

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Patsy Takemoto Mink

Japanese American civil rights activist, US. Congresswoman

“We self-righteously expect all others to admire us for our democracy and our traditions. We are so smug about our superiority, we fail to see our own glaring faults, such as prejudice and poverty amidst affluence.”

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FIGURE 1 COURTESY OF NATIONAL WOMEN'S MUSEUM

Background Information

Born: December 6, 1927; Died: September 28, 2002

Patsy Matsu Takemoto was born in Paia, Hawaii, on December 6, 1927. Her parents were second-generation Japanese Americans. She graduated from Maui High School in 1944 as the valedictorian and class president. Patsy acquired degrees in zoology and chemistry from the University of Hawaii in 1948. She also earned a law degree from the University of Chicago Law School in 1951.

Resistance

Throughout her life, Patsy faced various forms of discrimination. As a Japanese American, she encountered segregationist practices in college. After a policy forced her to live in a segregated dorm on campus, Patsy founded a coalition to change the policy.ⁱ Her efforts were successful, and the policy changed within a year. Although she earned several degrees, she frequently faced rejection from medical schools because of her gender.ⁱⁱ Patsy switched career goals and entered law school to fight for change. Turned down by law firms due to race and gender, Patsy ultimately formed her own law office in 1954. Patsy became the first Japanese American woman to practice law in Hawaii.ⁱⁱⁱ She also became involved in local politics. She founded the Oahu Young Democrats. In 1964 Mink was elected to the United States Congress, the first woman of color to hold the position. During her congressional career, Patsy co-authored, sponsored, and introduced the Title IX Amendment of the Higher Education Act to Congress of the legislation.^{iv} The law prohibits institutions that receive federal funding from excluding students from participating in educational and athletic programs based on sex. Patsy also formed the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus for better Asian representation. Mink would serve in the United States Congress for 24 years. She championed causes related to ending poverty, gender rights, and anti-war efforts.

Achievements

After her death, Title IX was renamed the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act. Patsy also received the Medal of Freedom posthumously.^v In 2018, Patsy's home state of Hawaii raised a life-sized statue in her honor.^{vi}

Essential Questions

1. Patsy faced many unfair obstacles during her pursuit of educational and career goals. How did she resist race or gender discrimination when it appeared throughout her life?
 - a. Why is it important to not give up when faced with challenges?

2. During her career, Patsy Mink became the first to do many things during her career.
 - a. How can being the first to do something create opportunities for others?

3. How did Patsy Mink use her role as a Congresswoman to improve the lives of girls and women across the country?

4. ***“We self-righteously expect all others to admire us for our democracy and our traditions. We are so smug about our superiority, we fail to see our own glaring faults, such as prejudice and poverty amidst affluence.”***
 - a. What does this quote mean to you?
 - b. Why is important to critique the society you live in?

ⁱ <https://wams.nyhistory.org/growth-and-turmoil/feminism-and-the-backlash/patsy-mink/>

ⁱⁱ <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/riseup/feature/patsy-mink>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/about/news/women-who-made-legal-history-patsy-mink/>

^{iv} <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/14th-amendment-and-evolution-title-ix>

^v <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/14th-amendment-and-evolution-title-ix>

^{vi} <https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/government-politics/2018-12-06/patsy-t-mink-monument-dedicated-on-her-birthday>