

Patrons: Baroness Helena Kennedy; Dr Paul Stephenson OBE; Leyla Hussein; Lord Herman Ouseley; Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC, Jean Stallings

A teachers' preparation session for the Journey to Justice travelling exhibition

The exhibition tells six seldom told stories of people involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the USA and makes links with action for justice and human rights here in the UK. There is further information about the exhibition and Journey to Justice in **APPENDIX 3**.

Here are some suggestion of how to prepare your students for a visit to the exhibition. It introduces them to the remarkable stories of two girls: **Ruby Bridges** (aged 6) and **Janie Forsyth McKinney** (aged 12). There are activities to cover two or three hours: if you only want to spend one hour we suggest you stick to 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 10.

1. Show your students the painting *The Problem we all Live With* (1964) by Norman Rockwell.



Here is a low res version: you can find good high res versions online by searching for the artist and title.


Get them to explore the painting. What is happening? Where is the girl going? Who are the men and what are they doing? What is the significance of what is on the wall? Whose 'side' are the four men on? Let them come up with ideas and suggestions.

2. Now share the story of **Ruby Bridges** with them. Choose whatever way you prefer.
 - (a) **Printed text.** For younger children, the interactive Scholastic lesson *Brave Ruby* has audio text and video at <https://sn1.scholastic.com/issues/2018-19/020119.html>. For slightly older ones (perhaps Years 5 to 7) there is her story at <http://bit.ly/1U7u8F4> which gives a tiny bit of context.

(b) **You tell the story.** Here is an outline that you can build on:

Ruby Bridges and Barbara Henry, 1960, New Orleans

In 1960, a 6-year-old girl named Ruby became a powerful symbol of the Civil Rights Movement when she began attending the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. Until then schools had been **segregated**: children went to separate White and Black schools and the standard of education was far worse for Black children. But as a result of protests and court actions by Black people and their white supporters, the government of New Orleans had been forced to **desegregate** schools. Ruby was the first Black child to go to William Frantz School and when she did, white parents pulled their children out of the school. Protesters were trying to show that desegregation wouldn't work. When white teachers and parents boycotted the school, 28-year-old teacher Barbara Henry refused to join them. Instead, she taught Ruby Bridges alone for a year. In the end, Ruby was the only student in first-grade teacher Barbara Henry's class for more than one year.

You could also use the slides at <http://bit.ly/1Ri3vZw> (if they are not visible, click on 'Back to top'. For captions to each slide, click on this image )

Using the slide showing a map of the USA and the states with segregated laws, explain how the American Civil War divided America and how individual states had the right to make their own legislation. Discuss the legacy of slavery and what segregation means. Explain how segregation was legal in southern states and the reasons for the Civil Rights Movement. (see **APPENDIX 2**: timeline of the Civil Rights Movement and Ruby Bridges).

3. There are various possible directions for discussion. You could consider the choices made by people involved:
 - What makes someone like Barbara stand up and resist injustice?
 - What made Ruby's parents and grandparents take the risk they did, knowing what might happen to them? His parents lost their jobs and his very poor grandparents were evicted.
 - What made Ruby, then only 6 years old, able to face a baying crowd of white people outside the school every day and walk through them, accompanied by armed US Marshals?
 - What can we learn from their stories?
4. Today Ruby is in her 60s and runs the Ruby Bridges Foundation which aims to give all children an equal opportunity to succeed. Ruby and Barbara were reunited on *The Oprah Show* in 1996: <http://bit.ly/1qD1j9e> . You could watch this and discuss why Ruby set up her foundation and why the reunion mattered so much to both her and Barbara.
5. You could look more deeply at Ruby's response at the time. Psychologist Robert Coles talks movingly about his observations of Ruby Bridges and how she acted at the age of 6: <http://bit.ly/1ToqlX1> . Why would Ruby perhaps not have been as afraid as we might think? This could lead into students considering how they would act in Ruby's shoes. Ruby herself reflects at <http://bit.ly/27Obc5E>
6. Another possibility is to consider what key strengths both Ruby and Barbara needed every day during that first year: perseverance? courage? faith? wisdom? solidarity? humanity? persistence? (You could also use the quotes in **APPENDIX 1**)



FILE - U.S. Deputy Marshals escort 6-year-old Ruby Bridges from William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, in this November 1960, file photo (AP Photo/File)

7. Now compare Ruby's story with that of a white girl in Alabama one year later, [Janie Forsyth McKinney](#). Her story is at <http://bit.ly/1g46cg0> . It would help to explain something about the Freedom Riders beforehand - that they were Black and White civil rights activists riding long distance buses together to challenge segregation. Janie's father was one of those who attacked the bus and set it on fire. At the age of twelve, she made a different decision. Her story can lead into similar questions as those about Ruby and Barbara. Why did Janie do what she did? What key strengths did she need?
8. Children have been inspired by these stories to write poems, either about Ruby, Barbara or Janie or about their struggles for justice in their own lives. If possible, get hold of the book by Ruby Bridges *Through My Eyes* (Scholastic 1999), showing dramatic, contemporary photographs and including powerful quotes from writers and other adults as well as Ruby and Barbara. Here are three examples of poetry by UK children that may inspire your students to do their own writing:

Ruby's Ordeal

As I leave home,
I am very nervous.
I wonder what will happen?

As I get near the gates
I can hear the angry crowd.
My heart is thudding very, very loudly.

All the way through the crowd,
The angry parents are shouting at me.
I feel really terrified.
I just wish they didn't hate me so.

As I enter the classroom
Mrs Henry asks me if I am alright.
And I say, "Yes, Mrs Henry, I'm fine."

But I am not
In the inside I am not OK.
I feel so sad and upset.

Too upset to cry.

By Carol aged 9. (My parents are from Ghana)

Dear Ruby Bridges,

This is a poem I wrote for you. I hope it impresses you. Even though you were a little girl, you were fierce.

As I walked through the resentful crowd
My heart is beating fast like a deer being chased by a cheetah
I want to run away from all this.

I am heartbroken. I have no friends at school.
The other teachers won't teach me
Every day people shout at me in the street
I want them to stop.

Will the other children come back?
I feel sorry for Mrs Henry,
All alone as well.
I am anxious and worried
"Why do you hate a six-year old so?"

By Izabella (I come from China and I live with my grandma. She is very nice. I am 9 years old)

Dried Flower by Alexandra Letu, Year 8,

(Alexandra was born in Romania and came to the UK aged ?? At school she was bullied for being overweight - an effect of the drugs she took for leukaemia. Inspired by Ruby's story and courage, she worked through her own struggles.

'The project has built up my confidence in speaking about my fears and experiences I have gone through in the past. It

9. Students could make placards showing the positive messages Ruby **should** have seen as she walked into school every day, escorted by US Marshals - messages such as 'Freedom To Learn Together' and 'Black and White Unite'.
10. Tell the students that they will find Ruby's story in the exhibition, as well as more about her if they look inside her school desk. They will also find another five stories of ordinary people who did extraordinary things to bring justice. They will be able to hear some of the music that supported the struggle for equality and to share their own ideas
 - about people who have influenced them and things they care about
 - about how to campaign for human rights and social justice

So what questions will they bring to the exhibition? What do they want to find out about, to discuss?

11. The exhibition connects the US civil rights movement with the UK. Look for what primary school children in Wales did when they heard about a racist's bombs killing four Black girls in Alabama, and how the bus boycott on Montgomery inspired people in Bristol to take action against segregation on the buses. You will also find local examples of people who have been on their own journeys to justice. Can you think of examples you know of?

APPENDIX 1: quotes

2011: Barack Obama as President; the **legacy** of Ruby Bridges.

1999: Harry Belafonte: the **courage and bravery** of Ruby.

Ruby was **inspired by her mother** Lucille Bridges, “an unsung hero, for having the courage and faith to take a stand-not just for her own children but for all children”, RB.

Barbara Henry, white teacher at William Frantz Elementary School, New Orleans. **The importance of perseverance and stamina**

Dr Robert Coles, a child psychiatrist, who was stationed near New Orleans, who offered support to Ruby via the NAACP during her experience, writes of Ruby’s **moral stamina and courage**.

Ruby Bridges: the importance of the **power of education and literacy**.

Ruby’s mother’s strong **faith** inspired and supported Ruby to be courageous and show fortitude

“If it hadn’t been for you (guys) I might not be here, and we wouldn’t be looking at this together.” President Barack Obama in the White House with Ruby Bridges and Barbara Henry, looking at the Norman Rockwell painting *‘The Problem We all Live With’*.

“Nothing can be more moving than watching a small black child climbing the steps to her elementary school that historically and legally did not welcome her presence. Ruby Bridges had been called by her country to perform an act of profound bravery- to become the black child in an all-white school. By this simple act of courage, Ruby moved the hearts and opened the minds of millions of people. Her story was and is an inspiration”, Harry Belafonte in the introduction to *‘Through My Eyes’* by Ruby Bridges.

“Sharecropping is hard work. On the day before Ruby was born, I carried 90 pounds of cotton on my back. I wanted a better life for Ruby”, Lucille Bridges p 7 in *‘Through My Eyes’* by Ruby Bridges

“I grew to love Ruby and to be awed by her. It was an ugly world outside, but I tried to make our world as normal as possible. Neither one of us ever missed a day (for over a year). It was important to keep going”, Barbara Henry p 22 in *‘Through My Eyes’*

“Ruby had a will and used it to make an ethical choice; she demonstrated moral stamina; she possessed honor, courage”. Robert Coles: *‘The Moral Life of Children’*.

“All our schools should be good enough to attract a healthy racial mix, which I believe leads to the most effective learning for everybody. If kids of different races are to grow up to live and work together in harmony, they are going to have to begin at the beginning- in school together. Nowadays I travel a lot, all across the country.In schools, I emphasize the importance of reading. I believe strongly in literacy and the power of education.” P 59 in *‘Through My Eyes’*

When Ruby had nightmares, her mother told her to pray. “Kneeling at the side of my bed and talking to the Lord made everything okay. My mother and our pastor always said you have to pray for your enemies and people who do you wrong and that’s what I did”. P 48 in *Through My Eyes*

APPENDIX 2: Ruby Bridges and Barbara Henry Timeline

Born on September 8, 1954, in Tylertown, Mississippi, Ruby Bridges at 6 became the first African-American child to integrate a white Southern elementary school.

- Ruby moves to New Orleans from Mississippi in 1958 (then aged 4). She attends a segregated kindergarten school.
- Desegregation of New Orleans schools is bitterly opposed since the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that all public schools should be desegregated. Louisiana and many Southern states pass laws to close schools facing racial integration.
- However in 1960 Federal Court in New Orleans passes law forcing 2 white public schools to admit black students. Only the first grade of the schools are to be integrated this first year.
- 4 black children pass test to attend one of the white schools, one of whom is Ruby Bridges. She is chosen for place at William Franz Elementary Public School.
- Monday 14th November Ruby sets off for William Franz Public School for first time. She will be the first and only black child to attend. Ruby and her mother are escorted to school by 4 armed US federal marshals.
- As they approach the school, there are police everywhere; barricades and mobs of white people screaming, shouting, chanting, threatening those who support integration.
"I heard the words, bestial, filthy and degenerate", John Steinbeck (Travels with Charley).
- Integration supporters, including NAACP leaders and white activists are faced with death threats.
- White parents rush to William Franz Public School to take their children out of the school (by the end of the week, only 3 white families remain at the school).
- All teachers except one refuse to teach black children.
- **Barbara Henry**, a young teacher from Boston, who has recently moved with her husband to New Orleans, is the only teacher happy to teach an integrated class.
- Barbara Henry teaches Ruby **alone** in her classroom for a whole year before a few white children start coming back to the school.
- Every day, on approaching the school and leaving at the end of the day, Ruby is escorted by armed federal marshals and has to endure walking through mob of screaming, racist anti-segregationists threatening violence and death.
- Barbara Henry also has a police escort but doesn't feel confident as many New Orleans police are unhappy about enforcing integration.
- A few brave white families carry on attending William Franz School during this year but they are attacked and daily abused. They move away to end the fear and daily ordeal their children have to endure.
- During that year, neither Ruby nor Mrs Henry ever have a single day off. Ruby never complains to Mrs Henry though she asks when the other children will come back.
- Finally, after a year, some white children return to William Franz School and other black children attend and the school becomes integrated.

Timeline of Ruby Bridges's involvement in the civil rights movement

1954: US Supreme Court ordered the end of 'separate but equal' education for African-American children (*Brown v Board of Education*, Topeka, Kansas)

1957: less than 2% of southern schools are integrated. This year President Eisenhower orders federal troops to enforce school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas and protect the 9 black high school students

1958: Ruby Bridges and her family move to New Orleans from Mississippi

September 1960: New Orleans deadline for integration (given by a federal court)

September 1960: Barbara Henry appointed as teacher to William Franz School

November 14 1960: September: Ruby Bridges, escorted by 4 armed US marshals, starts at William Franz Elementary Public School. Nearly all the white parents take their children away from the school and all teachers, except Barbara Henry, refuse to teach a black child

November 14 1960: 3 black girls Leona Tate, Tessie Prevost and Gail Etienne integrate another New Orleans School- McDonogh No 19

May 1961: Freedom Riders are attacked in Alabama whilst testing bus desegregation laws

September 1961: William Franz Public School is integrated

September 1962: James Meredith is the first African American to enrol at the University of Mississippi

1964: Norman Rockwell painting, *The Problem We All Live With* of Ruby Bridges being escorted to school, features on the cover of *Life* magazine.

Ruby's later life

1978?: Graduated from Francis T. Nicholls High School, where no one knew her story, an integrated high school in New Orleans

1993: Ruby's brother Milton is shot and killed in a drug-related incident in New Orleans. His children went to William Franz Public School.

1995: *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles is printed (Scholastic Press)

1996: Bridges is reunited with Barbara Henry on Oprah Winfrey Show

1999: *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges is printed (Scholastic Press)

1999: Ruby Bridges sets up the Ruby Bridges Foundation (www.rubybridgesfoundation.org) with the mission of 'Empowering children to advance social justice and racial harmony', partly in response to her brother's death. Ruby wants to raise funds and campaign for better education and more equal opportunities for poor, children in inner-city schools e.g. William Franz School (which, according to school data 2014, now has 97% black students).

1999- present: Ruby Bridges, often together with Barbara Henry, travel throughout the US to schools, colleges etc. to promote the importance of literacy and education. The Ruby Bridges Foundation promotes the 'values of tolerance, respect and appreciation of all differences'.

January 2009: The inauguration of President Barack Obama

"This is his time," *Ruby Bridges said*. "When he came out and gave his acceptance speech, it hit me; I could see in his demeanor and on his face that he had accepted what his purpose was. He seemed so humbled and so at peace. And I understand that look. And I know what that feeling is like. And you just step out and you go for it. You don't know if you have a day or a year; you just know you have to do it. I used to think about that a lot with Dr. King. That he had to know that he probably wasn't going to see the fruits of his labor. But he accepted it and he stepped out, every day, knowing that one day was going to be the day." *Ruby Bridges on the inauguration of President Barack Obama*

2011: Ruby Bridges visits Barack Obama in The White House to celebrate the hanging of the Norman Rockwell painting *'The Problem We All Live With'* near the Oval Office.

"Since President Obama came into office, I have supported having the painting hung in the White House," *said Ruby Bridges*. "It is the perfect symbol of how much we have accomplished in the last 50 years and a poignant reminder of how far we have left to go."

Friday 14th Nov 2014: Friday marked the 54th anniversary of the day she first walked up the steps to William Frantz Elementary School. She was in New Orleans for the unveiling of a statue in her likeness at her old school and reunions with the Barbara Henry, the white teacher who taught her, and with the sole-surviving U.S. marshal who walked her to school.



APPENDIX 3: Journey to Justice and the exhibition.



Patrons: Baroness Helena Kennedy; Dr Paul Stephenson OBE; Leyla Hussein; Lord Herman Ouseley; Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC, Jean Stallings

Journey to Justice (JtoJ) is a community organisation, a national alliance of educators, artists, film-makers, lawyers, students, musicians, historians, archivists, trade unionists, politicians, youth and community groups, human rights and faith organisations. The vast majority of people involved in JtoJ are volunteers and we have JtoJ groups developing all over the UK.

Our mission and aims are:

to galvanise people to take action for social justice through learning about human rights movements and the arts.

What we do We created a multi-media, interactive travelling exhibition focused on the US civil rights movement and its links to the UK. We tell stories of less well-known men, women and children who were involved and explore factors essential for a human rights movement to succeed. A juke box of freedom songs plays throughout and the exhibition includes art and poetry. We make links to the UK tradition of struggles for rights and freedoms highlighting local histories and the exhibition is a catalyst for an arts and education programme planned in partnership with grassroots organisations. We are now working on a new project to address economic injustice in the UK.

Who for? We work with people who do not see themselves as powerful or 'having a voice', especially the young. A related aim is to enable the wider community to understand the lives of those who are most marginalised and to confront prejudice.

Our website: www.journeytojustice.org.uk

The exhibition <https://journeytojustice.org.uk/the-exhibition/>

You can see a short film about our work with young people: <https://vimeo.com/127012579>

We have chosen to tell stories about: **Ruby Bridges and Barbara Henry** (New Orleans school desegregation); **Bayard Rustin** (phenomenal organiser); **Jean Stallings** (National Welfare Rights Organisation); a Memphis sanitation worker and his wife, **Elmore and Peggy Nickleberry** (economic justice and racism); **Marcia Saunders** (a Freedom Summer Voter Registration volunteer) and **Janice Kesley** from the Birmingham Children's Crusade. We also tell the story of the Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins at a lunch counter where visitors can take part in activities and watch our audio-visual collection.

We demonstrate the range and number of struggles for freedom here over hundreds of years using a map of the UK and we highlight examples of how the US civil rights movement and UK history connect, including: the Bristol bus boycott, 1963; Malcolm X's visits; the Tamla Motown Tour, 1965; a window 'from the people of Wales' for the bombed-out 16th St. Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

The exhibition examines what leads people to become and stay active in campaigns and what makes a human rights movement succeed e.g. motivation, vision, courage, tactics, empathy, organisation, understanding power, allies, leadership, persistence, sacrifice, publicity, training and funding, building links between individuals which galvanise and raise morale.

Wherever we go, there is also a section telling the story of less known local action for justice.