

Ruby Bridges is an important figure in American history, best known for being the first African American child to attend an all-white elementary school in the South. Her bravery as a six-year-old girl in 1960 made her a symbol of the struggle for civil rights and the fight against segregation in schools.

She was born in 1954 in Tylertown, Mississippi, the same year that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. *Segregation* means separating people by race, and before this ruling, Black and white children were forced to attend different schools.

Ruby's family moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, when she was young. In 1960, a federal court ordered that New Orleans schools must begin to integrate. *Integration* means bringing students of different races together in the same schools. Ruby was chosen as one of the first Black children to attend a previously all-white school.

On November 14, 1960, Ruby walked into William Frantz Elementary School for the first time. Because many white parents and students opposed integration, angry crowds gathered outside the school. They shouted insults and threats at her. The situation was so dangerous that U.S. federal marshals had to escort her safely into the building.

Inside the school, things were also difficult. Many white parents pulled their children out, and teachers refused to teach her. Only one teacher, Barbara Henry, agreed to teach Ruby. For the first year, Ruby was the only student in her class, learning one-on-one with Mrs. Henry every day.

Despite the hostility, Ruby showed great courage. At just six years old, she kept attending school, walking past the crowds daily. Her calmness and determination became a powerful statement against racism. She later said that she prayed on her way to school, asking God to forgive the people who were angry at her.

Her actions were an early and powerful example of the Civil Rights Movement, a nationwide struggle in the 1950s and 1960s to end racial segregation and discrimination. Ruby's story showed that even children could play a role in creating change.

Ruby's courage inspired many. The famous artist Norman Rockwell painted her story in his work "*The Problem We All Live With*" (1964), showing Ruby being escorted by marshals. This painting helped Americans see the injustice of segregation.

As an adult, Ruby Bridges continued her commitment to education and equality. She founded the Ruby Bridges Foundation in 1999 to promote tolerance, respect, and the value of diversity in schools. *Tolerance* means accepting and respecting people who are different from oneself.

Today, Ruby Bridges is celebrated as a civil rights hero. Schools, books, and films tell her story so that new generations understand the importance of courage, fairness, and

standing up against injustice. She has met with presidents, given speeches, and continues to inspire both children and adults.

Her life reminds us that change often begins with ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Ruby was just a child, but her bravery helped open doors for millions of students who came after her.

In summary, Ruby Bridges was a six-year-old girl who became a symbol of courage and equality by integrating an all-white school in 1960. Her bravery helped challenge segregation in education and continues to inspire the fight for justice and inclusion.