



# The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred-Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools

*Liva Baker*

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Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate rose in a descant above the cacophony of insults and obscenities shrieked by a crowd of angry white women in pincurlers and toreador pants lining the sidewalks leading to the William Frantz Elementary School in a blue-collar section of New Orleans. Their chanting set the pace for a six-year-old black girl, who thought it sounded like a nursery rhyme, to march toward the redbrick building on the sultry, sullen morning of Monday, November 14, 1960. Until that moment, the student body of the William Frantz Elementary School had been entirely white.

The little girl's name was Ruby Bridges. She was braving the crowd's hostility because her mother, the daughter of Mississippi sharecroppers, who could read a little and write a very little, "wanted it better for (her) kids."

(John) Steinbeck described Ruby in his best-selling *Travels with Charley* as "the littlest Negro girl you ever saw, dressed in starchy white, with new white shoes on feet so little they were almost round." As tomatoes, rotten eggs, and spittle whizzed over her head, barely missing her, she looked, said Steinbeck, like a "frightened fawn." The hair ribbon on her pigtail bobbed up and down exuding a perkiness nobody felt.

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