

**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**  
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**U.S. CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION MOURNS DEATH OF CIVIL RIGHTS PIONEER  
DOROTHY HEIGHT**

Washington, DC – The United States Commission on Civil Rights mourns the death of Dorothy Height—a matriarch of the civil rights movement who tirelessly fought discrimination and injustice with resolve and steadfast courage throughout her long and accomplished life.

An eager student who tenaciously pursued education in the face of overt discrimination, Ms. Height rose to lead the National Council of Negro Women for decades, becoming the most visible woman at the forefront of the civil rights movement. She marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and was a key figure in the civil rights struggles for school desegregation and voting rights, employment opportunities and equal access to public accommodations for blacks. Ms. Height also led the Harlem YWCA and the United Christian Youth Movement of North America, becoming a prominent voice for the need to jointly address racial and gender inequality at a time when advocates of both causes did not necessarily view or treat them as related concerns. In her leadership of the National Council of Negro Women, Ms. Height initiated practical programs to help poor black families, emphasizing the values of self-help and self-reliance. During her tenure, the Council also created the first black private, voluntary organization working in Africa, and founded the Bethune Museum and Archives for Black Women, which is dedicated to black women’s history.

Ms. Height had an ability to transcend the stereotypes of her day, rising to prominence within a civil rights movement largely dominated by male voices. Despite her great accomplishments, Ms. Height never sought the limelight and throughout her life, remained an example of humility and grace, often reminding her coworkers that, “We must try to take our task more seriously and ourselves more lightly.” Untold generations owe her a great debt of gratitude for her tireless and selfless public service.

In 1994, Ms. Height was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Clinton and the Congressional Gold Medal—American’s two highest civilian awards..

**THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights extends its deepest sympathies to the family and many friends and colleagues of Dorothy Height and joins them in celebrating the life and legacy of this national treasure.

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*The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chair Abigail Thernstrom, Commissioners Todd Gaziano, Gail Heriot, Peter N. Kirsanow, Arlan D. Melendez, Ashley L. Taylor, Jr., and Michael Yaki. Martin Dannenfels is the Staff Director. Commission meetings are open to the general public. The Commission's website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.*

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