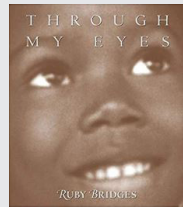


FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT

When it was time for me to start kindergarten, I went to the Johnson Lockett Elementary School. My segregated school was fairly far from my house, but I had lots of company for the long walk. All the kids on my block went to Johnson Lockett. I loved school that year, and my teacher, Mrs. King, was warm and encouraging. She was black, as all the teachers in black schools were then. Mrs. King was quite old, and she reminded me of my grandmother.

What I didn't know in kindergarten was that a federal court in New Orleans was about to force two white public schools to admit black students. The plan was to integrate only the first grade for that year. Then, every year after that, the incoming first grade would also be integrated.

In the late spring of my year at Johnson Lockett, the city school board began testing black kindergartners. They wanted to find out which children should be sent to the white schools. I took the test. I was only five, and I'm sure I didn't have any idea why I was taking it. Still, I remember that day. I remember getting dressed up and riding uptown on the bus with my mother, and sitting in an enormous room in the school board building along with about a hundred other black kids, all waiting to be tested.



Excerpt from **Through My Eyes**, by Ruby Bridges

SECONDHAND ACCOUNT



Excerpt from **Ruby Bridges (1954-)**, by Debra Michals

At the tender age of six, Ruby Bridges advanced the cause of civil rights in November 1960 when she became the first African American student to integrate an elementary school in the South.

Born on September 8, 1954, Bridges was the oldest of five children for Lucille and Abon Bridges, farmers in Tylertown, Mississippi. When Ruby was two years old, her parents moved their family to New Orleans, Louisiana in search of better work opportunities. Ruby's birth year coincided with the US Supreme Court's landmark ruling in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka Kansas*, which ended racial segregation in public schools.

Nonetheless, southern states continued to resist integration, and in 1959, Ruby attended a segregated New Orleans kindergarten. A year later, however, a federal court ordered Louisiana to desegregate. The school district created entrance exams for African American students to see whether they could compete academically at the all-white school. Ruby and five other students passed the exam.