

HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME: SEARCHING FOR THE SPIRIT OF JUSTICE IN THE LITTLE ROCK NINE CRISIS AND NEW MILLENNIUM

By **Conra D. Gist**

As a child I could not really understand the meaning and depths of my parents' faith. It was only recently that the profundity of their religious affirmation broke through to me. I realized that they and the others of Macedonia possessed something essential to the very survival of black humanity, and it ought not be dismissed or belittled.¹

Holy. Sacred. Divine. Revered. These are a few of the synonyms associated with the word *hallowed*. It is referenced at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer spoken by Jesus in the Gospels—"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your Name."² *Hallowed* denotes a submission to something greater in force and magnitude that must be acknowledged—a bowing to and making a way for. An obligatory honoring of an omnipotence. Despite the importance of what is hallowed, Cone's statement suggests that it can be missed, overlooked, devalued. The fact that that which demands the most attention and respect—the hallowed places—can go unnoticed seems contradictory. But there are many hermeneutical interpretations for understanding the word that compete for conclusions drawn about life events.

The integration of Central High School on September 25, 1957, by the Little Rock Nine—Terrance Roberts, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed, Minnijean Brown, Jefferson Thomas, Carlotta Walls, Gloria Ray, and Melba Pattillo—was a monumental moment. A synthesis of the key events leading up to the Little Rock Nine Crisis makes it apparent that positionality influences the interpretation of how, why, or if justice was executed on that day. Gloria Ladson-Billings³ argues that the term *social justice* is often either simplistically critiqued (e.g., targeted by rightist political groups in the U.S.) or uncritically appropriated (e.g., utilized as the latest buzzword to secure funding) based on the interests of stakeholders. To challenge the empty rhetorical use of the term *social justice*, Ladson-Billings, instead, calls for justice: just justice.

This article grapples with this call for justice by 1) looking for evidence of its footprints from multiple vantage points in the cultural, political, and social fabric of Little Rock during the 1957 integration of Central High School; 2) exploring the phenomenological experience of being guided by the spirit of justice; and 3) contemplating the path toward hallowed and sacred justice acts in the new millennium.

Looking from Multiple Vantage Points

The social positions and roles people occupy enact influence over their interpretations of events, and in the case of the Little Rock Nine Crisis, the view of whether or not justice was executed. There is the legislative perspective on the developments leading up to the integration of Central High School—the *Brown v. Board of Education* case and subsequent nationwide struggles to begin desegregation in schools. This viewpoint calls attention to the vital role judicial and executive branches of government played in upholding (e.g., requiring the enforcement of *Brown*), advancing (e.g., establishing additional legal precedents such as *Aaron v. Cooper*), and stagnating (e.g., various interpretations of *Brown II*) justice efforts. Elected government officials—United States President Eisenhower and Arkansas Governor Faubus—tapped the armed National Guard and 101st Airborne Division to enforce various executive orders, which offers a militarization view of how executive power is enforced.

However, the negotiation and struggle for power between state and federal leaders is also apparent in this crisis. This raises the question of the motive of leaders—were they, in the case of Eisenhower, more concerned with justice or power?

With the Southern Manifesto⁴ challenging the validity of the U.S. Constitution over states, was the presence of the 101st Airborne Division about justice or order? The political vacillation of support and challenge to desegregation efforts on the part of politicians also highlights the ways in which personal ambitions can eclipse the mission of justice efforts. For instance, Faubus's political agility on addressing desegregation during his 1956 re-election illustrates this point, as he placated different voting constituencies (e.g., White moderates, hard-nose segregationists, and some Blacks) when necessary until his political future demanded that he take a stand in 1957.⁵

The organizational capacity and influence of the NAACP and figureheads of leadership, such as Daisy Bates, spotlight the galvanizing power of collective justice acts that organized allies and supporters from various walks of life committed to desegregation in schools.⁶ Bates's legacy is even more remarkable given that there was not a formal protest agenda in Little Rock, in part because the Black leadership leaned towards Booker T. Washington's view of accommodation and the Black elite were concerned about the privileges they might lose.⁷ Yet Bates's commitment to bring key stakeholders together and lead a relentless effort over segregationist attacks on advancing Black educational opportunities in Little Rock was undaunted. Still, there is also the economic perspective—the business leaders and financial investors who were focused on ensuring the prosperity of the city, but not necessarily the justice of the city. Only when financial resources became restricted and the flood of investors halted did business elites become actively concerned about resistant segregationist efforts in the city.⁸ A council of White women, many who were wives of business and professional elites, organized the Women's Emergency Committee to stop the school closure plans advanced by Faubus for the following 1958-1959 school year.⁹ Their efforts were not solely in pursuit of justice, but rather in solidarity with the business community's interest in maintaining their quality of life and the social and financial prestige of the state. There were also the journalists and media representatives who portrayed desegregation efforts from the angle of a national groundswell to eradicate racial inequality. The challenges and disgraces of states and communities were no longer private affairs, but matters of public discourse and contention.

And then there are the tangible and intangible assaults on humanity executed by the tormentors of justice in the city. These assaults included the national guards who blocked Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine, from entering the building alone on September 4, 1957; the taunts and shouts of profanity and vulgarities tossed as multiple small knives aimed to debilitate the spirit of a young mind; the enraged mob that chased Melba Pattillo, another of the Little Rock Nine, and her mom from the school that same day; the countless unsubstantiated arrests—the state-sanctioned violence from federal and Arkansas authorities, which was evident in the myriad attacks with no arrest; the burning of crosses and house fires at the Bates residence; the loss of employment opportunities by the parents of the Little Rock Nine. Mary Ray (Gloria Ray's mom) resigned from her job after harassment; Cartaloyou Walls (Carlotta Wall's father) had to seek employment out of state when contractors refused to employ him; Ellis Thomas (Jefferson Thomas's father) lost his job; Birdie Eckford (Elizabeth Eckford's mother) was fired.¹⁰ The forced escape to other cities for refuge—Terrance Roberts's family migrated to California. The constant state-sanctioned legal harassment also presents another perspective—Arkansas Attorney General Bruce Bennett targeted Bates, in particular, filing a series of lawsuits including IRS charges.¹¹ Ultimately this impacted Bates's *State Press*, and in 1959 it closed, with a circulation that had dwindled from 17,000 to 6,000. This was a significant loss since the press served as a tool for advocacy, in particular during the national campaign against police brutality in the death of Sergeant Thomas P. Foster in 1942.¹²

There are also the facts of the sociopolitical context of the city. The Black poor, who represented a majority of the Black populace in Little Rock, suffered disproportionately from higher rates of adult mortality, infant mortality, and disease.¹³ The educational disparities between Blacks and Whites were also striking. The Black segregated Dunbar High School had no gymnasium, hand-me-down textbooks, and limited library resources, in comparison to the White segregated Central High School. The salary differentials between teachers and principals at the two high schools (Dunbar teachers, 724, versus Central teachers, 1,216)¹⁴ also exhibit the subordinate positioning of Blacks in the educational system. Despite the successful suit for salary

equalization between White and Black teachers by Sue Cowan Williams and the Classroom Teachers Association in 1945, “the school board already instituted a new rating system that largely persevered existing inequalities.”¹⁵

Looking from these multiple standpoints, it is clear that various cultural, economic, humanistic, political, and social agents shaped the Little Rock Nine Crisis, and they were not all concerned with the execution of justice, but rather, in many cases, the denial of it.

Being Guided by the Spirit of Justice

But there is also the spiritual perspective on what took place in September 1957. The autobiography of Melba Pattillo offers several clues regarding the phenomenological experience of being guided by the spirit of justice. For example, her Grandma India’s belief that “even when the battle is long and the path is steep, a true warrior does not give up. If each one of us does not step forward to claim our rights we are doomed to an eternal wait in hopes those who would usurp them will become benevolent. The Bible says, WATCH, FIGHT, AND PRAY”¹⁶ likely sustained her. She also took courage from the knowledge of her mother’s accomplishment as one of the first Blacks to receive her graduate degree from the University of Arkansas, which she described as follows: “the first graduate degree I know of in this family, Grandma India said, stroking the document as though it were the same precious tablet of Moses in the Bible.”¹⁷ The spirit of justice, then, was evident in the mind state taught by Grandma India and Melba’s mother, who urged Melba Pattillo to hold on and not give in. It was the unseen weapons that girded the warrior—righteousness, salvation, faith, peace, truth, and the Word.¹⁸ At a point of exasperation when Melba wanted comfort, Grandma India chided,

You’ll make this your last cry. You’re a warrior on the battlefield for your Lord. God’s warriors don’t cry, cause they trust that he’s always by their side. The women of this family don’t break down in the face of trouble. We always act with courage, and with God’s help, we ship trouble right on out . . . Now, you get yourself together, read the Twenty-Third Psalm, and don’t ever let me see you behave this way again.¹⁹

When Melba prepared to walk off to school on the morning of September 5, Grandma hugged her and “God is always with you, she whispered as she blinked back tears.”²⁰ From the view of the matriarchs in Melba’s family, the spirit of justice surrounded the Little Rock Nine. After all, her Grandma India taught, “We are not these bodies, we are spirits, God’s ideas. But you must strive to be the best of what God made you. You don’t want to be White, what you really want is to be free, and freedom is a state of mind.”²¹ So perhaps it is the made-up minds of the Little Rock Nine who refused to turn back that represent the most palpable phenomenological experience of being guided by justice.

The day after the Little Rock Nine integrated Central High School, Dr. King gave the following words of encouragement:

You must meet physical force with soul force. You have no alternative but to continue the struggle for integrated schools but do it with a thorough commitment to Christian principles. If the white mobs of Little Rock choose to be un-Christian and disgracefully barbaric in their acts, you must continue to be Christian and dignified in yours.²²

The soul force Dr. King identifies can be connected to the Christological idea expressed in John 1:5 that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”²³ Justice was the light, but the idea of overcoming reveals the struggle that took place. In this sense, a consecration of justice was performed on the sidewalk perimeter of Little Rock Central High School²⁴—from Jones Street, to 16th Street, to Park Street, past the sitting pool, and up the steps of the school.

Yet, even though Dr. King encouraged them to embody nonviolent justice tactics, consecration has sacrificial cost. Prolific and renowned legal scholar Derrick Bell references the prehistoric view that the “shedding of innocent blood effected a renewed connection between the people and their gods” and draws the comparison to the ways in which through the settling of “potentially costly differences between two opposing groups of whites [or any dominant group], a compromise is effected that depends on the involuntary sacrifice of Black rights or interests [or any oppressed group].”²⁵ In this sense the spirit of justice moved through the darkness of hatred, contentions, outbursts of

wrath, selfish ambitions, and dissensions²⁶ manifested that day, and implored the Little Rock Nine to carry on. To shine on as the light, despite the sacrificial blows swirling in a sociopolitical city-wide context committed to police state control (e.g., 1957 House Bill 322 authorized the state to resist the federal government's school integration efforts and its wide investigatory powers); hate (e.g., 1957 House Bill 323 exempted compulsory school attendance in integrated schools); and "witch hunts" and mania (e.g., 1957 House Bill 324 required the NAACP to report its funds and membership list).²⁷ If the spirit of justice was evidenced through the soul power (Dr. King's assertion) and spiritual intellectual prowess (as evidenced in Melba's autobiography) that day, then it was also concerned about the dehumanization of Blacks in general, and Black children in particular. Dr. King illustrates the connection between the spirit of justice and the quality of life people experience by explaining:

The gospel at its best deals with the whole man, not only his soul but his body, not only his spiritual well-being, but his material well being. Any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial.²⁸

On that day, on those grounds, it is not difficult to imagine that the spirit of justice cloaked the hostile grounds they walked on to permit passage in a sociopolitical spiritual darkness. The students, parents, allies, and church and organizational leaders were, for those rooted in the Christological faith, guided by "a deep conviction in the divine hand of justice who involves humanity in a type of spiritual struggle for establishing the right order of things in the world."²⁹ This directly relates to Cone's Black liberation theology belief that "one's social and historical context decides not only the questions we address to God but also the mode or form of the answers given to the questions."³⁰ The Little Rock Nine's ability to walk out this belief guided by the spirit of justice represents the use of the Gospel, on the part of some, to ground their struggle for liberation.

Forging Hallowed Paths in the New Millennium

Any time it takes 11,500 soldiers to assure nine

*Negro children their constitutional rights in a democratic society, I can't be happy.*³¹

Despite evidence of the spirit of justice and the ways in which it guided the Little Rock Nine on the grounds of Central High School, the spirit of justice did not deliver a final obliteration of darkness. Although Ernest Green was the first Black student to graduate from Central High School in 1958, the school closed the following year (1958-1959). This Lost Year³² signifies the relentless attack of segregationists in educational and political leadership to assert ongoing massive resistance. The two primary tools used by Arkansas Governor Faubus to orchestrate the school shutdown in Little Rock were interposition³³ and privatization.³⁴ After closing the schools Faubus "pressured the school board into leasing the public schools to the Little Rock Private School Corporation (LRPSC)."³⁵ When that failed, he assisted LRPSC in purchasing private buildings with public funds to operate schools.³⁶ This demonstrates the ways in which historically, during a time of deeply seated racial inequality in education, privatization was utilized to circumvent racial equality.

The Virginia governor James Jackson Kilpatrick, being a vocal promoter of the Southern Manifesto, was one of the first leaders in the South to "use public funds to pay students to attend private schools."³⁷ Day notes, "During the Civil Rights Era, Southern legislators ultimately passed over 450 statutes designed to obstruct desegregation and hinder the activities of Civil Rights workers."³⁸ The White Citizens Council played a dominant role post-*Brown* across the South and utilized various tactics such as publishing names of *Brown* supporters in local newspapers, which resulted in severe restriction of financial and social mobility (e.g., loss of jobs, loans, homes) of the named. This resistance to racial equality is evidence of what Bell terms the racial-retrenchment phenomenon in a counternarrative of legal argument against the passing of *Brown*, explaining:

The racial reform-retrenchment pattern so evident in this Court's racial decisions enables a prediction that, when the tide of white resentment rise and again swamp the expectations of Negroes in a flood of racial hostility, this Court, and probably the country, will vacillate; then, as with the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil Rights

Amendments, it will rationalize its ability—let us be honest—its unwillingness to give real meaning to the rights we declare so readily yet so willingly sacrifice when our interests turn to new issues or more pressing concerns.³⁹

Given this view, Bell argues that in pursuit of future justice the lessons of the past should be heeded. His primary caution is that the goal of racial equality should not use overreliance on court orders to achieve justice, arguing, “The danger with our commitment to the principle of racial equality is that it leads us to confuse tactics with principle”⁴⁰ and “equality by proclamation not only failed to truly reflect the complexity of racial subordination, it also vested the government and the courts with the ultimate moral authority to define American freedom.”⁴¹ Ladson-Billings also argues for a more expansive approach to justice, quoting the work of Amartya Sen that “justice is ultimately connected with the way people’s lives go, and not merely with the nature of institutions surrounding them.”⁴² To combat the shortcomings of this approach, Bell recommends the “review and replacement of racial-equality ideology with specific programs leading to tangible goals” because “African Americans need a rationale basis on what we can gain for ourselves rather than what we can obtain from courts or other government entities.”⁴³ This requires advancing a more pragmatic approach to justice that looks to local and community-based solutions and “professionals able to articulate racially realistic positions that touch some whites in the pocketbook, expecting that their sense of justice will follow.”⁴⁴ Specific to the work of educators, Ladson-Billings makes similar claims in her recommendations of what justice looks like in praxis via the justice work of critical scholars in the areas of culturally sustaining and hip hop pedagogies.

In a 2015 MLK interview, Cone stated, “The #BlackLivesMatter movement reminds me of the civil rights and black power movement of the 1960s. It’s the closest thing to the movement that gave rise to Black Liberation Theology.”⁴⁵ This is poignant because Black Liberation Theology is the consciousness-raising intellectual place where Cone began to apply lessons of his lived experiences in ways that shaped his activist vision. This is evident when he explains, “The Black church taught me to deal with the contradictions of life and provided a way to create meaning in community; this perspective on life is called the ‘art of survival’; but in the Black church, we call it the ‘grace of God.’”⁴⁶

The interviews of spotlighted founders of the #BlackLivesMatter movement reflect similar ontological experiences, in that they sought to make meaning of life experiences and reimagine a view of the world that expands beyond narrow positionalities to incorporate an expansive intersectionality of struggle. One of the cofounders, Alicia Garza, describes the #BlackLivesMatter movement as a “love note to our people” that looks to advance a “new program for liberation in the country” that “elevates the leadership and participation of folks who have been excluded.”⁴⁷

Patrisse Cullors, another cofounder, describes state violence as an opportunity to look at many other things because “our movements have not been good at holding race and gender and queerness and some struggle against . . . some enemy with a deadline . . . all in the hands and hearts and heads at the same time.”⁴⁸ There is inspirational capital in the #BlackLivesMatter leaders’ movement that has elevated global awareness and calls for solidarity to “recruit people who are ready and have been waiting.”⁴⁹

Their work suggests that perhaps what is most important for the advancement of justice acts is to challenge and inspire people not to overlook, miss, or devalue the callings of the spirit of justice in this current moment. Kirkland challenges folks to wake up from “post-racial mythologies that typify the age of Obama” and eloquently asserts:

Indeed certain things in our world endure. Every 28 hours, a bird flies free of a lonely nest. A day, depending on the season, gets longer or shorter. Every 28 hours a mother kindles a novel wish for her vibrant, young child. Every 28 hours, a fresh day is beginning for some, but not for all. Every 28 hours, there is a new Freddie Gray . . . Michael Brown . . . Renisha McBride . . . Rakia Boyd . . . Eric Garner . . . Remarly Graham . . . Amadou Diallo . . . James Powell . . . Edmund Perry . . . Oscar Grant . . . Sean Bell . . . Yvette Smith . . . Victor Steen . . . Steven Rodriguez . . . Aiyana Jones . . . Carlos Alcis . . . Christopher Kissane . . . Deion Fludd . . . Justin Slipp . . . Duane Brown . . .

Akai Gurly . . . Walter Scott . . . Trayvon Martin . . . etc. The use of deadly force has become so standard in the U.S. that every 28 hours an unarmed Black person is shot by a police officer or vigilante acting as a proxy for the State.⁵⁰

Although many advances have taken place in Little Rock since September 1957, inequality still persists. For example, geographically segregated neighborhoods;⁵¹ the recent takeover of the Little Rock School Board by the state;⁵² almost 50% of students in Little Rock attend schools that are underperforming;⁵³ the elimination of state funds to execute desegregation plans;⁵⁴ concern over re-segregation patterns that may result in the absence of court oversight;⁵⁵ and persistent inequitable schooling facilities in comparison to wealthier areas.⁵⁶ To address these longstanding systemic and structural inequities, cultural innovators, justice leaders, and difference makers must work to create knowledge and identify ways of knowing by envisioning citizens and teachers as a critical mass of reconcilers who work to engage schools in a transformative relationship with justice.⁵⁷ We must take heart in our ability to form a more just society, no matter the challenges that abound, and this is the core conviction of Black Liberation Theology: the carrying out with all diligence of the belief in what the eyes cannot see. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.”⁵⁸

The late trailblazing legal scholar Derrick Bell offers a more measured view of progress post-*Brown* that profoundly interweaves the challenges and possibilities ahead as we search for justice in the new millennium:

The world is moved by diverse powers and pressures creating cross currents that unpredictably, yet with eerie precision, determine the outcome of events. Often invisible in their influence, these forces shape our destinies, furthering or frustrating our goals. The perfection for which we strive is elusive precisely because we are caught up in a myriad of manifestations of perfection itself.⁵⁹



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Notes:

1. James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 12.
2. New King James Version, “Matthew 6:9,” <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6%3A9>.
3. Gloria J. Ladson Billings, “Social Justice in Education Award (2015) Lecture,” <http://www.aera.net/EventsMeetings/AnnualMeeting/PreviousAnnualMeetings/2015AnnualMeeting/2015AnnualMeetingWebcasts/SocialJusticeinEducationAward%282015%29LectureGloriaJLadson-Billings/tabid/15943/Default.aspx>.
4. John Kyle Day, *The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation*, (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 3. The Southern Manifesto is a Declaration of Constitutional Principles, signed by all members of the Arkansas congressional delegation, stating opposition to both federally mandated public school desegregation as declared in the U.S. Supreme Court Decision *Brown v. Board of Education* and growing Civil Rights Movement.
5. John A. Kirk, *Redefining the Color Line: Black Activism in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1940-1970*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002).
6. *Ibid.*, 130.

7. Ibid., 17.
8. Ibid., 134.
9. Ibid., 135.
10. Ibid., 129.
11. Ibid., 126.
12. Ibid., 44.
13. Ibid., 17.
14. Ibid., 15. The Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Museum noted a salary difference of \$344/month at Dunbar High School vs. \$500/month at Central High School.
15. Ibid., 43.
16. Melba Pattillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High* (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1994), 3.
17. Ibid., 13.
18. New King James Version, "Ephesians 6:14-18," <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+6%3A+14-18&version=NKJV>.
19. Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry*, 57.
20. Ibid., 46.
21. Ibid., 10.
22. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Dr. King Asks Non-Violence in Little Rock School Crisis," *Atlanta Daily Word*, September 26, 1957, accessed June 1, 2015, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/liberation_curriculum/pdfs/570926-004.pdf.
23. New King James Version, "John 1:4," <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+1&version=NKJV>.
24. Central High School was voted America's Most Beautiful High School in 1927.
25. Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes of Racial Reform* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 29.
26. New King James Version, "Galatians 5:20," <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+5%3A20&version=NKJV>.
27. Grif Stockley, *Daisy Bates: Civil Rights Crusader from Arkansas* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi), 93-94.
28. Dr. Martin Luther King, quoted in Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, "Why God Is Black: ALL TOGETHER Podcast Featuring James Cone," *Huff Post Religion*, January 16, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/16/god-is-black-james-cone_n_6487012.html.
29. Conra D. Gist, "A Call to Action: Teaching for Social Justice," in *Sparkling the Genius: The 2013 Woodson Lecture*, ed. Karsonya Wise Whitehead (Baltimore, MD: The Apprentice House), 30.

30. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 14.
31. Daisy L. Gatson Bates, quoted in Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Arkansas Museum Guide.
32. This is the term commonly used to describe the school closure in Little Rock in 1958-1959.
33. Day, *Southern Manifesto*, 12. Interposition is an alleging that a state government possessed the right to “interpose” between its populace and the federal government when that state determined that its citizens’ rights as guaranteed by the United States Constitution were infringed, until the dispute in question is resolved.
34. *Ibid.*, 13. Privatization is described as the use of public funds to support private initiatives, such as the opening of private schools and the payment of students to attend.
35. Kirk, *Redefining the Color Line*, 133.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Day, *Southern Manifesto*, 12.
38. *Ibid.*, 11.
39. Bell, *Silent Covenants*, 26.
40. *Ibid.*, 189.
41. *Ibid.*, 186.
42. Ladson Billings, “Social Justice in Education Award (2015) Lecture.”
43. Bell, *Silent Covenants*, 189.
44. *Ibid.*, 192.
45. James H. Cone, quoted in Raushenbush, “Why God Is Black.”
46. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 2.
47. Alicia Garza, “Building Movements Without Shedding Differences,” The Laura Flanders Show, <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/29813-building-movements-without-shedding-differences-alicia-garza>.
48. Patrisse Cullors, “Taking on the Sheriff with Art and Activism,” The Laura Flanders Show, <http://grittv.org/?video=taking-on-the-sheriff-with-art-and-activism-patrisse-cullors-and-kai-lumumba-barrow-grittv>.
49. Garza, “Building Movements.”
50. David E. Kirkland, “Making Black Lives Matter in Classrooms: The Power of Teachers to Change the World,” *Huff Post Education*, May 28, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-e-kirkland/making-black-lives-matter_b_7453122.html
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52. Denisa R. Superville, “Arkansas State Board Takes Over Little Rock School District,” *Education Week*, January 29, 2015, blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2015/01/arkansas_moves_to_take_over_li.html.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Jesse Washington, “Little Rock Schools, Are They Finally Desegregated?” *The Baxter Bulletin*, January 17, 2014, <http://www.baxterbulletin.com/story/news/2014/01/15/little-rock-schools-are-they-finally-desegregated/4485213/>.
55. John Wihbey, “School Resegregation, Race and America’s Future: Recent Research,” *Journalist’s Resource*, May 5, 2014, <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/education/school-segregation-race-americas-demographic-future-update-recent-research>.
56. Dexter Mullins, “Desegregation Funding Dries Up in Little Rock, but Problems Remain,” *Al Jazeera America*, February 23, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/2/23/desegregation-fundingdriesupinlittlerockbutproblemsremain.html>.
57. Gist, *Call to Action*, 36.
58. New King James Version, “Hebrews 11:1-2,” <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11%3A1-2&version=NKJV>.
59. Bell, *Silent Covenants*, introduction chapter quote.

LESSON PLAN:

SEARCHING FOR JUSTICE IN MEMOIRS: EXPLORING THE LIVES OF DAISY BATES, MELBA PATTILLO, AND CARLOTTA WALLS IN THE LITTLE ROCK NINE CRISISBy: **Conra D. Gist****Connections to High School Learning Expectations**

This learning series addresses a few of the big ideas emphasized in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the College, Career, Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. The CCSS Literacy and History/Social Studies Standards emphasize the importance of independence, strong content knowledge, valuing evidence, developing a critical mindset, and understanding diverse perspectives and cultures. These commitments are addressed in this learning series by enabling students to critically analyze and evaluate three different memoirs; identify and critique differences across accounts; and develop a rigorous and creative product to demonstrate their understandings of the justice acts of Daisy Bates, Carlotta Walls LaNier, and Melba Pattillo Beals. The primary goal of the C3 Framework is to develop knowledgeable, thinking, and active citizens. The content centered in this learning series addresses a similar goal by allowing for students' nuanced and complex understanding of civic engagement and action through a close investigation of memoirs written by Black women who encountered extreme hardship and difficulty due to social, political, and economic inequality.

Learning Series Overview

The article "Hallowed Be Your Name: Searching for the Spirit of Justice in the Little Rock Nine Crisis and New Millennium" describes the multiple vantage points for understanding the Little Rock Nine Crisis, and in particular, applies a spiritual epistemology of justice as a lens of interpretation. This lesson plan builds on the idea of looking from various vantage points by wearing a Black feminist lens for investigating the experiences of three Black women intimately involved in the Little Rock Nine Crisis: Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls. The core of the learning series is designed around a comparative memoir process that asks students to consider how the varied experiences of Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls as Black women during that time period influenced their understandings of justice in the U.S., the choices they made as it relates to education and advocacy, and how they worked to live free and unsubordinated lives.

The design of the learning series takes students through a self-paced inquiry, research, analysis, and sense making process through the reading of memoirs by Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls. Unlike a typical learning plan that functions in the context of a unit of study or takes place as an isolated teaching episode, this learning series is designed and written to function as an independent self-paced or small group class exploration project to unpack, dissect, compare, and evaluate three accounts of the Little Rock Nine Crisis. In part this is because the learning series requires the in-depth reading and analysis of three memoirs, utilizing a Black feminist lens to pay cultural and intellectual homage to their voices by reading each detailed and lengthy account. However, if time is a factor, this process can be curtailed by copying a few chapters from each memoir, or if reading level is a factor, other children's books can be supplemented, although the accompanying questions would have to be refined significantly to address students' readiness levels. There are also numerous lesson plan resources² related to this topic.

Memoir Study Texts

Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1986).

Melba Pattillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High* (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1994).

Carlotta Walls Lanier, *A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School* (New York, NY: Random House, 2009).

Learning Goals

Essential Questions

- Why do people have to pursue justice in society?
- How do you determine if a personal account of lived experiences is an important source of historical knowledge?
- Who can write history? Why?
- How do everyday citizens work toward justice in society?
- How does a person's social standing impact the ways in which they experience and see the world around them?
- Why do people who experience a similar phenomenon develop different accounts? How do you determine the truth about the phenomenon?

Know

- Different pathways Melba Pattillo, Carlotta Walls, and Daisy Bates took to pursue justice and the challenges they endured in the process
- Key details of the familial, social, and educational backgrounds of Melba Pattillo, Carlotta Walls, and Daisy Bates
- The timeline of events leading up to the Little Rock Nine Crisis
- Additional primary sources and resources available for further investigation of the Little Rock Nine Crisis

Understand

- A person's position and standing influences their view of the world and how they relate to others.
- Critical and reflective inquiry can deepen learning and enable people to transfer knowledge to new situations.
- Although individuals may belong to similar racial/ethnic groups other intersecting social positions create within group differences.
- Structural and systemic policies and practices function in ways that regulate certain groups to subordinate positions in U.S. society.
- Everyday people work toward justice to improve their lives, community, institutions, and the broader world.
- Social position and power influence who writes history.

Do

- Unpack, analyze, and evaluate written memoir accounts of Daisy Bates, Carlotta Walls, and Melba Pattillo.
- Identify similarities and differences between the memoir accounts and make claims about the discrepancies.
- Explore additional primary sources and secondary sources to consider differences between accounts and/or enhance and integrate understandings of a particular event.
- Create a virtual, artistic, or literary account/exhibit/review describing the lives of these three Black women and extend interpretations about their work toward justice and the impact on their lives.
- Notate questioning and comparative memoir organizers to scaffold understanding of key events and experiences related to the Little Rock Nine Crisis and the lives of Daisy Bates, Carlotta Walls, and Melba Pattillo.

I. Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

Reading Standards for Informational Texts

Key Ideas & Details

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Craft & Structure

6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Writing Standards

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

II. College, Career & Civic (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

D1.4.9-12: Individually and with others, students will explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how,

through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge.

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

D2.His.3.9-12: Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context

D2.His.4.9-12: Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras

D2.His.5.9-12: Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives

D2.His.6.9-12: Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced

D2.His.8.9-12: Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time

D2. His.11.9-12: Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose

D2. His.12.9-12: Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources

D2.His.14.9-12: Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past

D2.His.16.9-12: Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence

D3.4.9-12: Refine claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance, and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

A. Warm-Up

The learning series will begin with a pre-assessment and description of the culminating performance task.

Pre-assessment: Prior to the beginning of the learning series on the Little Rock Nine Crisis, ask the students to take a moment and complete a pre-assessment slip with questions about the Little Rock Nine Crisis.³ The pre-assessment questions will give you a sense of how knowledgeable students are about the Little Rock Nine Crisis, the experiences of Black girls and women during this time period, and how they worked for justice through the choices they made and actions they took. This will also allow you to anticipate if additional resources will be needed. The same assessment can be given at the completion of the learning series to gauge what students have learned.

Performance Task: To begin the learning series, explain that students will work individually or in small groups to explore the events surrounding the Little Rock Nine Crisis by engaging in a close reading of three memoirs. At the end of the readings, students will be asked to describe their analysis and evaluation of the experiences of three Black women involved in the Little Rock Nine Crisis by choosing from final project options in the RAFT task chart below. Since the learning series is primarily designed to be an independent or small group self-paced experience, there is room to differentiate the types of products that students have the opportunity to produce, as long as they reflect understanding of the learning goals. Students should anticipate sharing their final product and demonstrating all six of the Facets of Understanding.⁴

ROLE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	TOPIC
Web developer	Online users interested in finding information about the lives of Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls	Website	<p>*The topic focus will be the same for all final projects and must 1) focus on a critical synthesis of similarities and differences in the lives of Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls and 2) demonstrate rigorous and thoughtful responses to the essential questions of the unit.</p> <p>*All three memoirs must be referenced in the final project and include 4-6 additional primary or secondary sources.</p> <p>*Completed Comparative Memoir Organizers should be submitted for Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls along with the final project.</p>
Author	Readers interested in learning about the lives of Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls	Informational Article/Book	
Sculptor	Museum patrons interested in learning about the lives of Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls	Monument	
Journalist	Audience of popular newspaper/news show interested in learning about the lives of Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls	Podcast/Video blog	

B. Activity

Snapshot of Practice: The activities below are listed in sequential order and describe the process that can take place independently, in small groups, or in whole class discussion.

1. *Raising Questions and Defending Arguments*

The first part of the learning series will challenge students to think about key questions or areas of inquiry that will explain their understanding of the Little Rock Nine Crisis. To get started, have students read and reflect on the learning series essential questions and write initial responses. Then, students will read the article “Hallowed Be Your Name: Searching for the Spirit of Justice in the Little Rock Nine Crisis and New Millennium” by Conra D. Gist and note possible answers to the essential questions and any additional questions that emerged from the reading. If you decide to have students interact and critique the article as a whole class, you can use the Philosophical Chairs Strategy⁵ to facilitate the article discussion by posing the question of whether the Little Rock Nine Crisis occurred for economic, political, moral, spiritual, or social reasons and having students take sides. Also, you can pose the question of whether justice acts are still necessary on the part of everyday citizens in the new millennium by having students move to different sections of the room based on their answers (e.g., not at all, in very few cases, sometimes, and very often) and defend their choices using evidence from the text, lived experiences, and/or additional sources.

2. *Comparative Memoir Investigation*

The second part of the process will involve a focused reading of three memoirs by Black women intimately involved in the Little Rock Nine Crisis—Daisy Bates, Melba Pattillo, and Carlotta Walls. Although students should be encouraged to cross-reference additional primary and secondary sources related to the Little Rock Nine Crisis based on their interests and curiosity, the primary reading and analytical focus will center on these three texts. Both Bates and Walls had significant assistance in the crafting of their memoirs, but they were developed based on their vision and focus, and as such, are reflective of the memories they believed to be most compelling and valid. Therefore, their experiences and values are centered and will shape significantly students’ interpretations of the Little Rock Nine Crisis.

Before students begin reading the memoirs, have them revisit stories about Daisy, Carlotta, and Melba based on their reading of the “Hallowed Be Your Name” article to activate prior knowledge. For students who had difficulty

surmising key ideas from the article, provide them with the timeline of events⁶ and Little Rock Crisis Overview⁷ to supplement understanding. Then, explain to students that they will utilize a Comparative Memoir Organizer to unpack, dissect, analyze, and evaluate big ideas related to the women's experiences taking up justice acts during the Little Rock Nine Crisis. This process is easily facilitated if students are working independently; however, if they are working in small groups or as a whole class, they can discuss discoveries as they move through chapter chunks to exchange ideas. It will be important to check in on student progress by examining student work, paying attention for any areas where there are misconceptions, and meeting individually or in small groups with students demonstrating similar misconceptions. Below is a sample organizer that can be replicated for the other two memoirs.

Daisy Bates: <i>The Long Shadow of Little Rock</i>	
Scaffolding Questions	Possible Answer/Evidence (cite p. #)
Describe her family background and upbringing.	
What strengths and admirable qualities did she exhibit as a person?	
What significant moments or experiences shaped her belief about the way the world worked?	
What beliefs did she hold about education? What key roles did she play in the Little Rock Nine Crisis?	
How did she work for justice? In what ways, if any, did her advocacy influence the local community?	
In what ways did her racial identity influence the opportunities, decisions, and/or commitments she made? What policies, practices, or institutions presented barriers and challenges based on her race?	
In what ways did her gender influence the opportunities, decisions, and/or commitments she made? What policies, practices, or institutions presented barriers and challenges based on her gender?	
In what ways did her class status influence the opportunities, decisions, and/or commitments she made? What policies, practices, or institutions presented barriers and challenges based on her socioeconomic status?	
Did she live a free and safe life? Why or why not? How did she work to overcome these barriers?	
Due to her involvement in the Little Rock Nine Crisis, what types of sacrifices did she have to make?	

What types of community, familial, or social supports were available for her? Did they help her navigate/overcome obstacles?	
How does she analyze social problems and take action?	
What role did religion or spirituality play in her life? Did she use it as a tool for justice?	
Who is the audience for this account? When was it published? What role did people other than the author play in the development and writing of the memoir?	
How might the account be different/similar if it were written for the perspective of a Black man or White male/female from that time period?	
Memoir Comparative Analysis	
What similarities do you notice between Bates's responses to the questions above and the accounts of Melba and Carlotta?	
What differences do you notice between Bates's responses to the questions above and the accounts of Melba and Carlotta?	
Why do you think these differences in accounts exist?	
What types of primary sources or secondary sources might you research to clarify differences and/or address any questions about this particular account? Why?	
How trustworthy is the memoir account in comparison to other primary sources? Why?	
Any additional questions:	

3. *Making Sense of Sources and Evidence*

After students complete the reading of the three memoirs and Comparative Memoir Organizer, they should revisit the essential questions, consider evidence they found, and note any outstanding questions that emerged based on their reading of the three different memoir accounts.

C. Assessment

4. *Presenting the Final Project*

The last step in the learning series will enable students to develop conclusions about the work of justice through their analysis of the memoirs and develop a creative project that signifies these understandings to further the learning of the

everyday curious citizens. Although there is creative liberty for the final project to be responsive to students' interests and learning styles, it is critical that the project provide significant evidence of their understandings as it relates to the core learning goals. The Facets of Understanding Rubric⁸ can be useful for communicating the learning expectations and assessing understandings.

Notes:

Excerpts from Daisy Bates's memoir: "What It Means to Be a Negro," <http://www.nathanielturner.com/whatitmeanstobenegro.htm>; "Death of My Mother," <http://www.nathanielturner.com/deathofmymother.htm>; "The Death of Daddy," <http://www.nathanielturner.com/deathofdaddy.htm>

Lower-level books on the Little Rock Nine Crisis: *Cracking the Wall: The Struggles of the Little Rock Nine* (Eileen Lucas, Mark Anthony); *The Story of the Little Rock Nine and School Desegregation in Photographs* (David Aretha); *Little Rock Nine* (Marshall Poe, Ellen Lindner); *The Power of One: Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine* (Judith Bloom Fradin, Dennis B. Fradin); *Today the World Is Watching You: The Little Rock Nine and the Fight for School Integration, 1957* (Kekla Magoo); *School Desegregation and the Story of the Little Rock Nine* (Mara Miller); *The Little Rock Nine Stand Up for Their Rights* (Eileen Lucas); *The Little Rock Nine and the Fight for Equal Education* (Gary Jeffrey).

² Little Rock Nine Crisis lesson plans, teaching websites, and related articles:

<http://www.nps.gov/chsc/learn/education/lessonplansandteacherguides.htm>

http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/civil_rights_little_rock.html

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/im104.soc.ush.civil.lr9/little-rock-nine/>

http://crdl.usg.edu/events/little_rock_integration/?Welcome&Welcome

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/df675595-2cf4-4a5b-a425-c92f8c5a6c5c/media-tactics-daisy-bates-first-lady-of-little-rock/>

<http://itvs.org/films/daisy-bates/engagement-resources>

<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/little-rock-battle-school-integration>

<https://zinnedproject.org/materials/warriors-dont-cry-teaching-activit/>

<http://libinfo.uark.edu/specialcollections/findingaids/batesaid/batesaid.html#series6>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/09/the-little-rock-nine/380676/>

³ **Possible Little Rock Nine pre-assessment questions:** What is the Little Rock Nine Crisis? Why did it occur? Who are the key people involved in the Crisis? What were the educational and social experiences of Black female high school students during this time period? In general, what was life like for Black women and girls during this time period? If you decide to do research on the Little Rock Nine Crisis, what steps might you take to begin your research? Why? How will you know the research project was a success?

⁴ **Facets of Understandings based on Wiggins & McTighe (1998):** The Six Facets of Understanding provide a helpful framework for building appropriate assessment tasks: 1) Explain: the student generalizes, makes connections, has a sound theory, can put in their own words; 2) Interpret: the student offers a plausible and supported account of text, data, experience; 3) Apply: the student can transfer, adapt, adjust, address novel issues & problems; 4) Perspective: the student can see from different points of view; 5) Empathy: the student can walk in the shoes of people/characters; 6) Self-understanding: the student can self-assess, see the limits of their understanding, reflect meta-cognitively

⁵ **Philosophical Chairs Discussion:** <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/reading-like-a-historian-taking-positions>

⁶ **Little Rock Nine Crisis timeline:** <http://www.nps.gov/chsc/learn/historyculture/timeline.htm>

⁷ **Little Rock Nine Crisis overview:** <http://www.nps.gov/chsc/planyourvisit/upload/Site%20Bulletin%20Little%20Rock%20Nine.pdf>

⁸ **Rubric for the Six Facets of Understanding:** <http://faculty.fullerton.edu/npelaez/BIOL102/UBDrubric.htm>