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University of Dayton

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NOTE TO EDITORS: In a news release dated Dec. 3, the name of Charity Earley was misspelled. Information in this release is correct.

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The University of Dayton

News Release

Dec. 6, 1991
Contact: Pam Huber

CHARITY EARLEY TO RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREE FROM UD

DAYTON, Ohio -- Charity Adams Earley, who fought against race and gender biases long before they exploded into headlines, will be awarded an honorary degree from the University of Dayton at its commencement exercises to be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 21, in UD Arena.

Approximately 600 students will receive degrees, including seven students who will receive doctoral degrees, the most doctorates ever awarded in a winter commencement ceremony at UD. A total of 326 undergraduates will receive bachelor's degrees, and 263 graduate students will receive master's degrees. One dual degree will be awarded, and one student will receive an educational specialist degree.

Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., president of UD, will present an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters to Earley at commencement exercises. In addition to decades of service to the Dayton community, Earley holds the distinction of being the first black person to be commissioned an officer in the women's Army Auxiliary Corps, later renamed the Women's Army Corps (WAC).

A native of North Carolina, she holds a bachelor's degree from Wilberforce University and a master's degree from Ohio State University. When the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was formed in 1942, Earley was recommended by Wilberforce's dean of women for officer candidate school. Before leaving military service in 1946, she was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and was the second-highest-ranking officer in the WAC.

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Earley's 1989 book, One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC, chronicles those experiences because, as she wrote: "In another generation young black women who join the military will have scant record of their predecessors who fought on the two fronts of discrimination--segregation and reluctant acceptance by males." In fighting discrimination, she repeatedly placed her military career in jeopardy. Once, when informed of a plan to create a Negro Regiment for her to command, she indicated she would be willing to face court-martial rather than obey an order to command a regiment that would segregate the WAC.

During the past four decades, Earley's community activities have been numerous. She has been a member of the board of trustees of Sinclair Community College, of the board of directors of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce and of the national board of governors of the American Red Cross. She established the Black Leadership Program in Dayton. She has served on the boards of the Dayton Power and Light Co. and of Citizens Federal Savings and Loan.

For these and many other activities she has been named to the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame, was a winner of the Dayton Daily News Ten Top Women Award, won the Brotherhood Award from the Dayton Area National Conference of Christians and Jews and received the Walter White Award from the Atlanta NAACP Chapter for her pioneering service in the military.

A reception at UD Arena will be held following commencement exercises. Commencement dinner will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom, and commencement Mass will be celebrated at 4:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20, in the Immaculate Conception Chapel on campus.