

# Ruby Bridges



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The day 6-year-old Ruby Bridges walked through the doors of William Frantz Public School in New Orleans, Louisiana, she walked into the pages of history. It was November 14, 1960. Ruby was the first African American student at this previously all-white school.

When she was 4, Ruby's family had moved from Mississippi to New Orleans. Schools in the South were still segregated. Black children and white children went to separate schools. As you read on pages 2-5, the Supreme Court had ruled that school segregation was against the law. But many white people in the South didn't want to let black children go to school with white children. So they ignored the Supreme Court. After years of being ignored, the court gave the city of New Orleans a deadline: You must integrate your schools by September 1960.

In the spring of 1960, Ruby was in kindergarten. School officials wanted to choose the first black students to attend first grade at William Frantz Public School the next September. So, they tested black kindergarteners like Ruby. Ruby did well and was chosen. Her mother was excited, because she knew Ruby would get a better education at the white



school. But Ruby's father was afraid someone might hurt her. Finally, he agreed to let Ruby go.

Many white parents were not happy with this situation. They didn't want their children to go to school with Ruby or other black children. So they kept fighting against the ruling. Ruby didn't start first grade until November. When her first day of school finally arrived, U.S. federal marshals (a type of police) escorted her to school. Ruby spent that day, and nearly the whole school year, alone in an upstairs classroom with her teacher, Mrs. Barbara Henry. The marshals, who were there to protect Ruby, waited outside the room. They even took Ruby to the bathroom when she needed to go.

Every day outside the school, angry crowds greeted Ruby. They spat, yelled, threw things, and threatened her. But Ruby walked on. In fact, she did well in school that year. A child psychologist, Dr. Robert Coles, helped Ruby deal with what was happening. He encouraged her to draw pictures and talk about her feelings.

Ruby's bravery helped make a difference in the civil rights movement. She grew up, got married, and had four sons. Today, Ruby lives in New Orleans. She continues to fight for civil rights. She established the Ruby Bridges Foundation and travels around the country speaking about racism and her historic role in the civil rights movement. 🌟



Dr. Coles wrote a lot about Ruby and children like her. You can also read Ruby's own words in *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges (SCHOLASTIC PRESS).



Barbara Henry and Ruby Bridges-Hall in 1998