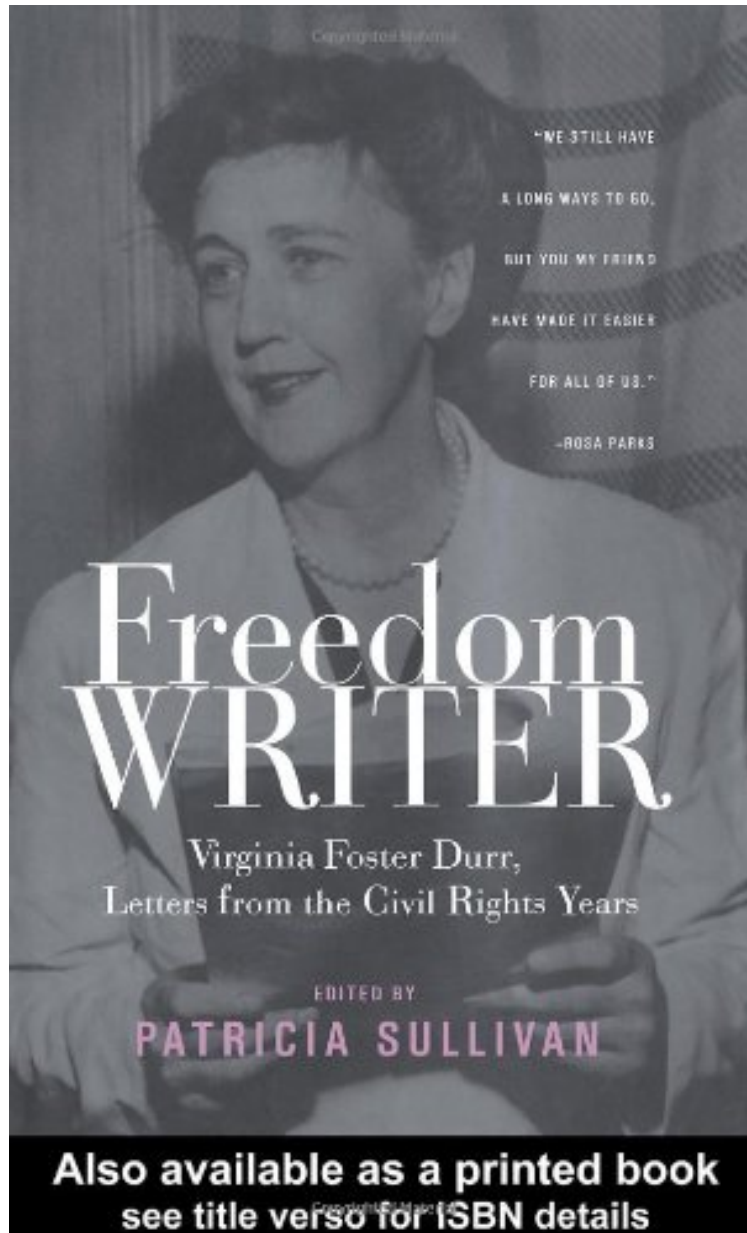


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Freedom Writer: Virginia Foster Durr, Letters From the Civil Rights Years

Patricia Sullivan

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Patricia Sullivan : Freedom Writer: Virginia Foster Durr, Letters From the Civil Rights Years before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Freedom Writer: Virginia Foster Durr, Letters From the Civil Rights Years:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Book of Letters that Tell a Story By Deborah Martinson Virginia Foster Durr's letters tell the story of her work for FDR, for the Civil Rights Movement, for an integrated South. I was riveted.

Virginia Foster Durr was a monumental champion for civil rights. A white southerner who returned to Alabama in 1951 after twenty years in Washington, she was horrified to revisit the racism of her childhood. She wrote hundreds of letters - humorous, sharp and observant - to her friends up north, among them Eleanor Roosevelt, Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson, Hugo Black and C. Vann Woodward. Published on the 100th anniversary of Durr's birth, her letters offer a distinctive glimpse into the day-to-day battles for racial justice at a pivotal moment in American history.

From Publishers Weekly Civil rights activist Virginia Durr (1903-1999) was, as her husband, the attorney Clifford Durr, noted, a Southern belle possessed of "more than one person's share of guts," as this collection of her letters, published on the 100th anniversary of her birth, demonstrates. Written when Durr was in her 50s and 60s, the letters are divided into four groups, and tell a story both personal and political: 1951-55 (from the Durr's return to their native Alabama to Rosa Park's arrest), 1956-60 (the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the sit-ins), 1961-65 (the Freedom Riders to the Selma March) and 1966-68 (to the Democratic Convention). They make compelling reading, as Durr relates "the jagged edge of daily experience" for white supporters in the South-the social isolation, the financial deprivation. Full of intimate detail, Durr's letters remind readers of the slow and painful process of change; of the tough fight for the abolition of the poll tax; of legal executions and illegal beatings and lynchings. They also chart the private costs (her brother-in-law Justice Hugo Black could not attend her daughter's wedding because Jessica Mitford was there) and the petty harassments (local sabotage-via a "power failure" during the broadcast of Martin Agronsky's interview with Martin Luther King). Harvard Fellow and historian Sullivan (*Days of Hope*) provides a biography in letters in this exemplary edition, complete with an identifying guide to the correspondents and succinct, context setting introductions to individual letters. Helpful footnotes appear with the letters; bibliographic data is in the endnotes. All contribute to making a highly readable tale and tribute to a woman for whom "politics in the service of changing the South was a passion." Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. 'Patricia Sullivan provides a well-selected and admirably annotated anthology of the prolific private correspondence of that redoubtable southern white liberal Virginia Durr ...' - *American Studies*, Vol 40 About the Author Patricia Sullivan is Associate Professor of History and African American Studies, University of South Carolina, and Fellow, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, Harvard University. She is coeditor of *Civil Rights in the United States* and has been a consultant on many films and documentaries, most recently HBO's "Boycott."