

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

JULIETTE HAMPTON MORGAN

librarian, activist, researcher, teacher

“A really brave man is the first to recognize courage in others. One of the surest signs of greatness (in nations and in individuals) is the ability to recognize that quality in others.”

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Background Information

Born February 21, 1914; Died July 16, 1957

Juliette Morgan was raised in a wealthy, White family in Montgomery Alabama. Morgan went to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and got degrees in English literature and political science. She also received her master’s degree in English and became an English teacher. After being a teacher, she was a librarian and a director of research at her local library.¹

Morgan’s Resistance

Morgan came from a normal privileged white family from the South without an understanding of racism. After college, Morgan was exposed to racism on public buses in Montgomery Alabama. Morgan saw drivers collect fare from Black people and drive away without letting them on. Morgan used the emergency bus brakes to protest the illegal activity and used her voice to write against racism. Morgan wrote against lynching legislation, poll taxes, and advocated for the rights of women. Morgan stood against the normalized rhetoric of Montgomery, which strongly supported segregation efforts. Her voice in the Montgomery Advertiser brought her hate mail and threats from family, friends, citizens, elected officials, and everyone in-between. She stood as a voice in support of the oppressed who could not voice their own opinion.²

After years of activism, Morgan continued to feel the pressures against segregationists in an extremely threatening manner. Morgan faced threats against her job from city leaders and officials over her words. Morgan eventually was consumed by persecution against her and took her life.

Achievements

Morgan stands as an exemplar for activists and White allies across the nation. The library Morgan originally worked at was renamed to commemorate her contribution to the community of Montgomery. She was also selected into the Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame in 2005.³ Morgan is an example of someone who committed to being anti-racist and worked within her spaces to deter racism and discrimination in her community.

¹ Stanton, M. (n.d.). Juliette Hampton Morgan. Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1581>

² Brown, M. (2018, February 21). Montgomery Librarian Juliette Morgan Remembered for Civil Rights Stand. Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <https://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/news/2018/02/21/montgomery-librarian-juliette-morgan-remembered-civil-rights-stand/355705002/>.

³ Juliette Hampton Morgan: A White Woman Who Understood. (n.d.). Retrieved October 29, 2019, from <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/juliette-hampton-morgan-a-white-woman-who-understood>.

Essential Questions

1. Juliette participated in resistance in her own unique way. Why do all forms of resistance matter? Why is it important that Morgan did not remain neutral to what she saw?

2. Morgan used her power and positions in society to be a voice of resistance. What power or positions do you have that can present your voice as a voice of resistance? How can we be activists in our spaces?

3. What brought Juliette to stop participating in discrimination as a bystander and choose to be a voice against discrimination? How can we relate this to what we see in our own lives? Do you have power?

4. ***“A really brave man is the first to recognize courage in others. One of the surest signs of greatness (in nations and in individuals) is the ability to recognize that quality in others”***
 - a. How did Morgan recognize the courage in others and be a brave individual just as she references here? How can you work to recognize others’ courage in your life?