

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Anna Pauline “Pauli” Murray

writer, poet, activist

“Confrontation by typewriter!”

Page | 1



Background

Born: November 20, 1910; Died: July 1, 1985

Pauli Murray was born in Baltimore, Maryland. She grew up in North Carolina with her grandparents after her parents passed away. She wanted a good education for herself. However, Murray could not attend all colleges, because some schools did not accept students who were Black and female. That didn't stop her from getting an education. In 1944, Murray graduated first in her class at Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C. After this, she continued her education at the University of California at Berkeley in 1945 and Yale Law School in 1965.

Murray's Resistance

Pauli Murray was a lawyer and a priest at different times in her life. However, she was a writer throughout her whole life, and she always fought against injustice. She wrote about many different subjects, but is best known for her poetry. She wrote about what it was like to be Black and a woman during a time when both groups were fighting for more rights. Her writing has the power to make readers think deeply about the problems in the world.

Murray's poems were made to teach people lessons about doing the right thing. She even wrote a book called *States' Laws on Race and Color*, which was used in the Supreme Court decision to end racial segregation in schools. Outside of writing, she fought to end segregation on public bussing. She was arrested once for refusing to sit in the back of the bus in March of 1940. She was also friends with male leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.. She also believed that more *women* should be leaders in the movement.

Achievements

Murray's writing was a form of resistance. Her actions received some attention at the time. In 1947, Murray was named “Woman of the Year” by Mademoiselle Magazine. She also became the first Black woman to become an Episcopal priest in 1977. Today, we remember her as an important person in the Civil Rights Movement, who wrote poetry to influence social change.

Essential Questions

1. What were 1-2 ways that Murray fought for social change?
2. Have you ever read something that made you think differently about the world? What did you read and how did it change your thinking?
3. **“Confrontation by typewriter!”**
 - a. Murray’s tool of resistance was the typewriter. What skill do you have to get your voice heard?

i Pauli Murray Project: Biography. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://paulimurrayproject.org/pauli-murray/biography/>

ii Peppard, C. (2010). Poetry, Ethics, and the Legacy of Pauli Murray. *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 30(1), 21-43. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23562860>