

Dorothy Height

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Dorothy Irene Height (March 24, 1912 – April 20, 2010)^[1] was an African American administrator, educator, and social activist. She was the president of the National Council of Negro Women for forty years, and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994, and the Congressional Gold Medal in 2004.^[1]

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Early life

Height was born in Richmond, Virginia. At an early age, she moved with her family to a Western Pennsylvania steel town in the Monongahela River Valley called Rankin, adjacent to Pittsburgh. Height was admitted to Barnard College in 1929, but upon arrival, she was denied entrance because the school had an unwritten policy of admitting only two black students per year.^[2] She pursued studies instead at New York University, earning a degree in 1932, and a master's degree in educational psychology the following year.^[3]

Career

Height started working as a caseworker with the New York City Welfare Department and, at the age of twenty-five, she began a career as a civil rights activist when she joined the National Council of Negro Women. She fought for equal rights for both African Americans and women, and in 1944 she joined the national staff of the YWCA. She also served as National President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority from 1946 to 1957.^[4] She remained active with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority throughout her life. While there she developed leadership training programs and interracial and ecumenical education programs.^[4]

In 1957, Height was named president of the National Council of Negro Women, a position she held until 1997. During the height of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Height organized "Wednesdays in

Dorothy I. Height



Born	Dorothy Irene Height March 24, 1912 Richmond, Virginia, U.S.
Died	April 20, 2010 (aged 98) Washington, D.C., U.S.
Occupation	Educator and social activist



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Mississippi",^[5] which brought together black and white women from the North and South to create a dialogue of understanding.

American leaders regularly took her counsel, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and Height also encouraged President Dwight D. Eisenhower to desegregate schools and President Lyndon B. Johnson to appoint African American women to positions in government. In the mid 1960s, Height wrote a column entitled "A Woman's Word" for the weekly African-American newspaper, the *New York Amsterdam News* and her first column appeared in the March 20, 1965 issue on page 8.

Height served on a number of committees, including as a consultant on African affairs to the Secretary of State, the President's Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped, and the President's Committee on the Status of Women. In 1974, Height was named to the National Council for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, which published The Belmont Report (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm>), a response to the infamous "Tuskegee Syphilis Study" and an international ethical touchstone for researchers to this day.

Later life

In 2004, Height was recognized by Barnard for her achievements as an honorary alumna during its commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.^[2]

The musical stage play *If This Hat Could Talk*, based on her memoirs *Open Wide The Freedom Gates*, debuted in the middle of 2005. It showcases her unique perspective on the civil rights movement and details many of the behind-the-scenes figures and mentors who shaped her life, including Mary McLeod Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Height was the chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the largest civil rights organization in the USA. She was an honored guest and seated on stage at the inauguration of President Barack Obama on January 20, 2009.^[1]

She attended the National Black Family Reunion, celebrated on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., every year until her death in 2010.^[citation needed]

On March 25, 2010 Height was admitted to Howard University Hospital in Washington D.C. for unspecified reasons. Her spokeswoman issued a statement stating that at that time she was in a "very serious, but stable" condition but that they were remaining optimistic about her recovery. On April 20, 2010, Height died at the age of ninety-eight.

Awards and honors

- Presidential Citizens Medal (1989)
- Spingarn Medal from the NAACP (1993)
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Freedom From Want Award (1993)
- inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame (1993)
- Presidential Medal of Freedom (1994)^[1]

- 7th Annual Heinz Award Chairman's Medal (2001)^[6]
- Listed on Molefi Kete Asante's list of 100 Greatest African Americans (2002)^[7]
- Congressional Gold Medal by President George W. Bush on behalf of the United States Congress (Approved, 2003) (Awarded, 2004)^[1]

References

1. [^] ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e Iovino, Jim (2010-04-20). "Civil Rights Icon Dorothy Height Dies at 98" (<http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local-beat/Civil-Rights-Icon-Dorothy-Height-Dies-at-98-91581204.html>) . NBC Universal. <http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local-beat/Civil-Rights-Icon-Dorothy-Height-Dies-at-98-91581204.html>. Retrieved 2010-04-20.
2. [^] ^a ^b "Civil Rights Pioneer Honor 75 years after rejection Barnard College recognizes woman the school once barred because of admission limit for blacks". *Newsday*. 2004-06-04. p. A22.
3. [^] "Dorothy Height was educator and activist organizer". *Post-Tribune*. 2003-02-16. p. A2.
4. [^] ^a ^b Height, Dorothy (2003). *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir*. PublicAffairs Press. ISBN 9781586482862.
5. [^] Evans, Ben (2010-04-20). "Dorothy Height, civil rights activist, dies at 98" (<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5g1wclP0PXt3NaBWLcwbFUjRs9bawD9F73F08>) Associated Press. <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5g1wclP0PXt3NaBWLcwbFUjRs9bawD9F73F081>. Retrieved 2010-04-20.
6. [^] The Heinz Awards, Dorothy Height profile (<http://www.heinzawards.net/recipients/dorothy-height>)
7. [^] Asante, Molefi Kete (2002). *100 Greatest African Americans: A Biographical Encyclopedia*. Amherst, New York. Prometheus Books. ISBN 1-57392-963-8.

External links

- National Council for Science and the Environment (<http://ncseonline.org/01about/cms.cfm?id=499>)
- Dorothy Height (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/7615645/Dorothy-Height.html>) - Daily Telegraph obituary
- African Events (<http://www.africanevents.com/DorHeightCongressAwards.htm>) Congressional Gold Medal Award for Dorothy Height
- Dorothy Height's oral history video excerpts (<http://www.visionaryproject.org/heightdorothy>) , The National Visionary Leadership Project
- Dorothy Height's Videos (<http://www.videosurf.com/dorothy-height-186341>)

Sources

- Height, Dorothy. *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir*.
- Tracey A. Fitzgerald, *The National Council of Negro Women and the Feminist Movement, 1935–1975*, Georgetown University Press, 1985.
- Judith Weisenfeld, "Dorothy Height", *Black Women in America: Profiles*, MacMillan Library Reference USA, New York, 1999, pp. 128–130.

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