



Barbara Jordan

Barbara Jordan was born in Houston, Texas's Fifth Ward. Jordan was Edward Patton's great-granddaughter through her mother, one of the last African American members of the Texas House of Representatives before the disenfranchisement of Black Texans under Jim Crow. She graduated with honors from Phillis Wheatley High School in 1952.



Because of segregationist laws of the time, she could not attend The University of Texas at Austin and instead chose Texas Southern University, a historically black institution, majoring in political science and history. Jordan was a national champion debater, defeating opponents from Yale and Brown and tying Harvard University. Jordan graduated *magna cum laude* in 1956. She then attended Boston University School of Law, graduating in 1959.

After an unsuccessful campaign for a statehouse seat, Jordan won a seat in the Texas Senate in 1966, becoming the first African-American state senator in Texas since 1883 and the first black woman to serve. She was re-elected to a full term in the Texas Senate in 1968 and served until 1972. She was the first African-American female to serve as president *pro tempore* of the state senate. She also served one day as acting governor of Texas on June 10, 1972, making Jordan the first African-American woman to serve as governor of a state.

In 1972, she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, the first woman elected in her own right to represent Texas in the House. In 1976, Jordan became the first African-American woman to deliver a keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. Despite not being a candidate, Jordan still received one delegate vote for president at the Convention. While in Congress, Jordan supported the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977. She supported the renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the expansion of that act. Jordan was also a supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment; during her tenure as a Congresswoman, she sponsored or cosponsored over 300 bills or resolutions, many of which are still in effect today as law. Jordan died at 59 due to complications from pneumonia on January 17, 1996; she was interred in Texas State Cemetery. She was the first African American to receive this honor.

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