

“A Day in the Life” Journal / 2016

The following journals are from the perspective of students in Mr. Wood’s second semester fourth hour government class - each takes the view of an individual or incident that had a significant impact in the American Civil Rights Movement.

1957 - The Little Rock Nine

White Student Attending Little Rock High (Madison Dutton)

Today at school we were just informed that next Wednesday nine African American students will be attending our school. Everyone went crazy!! In my mind I view them as regular old students, just like me and you. To my Mama though and every other white folk in town, they think otherwise. Those white folks think they’re the best ever, but they ain’t no better if they keep roughing up the black people. Up until this point I didn’t know whether to keep my opinions to myself or let them loose. I can’t keep biting my tongue anymore. Growing up my Mama always told me to voice my opinion. And that’s exactly what I’m going to do. I’ve had it up to my eyebrows with her and everyone else belittling those kids just cause their skin is a different color. It ain’t right.

When I got home from school I threw my backpack on the table. My Mama was cooking dinner and told me I needed to fix my attitude right that minute. Well I told her I’m sick of white folks. She says, “whatchya mean?” That’s when I just went off. I know I shouldn’t have, but I just can’t take it anymore. “What I mean is, why does everyone have to talk so bad ‘bout the black folks, when they ain’t no different than you or I?” I said to my Mama. She didn’t like that too much. “Yes they are!! Do you see how they look? Or the way they act? They do NOT belong at the same school my baby goes to,” said Mama. How can she think that? There is something wrong in her mind. It makes me so sad. Does she even think about it from their point of view? Does she put herself in their shoes? How would she like it if that was us? What if me, her daughter was being refused from going to school? I’m pretty sure she wouldn’t like that at all. I KNOW she wouldn’t be okay with that. And that’s what frustrates me so bad. How can I be younger than her and see it this way. I wish she could understand. I said to Mama, “Mama I think this society needs an awakening. You all think they’re different because you’ve just decided they’re different. The first person thought that and you all just went along with it. If this had never been put in someone's mind we wouldn’t be sitting here having this discussion.” After that comment Mama got mad and sent me to my room.

I’m so sad with how society looks at blacks. I wish people would all be as accepting as I am. And it’s sad that this is how it might be for a while because kids are going to just go along with what their parents think. And if they think differently they’re going to be too afraid to stand up for what they believe in.

Mama has also told me that if these kids are allowed to go to my school she’s not going to allow me to go. I think that should be my decision! Especially since I don’t have a problem

with it. But she's just gonna be stuck in her ways and I'll have to find a way around it. If only I could get her to look at this from a different point of view.

I'm not gonna drop the topic and she will be sure to hear more of how I think. I get my sass from her. She's not gonna like what she has commin. Although I need to be up for maybe a knock down drag out war. Things could get ugly with us both wanting our ways. Oh, Mamas callin me for dinner. You can already tell what I want the table of conversation to be. I'll be back to write how things go.

Elizabeth Eckford / one of the Little Rock Nine (Antinia Garza)

The other eight students and I are attending Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas today. We were all chosen to attend Central High, a prominent school full of white people. I tried to have an optimistic outlook on the day, but it just didn't seem doable. I prepared myself for the day. I even made a black and white dress all by myself so I would have a nice outfit for my first day. So, when i got up in the morning I put the dress on, and went to the kitchen where my momma had already put out breakfast. Pancakes... my favorite. I knew that she was already trying to make up for the terrible day I was about to have. I was so nervous I could barely eat. I had so many thoughts running through my head, "what are they going to think of me?", "everyone is going to hate me", "Why did I agree to go through with this?". I thought so much that I lost track of time, and was almost late to set off for my first challenge of the day; the bus.

The bus wasn't that bad. It was quiet, but I could feel people staring as if I were in the wrong place. I could hear people whispering about me. They were all saying mean things, so I chose not to listen. It made me nervous, but I had been through it all before. The scariest thing was getting off the the bus. As I got off, I could hear the angry roar of the crowd. There was a mob full of angry white parents screaming things that really hurt my feelings. "Get out of that school! Don't stay with *those kind* of people!". This will be forever etched in my brain. I've always wondered why people thought that we were so different than everyone else.

I looked around for the other black students, but I couldn't find them anywhere. Come to find out, I was uninformed of the small changes that were made prior to today, so I was all alone. I managed to stay calm and tried to blend in with everyone else. Once I got to the line of soldiers, I stopped in my tracks. They raised their long guns to my face. I was shaking in my boots, but I held my head up high, and looked for an open space to get through. I looked everywhere, but there was no where to get through. Holding myself together, I turned around and walked away. As I started to walk away, I kept hearing filthy words coming from the crowd. Some people were even talking about how I needed to be lynched. I felt like a foreigner in my home country. After hearing all the hatred that was being thrown at me, I had no idea what to do. I just wanted to breakdown and cry.

That's until I felt a gentle touch on my shoulder. Ms. Grace Lorch was standing beside me. She assured me that everything was going to be alright, and then walked me back to the bus walking closely by my side. I felt safe and relieved when i managed to make it back to the bus, and away from the angry mob.

When the other eight got to the school, they tried to get into the school as well. Once they were turned away, we all met up and went back to Ms. Bates' house. She managed to get the homework that we would have had that day, so we all stayed at her house and did it together. We pretty much ended the day the way we all started... nervous to see what the next day would bring. I never want to go back.