

# Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Little Rock Central High School  
National Historic Site



## Daisy Lee Gatson Bates (1914-1999)

Grade Level: K-12

### Objectives:

- To identify major civil rights leaders.
- To learn that ordinary men and women struggled for their beliefs and the beliefs of others during the Civil Rights Movement.
- All the participants of the Civil Rights Movement -famous or otherwise - deserve to have their stories told.
- All persons have the obligation to pass stories related to the Civil Rights Movement to younger people.

Ties to the Arkansas History Frameworks: (grades K-4) TCC1.2, 2.1, PPE1.3, PAG1.4, SSPS1.3, (grades 5-8) TCC1.3, 1.4, PPE1.2, PAG1.1, 1.3, 1.4, SPSS1.2, 1.4, (grades 9-12) TCC1.1, 1.2, 1.3, PPE1.1, PAG4.4, SSPS1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.6

Ties to the Social Studies Frameworks (U.S): (grades K-4) TCC1.1, 1.2., 1.3., 1.5, TCC2.3, PAG1.2, 1.6, 2.2, 2.3, SSPS1.1., 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.2, (grades 5-8) TCC1.4, PPE1.4, 1.7, 1.8, PDC1.7, PAG1.2, 1.8, 2.6, SSPS1.1, (grades 9-12) TCC1.3, 2.1, 2.2, PPE1.1, PAG1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.3

Daisy Lee Gatson Bates was born in the south Arkansas sawmill community of Huttig, (Union County) Arkansas on November 11, 1914. As a child, she learned that her natural parents were victims of racial violence when her mother was killed while resisting the advances of three local white men. Her father left shortly thereafter, and Daisy was reared by friends and family - the only family she ever knew.

When she was 15 years old, Bates, met an insurance salesman named Lucius Christopher Bates (1901-1980), who gave her gifts when he visited her family. Born in Liberty (Amite County), Mississippi, L. C. Bates attended Alcorn A & M College (now Alcorn State University) in Mississippi and Wilberforce University in Ohio. Although he was an insurance agent when Bates met him, L. C. Bates had previously worked for a Colorado newspaper for three years and later joined the staff of the Kansas City Call in Missouri. After working for newspapers in California and Memphis, L.C. Bates moved to Little Rock with his new bride and established the weekly *Arkansas State Press*. The first issue of this paper appeared on May 9, 1941 and became the largest and most influential African American paper in the state. Daisy Bates served as a reporter for the paper and one of her first assignments was to cover the murder of an African American soldier, Sergeant Thomas P. Foster, by a white police officer in Little Rock.

During its eighteen-year history, the *Arkansas State Press* became a leading voice in the Civil Rights Movement. Unrelenting in its criticism of racism, the paper attacked police brutality, segregation, and the inequities of the criminal justice system. The Bateses poured all their energy and money into making the newspaper a vehicle for the voice of the African American community in Arkansas. For example, in 1948, the paper supported the candidacy of Sid McMath for governor against the segregationist candidate, Jack Holt.

In 1952, the paper supported former Governor Francis Cherry in his re-election bid against Orval Faubus. Daisy and L.C. were also arrested for printing a story about an organized labor strike against an oil company in south Arkansas, in which an African American picketer was killed by a “scab” (person who crosses the picket lines and returns to work).

In the early years of running the paper, Daisy Bates also advanced her education by taking classes in business administration and public relations at the historic Shorter College. She also enrolled in flying classes – the only woman in her class - and received enough airtime to qualify for a license. Unfortunately, her insurance premiums were so high that she had to end her flying career.

Witnessing the discrimination against African Americans before and after World War II, Daisy and L.C. Bates were members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from the time of their move to Little Rock. In 1952, Bates was elected president of the Arkansas State Conference of NAACP branches. At the same time, NAACP attorneys filed lawsuits throughout the South to fight segregated education. Argued by Thurgood Marshall and other NAACP attorneys, they led to the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 that declared “separate but equal” was unconstitutional in educational settings. In Arkansas, Hoxie, Fayetteville, Charleston, and Fort Smith began integrating African American students into their system. However, the Little Rock School Board announced a complicated plan, the Blossom Plan, to integrate the education system in Arkansas’s capital city in three phases.

It was in her capacity with the NAACP that Daisy Bates became the advisor to the African American students who chose to enter Little Rock Central High School in September of 1957. The night before the students were to enter, the Bateses listened to Governor Orval Faubus deliver the infamous words “blood

will run in the streets” on television and even watched from afar as Arkansas National Guard troops were sent to the high school. Not only did Daisy advise the students, but she also tried to calm the fears of their parents, who were anxious for the safety of their children. She negotiated for the safety of the children by having NAACP officials accompany them to the school and watched as they entered Little Rock Central High School for the first time on September 23, 1957, three weeks after the start of the school year.

The month following the Little Rock Nine’s entrance into the high school, Daisy Bates and others associated with the NAACP were arrested. Daisy voluntarily surrendered herself to the police and was released on bond. They were charged with violating the Bennett Ordinance (enacted two weeks prior) that required any organization, on request by any elected official, to supply information regarding its membership, donors, amount of contributions, and expenditures. She was singled out for “special treatment” and found two crosses burning on her property. The Bateses also had a rock thrown into their living room window – barely missing Daisy -and shots fired at the home. After the school year ended, segregationists hung a likeness of Daisy Bates in effigy in Ouachita County and an incendiary bomb was thrown onto her property where it burned itself out.

After the bomb was thrown, Daisy Bates telegraphed the United States Attorney General the following message:

*Last night, July 7, 1959, at 10:08, a bomb hurled from an automobile exploded in our front yard. The bomb fell short of its target and only the lawn was damaged from the explosion which rocked dwellings for several blocks. As advisor to the litigants in the Little Rock school case, my home has been under constant attack since August 1957 by lawless elements of this state, and many threats have been made upon my life and the lives of my immediate family. Incendiary bombs have been thrown at our home from automobiles. Three KKK crosses have been burned on our lawn. Fire has been set to the house on two occasions. All the glass in the front of the house has been broken out and steel screens had to be made to cover the front windows to protect our home. To this date, no one has been apprehended by the law enforcement officers of this city or state. We have appealed to the city and county for protection. Yet these attacks on us and our home continue. We have been compelled to employ private guards. Now as a last resort, we are appealing to you to give us protection in Little Rock, United States of America.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> \*\* Bates, Daisy. The Long Shadow of Little Rock (Fayetteville; University of Arkansas Press, 1986), 162-163.

Assistant Attorney General W. Wilson White replied two days later, indicating that no assistance was to be given to Daisy Bates. His response highlights the need for civil rights legislation:

*The Attorney General and I have read the distressing account in your telegram of July 8, 1959, of the harassment which you have suffered since the institution of the Little Rock School desegregation case, culminating in the explosion of a bomb on July 7. After careful consideration, however, we are forced to conclude that there is no basis for federal jurisdiction. Any investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the incidents which you described in your telegram would be within the exclusive jurisdiction of state and local authorities. Inability or failure on the part of such authorities to take effective action does not authorize the federal government to intervene. This department can take action only when there has been a violation of federal law. The information which you furnish in your telegram fails to disclose any such violation.*

Because of the Bateses involvement in the integration of Little Rock Central High School, the couple suffered a subsequent loss of advertising revenue for their newspaper. They were forced to close the Arkansas State Press in 1959. In 1960, L.C. Bates became the NAACP field director for the state until his retirement in 1971. In 1960, Daisy Bates moved to New York City and spent two years writing her memoirs of the Central High crisis, which were published in 1962. Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt wrote an introduction to *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*. After completion of the book, Bates moved to Washington, D. C., where she worked for the Democratic National Committee and for President Lyndon B. Johnson's antipoverty programs. After suffering a stroke in 1965, she returned to Little Rock.

In 1968, Bates moved to Mitchellville (Desha County), Arkansas. For six years, she resided in a mobile home in the predominately black community and was a community organizer for the Mitchellville OEO Self-Help Project. Her efforts resulted in a new water system in 1970, installation of a sewer system in 1971, paved streets (including Main Street), and the completion of a community center and swimming pool in 1972.

In 1974, Bates retired. L.C. Bates died in 1980 and his wife revived the *Arkansas State Press* in April 1984. She sold the paper in December 1987 but remained a consultant. Daisy Bates died on November 4, 1999 and received the honor of lying in state on the second floor of the Arkansas State Capitol building, the same structure where her nemesis, Governor Orval Faubus, spoke against integration.

Daisy Bates was the recipient of numerous awards and honors. The year following her retirement, the Arkansas General Assembly passed a resolution commending her for her outstanding service to the citizens of Arkansas. She was awarded an honorary Doctor of Law degree by the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in May 1984. In 1986, the University of Arkansas Press published a reprint edition of *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* and in the spring of 1988, the book won the American Book Award, the first time that honor has been bestowed on a reprint edition. In 2000, the home of Daisy and L.C. Bates was listed as a National Historic Landmark. Located at 1207 West 28th Street in Little Rock, the home is privately maintained by the Daisy Bates House Museum Foundation. Little Rock also has a legacy to the civil rights activist - a street named in her honor in the heart of the city, Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive (formerly 14th Street).

# Vocabulary

*Arkansas Gazette*: Arkansas's oldest newspaper (1819) –now known as the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* – covered the crisis at Little Rock Central High School in 1957; received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Freedom Award for unbiased news reporting of events.

*Arkansas State Press*: Weekly newspaper printed for the African American community by L.C. and Daisy Bates. Debuted on May 9, 1941 and became the largest and most influential black paper in the state. It criticized racism, attacked police brutality, segregation, and the inequities of the criminal justice system. The paper closed in 1959 after the Bateses were involved with the Little Rock Central High crisis. After L.C. Bates' death in 1980, Daisy Bates reopened the newspaper in 1984 and served as an advisor after she sold the paper in 1987.

Daisy Lee Gatson Bates: (born in Huttig, Union County, Arkansas in 1914 and died in 1999; married L. C. Bates [1901-1980] and settled in Little Rock) Bates and her husband published the *Arkansas State Press*, the most influential African-American newspaper in Arkansas. Bates also served as a member of the NAACP and served as president of the Arkansas State Conference of NAACP branches. It was in this capacity that Daisy Bates became the advisor to the Little Rock Nine. In 1960, Bates moved to New York City and spent two years writing her memoirs of the Central High crisis. The former First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, wrote an introduction to *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, which was published in 1962. After completion of the book, Bates moved to Washington, D. C. where she worked for the Democratic National Committee and for the Johnson administration's antipoverty programs. After suffering a stroke in 1965, she returned to Little Rock.

Lucius Christopher (L.C.) Bates: (born in 1901 and died in 1980) Husband of Daisy Lee Gatson Bates; civil rights activist, and original owner of the *Arkansas State Press*.

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*: Landmark court case of 1954 in which the Supreme Court of the United States unanimously declared that it was unconstitutional to create separate schools for children on the basis of race. The *Brown* ruling ranks as one of the most important Supreme Court decisions of the 20th century. At the time of the decision, 17 southern states and the District of Columbia required that all public schools be racially segregated. A few northern and western states, including Kansas, left the issue of segregation up to individual school districts. While most schools in Kansas were integrated in 1954, those in Topeka were not.

Wiley Austin Branton: (born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas on December 13, 1923 and died in 1988) Prominent attorney, noted civil rights activist, and a strong advocate of voting rights for all Americans. An Army veteran of World War II, Branton spent time during the postwar period teaching African Americans how to mark an election ballot. His efforts resulted in his being convicted of a misdemeanor for "teaching the mechanics of voting." Branton attended Arkansas A.M. & N. College (now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff) and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration in 1950. As a law student at the University of Arkansas School of Law at Fayetteville, he received the Doctor of Law degree in 1952 and was the fourth African American student to enroll at the institution, as well as the third to graduate. Branton achieved national prominence when he served as the chief counsel for the nine African American students in the 1957 Little Rock desegregation case. However, during his distinguished legal career, he made significant contributions in the voting rights arena as both a public officer and private citizen. In

1962, Branton became the first Executive Director of the Southern Regional Council's Voter Education Project based in Atlanta, Georgia. The Project was a cooperative effort that successfully registered over 600,000 African American voters in 11 states and helped create the momentum for the 1965 Voting Rights Act. During the early 1960s, Branton also represented "freedom riders" in Mississippi and African Americans engaged in voter registration drives throughout the South.

**Civil Rights:** The rights belonging to an individual by virtue of citizenship, especially the fundamental freedoms and privileges guaranteed by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and by subsequent acts of Congress, including civil liberties, due process, equal protection of the laws, and freedom from discrimination.

**Governor Orval Faubus:** (born in Combs, Arkansas in 1910 and died in Huntsville in 1994; Governor of Arkansas from 1955 to 1967) A schoolteacher, Faubus served in World War II and became an Arkansas state highway commissioner. Elected governor, Faubus initially pursued a liberal course in office but to combat his political opponents (who were staunch segregationists) he adopted a hardline civil rights position. In 1957, Faubus gained national attention when he called out the Arkansas National Guard to prevent the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, but he was eventually forced to withdraw the Guard. After rioting broke out, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent U.S. troops to Little Rock and put the National Guard under federal command in order to ensure the integration of the school. Faubus's political expediency resulted in his repeated reelection as governor but also prevented him from moving into the national political arena. In 1970, 1974, and 1986 he sought reelection as governor of Arkansas but was unsuccessful in each attempt at a political comeback, the last time losing to Bill Clinton.

**Little Rock Central High School:** High school built in 1927 that served as the scene for the desegregation crisis of 1957.

**Thurgood Marshall:** (born in 1908 and died in 1993) American civil rights lawyer, the first African American justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. Throughout his long and varied career, Marshall was a tireless advocate for the rights of minorities and the poor.

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):** Organization founded in 1909 in New York City for the purpose of improving the conditions under which African Americans lived at that time. Although these conditions have improved enormously, many differences still exist in the rights of U.S. citizens solely because of race or ethnic origin. The NAACP continues to seek a single class of citizenship for every American.

**Segregation:** The act of segregating, or the state of being segregated; separation from others; a parting.

**Shorter College:** Founded in 1886 by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Shorter College is the oldest institution of higher learning in North Little Rock, Arkansas. For many years, Shorter College has maintained its status as a liberal arts college. The school provides access to general education and professional programs to persons regardless of race, national origin, creed, and political persuasion. The college also recognizes its institutional responsibility to serve the community by making institutional resources available to assist in its cultural, economic, and spiritual development.

**Racism:** The belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others; discrimination or prejudice based on race.

# Teacher Strategies and Evaluation: \*

\*Teaching strategies taken from Discoveryschool.com.

## 1) Read About It (Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Evaluation)

Read about a civil rights leader from the *suggested* bibliography:

*A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr.* by David Adler (School and Library Binding; K-4)

*A Picture Book of Rosa Parks* by David Adler (School and Library Binding; K-4)

*A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman* by David Adler (School and Library Binding; K-4)

*A Picture Book of Thurgood Marshall* by David Adler (School and Library Binding; K-4)\*\*

*My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Christine King Farris (Simon and Schuster; K-4)

*Warriors Don't Cry* by Melba Pattillo Beals (New York: Simon Pulse Publishers; 5-7)\*\*

*Little Rock: The Desegregation of Central High School* by Laurie O'Neill (Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 1994; mid-level readers)\*\*

*The Long Shadow of Little Rock* by Daisy Bates (University of Arkansas Press, senior high readers)\*\*

\*\**Thurgood Marshall* is specific to Little Rock Central High School history; *Warriors Don't Cry* was written by Melba Pattillo Beals, one of the Little Rock Nine; *Little Rock: The Desegregation of Central High School* is relevant to the crisis at Central High School in 1957; *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* was written by Daisy Gatson Bates, a mentor to the Little Rock Nine.

Students may illustrate, examine, summarize, differentiate, discuss, compare and contrast, or design a project demonstrating their comprehension of the contributions of civil rights leaders/individuals to the civil rights experience.

2) **Design an encyclopedia of civil rights (grades 4-7; BT: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation):**

Explain to students that some participants of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s are very well remembered, while some are less so. Some participants have been written about frequently while others have received little national recognition. Explain that students are going to do research and create a single volume to be titled *A Children's Encyclopedia of the Civil Rights Movement*. The book, which will be for lower elementary students, will include alphabetical articles about some of the people who made a difference in the movement in Arkansas and the United States. Use the following instructions:

- \* Ask students to describe the characteristics of an encyclopedia (e.g., what is it or what is in it?);
- \* Ask students how they will have to modify the characteristics of an encyclopedia so that lower elementary students may use and enjoy this one. For example, bring out the point that the writers of the *Children's Encyclopedia* won't be able to use large terms, such as poll tax, without explaining it. Text needs to remain simple and illustrations must be used;
- \* Have students brainstorm, research, and list the names of people or concepts associated with civil rights that they think belong in the encyclopedia. They need to reflect all time periods of American history. Begin a list, which eventually may include some or all the following names (• after a name/place/group indicates a key member of the Little Rock Central High School story):

- Harry Ashmore •
- Daisy Gatson Bates •
- L.C. Bates •
- Birmingham, Alabama
- Wiley Branton •
- *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* •
- Civil rights
- Desegregation
- Frederick Douglass
- Medgar Evers
- Grandfather clause
- Elizabeth Huckaby •
- Integration
- Reverend Jesse Jackson
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) •
- *Plessy v. Ferguson* •
- Poll tax
- Rosa Parks
- Selma, Alabama
- Dred Scott
- Adolphine Fletcher Terry •
- Emmett Till



- Sojourner Truth
- Harriet Tubman
- Alex Wilson •
- Jim Crow Laws •
- Martin Luther King Jr.
- Jess Matthews •
- Little Rock Central High School •
- The Little Rock Nine (Melba Pattillo Beals, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Carlotta Walls LaNier, Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, Minnijean Brown Trickey, and Thelma Mothershed-Wair) •
- Malcolm X
- Thurgood Marshall •

\* Assign a civil rights leader/participant/concept to students. If you want students to work together in small groups, you can consider giving several subjects to each group.

\* Discuss with your students where they can find biographical information about their subjects (ex: textbooks, nonfiction books, encyclopedias, videos, Internet sites). Indicate that wherever possible students should check more than one source for each person they are researching, and that the Internet is not the only viable source for historical research.

\* Go over the fundamentals of taking notes from other sources. Stress that the sentences and paragraphs in the student's encyclopedia will have to be original -not quotations from other sources.

\* Another factor to consider before writing begins is to format each article for the encyclopedia articles. In doing research, students will have found more biographical details about some subjects than others and they will have to decide whether to use blanks or question marks to indicate missing information. When birth and death dates and places are reported, consider the option of setting them off instead of running that information into the prose of the article. You may use the following format, for example:

*Daisy L. Gatson Bates*

*Born [place] [date]*

*Died [place] [date]*

*[Text for paragraph here]*

Set up a revising, editing, and proofreading system so that both students and teachers have a chance to improve the articles for the encyclopedia. Consider having all the articles typed or word processed in a large type style and size and justified on the left side. Allow your students to design the cover of the encyclopedia to reflect Arkansas and the civil rights movement.

Teachers may evaluate each encyclopedia entry by using the three-point rubric:

- Three points: comprehensive content (based on available sources); coherent and unified paragraphs; error-free grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- Two points: adequate content; paragraphs occasionally lacking coherence and unity; some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- One point: insufficient content; weak paragraphs; many errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- Teachers may ask students to contribute to the assessment rubric by determining how many facts should be required for “comprehensive content.”

**3) Treat Everyone Equally (grades 5- 12, BT: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Synthesis, Evaluation):**

Daisy Bates requested assistance in protecting herself and the students from violence. After an incident of violence against her home, Bates telegraphed the United States Attorney General in Washington and said that “as a last resort, we are appealing to you to give us protection in Little Rock.” She did not receive any help from the U.S. government. Complete the following using the 14th Amendment:

- a) Examine the Fourteenth Amendment, paying attention to the equal protection clause (use information provided in textbooks). Organize class into 3 to 5 groups of students. Have groups read the Fourteenth Amendment and discuss the problem Bates was having and develop answers for the situation. Share ideas with the class and expand answers with reasons for answers.
- b) Reread the Fourteenth Amendment and discuss the purpose of this amendment. Point out that at first the Amendment did not accomplish its purpose, and discrimination against African Americans continued. Document or chart the changes in the interpretation and laws associated with the Fourteenth Amendment (i.e., *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*).
- c) Conduct a class discussion of the following questions: Are there some circumstances where it might be reasonable and fair to treat a particular person or class of people differently from others (for example: would it be reasonable to distinguish between girls and boys driving at the age of 16 (girl get to drive, boys don't)?

**4) Analytical Thinking Questions for Discussion or Writing (grades 7- 12, BT: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation):**

a) Many of our country's civil rights activists have commented that hate is destructive. Compare the role that hatred has played in the civil rights movement in the United States and in human rights violations around the world, such as in Kosovo, Chechnya, and Sierra Leone (see information on Human Rights Watch at [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)). Analyze the role of hatred in these arenas and discuss or write about possible ways for resolving some of the issues you discover.

b) Some people see protecting civil rights as a political problem, but many of the causes of racism and prejudice are personal and societal, as well as political. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of personal, societal, and political solutions to civil rights problems. Which are most effective and why? Find a way to illustrate your answers.

c) Remind your students of the power of a symbol by considering some of the more familiar and forceful symbols throughout history and in today's world. Discuss such symbols as the peace symbol, the cross, the Star of David, the Nazi swastika, the Black Panther fist, the burning cross, and the red AIDS ribbon. Confer about the ways in which messages are conveyed by symbols (you may also consider some familiar commercial logos which communicate without words – e.g., the McDonald's® arch and the Nike® swoosh). Allow students to create their own symbols to represent the idea of carrying the campaign for civil rights into the 21st century and accompany the drawings with descriptive paragraphs explaining the elements of their symbols.

d) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is perhaps the most well-known figure of the Civil Rights Movement in America. His "I Have a Dream" speech, as it is commonly known, is one of America's most heralded speeches. Ask your students to read the speech. You might want to have students take turns reading each section aloud so that they can dramatize the energy of King's words. When the reading is complete, ask your students to analyze and discuss the essential elements of his message: What key images and phrases did he choose? What was the overall emotional tone of his words?

After the discussion, ask your students to imagine that Dr. King has returned to today's world. Invite them to write the speech he might deliver today.