

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

March 2014

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."
--Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in a speech to the Medical Committee for Human Rights, 1966

OCR News

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services joins in celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In the upcoming weeks, the Office for Civil Rights, in partnership with the Office of Minority Health, will jointly host activities to both promote health equity and honor courageous individuals and momentous events that continue to define the civil rights movement today. To commemorate the historic buildup to the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, we hope you will enjoy and share this month's copy of our special newsletter which will be disseminated through OCR's listserv.



PHOTO: Eleanor Roosevelt (left) receiving the Mary McLeod Bethune Human Rights Award from Dorothy I. Height (right), president of the National Council of Negro Women, at the Council's Silver Anniversary Dinner in New York, November 12, 1960

Source: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration Series: Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Public Domain Photographs, compiled 1882 - 1962 (ARC identifier: 195301)

This Month in Civil Rights History

March 1, 1875 Congress passes Civil Rights Act; invalidated by Supreme Court, 1883.

March 22, 1988 Congress overrides President Reagan's veto and passes the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which expands the reach of non-discrimination laws within private institutions receiving federal funds.

March 26, 1964 A Senate debate on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the one and only time Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X ever met in person. Their meeting only lasted one minute.

March 30, 1964 The "Southern Bloc" of 18 southern Democratic Senators and one Republican Senator led by Richard Russell (D-GA) began a 54-day filibuster of the original civil rights bill.

Source: Dirksen Congressional Center "Major Features of the Civil Rights Law"
http://www.congresslink.org/print_basics_histmats_civilrights64text.htm

Spotlight on Dorothy I. Height

In honor of National Women's History Month, HHS celebrates the pioneering achievements of Dr. Dorothy I. Height who fought for gender and racial equality. Upon graduating from New York University with a bachelor and master's degree in educational psychology, Dr. Height began a career as a social worker and served as a caseworker with the New York City Welfare Department. Early in her career, Dr. Height led the New York YWCA, and as a national board member, one of Dr. Height's major accomplishments was directing the integration of its facilities nationwide in the 1940s. As president of the National Council of Negro Women from 1957-1997, Dr. Height led programs on issues such as voting rights, unemployment, hunger and malnutrition, AIDS, and public housing.

During the 1960s, Dr. Height was a leading figure of the civil rights movement. She was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to the President's Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, served as a key organizer of the March on Washington in 1963, and sat with Dr. Martin Luther King as he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. In 1964, she stood alongside President Lyndon B. Johnson as he signed the Civil Rights Act into law on July 2. Dr. Height was later appointed to the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research where she helped the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare respond to ethical violations in healthcare. Among her many, many honors, Dr. Height was inducted into the National Women's Hall of fame (1993), awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1997), and the Congressional Gold Medal (2004).

Sources: <http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e0259>, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/21/us/21height.html?_r=0 Judith Weisenfeld, "Dorothy Height", Black Women in America: Profiles, MacMillan Library Reference USA, New York, 1999, pp. 128-130.



OFFICE
FOR
CIVIL
RIGHTS

Office for Civil Rights

U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, SW,
H.H.H. Building, Room 509-F

Washington, D.C. 20201

TELEPHONE

1-800-368-1019

E-MAIL

ocrmail@hhs.gov

TDD

1-800-537-7697

www.hhs.gov/ocr