

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Joan Trumpauer Mulholland organizer, activist

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“Support anybody who’s being bullied.”



COURTESY OF MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Background Information

Born: September 14, 1941

Mulholland was raised in Arlington, Virginia, by her wealthy White parents. She first noticed racism around her when she was only 10 years old. This is what made her want to fight for change.

At first, Mulholland wanted to go to a small college in Kentucky. Her racist mother would not allow it because she feared that Black people would soon be allowed to attend the university. Instead, her mother made her go to Duke university. She dropped out in the first year because they tried to stop her from fighting for the rights of Black people. Later, she became the first White student to go to Tougaloo College.

Mulholland’s Resistance

Mulholland started resisting when she was in high school. She invited her Black classmates to her church youth group’s Sunday spaghetti dinners. This might not sound like a big deal, but in the 1950s, this decision put them in danger. There was a possibility of being arrested by the police or being harmed by the American Nazi party that was two blocks away from the church. By the time Mulholland was 19, she had participated in about 40 sit-ins and protests against racism in the south. She spent two months in prison for protesting in Mississippi, and the Ku Klux Klan attempted to kill her. She continues to encourage young people to fight for justice and fairness.¹

Achievements

Mulholland has received many awards and recognitions for her work in the Civil Rights Movement. She received the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, Annual Award of Honor and the Anti-Defamation League Annual Heroes Against Hate Award. In 2014, she was recognized by President Barack Obama. In 2018, she received the “I Am a Man” award on the 50th anniversary of King’s assassination.

¹ Trainer, M. (2017, February 9). Joan Mulholland: Civil rights hero. Retrieved October 24, 2019, from ShareAmerica website: <https://share.america.gov/joan-mulholland-civil-rights-hero/>

Essential Questions

1. How did Joan Trumpauer Mulholland resist racism?

2. Mulholland was arrested for doing what she believed was right even through it was against the law. Is it ever okay to break the law? Why or why not?

3. *“Get out there and take some form of action,” “Support anybody who’s being bullied.”*
 - a. What are ways you can take action in your community?