

EMERITUS HON. DR. CLIFFORD E. DEBAPTISTE VISIONARY AWARD

Established in 2022, the Visionary Award is bestowed upon community leaders who empower others to be the change they wish to see in the world. These servants of the community are:

- **Bridge Builders**, across institutions and systems
- **Door Openers**, creating a pathway for the next generation to excel
- **Visionaries**, seeing a world where equity and justice create communities where all can prosper, be nourished, be free and be safe.



In 2024, the award's eponym, the Emeritus Hon. Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste, chose two winners: **Emeritus Professor Dr. C. James Trotman and Dr. Mildred C. Joyner, for expanding the educational impact of West Chester University's Frederick Douglass Institute.**

Since its 1995 creation, Founding Director Dr. James Trotman's name has been synonymous with WCU's Frederick Douglass Institute.

Dr. Trotman has authored two books on Frederick Douglass, in 2002 and 2011, and numerous refereed articles.

The Frederick Douglass Institute is a window to the world of knowledge, a catalyst for bringing systems of thought and expression, a light of hope and a place of encouragement for all who seek change. The Institute advances multicultural studies across the curriculum and deepens the intellectual heritage of Frederick Douglass, the former slave, distinguished orator, journalist, author and statesman.

In 2006 the Pennsylvania Historical Museum and Commission recognized WCU's connection with the great abolitionist and his life lessons for students.

In 2008 the National Park Service recognized WCU's Frederick Douglass Institute for its significance to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

Dr. Trotman recounted a vision shared with longtime colleague and friend,

Dr. Mit Joyner: a statue to commemorate Douglass' frequent visits and last lecture on West Chester's campus on February 1, 1895—just 19 days before his death.

Dr. Trotman raised modest amounts of money and Dr. Joyner successfully reached out to large donors. Student donations had a significant impact: a dollar or two from a lot of students made a deep impression. The statue was sculpted by WCU Professor Richard Blake and unveiled on October 1, 2013.

Through the visionary leadership of Dr. Trotman, there now are Frederick Douglass Institutes at all campuses of the Pennsylvania State Universities System: the FDI Collaborative.

Dr. Mildred "Mit" Joyner's initial career at Chester County Children and Youth Services led her to become a professor of Social Work at WCU. She eventually led as Department Chair, while also serving on the Boards of DNB Bank and Chester County Food Bank. Dr. Joyner championed social workers, nationally and internationally.

"Dr. Joyner was a dedicated social worker and community leader," Dr. DeBaptiste

declared. "She knew that the work she was doing was wholly important to the greater good of the community and she never stopped putting in the effort." Although Dr. Joyner died in 2023, her legacy lives on in the thousands of students that she mentored and the many public, private and nonprofit organizations she served.

"Dr. Jim Trotman is a treasured friend. A pioneer in the West Chester community, he has done so much good for so many people throughout the region. It is with immense pleasure that I honor Jim and Mit with the Visionary Award," enthused Dr. DeBaptiste.

Both Dr. Joyner and Dr. Trotman have dedicated their lives to building a stronger, more prosperous community, empowering others to be the change they wish to see in the world. **Visionary. Now & Forever.**

