

March 6, 2023

A letter from WID Board Chair, Susan Mazrui:

Some people know Judy Heumann from the movie *Crip Camp* that chronicles her early days as an organizer and Disability Rights activist. Others, like my daughter, were impressed by the fact her early story was featured in an American Girl book series. Some learned about her incredible life by through her many podcasts and publications, or through her books “*Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*” and “*Rolling Warrior: The Incredible, Sometimes Awkward, True Story of a Rebel Girl on Wheels Who Helped Spark a Revolution*”.

Most people, however, may not be aware of how this one individual sparked a movement that has changed their everyday lives. Most may not know about how she continued to fan the flame of disability rights and inclusion over a lifetime. But whether you are a person who wants to live in your own home as you age, or wants to be able to keep your job after an injury, or use a ramp with your rolling suitcase, you owe a debt of gratitude to Judy Heumann. Without her strength, persistence, and a lifetime of hard work, the world would be a much less accessible and inclusive place.

I was fortunate to know Judy, personally, and through her role as one of the founders of the World Institute on Disability, a disability-led organization now celebrating its 40th

Anniversary. A few very lucky individuals, like former WID board member, Neil Jacobson, have had the privilege of being lifelong friends. As the current Chair of WID's board, I have the privilege to work with WID's board and staff and so many in the disability community to continue the work what she started. Thanks to Judy, and the many activists she mentored, we have laws around the world that state that every disabled person has the right to be alive, educated, employed, included and respected. For those of us left, it is our responsibility to ensure that these laws are enforced and that equity and justice for those with disabilities becomes a reality everywhere.

I don't know what happens when we die but I hope Judy is now surrounded by the many of our service dogs who have also passed — and is finally getting the chance to spoil them rotten. For us, left saddened by her passing - her laughter, her nudging for ever higher standards and wry wit, will be missed. In her memory, we will remain unrepentant Disability Rights activists.

Sincerely,

Susan Mazrui

Board Chair, World Institute on Disability