

Then, many of the poor are the wrong age to be seen. A good number of them (over 8,000,000) are sixty-five years of age or better; an even larger number are under eighteen. The aged members of the other America are often sick, and they cannot move. Another group of them live out their lives in loneliness and frustration. They sit in rented rooms, or else they stay close to a house in a neighborhood that has completely changed from the old days. Indeed, one of the worst aspects of poverty among the aged is that these people are out of sight and out of mind, and alone.

The young are somewhat more visible, yet they too stay close to their neighborhoods. Sometimes they advertise their poverty through a newspaper story about a gang killing. But generally they do not disturb the quiet streets of the middle class.

And finally, the poor are politically invisible. It is one of the cruelest ironies of social life in advanced countries that the dispossessed at the bottom of society are unable to speak for themselves. The people of the other America do not, by far and large, belong to unions, to fraternal organizations, or to political parties. They are without lobbies of their own; they put forward no legislative program. They have no face; they have no voice.

Thus, there is not even a cynical political motive for caring about the poor, as in the old days. Because the slums are no longer centers of powerful political organizations, the politicians need not really care about their inhabitants. The slums are no longer visible to the middle class, so much of the idealistic urge to fight for those who need help is gone. Only the social agencies have a really direct involvement with the other America, and they are without any great political power. . . .

Only the larger society, with its help and resources, can really make it possible for these people to help themselves. Yet those who could make the difference too often refuse to act because of their ignorance and smugness. They view the effects of poverty—above all, the warping of the will and spirit that is a consequence of being poor—as choices. Understanding is an important step in breaking down this prejudice.

The United States contains an affluent society within its borders. Millions and tens of millions enjoy the highest standard of life the world has ever known.

But when all is said and done, after one reads the facts, either there are anger and shame, or there are not. And, as usual, the fate of the poor hangs upon the decision of the better-off. If this anger and shame are not forthcoming, someone can write a book about the other America a generation from now and it will be the same, or worse.

## READING REVIEW

1. According to Harrington, what was the "other America"?
2. Name three reasons why Harrington thought the poor in the United States tended to be increasingly "invisible."
3. What solution did Harrington offer to eliminate poverty in the United States?
4. What do you think of Harrington's solution?

## 235 Desegregation: On the Front Lines

A landmark in the history of American civil rights was the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The judges ruled that segregating black students from white students in public education was unconstitutional. They urged that schools should be desegregated "with all deliberate speed."

Desegregation went smoothly in some communities, but elsewhere it was accompanied by protests and violence. One such place was Little Rock, Arkansas. When nine black students attempted to enter Central High School in the fall of 1957, Governor Orval Faubus brought in troops to keep them out, and screaming mobs kept the town in an uproar. The students were able to go to school only when President Eisenhower federalized the National Guard—that is, brought it under federal control—and sent in paratroopers.

The story of the students' first day in school—September 25, 1957—is told here by Daisy Bates, then president of the Arkansas chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Although the students did enter the school, the struggle was far from over. The next year Little Rock's schools were closed down entirely. It was a long time before desegregation was an accomplished fact in the city.

## READING FOCUS

1. What was the significance of this event for American history?
2. How did the black students feel about their long awaited "victory"?

In midafternoon [of September 24] the city was electrified by the news that President Eisenhower had federalized all ten thousand men of the Arkansas National Guard units. . . . The Secretary of Defense ordered 1,000 paratroopers to Little Rock from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The soldiers were part of the 101st Airborne "Screaming Eagle" Division of the 327th Infantry Regiment.

When the Negro and white paratroopers arrived at Camp Robinson, an Army base in the suburb of North Little Rock, there was a general exodus of newsmen from our house. One reporter called back to me, "Come on, Mrs. Bates, aren't you going to see the troops enter the city?"

"No," I replied, "but thank God they're here."

After the newsmen were gone, I walked out onto the lawn. I heard the deep drone of big planes, and it sounded like music to my ears. I walked around the yard. I saw other women standing in their yards, looking upward, listening. I heard the subdued laughter of children and realized how long it had been since I'd heard that sound. Kept within doors in recent days, they now spilled out onto yards and driveways. From an open kitchen doorway Mrs. Anderson was heard singing, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen . . ." A fear-paralyzed city had begun to stir again.

Around 6 P.M., the long line of trucks, jeeps, and staff cars entered the heart of the city to the wailing sound of sirens and the dramatic flashing of lights from the police cars escorting the caravan to Central High School. The "Battle of Little Rock" was on.

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I knew the parents [of the schoolchildren were] waiting to hear from me, [to find out if] the children would be going back to Central tomorrow. I delayed calling them. I was awaiting a call from Superintendent [of Schools Virgil T.] Blossom. Finally, about 10 P.M., I called the parents to tell them I had not heard from Mr. Blossom. I assumed that the mob would be at the school the next morning and therefore decided that the children could not be sent to Central the next day, troops or not.

From *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* by Daisy Bates.

Shortly after midnight Mr. Blossom telephoned. "Mrs. Bates, I understand you instructed the children that they were not to go to Central in the morning."

"That is correct."

"But General Walker said that he is here to put the children in school. So you must have them at your house by eight thirty in the morning." Major General Edwin A. Walker, chief of the Arkansas Military District, had been put in command of the 101st Airborne Division and newly federalized Arkansas militia.

"I can't," I said. "I can't reach them. We have an agreement that if I want them, I will call *before* midnight. In order to get some sleep and avoid the harassing calls, they take their phones off the hook after midnight." How I wish I had done the same, I thought wearily, as I listened to the Superintendent's urgent tones. "I suppose I could go to each home, but I can't go alone," I said.

"I'll call Hawkins and Christophe and ask them to accompany you," Mr. Blossom said. "You may expect them shortly." Edwin Hawkins was Principal of Dunbar Junior High School and L. M. Christophe was Principal of Horace Mann High School, both Negro schools.

At about 1 A.M. the three of us set out. Our first stop was some eight blocks away, the home of fifteen-year-old Gloria Ray. We knocked for what seemed ten minutes before we got an answer. The door opened about three inches exposing the muzzle of a shotgun. Behind it stood Gloria's father.

"What do you want now?" was his none-too-cordial greeting, as he looked straight at me. He forgot—I hope that was the reason—to remove his finger from the trigger or at least to lower the gun.

My eyes were fixed on the muzzle, and I could sense that Hawkins and Christophe, standing behind me, were riveted in attention. In my most pleasant, friendliest voice, and trying to look at him instead of the gun, I said that the children were to be at my house by eight thirty the next morning, and that those were the instructions of Superintendent Blossom.

"I don't care if the President of the United States gave you those instructions!" he said irritably. "I won't let Gloria go. She's faced two mobs and that's enough."

Both Mr. Christophe and Mr. Hawkins as-

sured him that with the Federal troops there, the children would be safe. We all, of course, added that the decision was up to him. At this point I asked if he wouldn't mind lowering his gun. He did. I told him if he changed his mind to bring Gloria to my house in the morning. Somewhat shakily we made our way to the car.

"Good Lord," sighed Mr. Christophe, "are we going to have to go through this with all nine sets of parents?"

The children's homes were widely scattered over Little Rock, and so our tour took better than three hours. Our encounter with Mr. Ray impressed on our minds the need to identify ourselves immediately upon entering the grounds of each home. But the cautious parents still greeted us with gun in hand although they were a little more calm than Mr. Ray, and accepted the change in plans without objection.

At eight twenty-five the next morning, all the children except Gloria had arrived. My phone rang. "What time are we to be there, Mrs. Bates?" It was Gloria.

"They're all here now."

"Wait for me!" she said. "I'll be right over!"

In less than ten minutes, Mr. Ray, shy and smiling, led Gloria into the house. He looked

down at his daughter with pride. "Here, Daisy, she's yours. She's determined to go. Take her. You seem to have more influence over her than I have, anyhow."

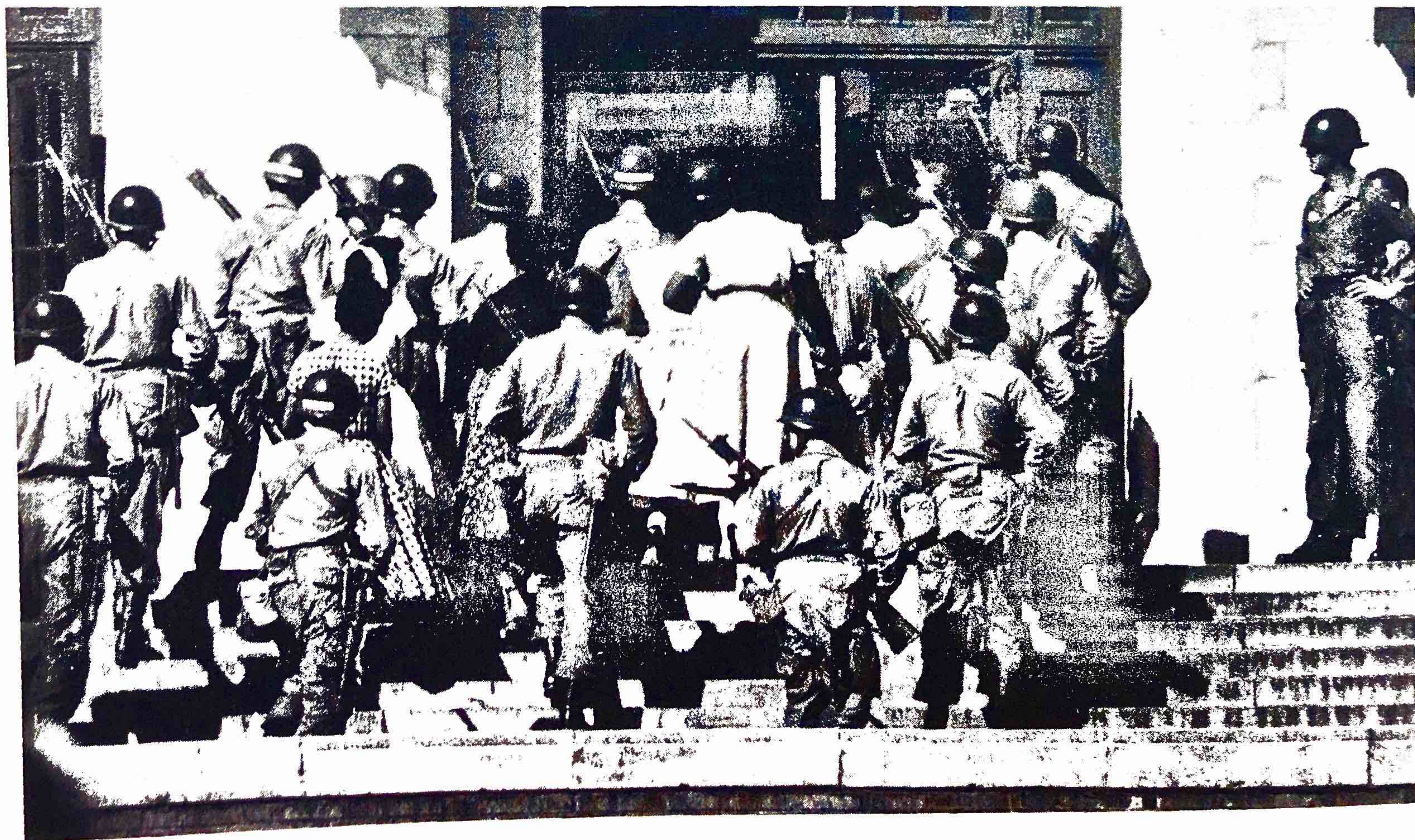
No sooner had Gloria joined the group than I was called to the telephone. A school official wanted to know whether the children were there. "All nine," I answered. I was told that a convoy for them was on its way.

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Soon jeeps were rolling down Twenty-eighth Street. Two passed our house and parked at the end of the block, while two remained at the other end of the block. Paratroopers quickly jumped out and stood across the width of the street at each end of the block—those at the western end standing at attention facing west, and those at the eastern end facing east.

An Army station wagon stopped in front of our house. While photographers, perched on the tops of cars and rooftops, went into action, the paratrooper in charge of the detail leaped out of the station wagon and started up our driveway. As he approached, I heard Minni-

*The Arkansas National Guard escorts black students into Central High School.*



jean say gleefully, "Oh, look at them, they're so—so soldierly! It gives you goose pimples to look at them!" And then she added solemnly, "For the first time in my life, I feel like an American citizen."

The officer was at the door, and as I opened it, he saluted and said, his voice ringing through the sudden quiet of the living-room where a number of friends and parents of the nine had gathered to witness this moment in history: "Mrs. Bates, we're ready for the children. We will return them to your home at three thirty o'clock."

I watched them follow him down the sidewalk. Another paratrooper held open the door of the station wagon, and they got in. Turning back into the room, my eyes none too dry, I saw the parents with tears of happiness in their eyes as they watched the group drive off.

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Tense and dramatic events were taking place in and around the school while the Negro pupils were being transported by the troops from my home to Central High.

A block from the school, a small group of hardcore segregationists ignored Mayor James Meyers' orders to disperse peacefully and return to their homes. The major [in charge of the troops] repeated the command when the surly, angry crowd refused to disperse. He was forced to radio for additional help. About thirty soldiers answered the emergency call "on the double," wearing steel helmets, carrying bayonet-fixed rifles, their gas masks in readiness, and "walkie-talkies" slung over their shoulders.

The soldiers lowered their rifles and moved slowly and deliberately into the crowd. The mob quickly gave way, shouting insults at the troops in the process. In a matter of minutes the streets, which for days had been littered with hate-filled mobs, cigarette butts, half-eaten sandwiches, and used flash bulbs, were strangely quiet.

At 9:22 A.M. the nine Negro pupils marched solemnly through the doors of Central High School, surrounded by twenty-two soldiers. An Army helicopter circled overhead. Around the massive brick schoolhouse 350 paratroopers stood grimly at attention. Scores of reporters, photographers, and TV cameramen made a

mad dash for telephones, typewriters, and TV studios. Within minutes a world that had been holding its breath learned that the nine pupils, protected by the might of the United States military, had finally entered the "never-never land."

When classes ended that afternoon, the troops escorted the pupils to my home. Here we held the first of many conferences that were to take place during the hectic months ahead.

I looked into the face of each child, from the frail ninety-pound Thelma Mothershed with a cardiac condition, to the well-built, sturdy Ernest Green, oldest of them all. They sat around the room, subdued and reflective—and understandably so. Too much had happened to them in these frenzied weeks to be otherwise.

I asked if they had a rough day. Not especially, they said. Some of the white pupils were friendly and had even invited them to lunch. Some were indifferent, and only a few showed open hostility.

Minnijean Brown reported that she had been invited by her classmates to join the glee club.

"Then why the long faces?" I wanted to know.

"Well," Ernest spoke up, "you don't expect us to be jumping for joy, do you?"

Someone said, "But Ernest, we *are* in Central, and that shouldn't make us feel sad exactly."

"Sure we're in Central," Ernest shot back, somewhat impatiently. "But how did we get in? We got in, finally, because we were protected by paratroops. Some victory!" he said sarcastically.

"Are you sorry," someone asked him, "that the President sent the troops?"

"No," said Ernest. "I'm only sorry it had to be that way."

## READING REVIEW

1. How did Daisy Bates react to President Eisenhower sending the National Guard to escort the black students to Central High?
2. How did she describe the students before and after their first day?
3. How did this event change the course of black-white relations in America?
4. Why did Ernest feel that finally getting to Central High was a hollow victory? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?