



THE DOROTHY COTTON INSTITUTE

Building Global Community for Human Rights Leadership



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**Sisters of Change: Dorothy Cotton and Unsung Sheroes
for Racial Justice, Human Rights and the Vote**

Opening Reception: January 23, 2020, 5-7 pm

Exhibit and Related Programming: Through April 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Dorothy Cotton Institute (DCI) and the Tompkins Center for History & Culture (TCHC) invites the public to attend an opening reception on Thursday, January 23 (5-7 pm) for the new, "Sisters of Change: Dorothy Cotton and Unsung Sheroes for Racial Justice, Human Rights and the Vote" exhibit at the Tompkins Center for History & Culture, 110 N. Tioga St. (on the Commons) in Ithaca.

A short program, including a preview of "Move When the Spirit Says Move," a new documentary film about Dorothy Cotton, will be offered from 5:30 – 6pm. Refreshments will be served. No attendance fee; however donations will be welcomed at the door.



The exhibit – in the lobby of the Tompkins Center for History & Culture -- is available for viewing through the end of April.

A series of related events (see below) will round out the four-month long celebration of themes central to the work and legacy of civil rights leader and Ithacan Dorothy Foreman Cotton and other unsung (and often unknown) African-American "sheroes" whose work built and sustained the Civil Rights Movement through savvy organizing, persistent community development, courageous action, and personal sacrifice.

Dorothy Cotton was Education Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) from 1961-1970. She was the only woman on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Executive Committee and a close colleague and friend of Dr. King's. A keystone of her work was the Citizenship Education Program, which trained thousands of people throughout the southern states to know their



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constitutional rights and create effective community-based strategies for non-violent direct action.

Dr. Cotton served as the Director of Student Activities at Cornell University from 1982-1991 and lived in Ithaca until her death in 2018.

In addition to the opening reception on January 23, a series of related events will be held through April, including:

- **February – Rejoice the Vote! Honor the Past, Celebrate the Present, Challenge the Future.** Highlighting milestones that have been crucial to Black liberation and the rights of full citizenship, and the “By A Show of Hands” Student Voting Project, showcasing posters and presentations by students from the Ithaca City School District.
- **March -- Our Untold Stories: Women of Color Changemakers,** featuring excerpts from an oral history project conducted by Cornell Professor Sofia Villenas and her students. DCI will also hold Human Rights Education workshops for elementary school children and their families
- **April – Powerful Voices of Social Change: Black Women Making History, Past, Present and Future,** a panel presentation featuring local women activists, artists and academics.

For more information on these events, visit www.dorothycottoninstitute.org

This exhibit and series of events is a collaborative effort between the Dorothy Cotton Institute, The History Center in Tompkins County, and other local partners. The program is funded in part by Humanities New York, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.