I could remember a childhood,

00:00:52,484 --> 00:00:53,652
not a childhood friend,

00:00:53,652 --> 00:00:55,821
but a friend of the family,

00:00:55,822 --> 00:00:57,923
Ed Dwight, who was the first

00:00:57,923 --> 00:01:00,627
African-American astronaut candidate.

00:01:00,627 --> 00:01:03,496
I grew up knowing him,

00:01:03,496 --> 00:01:07,667
knowing Robert Lawrence, and those guys

00:01:07,667 --> 00:01:11,938
really influenced my passion for space.

00:01:11,938 --> 00:01:13,305
I grew up in Hawaii.

00:01:13,305 --> 00:01:16,176
I got to see the Gemini capsules

00:01:16,176 --> 00:01:18,510
come in as we were standing at the dock.

00:01:18,510 --> 00:01:22,015
So, it... it was really engrained early on.

25 00:01:22,015 --> 00:01:25,051
So, that really
influenced my thought

26 00:01:25,051 --> 00:01:27,954
for working with NASA.

27 00:01:27,953 --> 00:01:30,556
You know, I think when
we talk about heritage,

28 00:01:30,557 --> 00:01:34,194
we look at race
too singularly.

29 00:01:34,194 --> 00:01:38,198
I think it actually has a
lot to do with experience,

30 00:01:38,197 --> 00:01:42,868
background, beliefs,
norms, opportunities

31 00:01:42,868 --> 00:01:46,206
and I would say,
being a military brat,

32 00:01:46,206 --> 00:01:49,375
that I’ve had great opportunities.

33 00:01:49,375 --> 00:01:54,480
Heritage wise, I’m
African of course...

34 00:01:54,480 --> 00:01:58,917
my great grandmother is
Caucasian from France...

35 00:01:58,918 --> 00:02:03,156
we have Indian blood,
so I think my heritage

36 00:02:03,156 --> 00:02:08,260
is a great mixture of what
America is and should be.

Some of the family
things that go on,

my dad and I still
laugh about it today,

that my first day
on the test range

after graduating, I was
actually shooting down

one of his missiles
that he had built

during his career
and that was a...

a Talos on range.

So, that...
that's kind of funny

and we still
laugh about it.

I tease him... how
slow his missile was,

and that we use them
for drones these days.
My studies in school were in mechanical engineering.

I have a degree in Mechanical Engineering...

lots of math and science.

My minor is in Bio-Medical Engineering.

I also have a... a Masters in Theology,

and I'm working on my PhD in Divinity.

So, between the math and science and the faith,

I think it's well prepared me for a career within NASA.

What I've found, NASA is so diverse that it really doesn't make a difference what your background is,

as long as you apply yourself.
you will do well within the agency.

My advise to young African Americans wishing to work at NASA is to take all of the math and science that you can in school, both high school and in college.

Work hard, apply yourself and I think things will... will work out great for you.