

RUBY BRIDGES

A CHILD OF COURAGE

A Woman of Determination



Like Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Ruby Bridges is an important part of America's Civil Rights history. But the difference between Ruby and other Civil Rights icons is obvious. **SHE ENTERED THE HISTORY BOOKS WHEN SHE ENTERED FIRST GRADE.**

On November 14, 1960, surrounded by armed U.S. Federal Marshals, Ruby Bridges became the very first black student to attend William Frantz Public School in New Orleans and the youngest foot soldier of the Civil Rights Movement. Many already know Ruby and her story. There's the famous Norman Rockwell painting that in 1964 appeared on the cover of *Look* magazine. John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* includes a section on Ruby. Robert Coles penned a 1995 book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, and soon after, a television movie based on her life was produced by Walt Disney Home Entertainment.

And, in 1999 Ruby published her own memoir, ***THROUGH MY EYES***.

Ruby Bridges was born in Mississippi in 1954 and moved to New Orleans at the age of two. In 1960, because of her high test scores, the NAACP contacted Ruby's parents in seeking children to participate in the integration of the New Orleans schools. Ruby's parents felt it was their obligation to better their children's lives and help change a discriminatory system.

HER BRAVE MARCH INTO SCHOOL ATTRACTED ATTENTION LOCALLY AND NATIONWIDE - and much of it negative. Angry protesters yelled at Ruby and held up intimidating signs and symbols. White parents pulled their children from the school and boycotted William Frantz Elementary for a year. The size of Ruby's class that first year? One. Two, if you count her teacher, Mrs. Barbara Henry.

Ruby's family also suffered for their decision: her father lost his job, and her grandparents, who were sharecroppers in Mississippi, were turned off their land.



Racism is a grownup disease, let's stop using kids to spread it ... Ruby Bridges

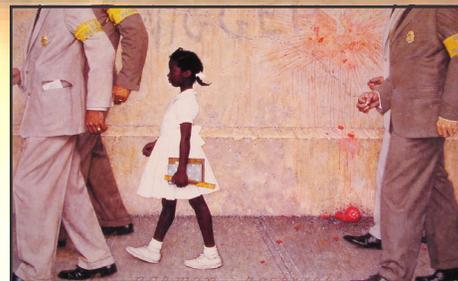
STILL, RUBY WENT TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY.

Today, Ruby is an adult who encompasses that rare commodity known as “living history.” She has been featured on *Oprah*, *Primetime*, *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather*, *Good Morning America*, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* and *NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams*. Ruby has been the topic of stories in *The New York Times*, *People* magazine, *Los Angeles Times* and hundreds of other publications.

She chairs the Ruby Bridges Foundation, which she formed in 1999 to promote **"THE VALUES OF TOLERANCE, RESPECT, AND APPRECIATION OF ALL DIFFERENCES."** And much like she did as a brave six-year-old girl, Ruby continues her quest of changing hearts and minds through lectures, keynote addresses, and talks given in public and private schools across America.

Ruby is also actively involved with **FIRST BOOK**, a national nonprofit organization that gives new books to children from low-income families. In the aftermath of the recent Gulf Region hurricanes, Ruby became the national spokesperson for **BOOK RELIEF**, a First Book initiative to provide books to children and adults affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The organization will also help to rebuild and restore libraries in schools affected by these storms.

Forty-six years after her heroic walk into William Frantz Elementary School garnered national attention and made her a civil rights icon, Ruby’s first-person account now adds immeasurably to the knowledge base and understanding of the American Civil Rights Movement. Now an “insider” and far from naïve about the realities of social change, Ruby continues to share candidly her seasoned perspective on a history that reflects the seismic changes in America during the last half century. **IT IS, AFTER ALL, A HISTORY LESSON THAT SHE HELPED WRITE.**



The Problem We All Live With

The painting that made Ruby Bridges famous appeared in *Look* magazine in 1964. This image of a young Ruby Bridges’ courageous steps upon entering a newly desegregated school captures the essence of the Civil Rights Movement. After the Supreme Court ordered an end to unequal and inferior education, similar scenes occurred for many years across America, in countless schools and colleges, large, small, rural, and urban.

EVEN AFTER ALMOST 40 YEARS, THIS SCENE GRIPS OUR IMAGINATIONS.

Rockwell carefully evokes the look and feel of a pivotal period when African Americans brought their struggle for equal rights into the consciousness of white Americans. People often notice that Rockwell, who painted faces with such care, chose not to show the heads of the U.S. Federal Marshals in the picture.

America’s youngest Civil Rights icon, is the recipient of many honors and awards, including:



- ◆ Honorary Doctorate degrees from Connecticut College, College of New Rochelle, and Columbia University Teacher’s College
- ◆ Honorary U.S. Federal Marshal
- ◆ Member of the Board of Directors of the Norman Rockwell Museum
- ◆ Co-chair, “A Campaign For Forgiveness Research” with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former President Jimmy Carter, and Robert Coles
- ◆ The Presidential Citizens Medal, bestowed by President Bill Clinton
- ◆ Ruby Bridges Elementary School first in the nation named in her honor dedicated October, 2006 in Alameda, CA
- ◆ Anti-Defamation League 2006 honoree for In Concert Against Hate