

# Marching On: *The Lincoln School Story* and the Fight for Integration in Hillsboro, Ohio Resource Guide



OHIO HUMANITIES



Sharing stories.  
Sparking conversations.  
Inspiring ideas.

# Director's Note

Dear friend,

When I joined Ohio Humanities as Executive Director in 2021, I began working with our team to identify untold and under-told stories that would encourage meaningful discourse among Ohioans. I was soon introduced to the story of the Lincoln School Marchers and the important role that Hillsboro, Ohio, played in the movement to desegregate America's schools and the overall fight for civil rights for Black Americans. I was transfixed.



For many years, Ohio Humanities has offered media grants to support the creation of documentary films. One of these films tells *The Lincoln School Story*. Following the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, a group of Black women and children in Hillsboro, Ohio, fought to desegregate a local elementary school by marching to the white school, demanding admission. Upon being rejected, they woke up the next morning and marched again. And again. And again. For two years, they marched.

Many of the Lincoln School students who marched are still alive today. As elementary school students, these brave individuals became activists—even if they didn't realize it at the time. "Back then, I probably didn't think I was part of the Civil Rights Movement," said Myra Cumberland Phillips. "But now, yes, I do."

By sharing their story, the marchers hope to inspire others to remember their mothers and continue the work they started. Their commitment to keeping the story of the march—and their mothers—alive reminds us of the importance of education and of how recent the civil rights movement is in our past.

Ohio Humanities first supported *The Lincoln School Story* with a planning grant in 2016. To share this incredible history with a wider audience, we are now updating the documentary, creating a children's book, featuring the story in the first edition of *Lumen*, and developing educational materials to help communities across Ohio and around the country learn about our state's important role in the civil rights movement.

I am so grateful that these elders shared their story with us, and I hope that these materials inspire the next generation of changemakers to follow in their footsteps.

In this packet, you'll find printable discussion questions and a list of books, stories, and podcasts to explore and learn more about school integration across the country.

For more interactive resources—including a

copy of the featured story on the Lincoln School Marchers from *Lumen* magazine, more information about the living Marchers, historical news coverage of Hillsboro's fight for integration, a coloring page, and an illustrated children's story about the Marchers—please visit our website using this QR code or at [ohiohumanities.org/lincoln-school](https://ohiohumanities.org/lincoln-school).

If you are interested in sharing this important story with your community by hosting a screening or event, please contact us at [ohc@ohiohumanities.org](mailto:ohc@ohiohumanities.org).

Sincerely,



Rebecca Brown Asmo  
Executive Director



### *SHARING THIS STORY*

The story of the Lincoln School Marchers is an important one in America's fight for racial justice. For years, it went largely untold. Ohio Humanities is proud to share this story in myriad ways, including helping fund "The Lincoln School Story," a 20-minute documentary film. Ohio Humanities has also created a discussion guide for book clubs, film clubs, community groups, nonprofits and families to prompt learning and thoughtful discussion. Access the documentary film, discussion guide and more by using this QR code or visiting [ohiohumanities.org](https://ohiohumanities.org).

# Discuss the Film

The following questions are designed to help you consider the connections between the Hillsboro march and the larger context of other social protests, past or present.

- ❖ Philip Partridge's decision to burn the Lincoln School had unintended consequences for the Black community. What actions do you think are appropriate for non-marginalized members of society to take to help a marginalized social group?
- ❖ Why do you think the Black families were so intent on changing segregation in the educational system rather than other social spaces like, for example, diners or movie theaters?
- ❖ After *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided, the Hillsboro school board rezoned the school districts to keep Lincoln an all-Black school. In what other ways has redistricting or rezoning affected race relations in other American communities?
- ❖ Why do you think it was important for the mothers to challenge segregation both in the courtrooms and on the streets of their local community?
- ❖ Why do you think some parents chose to keep their children at the Lincoln school, despite the efforts of others in Hillsboro's Black community to boycott the public school system?
- ❖ The Civil Rights Movement is typically characterized as being led by charismatic Black men, but the march in Hillsboro was headed by Black women. How does that change the way we think about the Movement?
- ❖ In what ways did this protest act as a model for future social action against racial inequality? In what ways might this protest inspire social change today?

# Learn More with these reading recommendations

*Civil Rights Queen: Constance Baker Motley and the Struggle for Equality* by Tomiko Brown-Nagin

*An African American Dilemma: A History of School Integration and Civil Rights in the North* by Zoë Burkholder

*Why Busing Failed* by Matthew Delmont

*A Most Tolerant Little Town: The Explosive Beginning of School Desegregation* by Rachel Louise Martin

"Early Boycotts of Segregation Schools: The Case of Springfield, Ohio, 1922-23" by August Meier and Elliot Rudwick

*The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein

*Sweet Land of Liberty* by Thomas Sugrue

"The Long Walk" by Sara Stankorb

"Essay B" from This American Life

*The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation* by Anna Malaika Tubbs

"Picturing Black History: Marching Mothers" by Jessica Viñas-Nelson

*Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* by Heather Andrea Williams

"Fire of Justice: The Battle for School Desegregation in Hillsboro" by Pat Williamsen



LET'S CONNECT

