



TITLE

PATSY MINK: MORE THAN JUST THE FIRST WOMAN OF COLOR IN CONGRESS



GRADE LEVEL: MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

SUBJECT: History, Social Studies

THEME: Bias and Stereotype, Civil Rights, Identity and Culture, and Immigration

STANDARDS: UCLA Public History Initiative : *Era 9 Postwar United States* (1945 to early 1970s); Standard 4: The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties. Educating for American Democracy: Theme 5: Institutional & Social Transformation - A Series of Refoundings? How do laws and social structures change?

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Identify Patsy Mink of Hawaii as the first woman of color to be elected to the U.S. Congress.
- Recount important aspects of her career prior to being elected to the House of Representatives
- Explain her role as a legislative leader in Congress, especially in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, advancing education programs, and working environmental issues.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why, even with sterling qualifications, did women of color find it so difficult to enter the political ranks and achieve elective office?
- How did Title IX transform the landscape of education for women?

CLASSROOM TIME:

2 Periods



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LAST UPDATE: JAN, 10TH, 2024



INTRODUCTION:

Patsy Mink is often remembered as the first woman of color to serve in the U.S. Congress (1965) - a factoid, but nothing more. However, she had a distinguished background before her election to Congress and had many achievements as a member of the House of Representatives, most notable of which is her role in the passage of Title IX of the Education Acts of 1972, for which she acquired the nickname “Godmother of Title IX.” The law’s most basic provisions prohibit sexual misconduct and discrimination in any education program that receives federal monies. While it applies equally to women and men, in practical terms, the law’s most immediate impact in schools was to make it possible for increased participation by females in organized sports.

1. Icebreaker:

Open the class with the photo below of a woman (Patsy Mink) amidst 20 men. (Turn it into a slide, if preferred) and ask the class: “Who is this woman?” Then, proceed to do a photo analysis using a document analysis process such as the one from [DocsTeach: Document Analysis with Students](#). If any student is able to identify her, great! Most likely, none will know and the teacher can provide her name. Using the photo for further discussion, have students observe and comment on Patsy Mink being in this group? Why no other women? What kind of group photo is this? (Newly elected members of Congress.) When was it taken? (1965) Are there only white men in this group? (No, one man in the back row is African American, John Conyers, of Michigan.)



ASSIGNMENT:

2. Following the photo discussion, pose the following question: “Who knows what Title IX is?”

That should prompt several answers that match the description in the introduction above. Have students discuss ways that they think their own lives have been affected by Title IX such as their own involvement and participation in school activities and what they see in college, and by extension, professional sports. Also, see if students can raise other issues related to Title IX such as sexual harassment or sexual violence as part of the law’s impact. Use the article from Michelle Voepel (see Resources below) to find specific examples related to Title IX, if necessary.)





REFLECTION:

Have students read the [New York Times Obituary on Patsy Mink, Patsy Mink, Veteran Hawaii Congresswoman, Dies at 74 - The New York Times](#), and complete the worksheet with others in small groups. Have them assess her significance with the last question on the worksheet which they will share with the whole class following the small group's work.

(Note: it may be helpful to review with students the process of statehood for Hawaii and its status until 1960 as a territory. This may come up in the worksheet with the obituary saying Patsy Mink was elected to Territorial Legislature in 1958.)

RESOURCES

U.S. House of Representatives site for capturing the heritage and history of "The People's House."
[Patsy Mink History.gov](#)

Patsy Mink Foundation
<https://www.patsyminkfoundation.org/more-about-patsy-mink>

Michelle Voepel, ESPN. Patsy Mink
[ESPN.com: NCW - Mink legacy: Stand up, speak out and be counted](#)

Patsy Mink Paper, Library of Congress.
[Patsy T. Mink Papers \(Manuscript Reading Room, Library of Congress\)](#)

Elissa Goodman, New York Times, Obituary, 30 September 2002.
[Patsy Mink, Veteran Hawaii Congresswoman, Dies at 74 - The New York Times](#)



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