

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Daisy Bates organizer, activist

“What’s happening in Little Rock...is a question of right against wrong”

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Background

Born: November 11, 1914; Died: November 4, 1999

Daisy Bates grew up in Huttig, Arkansas. She was only three years old when her mother was killed by a group of White men. This sad event made her aware of racism and violence at a young age. She was raised in a foster home until she was 15 years old, and she attended a segregated high school. Then she fell in love and moved away with her future husband to live in Little Rock, Arkansas. In Little Rock, Bates took classes at Shorter College and Philander Smith College.ⁱⁱ

Bates’ Resistance

In 1942, Bates started her own newspaper called *The Arkansas Weekly*. It was one of the only newspapers run by Black people. Her newspaper published many stories about the Civil Rights Movement in the south. In 1954, the Supreme Court decided that segregation in schools was illegal. This meant that Black and White students could now go to the same schools.

However, many schools were not willing to cooperate. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) asked Bates if she could help train Black students to integrate schools in Arkansas. In 1957, she chose nine Black high school students to integrate into Central High School in Little Rock. Central High School was an “all-White” school at the time. Bates helped by driving them to school and making sure they stayed safe. She protected them from the racist and violent crowds who did not want Black students attending Central High School.ⁱⁱⁱ

Achievements

Daisy Bates played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement. She was a woman who was determined to integrate Arkansas public schools. In 1963 she was invited to speak at the March on Washington. Bates did such good work in Arkansas that they celebrate “Daisy Bates Day” every year on the third Monday in February. She also won the Medal of Freedom in 1999.

Essential Questions

1. How did Daisy Bates fight against segregation?

2. How can writing in a newspaper be a form of resistance?

3. *“What’s happening in Little Rock...is a question of right against wrong”*

Do we still have a version of Little Rock—a place where schools are still segregated?
What should be done about it?

i Norwood, A. (2017) "Daisy Bates." National Women's History Museum. 2017. Retrieved from www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/daisy-bates

ii Daisy Gatson Bates Biography at Black History Now. (2011, August 11). Retrieved from <http://blackhistorynow.com/daisy-gatson-bates/>.

iii Reed, L. (2000). The Legacy of Daisy Bates. *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 59(1), 76-83. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40027970>