



Dorothy I. Height

A pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement, Dorothy I. Height is world renowned for her dedication to social justice through her roles as an administrator, educator and social activist. In 2004, Dr. Height was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by President George W. Bush.



Dr. Height was born in 1912 and received a scholarship for her oratory skills to attend Barnard College, but was not admitted because they had reached their quota of two African American students before she arrived. She pursued studies at New York University and received the Barnard Medal of Distinction in 1980. She did postgraduate work at Columbia University and the New York University School of Social Work. She has received 36 Honorary Doctorate Degrees from prestigious universities.

Starting her career as a case worker with the New York City Welfare Department, she learned the value of social justice for clients and for the community.

Dr. Height joined the National Council of Negro Women, fighting for equal rights for both women and African Americans. She served as the National President of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. for 11 years, developing leadership programs for African American women and interracial education programs as part of the advent of the civil rights movement.

The National Council on Negro Women named Dr. Height their president in 1957. During her tenure as president in 1960, she was the only woman engaged in the United Civil Rights Leadership organization, along with Martin Luther King, Jr., Whitney M. Young, Jr., A. Phillip Randolph, James Farmer, Roy Wilkins and John Lewis.

“Wednesdays in Mississippi,” a creation of Dr. Height’s which brought together women of all races to create open communication, came at the peak of the civil rights movement. She provided counsel to many leaders including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson.

Dr. Height’s memoir, *Open Wide The Freedom Gates: A Memoir*, provides a glimpse into her unique personal perspective on the civil rights movement. Her life story has also been chronicled in a Broadway play, *If This Hat Could Talk*.

Dr. Height is currently the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the largest civil rights organization in the United States and the Chair and President Emerita of the National Council on Negro Women.

The National Association of Social Workers considers it a great honor to name the Social Work Reinvestment Act after Dr. Dorothy I. Height and fellow civil rights legend and social work icon Whitney M. Young, Jr.

“We hold in our hands the power to shape not only our own but the nation’s future.”

– Dr. Dorothy I. Height