



THE JOAN TRUMPAUER MULHOLLAND CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Joan Trumpauer Mulholland in recognition of her unique and substantial contributions to American life through her life-long commitment to social justice and equality for all citizens, exhibited both through direct action, at great personal risk, and through ongoing educational activities.



Born September 14, 1941, Joan, at the age of 10 had a very understanding of her expressed Christian faith and of America's founding documents. She believed that we should love our neighbors as ourselves and treat others the way we want to be treated and that "all men are created equal" in the eyes of her Creator as well as on the scales of Justice.

While visiting her grandmother in rural Georgia, her eyes were opened to the extreme inequality of the races when Joan came upon a dilapidated wooden shack that served as the schoolhouse for the community's Black children and compared it to the newly constructed block and brick school for the community's White children. She vowed then that if she ever had a chance, she would work to change this separate but unequal system.

In 1960, as a student of Duke University, Joan joined the picket lines and sit-ins in Durham, NC and was arrested. She also became a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). It was her first real opportunity to fulfill the promise she made to herself when she was that little ten year old girl.

In the summer of 1960, Joan became a part of the Howard University civil rights group called the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) that worked to integrate the lunch counters in northern Virginia and the local amusement park in Glen Echo, MD.

In 1961, she joined the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and took part in the Freedom Rides when the call came to send more Riders after members of her Howard Group were attacked in Anniston, AL and trapped in the church in Montgomery. Joan pulled together a small group and headed to Jackson, MS where they were arrested at the train station. Her subsequent mugshot would go on to be noted as one of the most famous in American history.

After serving two months in Maximum Security at the notorious Parchman Prison, Joan attended Tougaloo College as the first white student in the school's storied history and would be a member of the illustrious Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. April of 1963.





On May 28, 1963, Joan would participate in one of the most famous and violent sit-ins of the Civil Rights Movement, the Jackson Woolworth's Sit-in. The hours of violence she and her fellow activists faced galvanized the Movement in Jackson. Thousands turned out in protest. The sit-in was famously captured in a photo that would become the most used photo depicting sit-ins during the Movement (utilized in museums and textbooks throughout the world).

Joan Trumpauer Mulholland would go on to participate in over

50 SIT-INS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Joan played key roles in planning and participating in historic civil rights events like the March on Washington, Selma to Montgomery march, and Meredith March Against Fear, alongside renowned figures including John Lewis, Julian Bond, and Fannie Lou Hamer.

Despite facing attacks, shootings, imprisonment, and threats from the Ku Klux Klan, she persevered, even losing friends during Freedom Summer. After graduating from Tougaloo College in 1964, she raised five children as a single mother while teaching for three decades in Arlington, Virginia. Now, at 82, she remains active, volunteering at the local school library and advocating for civic engagement.



She is the recipient of the 2013 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated Annual Award of Honor, the 2013 Anti-Defamation League Annual Heroes Against Hate Award, the 2015 National Civil Rights Museum Freedom Award, the 2019 International Civil Rights Museum Trailblazer Award, and the 2020 Simeon Booker Award for Courage.

Her story has been captured in multiple films including the award-winning documentaries, "An Ordinary Hero" and PBS "Freedom Riders" and books ("Get Back to the Counter", "She Stood for Freedom", and "We Shall Not Be Moved")

In February of 2023, Joan was honored by the Virginia General Assembly and was received on the Floor of the Virginia State Senate. In May of 2023 she was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by her alma mater, Tougaloo College, for her service to humanity.