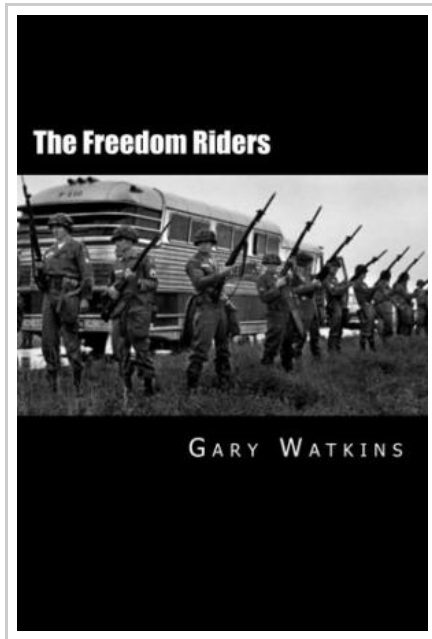



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The Freedom Riders

By Gary Watkins

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0.2in. Freedom Riders were civil rights activists who rode

interstate buses into the segregated southern United States in

1961 and following years to challenge the non-enforcement of

the United States Supreme Court decisions *Irene Morgan v.*

Commonwealth of Virginia (1946) and *Boynton v. Virginia*

(1960), 1 which ruled that segregated public buses were

unconstitutional. 2 The Southern states had ignored the rulings

and the federal government did nothing to enforce them. The

first Freedom Ride left Washington, D. C. , on May 4, 1961, 3 and

was scheduled to arrive in New Orleans on May 17. Boynton

outlawed racial segregation in the restaurants and waiting

rooms in terminals serving buses that crossed state lines. Five

years prior to the Boynton ruling, the Interstate Commerce

Commission (ICC) had issued a ruling in *Sarah Keys v. Carolina*

Coach Company (1955) that had explicitly denounced the

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) doctrine of separate but equal in

interstate bus travel. The ICC failed to enforce its ruling, and

Jim Crow travel laws remained in force throughout the South.

The Freedom Riders challenged this...



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