

## *Barbara Jordan*

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Barbara Jordan, orator, legislator and educator, has left a unique stamp on our times. An uncommon woman from common beginnings, her extraordinary journey from the segregated Houston neighborhood of her childhood to legendary public figure is strewn with "firsts." Her life exemplifies the ideals she espouses and challenges Americans, especially women, to join the battle and stay the course in the struggle for civil rights.

Barbara Jordan's commitment to public service began in 1966, when she was the first African-American woman elected to the Texas Senate. In 1972, she became the first African-American woman from the Deep South to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (18th District of Texas), where she served three terms (1972-78). Congresswoman Jordan was a member of both the Judiciary and Government Operations Committees. She was instrumental in the passage of amendments that expanded coverage of the Voting Rights Act.

As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, she made her first dramatic impression on the American public on national television with a concise and lucid argument for the impeachment of then President Richard M. Nixon. "My faith in the Constitution is whole," she said.

"It is complete. It is total. I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction of the Constitution." She did not then and she has not since.

In 1976, she was the first African-American to keynote the Democratic National Convention. Breaking traditions of past convention speeches, she held the audience and the American people rapt as she spoke with what has since been referred to as "the voice of God." Nearly twenty years later, in 1992, she again inspired the party and the public with her address at the Democratic National Convention.

In 1979, she joined the faculty of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. She continues to share her experience and expertise with students in one of the most popular courses on campus, a graduate seminar on ethics. "It is ethical sensitivity which I try to impart to my students," says Jordan. "Any individual who has a proper ethical sense will know instantly that biases based on gender and race are unethical. What we ought to be about is including all people...in the growth, development and worklife of the nation."

In addition to teaching, Jordan is ethics advisor to Texas Governor Ann Richards and Chair of President Bill Clinton's Immigration Reform Committee.

Jordan holds 30 honorary degrees and has received countless awards, including the Nelson Mandela Award for Health and Human Rights. The National Women's Hall of Fame lists her among the ten most influential women of the 20th Century.

Barbara Jordan earned her B. A. from Texas Southern University (1956) and her LL.B. from Boston University (1959).

