

Civil Rights Pioneer Dr. Dorothy Height has Her Monumental Memoir
Open Wide the Freedom Gates
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Words from the incomparable work of noted and heralded poet Maya Angelou could not ring truer than when talking about the life and times of civil rights heroine and activist, Dr. Dorothy I. Height. Dr. Height's life has been defined by doing. Nothing has been out of her reach and the realm of her reach has been massive.

She's marched with Martin, sat in sessions with Stokely, rode with Rosa and had joint meetings with John, President John F. Kennedy that is. The civil rights movement would never be properly documented without the outstanding contributions of Dr. Dorothy I. Height.

Dr. Dorothy Height for more than 5 decades has been the President of NCNW (National Council of Negro Women), the largest Black women's organization in the country. She has been presented with the Citizens Medal Award for Distinguished Service to the Country by President Ronald Reagan, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton and the Congressional Gold Medal from our current President, George W. Bush. She conceived and organized the Black Family Reunion, which to date has attracted over 10 million people, during its 20 year run.

As the only woman and last surviving member of The Civil Rights Six, Dr. Height has worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, A. Philip Randolph, and others. She participated in virtually all of the major Civil and Human Rights events of the 20th Century. She is also credited with organizing "Wednesdays in Mississippi" in 1964, which brought White and Black women from the North and South together to fight segregation. She is, without a doubt, the remaining "Strategist of The Movement." Her lifetime of achievement is marked with the liberation of Black America, the brilliant advancement of women's rights, and the most determined effort to lift up the poor and the powerless.

In an effort to recognize Dr. Height's unheralded role and her many important contributions to the Civil Rights and Women's Movement, "**IF THIS HAT COULD TALK: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF DR. DOROTHY HEIGHT**," was born for the stage. The stageplay is a musical celebration of the Civil Rights Movement set to gospel, jazz, blues and R&B.

"**IF THIS HAT COULD TALK: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF DOROTHY HEIGHT**," is loosely based on Dr. Height's best selling memoir, "Open Wide The Freedom Gates." It was created to give audiences a glimpse of great events as seen through her eyes. It intimately reveals what really happened during one of our Country's most trying periods. "**IF THIS HAT COULD TALK: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF DOROTHY HEIGHT**," was also established to serve as a model for young people. The desired goal rests in raising up a generation of young people who become aware of their past after viewing this production, that they become enriched and empowered to pursue a better future.

"Freedom's gates are open wide" in The Nation's Capital on Wednesday, June 15 - Sunday, June 26, 2005 at the historic Lincoln Theater, 1215 U Street, NW. Performances are scheduled nightly at 8 PM, with Saturday performances at 3 PM and 8 PM and at 3 PM and 7:30 PM on Sundays.

The launching of this monumental masterpiece marks a unique opportunity, through the eyes of its creative team and producers, to not only highlight the contributions of Dr. Height, but also to galvanize community activism among young adults and endow the National Council of Negro Women, which is the largest woman based organization in the country. The production's title sponsor is Verizon. Other sponsors include Tyson, Coca-Cola, General Mills, Amtrak, Daimler-Chrysler, Alignment Strategies, Inc.

"IF THIS HAT COULD TALK: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF DR. DOROTHY HEIGHT," a masterful memoir put to music through the eyes of the woman who made it possible-Dr. Dorothy I. Height. Throughout this production, Dr. Height takes us on a ride through the hallways of history, history that she helped affect, change and make happen.

"IF THIS HAT COULD TALK: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF DOROTHY HEIGHT," is a tale told by the woman herself as she encounters some young women who have failed to realize the impact women through history have made and the sacrifices slain soldiers of the struggle have fought for. It chronicles and uncovers the connection that all women have-to withstand against all odds, regardless of race or their socio-economic background. Through history she helps these women discover who they are and who they ultimately have the capacity to be.

Combine the courageous conquests of some of the Civil Rights Movement most admired ambassadors, the relentless revolution that gave way to the waves of change in this country and the fearless fervor of people who had the faith and fortitude to fix any problem and you have the makings for **"IF THIS HAT COULD TALK: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF DR. DOROTHY HEIGHT."**

Throughout the show Dr. Height enlists the experiences of some of her counterparts, among them Mary McLeod Bethune, A. Phillip Randolph, President John F. Kennedy, Rev. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hammer and Maya Angelou, to give their take on some of history's most triumphant and tumultuous times.

The show is written, directed and choreographed by Tony Award-Winner Dr. George Faison. Faison, a 35-year veteran of the industry is one of the World's premiere choreographers and directors. He is most noted for his Tony Award-winning choreography on the original Broadway production of the show, "The Wiz," and was nominated for an Emmy for his work with "The Josephine Baker Story," which he choreographed.

With everything from gospel music to the blues, an eclectic score brilliantly written by Joe Coleman, adding poetry and historical pieces, **"IF THIS HAT COULD TALK: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF DR. DOROTHY HEIGHT,"** challenges its audiences to remember, while it compels its audience to want to affect needed change today on an individual and

corporate level and confronts its audiences with events that rocked and revolutionized the world. Joe Coleman rose to fame as the lead singer of the world-renowned vocal group, The Platters. He is an accomplished singer, lyricist, composer and actor. He has performed with everyone from the incomparable Barbara Streisand to the iconic soul singer Smokey Robinson, just to name a few and has been featured on everything from "The Today Show" to "Live with Regis and Kelly."

If you had to find a word to sum up the significant scope of this production of "herstory" it would be "edutainment"-it simply focuses on entertaining its audience while subliminally informing and educating them. In addition to the story seen from the stage, there is also a Youth for Excellence component attached to this musical. This initiative gives young people an opportunity to view the production, meet with the cast immediately after the performance, brainstorm as a group and then develop ways to ignite the waves of social change in their own communities. This is strongly supported by an accompanying study guide.

The production will initially tour the East Coast, hitting The Nation's Capital at The Lincoln Theater for its Official Launch. During its entire run, which will commence in September of this year, the production will visit almost every major city, among them, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Houston and Atlanta.