

Bio | Judith D. Hampton, President

Like her brother, Blackside founder Henry Hampton, Judith "Judi" Hampton has a profound personal and professional connection with the civil rights movement.

Judi grew up in racially divided St. Louis, and when Brown vs. Board of Education became law, she went from an all-black school to an all-white school. But Judi was taught by her parents to work through adversity-and she managed to be elected president of her junior class. Unfortunately, the school booked the reception in her honor at a segregated restaurant. While her classmates were invited in, Judi was turned away at the door. She managed to shepherd her group of students to an integrated lunch counter-but she never forgot the injustice.

In the 1960's, while Judi Hampton was at Columbia University in New York City, she left the comfortable college life to go to Canton, Mississippi to set up a Freedom School and work on a CORE drive for black voter registration. Living with other volunteers in a Freedom House (pictured in Eyes on the Prize), she worked alongside key civil rights figures. Like other freedom workers, Judi faced hostility and threats from segregationists-yet she found the experience empowering.

Judi Hampton went on to become a high-level public relations professional. She became a Senior Public Affairs officer with the Mobil Corporation, where she helped to develop the Mobil Mentor in Engineering program to encourage minorities to enter the engineering professions-one of the early initiatives of its kind. In 1987 she founded her own firm, Judi Hampton Public Relations, specializing in corporate and multicultural publicity. Her clients included Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, McDonald's GospelFest, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, Literacy Volunteers, and the Human Resources Administration.

In the late 1990's Judi turned her focus to teaching, training, and coaching. She was named a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and traveled to universities nationwide to lecture on topics related to diversity and leadership, often drawing on her experiences in the civil rights movement. She also leads career development seminars on topics such as managing multiple priorities, conflict resolution, diversity in the workplace, and leadership skills.

Judi and Henry Hampton were always close, and she provided much support and encouragement to him as he worked to raise funds to produce Eyes on the Prize and his other films. Later, she was often there by his side when he received awards for his achievements.

After Henry passed away in 1998, Judi Hampton became president of Blackside. Her first mission was to see two films that Henry had started through to completion: Make Me a World and This Far By Faith. Judi was also determined to bring Eyes on the Prize to new audiences and has worked relentlessly to achieve this goal since 1999. With the rebroadcast of the series on PBS, she hopes that the events of the civil rights movement she lived as a young person will ignite a national dialogue and motivate a new generation to defend equality.