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Stacey Park Milbern Honored on New US Quarter

August 10, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



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The U.S. Mint will begin circulating a new quarter on Monday featuring Stacey Park Milbern, a Korean American disability rights activist. Milbern, who passed away in 2020, became the first Korean American to appear on U.S. currency, marking a significant recognition of her advocacy work.

This quarter is the 19th design in the American Women's Quarters Program, which started in 2022. Each year, the program issues five coins celebrating the achievements of pioneering American women. The front side of the coin continues to feature George Washington, while the reverse depicts Milbern in a motorized wheelchair, wearing glasses and a bob haircut, captured as she delivers a speech.

Born in 1987 to Joel and Jean Milbern, Stacey was the eldest of three children. Her father was a U.S. serviceman stationed in Korea when she was born. Diagnosed at birth with a degenerative muscle disease, she was encouraged by her parents to see herself as no different from other children. However, after an injury in fourth grade, Stacey began to understand the challenges posed by her physical condition.

Milbern became a prominent voice for disability rights by sharing her experiences and calling attention to social barriers faced by people with disabilities. Her early writing gained traction, leading to wider recognition of her advocacy.

At 20 years old, Milbern successfully influenced North Carolina lawmakers to include disability history in the public high school curriculum. She graduated from Methodist University and Mills College before relocating to California, where she broadened her activism to include rights for people of color and the LGBTQ community.

In 2014, the Obama administration appointed Milbern to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, recognizing her leadership in the field.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, while battling kidney cancer, Milbern organized the distribution of masks and essential supplies to vulnerable groups. Sadly, her health declined, and she died on May 19, 2020, her 33rd birthday.

The U.S. Mint plans to produce at least 300 million Milbern quarters, with the possibility of reaching 700 million. Given the longevity of quarters minted decades ago, her image will likely remain in circulation for many years.

Other women honoured this year in the American Women's Quarters Program include journalist and civil rights activist Ida Wells, Girl Scouts founder Juliette Gordon Low, astronomer Vera Rubin, and tennis player Althea Gibson.

This new quarter celebrates Stacey Park Milbern's legacy and the ongoing efforts to advance disability rights in the United States.

