

How We Got Over

Growing Up in the Segregated South: A Collection of Narratives

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Storytellers Return to the Scene of Jim Crow Wrongs

[Alexandria, Louisiana, January 11, 2022] *How We Got Over*, a book of 24 stories about growing up black in central Louisiana at midcentury, formally launches its release Saturday, January 15. As the weekend honors Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and February primes for Black History Month, the book's contributing writers, 15 of the 24, will gather at their hometown Rapides Parish Public Library Main Branch for the ceremonial event.

In the book, stories reveal the stark realities of the everyday existence endured by Black Americans under the country's harshest rule since enslavement. The work's purpose is to enlighten the unaware and remind those already mindful of a time not so long ago. Stories cover the challenges of racism, the necessity and urgency of survival under a strict segregation system and the beauty of sustainable black life in spite of the times.

Essayists, all graduates of the historical Black Peabody High School Class of 1968, held their first book planning meeting over Zoom in December 2020 after publisher, editor and fellow classmate Helen Benjamin sent callouts asking for participation. From that moment, story drafts and editing rounds continued for months before completion. "Creating a work such as this requires the effort of many hands from idea to reality," Dr. Benjamin explains.

After the commitments, the process became a mission. "It was not only important that our stories be told but also that the historical context for our narratives be recognized and included in this volume." To develop the framework, Dr. Benjamin and the book's coeditor Jean Nash Johnson turned to multiple sources, including the local public libraries, Louisiana state archives, U.S. Census records, Genealogy groups, *The Alexandria Town Talk*, and Black newspapers dating back to the mid to late 1800s.

During Saturday's celebration, featured book contributors will share stories and experiences, performing oral readings from narrative excerpts and taking audience questions. Following the Q&A, the coauthors and editors will be available to sign books.

How We Got Over is available in hardbound, softback and Kindle at Amazon.com. and at the Saturday launch. For additional book facts, upcoming events and media releases, visit HowWeGotOver.org.

NBC's KALB-TV Interview: Book publisher Helen Benjamin talks about the publishing and launch of *How We Got Over*

<https://www.kalb.com/video/2022/01/10/good-day-cenla-dr-helen-benjamin/>

