

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN, INC.

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Women's History Month offers a perfect opportunity to celebrate the character and accomplishments of women. NCNW need look no further for heroines to honor than to our own past National Chairs. Our Founder, **Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune**, established NCNW in 1935 as an "organization of organizations." NCNW's continued vitality is a testament to her clarity of vision and purpose. Dr. Bethune founded Bethune Cookman University, helped integrate women and blacks into federal government service, was the first woman to preside over ASALH (the Association for the Study of African American Life and History) and was a founder of the United Negro College Fund. This woman of towering achievement will soon become the first black woman voted to represent one of fifty states in National Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol.

Dr. Bethune was succeeded by **Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee**, a physician and perhaps the most renowned black women of her generation. Dr. Ferebee assured that NCNW would emphasize the status of women's health - a priority we still hold dear today. She also honed NCNW's vision as a champion for fair and equal treatment in the military, housing, employment and voting. Ferebee also issued a "Nine Point Program" which called attention to the need to achieve "basic civil rights through education and legislation and hosted a groundbreaking gathering of diverse women at the Shoreham Hotel.

Ms. Vivian Carter Mason took the helm in 1953. Among her many trailblazing accomplishments was service as the first black female administrator in New York City's Department of Welfare. Mason's administrative skills were beneficial in helping to better organize NCNW headquarters and connect local sections to the national office. Under her leadership, NCNW members took a heightened interest in international affairs, including the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, the American Association for the United Nations and the International Council of Women of the World. Ms. Mason's legacy is that today, NCNW is recognized as an NGO by the United Nations.

From 1957 until her death in 2010, **Dr. Dorothy Irene Height** was NCNW's standard bearer. Height had the daunting task of leading NCNW through the expanding Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. She

organized Wednesdays in Mississippi to bring equality and racial tolerance to violence-torn Mississippi. Dr. Height's personal charm and brilliance brought NCNW into the halls of power in the Nation's Capitol. She met with every U.S. President while presiding over NCNW. She also assured the organization's future by arranging to purchase the historic headquarters at 633 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Dr. Barbara Shaw heroically led NCNW through the grief and sense of loss following Dr. Height's demise. She held the organization together through her faith and dedication to NCNW's mission. Her legacy will always be that she refused to let NCNW fail when many obstacles obscured its future.

I will always be grateful to these women and inspired by their examples. Please join me in observing Women's History Month by celebrating their grace, brilliance, dedication and passion for women of African descent, their families and communities.

Sincerely,
Ingrid Saunders Jones