

JONES, AUDREY EVELYN (1929-2014), teacher and campaigner for women's rights

Name: Audrey Evelyn Jones

Date of birth: 1929

Date of death: 2014

Spouse: Hugh Gabriel Jones

Child: Robert Jones

Parent: Evelyn Mary Reed (née Tofield)

Parent: John Henry Reed

Gender: Female

Occupation: teacher and campaigner for women's rights

Area of activity: Education; Politics, Government and Political Movements

Author: Jean Silvan Evans

Audrey Jones was born on 15 October 1929 in Bushey, Hertfordshire, the eldest of three children of John Henry Reed (1901-1971), a police officer, and Evelyn Mary Reed, (née Tofield, 1898-1938), a newsagent. She had a brother Bernard (born 1936) and a sister Marion (born 1938). After her mother's early death, the family moved to Essex. Audrey won a place in Chelmsford County High School for Girls, going on to graduate from Southampton University College (1950) and complete a PGCE at Manchester University. In 1951 she married Hugh Gabriel Jones (1923-2011); their only son was Robert (born 1951). The family moved to Hugh's native Wales when he took over transport logistics for international chemical company Dow Corning.

Audrey first made her mark as an inspirational teacher. Settled in the Vale of Glamorgan, in 1960 she joined what became St Cyres Comprehensive School in Penarth, where she remained for 30 years, gaining a reputation as an uncompromising advocate of girls' education and rising to Deputy Head, a distinction gained by few women in 1980s comprehensives. Committed to challenging sexism in education, she encouraged girls to study science and maths and was insistent boys had a positive attitude to girls. In the National Union of Teachers she worked to further girls' education and research on sex discrimination in schools. When she died, tributes included one from former student Paralympic athlete Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, who said she was 'an amazing teacher' and a 'massive influence' on her life.

Audrey helped start Wales Women's Rights Committee (WWRC), which in 1975 petitioned the European Parliament on equal treatment for men and women workers and in 1984 evolved into Wales Assembly of Women (WAW). WAW sent delegates to every major UN World Conference for Women and in 2000 became accredited to the UN Economic and Social Council, when Audrey hand-delivered the application in New York. WAW became her main campaign base.

After retirement in 1990, she took more fully to the world stage. She represented WAW in preparations for the significant 1995 UN World Conference for Women in Beijing, attending meetings in European cities and drafting reports. Beijing proved a watershed in mainstreaming gender equality, establishing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. She regularly attended annual New York sessions to review progress on Beijing until a couple of years before her death, including the major conferences Beijing+5 (2000) and Beijing+10 (2005).

Nearer home, she championed women's rights through the Vale of Glamorgan Labour Party, serving on the general committee and the executive. Determined its Women's Forum should survive when all-women meetings were being questioned in Labour Party circles, she argued women needed as many platforms as possible to promote equality, and she always knew who was in the forefront of promoting women's interests when identifying speakers for the Forum's annual celebration lunch for International Women's Day.

Interested in art, she built up a discerning collection of work by contemporary artists working in Wales. She linked WAW with the Women's Arts Association, and, although not an artist, became Chair for several years. She was a founder member of Women's Archive of Wales, the body committed to raising the profile of women in Welsh history; and a member of the Fawcett Society, influential in its education group. A music lover, she also found time to be an avid concert-goer.

Audrey was one of 60 leading UK feminists chosen for interview for the British Library archive *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project* that documented memories of activists at the forefront of the fight for political and social equality in the 1970s/80s. The British Library website holds a summary of her six-hour-plus audio interview and a video clip of Audrey in typically animated fashion commenting on the sexism evident in exam questions of the time.

As devolution loomed in Wales, Audrey was an ardent campaigner when WAW joined other women's groups in a powerful movement to persuade the new National Assembly to commit to equal opportunity and took to the streets with WAW members in the drive to get Labour to adopt constituency twinning to ensure gender equality in Labour representation in the first Assembly. Audrey always aimed to involve young women in WAW and keep up with research on women's rights. In 2016, WAW brought these two aims together when it established the Audrey Jones Memorial Awards for Research by Women in her honour.

Audrey was taken ill when returning from a London meeting preparing for an international conference of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and died from a heart complaint on 16 August 2014 aged 84. After a humanist funeral service, she was buried in the Cardiff Natural Burial Meadow at St Nicholas.

Author

Jean Silvan Evans

Sources

Diane Setch: Responsible for WAW Communications and founder of the Women's Arts Association

Robert Jones: interview with son

Gwyneth Price: former chair of Vale of Glamorgan Labour Party Women's Forum

Wales Assembly of Women website

The Guardian 'Audrey Jones obituary' 8.10.14

British Library website: *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project* (2010-2013), led by the British Library. Shelfmark: C1420/30. [Audrey Jones interview: September 2011, detailed summary](#)

Video clip 'Audrey Jones discusses sexist exam questions' on British Library website

United Nations websites for the [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#) (CEDAW)

Additional Links

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