

Dorothy Orr

Dorothy James Orr

Doctor of Humane Letters

May 23, 2005

Dedicated civic leader, distinguished executive, you, Dorothy James Orr, are a pioneer who has devoted your life to building interracial coalitions and partnerships among the elderly, youth, educators, corporate leaders, legislators, and community service executives as a means of improving everyone's quality of life. We honor you for your achievements in the corporate, educational, civic, and political fields, and for your contributions to Pace University.

You were a pioneer in the human rights movement, serving as commissioner of human rights for New York State, where you developed the first master plan for voluntary affirmative action and established strategies with the banking, insurance, and media industries that resulted in equal opportunity access to entry-level, middle management, and senior executive positions. Your leadership as executive director of the two largest community corporations in the nation—Youth in Action and Har You Act—where you organized and mobilized the poor, legislators, corporate executives, and a staff of 1,000 to work together to provide opportunities for training, education, access to capital, and the American Dream.

A devoted educator, you served as commissioner of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, associate professor at Fordham University, and the President's Advisory Board on Higher Education. You also served as consultant to Manhattanville and Spellman Colleges as well as the National Association of Equal Opportunity to Education.

In 1975, you transformed the corporate executive world when you were appointed vice president of Equitable Life Assurance Society and served as the first female African-American corporate vice president in the insurance industry. At Equitable, you recommended policies and implemented strategies to use corporate resources to address social issues impacting women and minorities while integrating financial goals with social objectives.

Recently, you brought your leadership to the Westchester County's Pre-White House Conference of the County Department of Aging Services, where you served as consultant to the Commissioner on Aging, and cochaired the Diversity Caucus on Healthcare and Disparity.

You have received many awards and honors including woman of the year in Westchester County, the National Association of Equal Opportunity in Education Award, and the Business Policy Review Council Corporate Pioneer Award.

Your devotion to Pace University began 15 years ago with the speech "New Directions for Women to the Women Students of Pace." Most recently, you helped establish the African American Leadership Forum for Education Policy/Pace University Institute for the Advancement of Equal Opportunity in Education as well as a think tank on education policy and racial issues.

For being a soldier in the war on poverty and a leader in the era of human rights, and for being an inspiration not only to the African-American community but also to the many underrepresented groups who continue to find their voice through your leadership and hard work, Pace University is honored to confer upon you, Dorothy James Orr, the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereunto.

Aniello A. Bianco '61

Chairman, Board of Trustees

David A. Caputo

President, Pace University

