



"Most people need to realize the nation will always be in trouble until they do more than pay lip service to civil rights."

Frankie Muse Freeman



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Defender of Human Rights *Frankie Muse Freeman*

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When Frankie Muse Freeman moved to St. Louis in 1948, she was one of a handful of Black female attorneys in the state. In 1954, Freeman successfully argued *Davis et. al. v. the St. Louis Housing Authority*, a class-action lawsuit that challenged racial discrimination in public housing. The win made her the first Black woman to win a major civil rights case in the United States, and it successfully ended legal discrimination in the city of St. Louis.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy nominated Freeman to serve on the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights. She was later re-nominated by President Lyndon B. Johnson. She became both the first Black person and first woman to serve on the commission. Her work was integral to the legislation for the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Freeman served on the commission until 1980 when President Jimmy Carter nominated her to serve as Inspector General for the Community Service Administration. She served in the role until January 1981.

When Freeman returned to St. Louis, she created the Citizen's Commission of Civil Rights to push back against the dismantling of civil rights policies. In her later years, Freeman worked to end age discrimination and served on the boards of a number of nonprofits including the United Way of Greater St. Louis, Girl Scouts of the United States of America and the National Urban League of St. Louis.