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CIVIL WAR TO CIVIL RIGHTS:

SUZANNE FELICIANO (UNION MEMBER, ACTIVIST)



Kentucky Historical Society collections

HENDERSON — Suzanne Feliciano was an advocate for labor and women's rights in the 1970s and 1980s. She went to work right out of high school at the General Electric factory in Henderson and joined a labor union, but workers were just beginning to unionize at her next employer, Kenco Plastics.

The factory floor workers were almost exclusively women. Between 1976 and 1980 the plant saw its first female foreman and had several strikes.

Feliciano became a union steward. The company fired

her after she negotiated the return to work from an employee walk-out. She and her union requested — and won — arbitration. Kenco rehired Feliciano with full back pay for lost time. During another strike, she was arrested for civil disobedience — a tactic labor unions learned from the civil rights movement.

Feliciano was active in the University of Kentucky's Center for Labor Education and Research. She earned a degree in political science from UK then worked with the Southeast Women's Employment Coalition setting up training and advocating for better employment opportunities for women in road construction.

This button illustrates that civil rights' activism included women's and labor issues.

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