

Ruby Bridges Biography - Whole Class Shared Writing

We read a biography about the life of Ruby Bridges. It didn't tell us much about her adult life, so we did our own research and wrote the last two paragraphs together.

Who Is Ruby Bridges?

Ruby Bridges was born in Tylertown, Mississippi, in 1954. She was the first African-American child to go to a white school after desegregation (the ending of racial segregation), in southern America. At this time, she was only six.

In 1954, the Supreme Court in America ruled that schools should no longer be segregated. Even though it became law to desegregate schools, it took a number of years for African-American children to be able to go to white schools and, even then, there was a lot of resistance.

People expected there to be trouble for Ruby when she started at the William Frantz School. To keep her safe, she was driven and walked into school by four US Federal Marshals. At school, there were crowds of people protesting, shouting rude names and throwing things because they did not want African-American children coming to the white school. There was so much trouble that the white children had been kept at home, so there were no classes that day. A famous painting was done by Norman Rockwell of this iconic walk to school called 'The Problem We All Live With'.

Only one white teacher, Mrs Henry, agreed to teach Ruby. Mrs Henry's choices also made her unpopular with the white parents, but she did not care and saw Ruby as an important individual. Other parents kept their white children away from Ruby, so, for a whole year, there was only Ruby and Mrs Henry together in one classroom for lessons, break times and even for meals. Thankfully, after the first year, white children started to return to Ruby's class and the Federal Marshals stopped taking her to school. She had found the first year very hard and knew that children did not want to play with her because of the colour of her skin.

After graduating from high school, Ruby became a travel agent. Her career lasted 15 years. Later, she left to become a parent liaison officer (at her former primary school). In 1984, she married Malcolm Hall and they had four sons. It must have been tough for Ruby, when in 2006, one of her sons was involved in a fatal shooting incident. Christopher, Sean and Craig are her surviving sons. Throughout her adult life, she has worked as an activist, fighting for equality for black people. President Barack Obama, invited her to the well-known White House, on July 15, 2011, where he told her, “I think it’s fair to say that if it hadn’t been for you guys, I might not be here.”

Ruby Bridges lives in New Orleans with her husband, not far from Tylertown, Mississippi, where she went to school. She will be remembered for being the first black child to go to an all-white school in southern America. Her bravery, resilience and desire for justice, gives black people better opportunities to this day.

