On November 14, 1960, Ruby Bridges arrived at William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was her first day at the school. Ruby had no idea how difficult the day would be—and all because of the color of her skin.

As Ruby approached the building, an angry mob called her names. They yelled at the first-grader, telling her to go home. Protected by U.S. officers called marshals, she walked into the school—and into history.

Ruby became the first African-American student to go to the all-white school.

Exactly 54 years later, on November 14, 2014, Ruby walked up to the school again. This time, a crowd welcomed her with applause. They had gathered to watch a statue of Ruby be unveiled at the school.

To most people, the statue represents Ruby's role in the struggle for equality. But to Ruby, it also stands for something else—the power of kids to change the world. “Kids can do anything,” she told Scholastic News Kid Reporter Samuel Davis. “I want them to be able to see themselves in the statue.”

The new Ruby Bridges statue at William Frantz Elementary School

In some parts of the U.S., segregation is allowed in schools and other public places. But in a court case called Brown v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that segregation in public schools is illegal. However, in many Southern states, schools don't integrate right away.
When Ruby was young, segregation, or the separation of people by race, was common in parts of the U.S. It was especially common in the South. In many places there, black children weren't allowed to attend the same schools as white kids. Black people also had to use different public restrooms and drinking fountains than white people.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that segregation in public schools was illegal and had to stop. However, Louisiana and several other states ignored the ruling. In 1960, the U.S. government stepped in and ordered schools in New Orleans to integrate. Ruby was chosen to help lead the way.

**Brave Ruby**

Many white people in New Orleans were upset about the government's order. They protested outside the school every day. Many of them refused to let their kids be in the same class as Ruby. So Ruby ended up in a class by herself for the whole school year. She liked studying with her teacher, Barbara Henry. But she often wished she had other kids to learn with and play with.

Ruby bravely stuck it out. By the next school year, the protests had stopped. Other black students joined Ruby at William Frantz. Many white students returned to the school.

Today, Ruby Bridges hopes that the new statue of her will remind kids that they can help stop injustice. “It doesn’t matter what a person looks like,” she says. “You need to always, always give a person a chance.”

—by Karen Kellaher, with Scholastic News Kid Reporter Samuel Davis

**Unfair Laws**

In Little Rock, Arkansas, nine African-American students are blocked from entering an all-white high school. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sends in U.S. troops to make sure the students are allowed to go to the school.

With Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders present, President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It outlaws segregation in public places like schools, buses, trains, restaurants, and stores.

**Words to Know**

unveiled (uhn-VAYLD) verb. shown in public for the first time

integrate (IN-tuh-grayt) verb. to include people of all races