JUDY HEUMANN – from the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)

March 6, 2023

In Memory of Judy Heumann (1947 – 2023)

There's a larger-than-life photo of Judy Heumann in the rotunda of the Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley, California, where DREDF's office is located. We have rolled or walked past her image thousands of times, but the photo never just blends into the background—like Judy, it always draws our attention.

The avalanche of tributes and shared memories of Judy since her passing on Saturday, March 4, 2023, are testament to the depth and breadth of her love for disabled people around the world—we were her family, and we felt that. She made sure we knew our value and our power, and that we knew that we could collectively build an inclusive world.

Judy was one of DREDF's board members, a title that does not do justice to what she meant to us and did for us. She worked at the Berkeley Center for Independent Living (CIL) when it started the Disability Law Resource Center (DLRC), which became DREDF in 1979. She was among the group of disabled people who understood disability as a social issue, how ableism shows up as discrimination, and the need for disability civil rights.

Judy's impact is vast. Each action she took built on the one before it. In her early life, she learned perseverance and patience from witnessing her mother's ongoing advocacy to have her go to school with her non-disabled peers. Judy studied from home and attended segregated schools for disabled students for fourteen years before she entered Sheepshead Bay High School in ninth grade. Those years of segregation sparked her thinking about disability and identity. She wrote in her memoir, [Being Heumann, an Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist](https://judithheumann.com/being-heumann/?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550), "We were learning that despite what society might be telling us, we all had something to contribute." She also recognized that she and her disabled friends were living and learning about what we now refer to as "disability culture."

From her summer counselor gig at Camp Jened, a summer camp for disabled youth and the subject of the award-winning documentary, [Crip Camp](https://cripcamp.com/?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550), her lawsuit against the City of New York for refusing to grant her a license to teach because she used a wheelchair, founding Disabled in Action, co-leading the 1977 Section 504 Sit-ins, heading the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (an appointment made by President Clinton), being appointed by President Obama as the first Special Advisor on International Disability Rights for the U.S. State Department, to hosting [The Heumann Perspective podcast](https://judithheumann.com/heumann-perspective/?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550), everything has been about her disabled siblings around the world.

Our sadness is matched with the knowledge that her legacy lives on in the law, and the many, many advocates she mentored.

Thank you, Judy. We love you. We will never forget you.

More tributes and articles about Judy

• [The Heumann Perspective](https://judithheumann.com/the-world-mourns-the-passing-of-judy-heumann-disability-rights-activist/?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550) | The World Mourns the Passing of Judy Heumann, Disability Rights Activist (March 4, 2023)

• [American Association of People with Disabilities](https://www.aapd.com/press-releases/the-world-mourns-the-passing-of-judy-heumann-disability-rights-activist/?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550) (AAPD) | Press Release: The World Mourns the Passing of Judy Heumann, Disability Rights Activist (March 4, 2023)

• [Wikipedia | Judith Heumann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Heumann?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550)

• [BBC | US Disability rights activist Judy Heumann dies aged 75 (March 5, 2023)](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64854839?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550)

• [Hollywood Reporter | Judy Heumann, Disability Rights Activist and 'Crip Camp' Star, Dies at 75 (March 5, 2023)](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/judy-heumann-dead-crip-camp-disability-rights-activist-1235341505/?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550)

• [Statement from President Joe Biden on the Passing of Judith Heumann](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/03/05/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-the-passing-of-judith-heumann/?mc_cid=41188a1f5e&mc_eid=4963627550)