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## Height Brings 'Presence of Royalty' to Campus

**By: Shivonne Foster**

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Introduced to a moderately filled Blackburn Ballroom as a "living treasure," the compelling 96-year-old Dorothy I. Height took the stage and encouraged students to carry out their civil duty of service.

"I'm thanking you for thinking about me," she said. "And thank you for an hour like this. It kind of gives me new life and a new inspiration."

The National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) Howard University Section, along with several other organizations, hosted the event on Wednesday.

"Celebrating all womanhood" served as a reoccurring theme for the program, as the accomplishments of the mistress of ceremonies JC Hayward, Ph.D., who recently celebrated her 36th anniversary as a news anchor for WUSA 9 News NOW at noon.

"You are in the presence of royalty and that does not happen often," Hayward said of Height. "She is a queen, and I am always just delighted and honored to be in her presence."

Height paid tribute to the current celebration of Women's History Month, saying, "African-American women are very special women because we seldom do what we want to do, but we always do what we have to do."

"I may be 96 this week, but my life was shaped before I was 25," she said.

She spoke of her experience working at NCNW under the leadership of Mary McLeod Bethune and how at an early age she engaged in the life commitment to servitude.

"I'm very proud of the fact that we recognize the importance of service," she said. "Keep going on working together as you're doing. It's a beautiful spirit. I felt the spirit once I came into this room."

Height said she has had the ability to serve by not only working with every presidential administration since Roosevelt but also through working with the poor.

She also charged students to remain politically involved.

"We have to help one another realize that there are no limits but the ones we put on ourselves," Height said. "We need to get out our vote. You either vote or the vote that you didn't make is voted for you."

Some of the work she spoke of was initiatives she participated in Harlem, N.Y. where she petitioned for decent pay for domestic workers.

"I learned at a young age so much about equality," Height said.

Height also told the audience about her educational opportunities, where she was able to earn a scholarship to complete her master's degree at New York University.

She emphasized the importance of continuing to strive in service.

"Keep going on so that what we worked for in the Civil Rights Movement is not lost," she said. "If we keep going, we will someday have a society of equality and justice and freedom for all."

She continued to encourage students to unify to take on social issues.

"I'm especially proud to be here," Height said, "To see all of you working together because one of the things Mrs. Bethune taught me was that we need to learn how to work together and work on our issues together."

Height spoke fondly of her life shaping mentor, Bethune, who founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935.

Height joined the organization in 1937 and served as the organization's president from 1957 to 1997.

A video of Height's servitude gave students an even greater understanding of her many accomplishments. She was displayed as a mentor, leader and champion, who encouraged youth to look back on the struggle and be leaders for today.

"I came out because she's a living legend," said Nicole Mahdi, a senior biology major. "A lot of times you don't get to see people like that, and here she is and she's 96 years old."

Mahdi said at first she could not believe Height was coming.

"To be in the presence of someone like that is amazing," she said. "She's one of the wisest people on earth, and it's an honor to sit in the same room as her."

Many students recognized Height's great achievements.

"I feel like she's responsible to my being here as a woman and especially as a black woman," said Andrena Sawyer, a senior sociology major. "The thing that's amazing is that she's talking about giving back and she's 96 and has already done so much. It's remarkable."

Height was presented the first annual Dorothy I. Height Award from NCNW Howard Section as a living legend.

Height who is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., was also acknowledged by Alpha Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

"I hope the audience gained inspiration to continue the legacy," said Zarree Walker, president of NCNW Howard Section. "She just had a birthday on Monday, and she's 96 years old, and this is her gift to us."

"We're just ecstatic that she could be here," she said.

Height's encouragement to the audience was well received.

"The program was historic," said Gregory Carr, Ph.D., assistant professor of Afro-American studies. "Dorothy Height is the last figure of that structure. She's also the most unknown."

Carr explained that some of Height's unfamiliarity is due to personal choice, as she is a servant, but also because of sexism within the movement.

He said Howard students are currently fulfilling the youth's role by tutoring children, working in communities like Panama and Katrina damage New Orleans and becoming involved politically with the Jena "6."

Carr said, "It's really about interacting with the community as a community representative."

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