

FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN, ESQUIRE:  
THE LEGACY OF THE FIRST FEMALE UNITED STATES  
COMMISSIONER OF CIVIL RIGHTS  
AND PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR COMMISSIONER

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ABSTRACT

*Fondly called Frankie 'Freedom,' Frankie Freeman was a life-long champion of civil rights. Among her many achievements, Freeman was the first woman appointed to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. In this Article Judge Colbert-Botchway discusses Commissioner Freeman and illustrates how her work was instrumental in fulfilling the promise of equal justice for all. Commissioner Freeman served as lead counsel in several important civil rights cases and was named to the United States Commission on Civil Rights in 1964. She was the first woman and the first person of color to be appointed to the Commission. Although others placed limits on her aspirations, Commissioner Freeman distinguished herself in the legal profession through her fearless service to others and dedicated her life to eliminating the negative consequences of racial inequality, advancing the civil rights movement, and breaking down barriers to equal justice.*

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\* Associate Circuit Judge, 22nd Judicial Circuit, St. Louis, Missouri. Much of the material in this Article is extracted from oral interviews of Commissioner Freeman conducted by the author on May 18, 2014; July 20, 2014; August 10, 2014; and October 12, 2014, for the American Bar Association's (ABA) Trailblazer in the Law Oral History Project (notes on file with the author).

## INTRODUCTION

On Saturday, January 20, 2018, legendary Civil Rights Attorney Frankie Muse Freeman was laid to rest at Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>1</sup> Born on November 24, 1916, she lived 101 years and was a life-long champion for civil rights.<sup>2</sup> Among her many achievements, Commissioner Freeman was the first woman appointed to the United States Commission on Civil Rights.<sup>3</sup>

It seems befitting that Commissioner Freeman was buried at Calvary near freed slave Dred Scott. Scott was born in Virginia and brought to St. Louis by his owner Peter Blow in 1830.<sup>4</sup> After being sold to Dr. John Emerson in 1832, he traveled to several free territories before returning to St. Louis City and filing suit for his freedom on April 6, 1846, in Missouri's 22nd Judicial Circuit.<sup>5</sup> Dred Scott won his freedom in 1850 based on Missouri's freedom suit precedent, "Once Free Always Free," which held that "once the bonds of slavery were broken they did not reattach."<sup>6</sup> However, Dred Scott's successful ruling was appealed.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Christine Byers, *Funeral Arrangements Set for Iconic St. Louis Civil Rights Leader Frankie Freeman*, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH (Jan. 15, 2018), [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/funeral-arrangements-set-for-iconic-st-louis-civil-rights-leader-frankie-freeman/article\\_96f5d42d-28df-5153-a7d0-4f8005ad556c.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/funeral-arrangements-set-for-iconic-st-louis-civil-rights-leader-frankie-freeman/article_96f5d42d-28df-5153-a7d0-4f8005ad556c.html) [<https://perma.cc/JCK5-P8PH>].

2. *Id.*; Laurie Skrivan, *Frankie Muse Freeman, Iconic St. Louis Civil Rights Activist, Dies at 101*, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH (Jan. 1, 2018), [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/obituaries/frankie-muse-freeman-iconic-st-louis-civil-rights-activist-dies/article\\_4ad22dfb-af7f-5b4b-b2bd-63f3d455eece.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/obituaries/frankie-muse-freeman-iconic-st-louis-civil-rights-activist-dies/article_4ad22dfb-af7f-5b4b-b2bd-63f3d455eece.html) [<https://perma.cc/P3NS-W2CG>].

3. Press Release, U.S. Comm'n on C.R., *Statement on the Passing of Frankie Muse Freeman* (Jan. 19, 2018), <https://www.usccr.gov/press/2018/01-19-PR-Freeman.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/VZN9-YBJ3>].

4. *Dred Scott Case*, HISTORY (Aug. 26, 2020), <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/dred-scott-case> [<https://perma.cc/7YLJ-QKSM>].

5. Scott's case was combined with his wife Harriett's pending case and renamed *Dred Scott v. Irene Emerson*. *Id.*; *Missouri's Dred Scott Case, 1846-1857*, MO. ST. ARCHIVES, <https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/africanamerican/scott/scott.asp> [<https://perma.cc/F3MF-6KLM>].

6. *Missouri's Dred Scott Case, 1846-1857*, *supra* note 5. See also Kelly Marie Kennington, *Law, Geography, and Mobility: Suing for Freedom in Antebellum St. Louis*, 80 J.S. HIST. 575, 594 (2014) (describing travel through a free territory as "the most popular argument for freedom in St. Louis's antebellum freedom suits"). See also David Thomas Konig, *The Persistence of Caste: Race, Rights, and the Legal Struggle to Expand the Boundaries of Freedom in St. Louis*, 67 WASH. U.J.L. & POL'Y 147 (2022) (also published in this volume).

7. *Scott v. Emerson*, 15 Mo. 576 (1852).

This case made its way to the Supreme Court, where it was heard after Dred Scott was sold to John Sandford. In *Scott v. Sandford*, the United States Supreme Court held that Blacks could not bring suit in federal court because they/we were not citizens, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional, and Congress did not have the authority to prohibit slavery in the territories.<sup>8</sup> Only after the Civil War; the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863;<sup>9</sup> and passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865,<sup>10</sup> the Civil Rights Act of 1866,<sup>11</sup> and the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1868,<sup>12</sup> did the holding in *Scott v. Sandford* get fully overturned.

Both Dred Scott and attorney Frankie Muse Freeman litigated cases in St. Louis City's 22nd Judicial Circuit that forever changed America. Although Dred Scott died in St. Louis in 1858,<sup>13</sup> Frankie Muse Freeman continued his fight for freedom and equality under the law almost a century later. She arrived to St. Louis in 1948<sup>14</sup> and picked up Dred Scott's torch, stating there was "more work to do."<sup>15</sup> Frankie Freeman's work on the United States Commission on Civil Rights was instrumental in fulfilling the promise of equal justice for all.

I am proud to serve as an Associate Circuit Judge in that same 22nd Judicial Circuit in St. Louis, Missouri, where access to justice is a priority. And I am proud to have had the opportunity to conduct an oral history for the American Bar Association's (ABA) Trailblazer in the Law Project on

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8. *Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1857).

9. Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation at Gettysburg, VA (Jan. 1, 1863) (transcript available in National Archives – General Records of the United States Government – Presidential Proclamations, 1791-1991 – Record Group 11).

10. U.S. CONST. amend. XIII.

11. Civil Rights Act of 1866, ch. 31, 14 Stat. 27.

12. U.S. CONST. amend. XIV.

13. *Dred Scott Case*, *supra* note 4.

14. Interview II with Frankie Muse Freeman in St. Louis, Mo., at 15 (July 20, 2014), [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women\\_trailblazers/frankie-muse-freeman-int-2-july-20-2014.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/frankie-muse-freeman-int-2-july-20-2014.pdf) [hereinafter Interview II]; *see also* FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN & CANDACE O'CONNOR, A SONG OF FAITH AND HOPE: THE LIFE OF FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN (2003).

15. Interview I with Frankie Muse Freeman in St. Louis, Mo., at 3 (Mar. 18, 2014), [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women\\_trailblazers/frankie-muse-freeman-int-1-may-18-2014.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/frankie-muse-freeman-int-1-may-18-2014.pdf) [hereinafter Interview I]. This phrase was a common call to action Commissioner Freeman would use during our conversations together. I explicitly remember her using it after our third interview on August 10, 2014—the day after Michael Brown was killed by police in Ferguson, Mo.

Pioneering Woman Frankie Muse Freeman.<sup>16</sup> Fondly called Frankie ‘Freedom,’ Commissioner Freeman was one of the greatest women of our time. Although others placed limits on her aspirations, she prevailed as a champion of civil rights, and many others have benefited greatly from her perseverance. She distinguished herself in the legal profession through her fearless service to others and dedicated her life to eliminating the negative consequences of racial inequality, advancing the civil rights movement, and breaking down barriers to equal justice.

### I. FRANKIE MUSE “FREEDOM” FREEMAN’S LIFE AND WORK

In our interview, Commissioner Freeman shared warm memories of her strong grandfather, a tobacco farmer named Frankie, who was born into slavery in Danville, Virginia and freed as a teenager.<sup>17</sup> Commissioner Freeman’s given name was Marie Frankie Muse,<sup>18</sup> named after her grandfather.<sup>19</sup> She was the first born child of Maude Beatrice Smith Muse and William Brown Muse,<sup>20</sup> who were both college educated.<sup>21</sup> She grew up under the veil of segregation, Jim Crow laws, and legal discrimination.<sup>22</sup> At an early age, after living through the ills of this discrimination, Commissioner Freeman vowed to fight for social justice—and selected the legal profession as her tool.<sup>23</sup>

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16. In 2014, the ABA awarded Commissioner Freeman the Spirit of Excellence Award from its Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession for her over sixty years of service. In August of 2015, at her request, I completed Commissioner Freeman’s oral history, which was recorded for the ABA Women Trailblazers Project. *Woman Trailblazers in the Law: Frankie Muse Freeman*, A.B.A., [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/senior\\_lawyers/women\\_trailblazers\\_project\\_listing/frankie-muse-freeman/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/senior_lawyers/women_trailblazers_project_listing/frankie-muse-freeman/) (last visited July 26, 2021); *Frankie Muse Freeman to Receive 2014 ABA Spirit of Excellence Award*, ST. LOUIS AM. (Feb. 10, 2014), [http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local\\_news/frankie-muse-freeman-to-receive-2014-aba-spirit-of-excellence-award/article\\_3d52b99c-9284-11e3-bb43-0019bb2963f4.html](http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local_news/frankie-muse-freeman-to-receive-2014-aba-spirit-of-excellence-award/article_3d52b99c-9284-11e3-bb43-0019bb2963f4.html) (last visited Oct. 24, 2021).

17. Interview I, *supra* note 15, at 3; see also FREEMAN & O’CONNOR, *supra* note 14.

18. Interview by The History Makers with The Honorable Frankie Freeman (Dec. 19, 2006), <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/honorable-frankie-freeman> [https://perma.cc/YJ3Z-ZDTR].

19. Interview I, *supra* note 15, at 4.

20. *Id.* at 1.

21. *Id.* at 2.

22. *Id.* at 5–12, 14–19.

23. Interview II, *supra* note 14, at 4.

Commissioner Freeman received her undergraduate degree from her mother's alma mater, the Hampton Institute,<sup>24</sup> and her law degree from Howard University,<sup>25</sup> finishing second in her class.<sup>26</sup> In 1948, she moved to St. Louis, Missouri with her husband, Shelby.<sup>27</sup> After passing the bar, she began her practice, which would last over sixty years. Although her mentor, Thurgood Marshall, offered her a position working on the east coast for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), she decided to plant her roots in St. Louis.<sup>28</sup>

Commissioner Freeman shared with me the struggles she faced in the beginning of her legal career in St. Louis. After writing several law firms, she discovered that white firms would not hire a black attorney, and black firms would not allow a female attorney to try cases.<sup>29</sup> This prompted her to establish her own practice, which provided pro bono services to the local NAACP along with assistance in divorce and criminal cases.<sup>30</sup> She was one of the first women, if not the first black woman, to start her own law firm in St. Louis—a trailblazing act for 1949. During those early years in solo practice, Commissioner Freeman realized her life's passion as a civil rights attorney.<sup>31</sup>

Destiny soon led Commissioner Freeman back to the NAACP – St. Louis Chapter. In 1949, she became full-time legal counsel to the local NAACP's legal team, where she worked in some capacity for over sixty years.<sup>32</sup> In her full-time role, she frequently challenged discriminatory laws by filing claims against local institutions with racially biased practices. One such civil rights case for which she served on the trial team was *Brewton v. Board of Education of the City of St. Louis* in 1949.<sup>33</sup> In that case, the Missouri Supreme Court upheld a favorable trial decision that the district had violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment by failing to provide the same airplane mechanics course

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24. Interview I, *supra* note 15, at 2, 7.

25. *Id.* at 3.

26. Hon. Willie J. Epps Jr., *Black Lawyers of Missouri: 150 Years of Progress and Promise*, 86 MO. L. REV. 1, 40 (2021); Interview II, *supra* note 14, at 13.

27. Interview II, *supra* note 14, at 15.

28. *Id.* at 13–14.

29. *Id.* at 16–17.

30. *Id.* at 16–17; Interview I, *supra* note 15.

31. Interview II, *supra* note 14, at 11, 13.

32. *Id.* at 17.

33. *State ex rel. Brewton v. Bd. of Educ. of City of St. Louis*, 233 S.W.2d 697 (Mo. 1950).

offered at Hadley Tech to the segregated Washington Technical High School.<sup>34</sup> This claim was one of many anti-segregation suits filed across the United States which ultimately led to the historic ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>35</sup> *Brown* consolidated several class action lawsuits brought against school districts throughout the country. In their landmark 1954 decision, the Supreme Court ended the long-held practice of legal education discrimination. The Court held that “separate but equal” violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and ordered U.S. public schools to integrate their classrooms.<sup>36</sup> This result fulfilled the NAACP’s twenty-year goal to challenge and overturn the separate but equal doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, an 1896 decision upholding Jim Crow laws and racial segregation.<sup>37</sup> Following the decision in *Brown*, the next goal was to integrate public facilities and beyond, and Commissioner Freeman led the way in St. Louis. She became an essential member of the NAACP’s brain trust along with legendary attorneys Sidney Redmond and Henry Espy.<sup>38</sup>

Commissioner Freeman worked on many other important civil rights cases challenging discrimination in areas from education to hiring practices. She served as lead attorney for the landmark class action NAACP case *Davis v. St. Louis Housing Authority*.<sup>39</sup> At the time of the case, St. Louis had racially segregated public housing: Carr Square Village (north of downtown) was for black families, and the Clinton Peabody (south of downtown) was for white families.<sup>40</sup> The law did not require segregation, but St. Louis and many other cities had racially separate units in practice.<sup>41</sup> In 1952, construction was finished on the Cochran Gardens Apartments, which was additional federal housing designated for integrated tenants.<sup>42</sup> However, numerous black families were denied access and informed the housing was for white families only.<sup>43</sup> The St.

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34. *Id.* at 699–700.

35. *Brown v. Bd. of Educ. of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

36. *Id.* at 495.

37. *Id.* at 483.

38. Interview by The History Makers, *supra* note 18.

39. *Davis v. St. Louis Hous. Auth.*, CA # 8637 Div. 1 (E.D. Mo. Dec. 27, 1955) (Nat’l Archives Catalog, Civ. Case Files 1938-2000).

40. *Id.*; Interview II, *supra* note 14, at 18–20.

41. Interview II, *supra* note 14, at 18–20.

42. *Id.*

43. *Id.*

Louis Housing Authority claimed it was a valid policy and common pattern in St. Louis for this racial separation to occur, naming other similar organizations that maintained segregation.<sup>44</sup> However, the Court disagreed and found that discrimination against qualified housing applicants on the basis of race was unconstitutional.<sup>45</sup> The landmark victory, handed down in 1954, was used to help dismantle legal discrimination in public housing across the United States.<sup>46</sup>

Commissioner Freeman also served as counsel for the St. Louis Land Clearance and Housing Authorities and as assistant attorney general of Missouri from 1956 to 1970.<sup>47</sup> In 1958, Commissioner Freeman joined the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and her outstanding work led to national attention.<sup>48</sup> A few years later, she met with President John F. Kennedy, who shared his plan to nominate her to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights before his 1963 assassination.<sup>49</sup> President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Freeman, making her the first woman and the first person of color on the Commission, in March of 1964.<sup>50</sup> Her work investigating complaints of racial discrimination contributed to the Commission's 1964 reports<sup>51</sup> that led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>52</sup> and Fair Housing Act of 1968,<sup>53</sup> and were incorporated into

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44. *Id.*

45. *Davis*, CA # 8637 Div. 1.

46. Judge Nannette A. Baker, *Civil Rights Pioneer: Frankie Muse Freeman*, A.B.A. (May 1, 2015), [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/judicial/publications/judges\\_journal/2015/spring/civil\\_rights\\_pioneer\\_frankie\\_muse\\_freeman\\_by\\_judge\\_nannette\\_a\\_baker/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/judicial/publications/judges_journal/2015/spring/civil_rights_pioneer_frankie_muse_freeman_by_judge_nannette_a_baker/).

47. Byers, *supra* note 1; Interview II, *supra* note 14, at 20.

48. 160 CONG. REC. S5583 (daily ed. Sept. 15, 2014) (statement of Sen. Claire McCaskill).

49. Interview III with Frankie Muse Freeman in St. Louis, Mo., at 1 (Aug. 10, 2014), [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women\\_trailblazers/frankie-muse-freeman-int-3-aug-10-2014.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/women_trailblazers/frankie-muse-freeman-int-3-aug-10-2014.pdf).

50. Statement on the Passing of Frankie Muse Freeman, *supra* note 3.

51. U.S. COMM'N ON C.R., REPORTS ON APPRENTICESHIP (Jan. 1964), <https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12ap6.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/NW7P-T4K6>]; U.S. COMM'N ON C.R., PUB. EDUC.: 1964 STAFF REPORT (Feb. 1964), <https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12ed82964.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/7Z2D-9WHS>].

52. Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 42 U.S.C.).

53. Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), Pub. L. No. 90-284, 82 Stat. 73 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 42 U.S.C.).

the Voting Rights Act of 1965.<sup>54</sup> Commissioner Freeman was reappointed by Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter, serving as the only woman during her tenure.<sup>55</sup> The official transcripts and records of the Commission investigations are housed in the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas.<sup>56</sup> When visiting the library in 2020, I was overwhelmed with gratitude for her contributions to civil rights and its lasting relevance.

In the Commission's 1967 Report, Commissioner Freeman wrote a separate statement declaring "[t]he worsening crisis in our cities is essentially a human crisis."<sup>57</sup> This statement has been used as recently as 2015 by community leaders in their attempt to understand and respond to the "Ferguson Crisis" that erupted August 9, 2014, the day Michael Brown was killed.<sup>58</sup> In an NPR interview for St. Louis Public Radio in 2015, Commissioner Freeman stated, "I could take that official report of the Civil Rights Commission, and change the date and it would still be true."<sup>59</sup>

Commissioner Freeman left the Civil Rights Commission in 1979 after President Carter nominated her as the first Inspector General of the Community Service Administration.<sup>60</sup> In 1982, Commissioner Freeman became an essential founding member of the bipartisan Citizens Commission on Civil Rights, a St. Louis group committed to ending racial

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54. Voting Rights Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-110, 79 Stat. 437 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 52 U.S.C.).

55. *Biography: Frankie Muse Freeman*, STANFORD L. SCH., <https://abawtp.law.stanford.edu/exhibits/show/frankie-muse-freeman/biography> [<https://perma.cc/XYN5-LYLQ>]; Dorothy Height (then-President of the National Council of Negro Women), *Foreword* to FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN & CANDACE O'CONNOR, *A SONG OF FAITH AND HOPE: THE LIFE OF FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN* (2003).

56. See *Discover Our Collections*, LBJ PRESIDENTIAL LIBR., <https://discoverljb.org> [<https://perma.cc/R7CS-CRH3>].

57. U.S. COMM'N ON C.R., *RACIAL ISOLATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS 19* (1967), <https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr1107.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/8W26-JA4U>].

58. *Frankie M. Freeman St. Louis Person of the Year, 2015*, SLAY (Dec. 29, 2015), <https://archive.mayorslay.com/article/frankie-m-freeman-st-louis-person-year-2015> (last visited July 26, 2021).

59. Alex Heuer, *Longtime Civil Rights Advocate Frankie Freeman: 'There's Still Work to Be Done'*, ST. LOUIS PUB. RADIO (Apr. 21, 2015, 2:25 PM), <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/show/st-louis-on-the-air/2015-04-21/longtime-civil-rights-advocate-frankie-freeman-theres-still-work-to-be-done> [<https://perma.cc/9QQU-WA8A>].

60. Jimmy Carter, *Community Services Administration Nomination of Frankie M. Freeman to be Inspector General*, AM. PRESIDENCY PROJECT (June 14, 1979), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/community-services-administration-nomination-frankie-m-freeman-be-inspector-general> [<https://perma.cc/Z22G-M88R>]; see also *The First Inspectors General*, COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GENERAL ON INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY, <https://www.ignet.gov/content/first-inspectors-general> [<https://perma.cc/UP23-GBCG>].



discrimination and devising remedies to counteract its harmful effects.<sup>61</sup> In 1989, Commissioner Freeman was named board chair of The National Council on Aging, Inc.<sup>62</sup> Late in her professional life, after leaving the NAACP, Commissioner Freeman became a board member of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis<sup>63</sup> and was eventually elected the first woman board chair.<sup>64</sup> She noted that the board brings diverse persons together intentionally in a peer relationship to work for change. In 1999, she was selected to co-lead the St. Louis City Public School desegregation task force with William H. Danforth.<sup>65</sup> In 2006, they again joined forces to head up an advisory committee to review and improve said schools.<sup>66</sup> These organizations continue to do the work she committed her life to.

Commissioner Freeman remained very involved in her community on many levels, including service as Trustee Emeritus of Howard University; past national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.; past Board Chair of Girls Scouts of the United States of America, YMCA Metro St. Louis, and United Way of Greater St. Louis; and past Board Member of St. Louis Regional Oasis and the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District.<sup>67</sup> Commissioner Freeman was also a member of the Executive Committee of the St. Louis City NAACP, the National Bar Association, The Mound City Bar Association, the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, and the Washington Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church.<sup>68</sup>

She received numerous awards for her service in civil rights including honorary degrees from Aquinas Institute of Theology, Eden Theological Seminary, Hampton University, Harris-Stowe University, Howard

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61. *Biography: Frankie Muse Freeman, supra* note 55.

62. *Id.*

63. *Id.*

64. Derrion Henderson, *Civil Rights Icon Frankie Muse Freeman Remembered for Making a Difference*, FOX 2 ST. LOUIS (Jan. 13, 2018, 9:28 PM), <https://fox2now.com/news/civil-rights-icon-frankie-muse-freeman-remembered-for-making-a-difference/> [<https://perma.cc/3VUL-55U6>].

65. Elizabeth Holland, *At 95, Citizen of the Year Frankie Freeman Continues to Serve*, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH (Jan. 15, 2012), [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/at-95-citizen-of-year-frankie-freeman-continues-to-serve/article\\_21b643d8-450f-5892-873f-08b80aa04e3c.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/at-95-citizen-of-year-frankie-freeman-continues-to-serve/article_21b643d8-450f-5892-873f-08b80aa04e3c.html) [<https://perma.cc/YPP8-NEHY>].

66. Alvin A. Reid, *State Committee to Work With SLPS*, ST. LOUIS AM. (Aug. 3, 2006), [http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local\\_news/state-committee-to-work-with-slps/article\\_d5797f00-277c-5a9e-bb05-1ffb72b05edf.html](http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local_news/state-committee-to-work-with-slps/article_d5797f00-277c-5a9e-bb05-1ffb72b05edf.html).

67. *Biography: Frankie Muse Freeman, supra* note 55.

68. *Id.*

University, Saint Louis University, Washington University, and University of Missouri–St. Louis.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, she was inducted into the National Bar Association’s Hall of Fame (1990) and the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame (2007), and she received the St. Louis Post-Dispatch Citizen of the Year (2011), NAACP Highest Honor—the Spingarn Awardee (2011), and ABA Spirit of Excellence Awardee and Women Trailblazer Inductee (2014).<sup>70</sup> In 2003, Commissioner Freeman published her memoirs.<sup>71</sup>

Commissioner Freeman served our country well into her 90s. In 2015 President Barack Obama appointed her to the Commission on Presidential Scholars founded by President Johnson in 1964.<sup>72</sup> This Commission recognizes and honors some of our nation’s most distinguished graduating high school seniors.<sup>73</sup> Ms. Frankie “Freedom” fought so students of color would be treated equally both locally and nationally.

Like Dred Scott, whose bronze statute was installed on the East side of the Old Court House in St. Louis—where many slaves were sold and freedom suits were filed<sup>74</sup>—Commissioner Freeman’s bronze statute was erected on the West side of the Old Court House.<sup>75</sup> On November 21, 2017, just before her 101st birthday, Commissioner Freeman witnessed and participated in her statue dedication which reads: “In recognition of exemplary service, distinguished leadership and commitment to improve the cultural, social, and economic growth and development of the St. Louis Community.”<sup>76</sup>

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69. *Id.*

70. *Id.*

71. *Id.* See FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN & CANDACE O’CONNOR, A SONG OF FAITH AND HOPE: THE LIFE OF FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN (2003).

72. Press Release, White House: Off. of the Press Sec’y, President Obama Announces More Key Administration Posts (Feb. 5, 2015), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/05/president-obama-announces-more-key-administration-posts> [<https://perma.cc/V7BK-92EA>].

73. *U.S. Presidential Scholars Program: About the Program*, U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/psp/about.html> [<https://perma.cc/3EGT-G3WB>].

74. Judge David C. Mason, *Famous for Freedom Suits*, MO. HIST. SOC’Y (June 15, 2017), <https://mohistory.org/blog/famous-for-freedom-suits> [<https://perma.cc/T9QX-X4HM>].

75. Kae M. Petrin, *NAACP Honors Civil Rights Pioneer Frankie Freeman with Statue in Kiener Plaza*, ST. LOUIS PUB. RADIO (Nov. 21, 2017, 5:59 PM), <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/government-politics-issues/2017-11-21/naACP-honors-civil-rights-pioneer-frankie-freeman-with-statue-in-kiener-plaza> [<https://perma.cc/5QWJ-YTAW>].

76. *Id.*; Brian R. Owens, *Statue of Frankie Freeman* (2017).

Frankie Muse Freeman's legacy of service in the struggle against injustice lives on. She always imagined a better country where equality and justice for all prevails, and she would ask who will continue to carry the torch forward next. While the NAACP, under the direction of Legal Defense Fund President and Director Sherrilyn Ifill, and the Urban League, led by Marc H. Morial, remain leaders in the struggle for civil rights, there are current and future champions of civil rights in our midst. We look forward to the contributions of those servant leaders who will follow in her footsteps. Her favorite song and mantra was "If I Can Help Somebody" by Mahalia Jackson, and her life's work continues to help others. Until her last breath, she was a champion of civil rights. One of her final quotes, which donned her funeral program was, "It isn't easy. But you will still fight...the struggle continues. But don't give up."<sup>77</sup>

ADDITIONAL WORDS OF WISDOM  
FROM FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN<sup>78</sup>

*Passed down from her daughter Shelbe Patricia Bullock at her funeral*

ON WHO WANTS A WOMAN

"When I first opened my law office it was well equipped and everything, and the very first person who came in my office after I opened it wanted a lawyer. I said, 'I'm a lawyer.' He said, 'I don't want a woman.' Oh, it was really bad."

ON HOW BIAS IS RACIALLY INCLUSIVE

"Gender discrimination is racially inclusive. There are many black people who knew me, but would go to a white attorney before they would go to a female lawyer."

ON ACHIEVING EQUALITY

"As long as I live and as long as I am able, I will do what I can to make it better, to continue to struggle to achieve equality of opportunity, on the

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77. FRANKIE MUSE FREEMAN FUNERAL PROGRAM, WASHINGTON TABERNACLE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH (Jan. 20, 2018) (on file with author).

78. *Id.*

basis of race, gender, age, on all of the areas in which basic . . . Constitutional rights are being denied.”

#### ON WORDS TO LIVE BY

“Do your best, always, but always be of service to make a difference, this is what I live by. Thank you, Lord.”

#### ON MAKING TROUBLE

“I have been called a trouble maker and I’ve said that’s a good thing”

#### ON ENDING BIAS

“There has been gender discrimination from the beginning of the world. The point is that you have to combat it. But, you have to combat it consistently. When people see women doing things as well or better than men, then it will change.”

#### ON NOT MY PROBLEM

“I was determined that discrimination on the basis of race and gender to the extent that I could do my job – that was your problem.”

#### ON THE STRUGGLE

“It isn’t easy. But you will still fight...the struggle continues, but don’t give up.”