

## First Korean American woman on U.S. coin; disability rights activist Stacey Park Milbern

Made significant contributions to expanding policies and laws  
'A fierce and compassionate activist'



Stacey Park Milbern is pictured on the left, while on the right is the Stacey Park Milbern commemorative 25-cent coin, which the United States Mint will begin distributing Aug. 11.

A 25-cent coin (quarter) featuring a Korean American female disability rights activist will enter circulation in the United States on Aug. 11. The person being honored is Stacey Park Milbern (1987-2020). This marks the first time a Korean American figure has appeared on U.S. currency.

According to the U.S. Mint on Aug. 10, the coin commemorating Milbern's life and legacy was minted through the American Women Quarters Program. The U.S. Treasury Department and others have been running a campaign since 2022 through this year that features 20 women on the reverse side of quarters, honoring women who contributed to the development of American society in various fields, such as suffrage, civil rights, abolition of slavery, science and the arts. Milbern became the 19th person to be honored through this program.

As a person with a disability, Milbern was a human rights activist who laid the groundwork for the disability rights movement. She was born in Seoul as the eldest of three siblings to a U.S. serviceman father (Joel Milbern) stationed in Korea and a Korean mother (Jean Milbern). She later moved to the United States and grew up in North Carolina. Some Korean American media outlets in the U.S. report her Korean name as Park Ji-hye.

She suffered from muscular dystrophy, a congenital degenerative muscle disease. Milbern began disability rights activism while interacting with other disabled individuals in her community and, by age 16, was already making a name for herself serving on several disability-related committees in North Carolina. At age 20 in 2007, she played a decisive role in the enactment and passage of North Carolina state legislation designating October as Disability History and Awareness Month and mandating the teaching of disability history in all schools.

After graduating from college, she moved in 2011 to the California Bay Area, a historic hub of the disability rights movement. There, she founded the Disability Justice Culture Club, giving concrete form to the Disability Justice movement, whose concepts she had developed alongside fellow activists during her teenage years. Through this movement, Milbern sought to advance the rights and interests of marginalized groups within the disability community, including people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals and the homeless.

In 2014, Milbern was appointed to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities under former President Barack Obama's administration, where she served as a policy adviser. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, she organized a team to distribute masks, medicines and hygiene supplies to people with disabilities, low-income individuals and the homeless. Despite undergoing treatment for kidney cancer, she remained passionately active until her death on May 19, 2020, due to surgical complications. It was the day of her 33rd birthday.

The Mint stated: "Milbern was a leader, visionary, and problem-solver. She was a fierce yet compassionate advocate for justice for people with disabilities, shining with youth, purpose, and dedication." 

