



Freedom on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky (Kentucky Remembered)

Catherine Fosl, Tracy K'Meyer Ph.D.

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Memories fade, witnesses pass away, and the stories of how social change took place are often lost. Many of those stories, however, have been preserved thanks to the dozens of civil rights activists across Kentucky who shared their memories in the wide-ranging oral history project from which this volume arose. Through their collective memories and the efforts of a new generation of historians, the stories behind the marches, vigils, court cases, and other struggles to overcome racial discrimination are finally being brought to light. In *Freedom on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky*, Catherine Fosl and Tracy E. K'Meyer gather the voices of more than one hundred courageous crusaders for civil rights, many of whom have never before spoken publicly about their experiences. These activists hail from all over Kentucky, offering a wide representation of the state's geography and culture while explaining the civil rights movement in their respective communities and in their own words. Grounded in oral history, this book offers new insights into the diverse experiences and ground-level perspectives of the activists. This approach often highlights the contradictions between the experiences of individual activists and commonly held beliefs about the larger movement. Interspersed among the chapters are in-depth profiles of activists such as Kentucky general assemblyman Jesse Crenshaw and Helen Fisher Frye, past president of the Danville NAACP. These activists describe the many challenges that Kentuckians faced during the civil rights movement, such as inequality in public accommodations, education, housing, and politics. By placing the narratives in the social context of state, regional, and national trends, Fosl and K'Meyer demonstrate how contemporary race relations in Kentucky are marked by many of the same barriers that African Americans faced before and during the civil rights movement. From city streets to mountain communities, in areas with black populations large and small, Kentucky's civil rights movement was much more than a series of mass demonstrations, campaigns, and elite-level policy decisions. It was also the sum of countless individual struggles, including the mother who sent her child to an all-white school, the veteran who refused to give up when denied a job, and the volunteer election worker who decided to run for office herself. In vivid detail, *Freedom on the Border* brings this mosaic of experiences to life and presents a new, compelling picture of a vital and little-understood era in the history of Kentucky and the nation.

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