



## DOROTHY COTTON

Born in Goldsboro, North Carolina, Dorothy Cotton attended Dillard High School. She was a student at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, and transferred after one year to Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia where she studied English and Library Science. She received her Master's Degree in Special Education and Speech Therapy from Boston University. Dr. Cotton was the Education Director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for twelve years working directly with Dr. King and preparing many of what he called "the ground crew" in various areas. Dorothy served on his executive staff and was part of his entourage to Oslo, Norway, where he received the Nobel Peace Prize. She served as the Vice President of Field Operations for the Dr. M.L.K. Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta. She translates years of experience and learning in words and song bearing messages of hope. Through "Songs of the Movement," laughter, and storytelling, Dorothy synthesizes the lessons from our history into a hardworking vision for the future. Dorothy gets us to laugh, sing, and join together to create a more caring and humane world. She is an educator, a speaker, singer, peacemaker, and a visionary.

**Music was important in the Civil Rights Movement.** She has taught America, and many other places, the songs of the Civil Rights Movement, including "We Shall Overcome." This theme song of the movement has gone down in history, but it is not the only one. "We Shall Overcome," is a song that needs to be understood if one is to stay faithful to its origin. It can be sung triumphantly, it can be sung prayerfully. Whether sung prayerfully or in the spirit of triumph, it should be sung with hope and determination of victory, of achieving positive goals. This song emerged against oppression. It came out of suffering! Dorothy reminds us that "We Shall Overcome" was – and should remain – a sacred song, a prayer song. It can be sung with joy and great anticipation, and always hope. "We Shall Overcome" is hope made flesh. This is what Dorothy stands for and what she speaks for today. Her witness about yesterday preserves the lessons from earlier times and shares hope for our challenges today. We need to learn what we can from the journey of Martin Luther King, Jr. and find our own strength and our own vision for how each of us can serve in our own way. She is proud to be associated with the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers and enthusiastically supports their mission of preserving the Negro Spirituals and spreading goodwill through music.