

# Pauli Murray

November 20, 1910 – July 1, 1985

## Persistence



“True community is based upon equality, mutuality, and reciprocity”

Reverend Doctor Pauli Murray

**R**everend Doctor Pauli Murray was the first African American Doctor of the Science of Law (JSD) from Yale Law School, the first African American to become an Episcopal Priest, and the founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Murray strategically won the rights for desegregation in public schools, workplace rights for women, and LGBTQ+ in addition to being an author, poet, labor organizer, and member of the multi-racial LGBTQ+ community – all to dismantle the structure that supports racism and social inequalities. On the National Register of Historic Places, *The Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice* stands and operates in Murray's honor in Durham, North Carolina, at their childhood home built by Murray's grandparents.

Anne Pauline Murray was born on November 20, 1910, the fourth of six children to Agnes and William Murray. When Murray was three, her mother suddenly died of a cerebral hemorrhage. Murray's father was left to raise six children alone. Raising six children was more than he could handle on his own. He sent Murray to live with her mom's sister and grandparents in Durham, North Carolina. Three years later, William was committed to the *Crownsville State Hospital for the Negro Insane*. In 1922, William was beaten and killed by a white guard in the basement of the hospital. These horrible events were remembered by Murray as the most significant events of their childhood.

Embracing the **super skill of persistence**, Murray was an eager and

motivated student, a forward on the basketball team, and graduated high school at the age of 15. Murray's path forward was not simple. After denied acceptance at Harvard Law School, Murray graduated Howard Law School at the top of her class. Murray received her master's degree from University of California, Berkeley. She was able to win a seat on the New York Senate in 1948 and in 1955, published a compilation of all laws affecting all African Americans, *State Laws on Race and Color*. During the McCarthy-ism era, Murray was rejected from a State Senate position because her references, Eleanor Roosevelt, Thurgood Marshall and A. Phillip Randolph, were considered too radical. In 1961, John F. Kennedy appointed Murray to the *Commission on the Status of Women* on civic and political rights. In 1964, Murray co-authored the *Jane Crow Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII*.

Murray graduated from Yale Law School in 1965, and among other activities was a founding member of NOW in 1966. Murray entered seminary at the age of 62 in 1973 and in 1977, became the first African American Priest in the Episcopal church, serving communion for the first time at Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, NC, where Murray's enslaved grandmother had been baptized. Murray retired as required by the church at the age of 72. On July 1, 1985, Pauli Murray died in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, leaving a legacy of love, peace, change and accomplishment through persistence.

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