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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) | [Next entry](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_national_council_of_the_churches_of_christ_in_america_ncc) | |
| Founded in 1935 by Mary McLeod Bethune, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) was the first national coalition of African American women’s organizations. The most influential national women’s organization during the civil rights movement at the time, the NCNW represented 850,000 members, including Martin Luther King’s wife, [**Coretta Scott King**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_king_coretta_scott_1927_2006/). In 1957 King addressed the NCNW at their annual convention, telling the women, ‘‘I have long admired this organization, its great work, and its noble purposes’’ (King, 9 November 1957).  NCNW presidents Vivian C. Mason (1953–1957) and Dorothy I. Height (1957– 1998), both worked with King, collaborating on movement strategies and speaking at events together. In the early months of the [**Montgomery bus boycott**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_montgomery_bus_boycott_1955_1956/), Mason raised funds for the boycott and featured [**Rosa Parks**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_parks_rosa_1913_2005/) as a guest speaker at a May 1956 NCNW conference of women leaders in Washington, D.C. In May 1957 King and Mason shared a podium at the [**Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_prayer_pilgrimage_for_freedom_1957/). Later that year, King gave a featured address at the NCNW annual convention, predicting a future of desegregation and urging the audience to ‘‘be maladjusted’’ to segregation and discrimination (King, 9 November 1957). Mason wrote King soon afterward, thanking him for addressing her members: ‘‘Your philosophy to treat the sickness of race culture in American life found an echo in their hearts. They want to be counted among the brave and the daring, those who dare to be followers of Christ when all the world seeks mammon’’ (Mason, 19 November 1957). Mason also proposed turning King’s speech into a commercial recording to raise funds for both organizations. Mason and King shared an interest in voter registration and the NCNW collaborated with the [**Southern Christian Leadership Conference**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_southern_christian_leadership_conference_sclc/) (SCLC) on the organization’s registration campaign, the Crusade for Citizenship.  Height continued Mason’s collaboration with King. Height and King were both sponsors of the 1962 American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa, and met with President [**John F. Kennedy**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_kennedy_john_fitzgerald_1917_1963/), [**James Farmer**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_farmer_james_1920_1999/), [**A. Philip Randolph**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_randolph_a_philip_1889_1979/), [**Roy Wilkins**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_wilkins_roy_ottaway_1901_1981/), and [**Whitney Young**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_young_andrew_1932/) to share the conference’s resolutions. In 1963 the NCNW and SCLC joined with five other national civil rights organizations to form the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership (CUCRL). This organization became the beneficiary of the profits from the sales of recordings of King’s ‘‘[**I Have a Dream**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_i_have_a_dream_28_august_1963/)’’ speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.  Height visited Birmingham, Alabama, on Mother’s Day 1963, at the conclusion of the [**Birmingham Campaign**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_birmingham_campaign/). Height thanked King and the others engaged in the campaign, saying, ‘‘know that the National Council of Negro Women and all of us are hand in hand with you, all of us with our hand in God’s hand’’ (Height, 12 May 1963). Speaking after her, King called Height one of ‘‘the great women of our day and age’’ and praised the women in the Birmingham movement, saying, ‘‘we wouldn’t have a Birmingham movement if the women were not present in this movement’’ (King, 12 May 1963). The next month, Height joined the dais guests at a [**Gandhi Society for Human Rights**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_gandhi_society_for_human_rights/) luncheon in King’s honor in Washington, D.C.  After King’s [**assassination**](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_kings_assassination_4_april_1968/), Height recalled: ‘‘Each of us had a feeling that, particularly in the United Civil Rights Leadership group, we had a feeling that we had to re-double our efforts. We saw him cut down right in the middle of what he was doing. And we felt that we wanted to make sure that it was clear that the dream was not killed, but it was the dreamer. That’s the way we felt about it’’ (Height, 14 January 2005). Height remained the president of the NCNW until 1998, when she became chair and president emerita of the organization.  **Sources**  Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart*, 1985.  Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 1986.  Height, Address delivered at New Pilgrim Baptist Church, 12 May 1963, MLKEC.  Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates,* 2003.  Height, ‘‘We Wanted the Voice of a Woman to be Heard,’’ in *Sisters in teh Struggle,* eds. Thomas and Franklin, 2001.  King, ‘‘A Look to the Future,’’ 9 November 1957, ORS.  King, Address delivered at New Pilgrim Baptist Church, 12 May 1963, MLKEC.  Mason to King, 30 April 1956, in *Papers* 3:**235–236**.  Mason to King, 19 November 1957, MLKP-MBU.  ‘‘Transcript: Civil Rights Activist Dorothy Height Remembers Martin Luther King,’’ 14 January 2005, Voice of America. **http://www.voanews.com/mediaassets/english/2005\_01/Audio/mp3/Rupli-Height%2014Jan05.mp3**. |