

Warriors dont cry



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

.. to finish their tasks before any blacks could begin theirs, and even if a white person was walking down the street, a black person had to get out of the way and allow them to pass. If a colored person broke one of these laws, they could be beaten, injured, thrown in prison and charged with bogus crimes, or they may even vanish. The colored children were raised by their parents who taught them to expect racism and segregation and to even accept it because any opposition to the white people meant harsher penalties and even more laws to be passed. This was a major reason why even some blacks opposed the integration of colored children into the white schools and into the white society.

They figured that even though the conditions and quality of their children's education was not as good as the whites, at least they would be able to live in a peaceful, non-violent way. Melba recalled a confrontation with a woman at church whom she had known for many years. As she put it, I was startled when a woman I'd seen often enough but didn't really know began lecturing me. For a moment I feared she was even going to haul off and hit me. She was beside herself with anger.

I could barely get my good morning in because she was talking very loud, attracting attention as she told me I was too fancy for my britches and the other people in our community would pay for my uppity need to be with white folks. Well, the students refused to go down without an intense struggle. The NAACP, led by Daisy Bates, organized boycotts against white businesses in Little Rock and even took the case to federal court, where it became a nationwide constitutional crisis. Churches held vigils and prayer meetings, and black friends united together in community efforts to clean up

the town and prove their acceptability. Beals held on tightly to her religious views and kept her faith in God throughout the entire ordeal.

She felt that as long as she was humble and steadfast, then the Lord would reward her in the end. Her faith in God was her one true hope when everything else had failed her and she felt like giving up. Melba also found strength in her grandmother, who was always there for her in the roughest times. Her grandma always knew the right thing to say at the right time in order to provide support and comfort. On September 20, a judge ruled in favor of the students and prevented Governor Faubus from using the National Guard to prevent entry into the school.

On Monday, September 23, the nine black students left for school together. An enormous mob outside was waiting for them but they pressed on. Amidst racial slurs being shouted at them, death threats being proposed, objects being thrown, and human barricades blocking them, the students boldly marched up to the doors of the school. On the outside, they remained stoic, not allowing any emotion to be shown for fear the mob would become even more violent. On the inside, however, Melba feared for her life. She was absolutely sure that her death was imminent and quickly approaching, but the students managed to walk inside.

President Eisenhower had sent in federal troops to make sure that the scene remained safe and that the students made it through the school day without harm. Men in military uniform escorted all of the students around the building. This made Melba feel even more different and awkward than before, but she pressed on, and so did the other students. Even though the

guards were with the students, they still experienced constant hatred and acts of racial violence. Insults were yells, black students were punched, lockers were destroyed, and fights broke out.

Melba even had sticks of dynamite tossed her way, she was stabbed, and a white student intentionally sprayed acid into her eyes, nearly causing permanent blindness. As the year went by the insults decreased gradually, but the hatred still remained. Eventually the troops left and the students had to fend for themselves. Minnijean Brown was expelled just before Christmas because she could not handle the hatred anymore and intentionally dumped a lunch tray on two white boys. She was allowed to come back to the school for the next semester but then permanently expelled for calling a white girl who provoked her white trash. This gave the white students at the school something to be excited about.

The hate crimes began to happen more frequently. Nevertheless, the other eight students never blinked an eye or started anything, they only turned the other cheek in a very brave, almost warrior-like way. The other eight students finished school that year and one of them even graduated. Ernest Green became the first colored student to ever graduate from Central High School. The black students could never have dreamed of a happier day. They had successfully completed the unthinkable. Even though all of the cards were stacked up against them, they managed to fight through all of the hate and emerge as winners in a battle against racism.

This was a huge victory for the entire African-American society. But the war was not over. The governor signed a bill that allowed him to shut down all

four of Little Rock's public schools. The families of the Little Rock Nine (now eight) students fell under enormous pressure from all sides. Some of them lost their jobs, some moved, and other gave up.

Melba and four other students took correspondence courses from Arkansas State University while waiting for the high schools to open. The case was already in the Supreme Court and Beals knew it was only a matter of time. She patiently waited until the 1959 ruling was announced that declared Governor Faubus's bill unconstitutional, forcing him to reopen the doors. Melba Beals did not, however, go back to Central High School. During the period when the schools were closed down, the death threats and violent acts toward Melba's family escalated.

Fearing her life, Melba moved to California to live in a safer environment where she could continue working toward her educational dreams. The members of the Little Rock Nine, along with help from their family members, community, churches, and national organizations proved that although some people will go to great lengths in order to prevent desegregation, with hard work and determination, and a little bit of luck, things can and will get better. They were part of a stepping stone that helped the civil rights movement to take off and eventually led to complete integration of all ethnic groups in America. The definition of a warrior is one who is engaged in or experienced in battle, or in the military life; a soldier; a champion. Melba Beals proved to be a warrior throughout all of the events that surrounded the integration of Central High School.

Although she eventually had to leave town, she and the other eight students showed true bravery and courage when they decided to scale the walls of segregation and end the oppression of the white people in Little Rock. Beals was truly woman who fought hard and kept her faith in route to becoming a warrior and eventually a champion in the fight for civil rights. Sources: Beals, Melba Patillo. Warriors Don't Cry. Pocket Books. (February 1995).

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