



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Judith E. Heumann Papers

NMAH.AC.1633

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Judith E. Heumann Papers
<b>Date:</b>	1940s-2000s
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.1633
<b>Creator:</b>	Heumann, Judith E. (Judith Ellen) (1947-12-18-2023-03-04) Pineda, Jorge
<b>Extent:</b>	22 Cubic feet (22 boxes)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The Judith E. Heumann Papers document her activism as a disability rights advocate.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Jorge H. Gonzalez Pineda, in 2024.

### Related Materials

#### **Materials in the Archives Center**

Disability Reference Collection (NMAH.AC.1319)

Elaine Ostroff Universal Design Papers (NMAH.AC.1356)

Van Philips Video History and Papers (NMAH.AC.0859)

Target Stores Collection of Fashion Advertising Using Models with Disabilities (NMAH.AC.0436)

Adaptive Mobility Oral History Project Collection (NMAH.AC.1359)

Safko International, Inc., Records (NMAH.AC.0911)

#### **Materials at Other Organizations**

##### **The Bancroft Library, University of California**

Judith E. Heumann papers, BANC MSS 99/143z

Judith Heumann photograph collection, BANC PIC 1999.091

Disability rights photographs: activities in Berkeley, California and elsewhere, BANC PIC 1999.090

World Institute on Disability records, 1983-2002, BANC MSS 99/148z

Center for Independent Living records, BANC MSS 2000/43c

Judith Heumann: Pioneering Disability Rights Advocate and Leader in Disabled in Action, New York; Center for Independent Living, Berkeley; World Institute on Disability; and the US Department of

Education, 1960s-2000/Judith Heumann; interviews conducted by Susan Brown, David Landes, and Jonathan Young in 1998-2001.

## Processing Information

Collection is unprocessed.

## Preferred Citation

Judith E. Heumann Papers, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

## Restrictions

Collection is closed during processing.

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical

Judy Heumann was an internationally recognized advocate for the rights of disabled people. She was widely regarded as "the mother" of the Disability Rights Movement. At 18-months-old, Judy contracted polio in Brooklyn, New York and began to use a wheelchair for mobility. She was denied the right to attend school at the age of five because she was considered a "fire hazard." Later in life, Judy was denied her teaching license by the same school district. After passing her oral and written exams, she was failed on her medical exam because she could not walk. Judy sued the New York Board of Education and Judge Constance Baker Motley (the first Black female federal judge) strongly suggested the board reconsider. They did and Judy went on to become the first wheelchair user to teach in the state of New York.

In 1977, Judy was a leader in the historic 504 Sit-In in San Francisco. This 26-day protest (the longest sit-in at a federal building to date) led to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act being signed into law. Judy was instrumental in the development and implementation of other legislation including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These pieces of legislation have been integral in advancing the inclusion of disabled people in the US and around the world.

From 1993 to 2001, Judy served in the Clinton Administration as the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the Department of Education. Judy then served as the World Bank's first Adviser on Disability and Development from 2002 to 2006. In this position, she led the World Bank's disability work to expand its knowledge and capability to work with governments and civil society on including disability in the global conversation. In 2010, President Obama appointed Judy as the first Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State, where she served until 2017. Mayor Fenty of D.C. appointed Judy as the first Director for the Department on Disability Services, where she was responsible for the Developmental Disability Administration and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. She also was a Senior Fellow at the Ford Foundation, where she produced the white paper Road Map for Inclusion.

Judy was a founding member of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living which was the first grassroots center in the United States and helped to launch the Independent Living Movement both nationally and globally. In 1983, Judy co-founded the World Institute on Disability (WID) with Ed Roberts and Joan Leon, as one of the first global disability rights organizations founded and continually led by people with disabilities that works to fully integrate people with disabilities into the communities around them via research, policy, and consulting efforts.

Throughout her life, Judy served on a number of non-profit boards, including the American Association of People with Disabilities, the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Humanity and Inclusion, Human Rights Watch, United States International Council on Disability, and Save the Children.

*Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*, written by Judy with coauthor Kristen Joiner, was published by Beacon Press in 2020. Following in 2021 was the Young Adult version, *Rolling Warrior*. Both audiobooks are read by Ali Stroker, the first wheelchair user to perform on Broadway. After a four studio bidding war, *Being Heumann's* movie adaptation will be done by Apple TV+ with producer David Permut (*Hacksaw Ridge*) and writer/director Sian Heder (Academy Award Winning 'Best Picture' *CODA*).

Judy is featured in *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*, the 2020 award winning, Oscar-nominated documentary film, directed by James LeBrecht and Nicole Newnham and produced by the Obama Higher Ground Production Company. She has been featured in numerous other documentaries on the history of the disability rights movement, including *Lives Worth Living* and *the Power of 504*. She delivered a TED talk in 2016, "Our Fight for Disability Rights- and Why We're Not Done Yet". Her story was also told on Comedy Central's *Drunk History* in early 2018, in which she was portrayed by Ali Stroker. In 2020, Judy was featured on the Trevor Noah show. She also hosted an award-winning podcast called *The Heumann Perspective*, featuring a variety of members from the disability community.

Judy graduated from Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY in 1969 and received her Master's in Public Health from the University of California at Berkeley in 1975. She was awarded several honorary doctorate degrees from universities across the United States including New York University, University of Pittsburgh, Middlebury College, and Smith College. She also received numerous awards including being the first recipient of the Henry B. Betts Award in recognition of efforts to significantly improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and the Max Starkloff Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Council on Independent Living. Judy Heumann passed away on March 4th, 2023 at the age of 75. News of her passing was reported on by major outlets in the United States and around the world. Judy Heumann passed away on March 4th, 2023 at the age of 75.

#### Source

<https://judithheumann.com/project/about/> (last accessed January 29, 2025)

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## Content Description

Collection documents Judith E. Heumann, leading disability rights activist through photographs, correspondence, notebooks, and printed materials.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

#### Subjects:

- Activism
- Civil rights
- Civil rights -- United States
- Disabilities
- People with disabilities
- People with disabilities -- Civil rights -- United States
- Women's rights

#### Types of Materials:

- Calendars
- Correspondence
- Ephemera
- Photograph albums
- Photographs

Publications

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## Container Listing

Box 1	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 2	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 3	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 4	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 5	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 6	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 7	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 8	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 9	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 10	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 11	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 12	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 13	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 14	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 15	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 16	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 17	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 18	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 19	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 20	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 21	Unprocessed Material, undated
Box 22	Unprocessed Material, undated

Frame 1	Unprocessed Material, undated
Frame 2	Unprocessed Material, undated
Frame 3	Unprocessed Material, undated
Envelope 1	Unprocessed Material, undated
Volume Album 1	Unprocessed Material, undated
Volume Album 2	Unprocessed Material, undated
Volume Album 3	Unprocessed Material, undated
Flat-file 1	Poster