

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

DOROTHY HEIGHT

social worker, activist, writer, speaker

"We cannot afford to be separate... We have to see that all of us are in the same boat"

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Background Information

Born on March 24, 1912; Died on April 20, 2010.

Dorothy Height showed great promise as an orator and competed nationally in oratory contests. These contests helped her receive scholarships to attend college. Height went to an integrated high school in the early 1920s. Afterwards, Height went to New York University for undergraduate and graduate degrees in educational psychology in the 1930s.

Height's Resistance

Height has a lifelong history of activism in civil rights and intersectionality. Height helped racially integrate the Youth Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Also, Height organized countless events like the March of Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Height was the only woman organizer for the March. While she organized much of the event and was a nationally recognized orator, she was not asked to speak at the March.¹

Height created the Center for Racial Justice in 1965 within the YWCA. Height also helped create the National Women's Political Caucus.² Height improved the living conditions of Black women through multiple organizations. She helped enhance literacy, reduce unemployment, and increase voter awareness.³

Achievements

Dorothy Height has received the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1994), the Congressional Gold Medal (2004), and many other awards.⁴ Her work on intersectionality helped integrate the YWCA and highlight women in the Civil Rights Movement. Height pushed for government reform while promoting institutional change nationwide. Height used her talents, positions, and education to transform society and fight against sexism and discrimination.

¹ Dorothy Height. (2019, September 13). Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <https://www.biography.com/activist/dorothy-height>.

² Dorothy I. Height (U.S. National Park Service). (n.d.). Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <https://www.nps.gov/people/dorothy-i-height.html>.

³ Norwood, A. (n.d.). Dorothy Height. Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/dorothy-height>.

⁴ Dorothy Height. (2019, September 13). Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <https://www.biography.com/activist/dorothy-height>.

Essential Questions

1. How did the intersectionality⁵ of Height (being Black and a woman) inform her activism and experiences throughout history?
2. Why do you think that Height was not asked to speak at the March on Washington given her background, experience, and expertise in the matter? *Hint: How did Height's identity possibly influence the decision to not let her speak?*
3. ***"We cannot afford to be separate... We have to see that all of us are in the same boat"***
 - a. Height stresses the importance of community development and cohesion. Why do you think that Height said that we are all in the same boat? What are the common threads between us all in the United States then and today?

⁵ Intersectionality- term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw to encompass multiple identities, that are traditionally oppressed, that all intersect to create one's identity (e.g., Black, female, queer).