



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

Senator Montgomery Honors Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient Dorothy Burnham, a Brooklyn “Renaissance Woman”

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The lifetime achievements of Brooklyn native Dorothy Burnham were recognized and lauded by NYS Senator Velmanette Montgomery (D-Brooklyn) during the reading of a Senate resolution, which was unanimously passed by the full Senate during the final days of the 2011 Legislative Session.

The resolution paid tribute to Dorothy Burnham's many notable contributions to our public education system, the advancement of civil rights, and to the promotion of racial and economic equality. Ms. Burnham was also honored for her designation as recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award by the New York Friends of the People's World.

"Dorothy Burnham is a Renaissance Woman," said Senator Montgomery. "She set her own agenda for personal and professional achievement and paved the way for countless young people to overcome obstacles to their successes. Dorothy has and continues to be an unwavering crusader for social justice and cultural diversity, which strengthens the fabric of all communities. Being the unique leader that she is, Dorothy has made great contributions to multiple worthy causes throughout her life, all made possible through her own education. I am proud and honored to know her."

Dorothy Burnham went to an all Girls High School in the early 1930s, at which time she became active on social issues through the American Student Union; this initiated a lifetime of activity and commitment to the fight for civil rights, women's rights, peace, democratic rights, and the concerns of all working people.

When Ms. Burnham was enrolled in Brooklyn College she was exposed to remarkable professors who urged her to explore the true causes of poverty, starvation, social inequality, and racism; they inspired her and pointed her in the direction to change conditions by active participation in the struggles of that period; this is where she developed her own dedication to social justice.

Burnham said of her college experience, "Some 250 years ago, Thomas Jefferson declared that

one of the goals of the nation would be to provide public education to rich and poor so that all could take part in our Democracy. When I enrolled in Brooklyn College two years after its founding in 1930, there were no tuition fees and no financial aid forms to fill out. I am truly grateful for the public free education system and for the direction and help I received at that period in my life.”

In 1940, Dorothy and her husband, Louis E. Burnham moved to Birmingham, Alabama to the headquarters of the Southern Negro Youth Congress, where they joined other young African American progressives and became life-long advocates for social justice; Louis and Dorothy worked out of that office in Birmingham until it closed in 1949. Upon returning to Brooklyn, Dorothy became a professor of Biology at Hostas Community College, and Empire State College in the CUNY system, during which time she was also active in the New York State Teachers Union.

In the 1980s and 90s, Dorothy Burnham was an active leader in the national organization Women for Racial and Economic Equality, as well as with the Sisters Against South African Apartheid, Genes and Gender, and Womens International League for Peace and Freedom.

Today, Dorothy Burnham is the President of the Louis E. Burnham Award Fund, which funds writers and other activists in the struggles for social progress, especially civil rights.

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