

CRIPSTORY

The Unheard History of Disability

Judy Heumann

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Judy Heumann was born in Philadelphia in 1947 and contracted polio as a toddler, which led to her using a wheelchair for mobility. Throughout her life, Heumann faced a great deal of discrimination and barriers.

As a child, she was not allowed to attend school due to her wheelchair being deemed a “fire hazard.” Later, after receiving a NY teaching license, she was denied the opportunity to teach because the state doubted her ability to protect herself and her students in case of a fire.

After successfully suing the Board of Education, Heumann became the first wheelchair-using teacher in NYC, receiving recognition nationwide. In 1970, she started Disabled in Action, which focused on securing the protection of disabled people under civil rights laws, and this helped end forced institutionalization.



During the 1970s, Heumann led many protests to encourage President Nixon to sign the Rehabilitation Act Section 504, which would secure the disabled community's right to equal services and community integration. In 1975, she helped develop legislation that eventually became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which allowed any disabled person to have the right to an education and co-founded the World Institute on Disability in 1983.

Heumann was also part of the Ed Roberts Independent Living Movement, which stressed that disabled people have the same civil rights as everyone else, and this eventually secured the passage of the 1990 ADA.



Judy Heumann played a significant role in the history of disability rights, forcing the world to treat disabled people as people. Her famous quote, “If I have to feel thankful about an accessible bathroom, when am I ever gonna be equal in the community?” That says it all.

**We thank Judy Heumann for all she did and
may she rest in power
(1947-2023).**



DIYabled



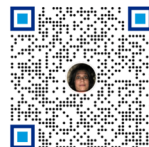
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