

## NSBE Honors a Diversity ‘Champion’



Gene Washington

**G**ene Washington, former Minnesota Viking, longtime supporter of NSBE and founding member of the Board of Corporate Affiliates (BCA), will receive the first-ever Gene Washington Champion of Champions Award at the 14th Annual NSBE Golden Torch Awards ceremony, on March 26 in St. Louis. The award recognizes Washington's outstanding service to the Society during his tenure with Board of Corporate Affiliates member 3M. He retired from the company as manager of Workforce Diversity last year.

“I'm very excited about the award. It's quite an honor. And I salute our NSBE students as the real ‘champions’ who are persevering in their studies and making a very significant contribution to our national engineering community,” Washington told *NSBE Magazine*.

That's quite a statement coming from someone who has received as many

awards as Washington has in his 40-year career in diversity recruiting.

Washington grew up in a racially segregated community outside of Houston, Texas. A talented athlete in several sports, he was recruited to play football for Michigan State University, where he got his first exposure to racial integration and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. Throughout his career, “Segregation pushed me to excel, because we were treated so unfairly,” he told *In Magazine* in May 2010.

Washington began working part time for 3M while he was still playing for the Vikings in the early 1970s, developing the company's first Minority College Relations Recruitment Program. After employment elsewhere, he came back to 3M in 1988 and greatly expanded the company's diversity recruitment program through his work with NSBE and many other organizations over the next 21 years. ■

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