

Daisy Bates Oral History Excerpt

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Daisy Bates was a civil rights activist and the head of the state chapter of the NAACP. She served as advisor to the Little Rock Nine, nine black students who enrolled at the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Alabama in 1957. She helped the students cope with the harassment they suffered from white students by organizing daily after school meetings at her home where the students could talk about their frustrations and learn the non-violence strategies practiced by Martin Luther King, Jr. Here, Ms. Bates recalls Minnijean Brown, one of the nine, being expelled for fighting back against students who taunted her. After leaving Central, Minnie was enrolled in and graduated from an integrated school in New York.

Audio

File:

Duration: 1:54

Transcript:

Audio Transcript

Elizabeth Jacoway (interviewer)

But that harassment continued all the time.

Daisy Bates

All during the school year, all during school.

Elizabeth Jacoway (interviewer)

Just every day there was something, wasn't there?

Daisy Bates

Mm-hm, something. They would pick on the vulnerable ones, like Minnie. They knew Minnie had a temper. They were trying to get them, one by one. So Minnie came in that afternoon, and she said [unclear] and the kids all looked at me.

Elizabeth Jacoway (interviewer)

That day she had been expelled?

Daisy Bates

The day she'd been expelled. And I said, "And so what's the matter now? What happened? What happened?" "You tell her." "No, you tell her." So Jeff said well that, "Minnie hit a boy on the head today with some chili." We were practicing non-violence, and we'd meet here everyday. I said, "Well, Minnie, what happened?" She said she got up, and she went

between the tables as she went to the counter to get the chili; and she was going up between the tables when the boy pushed his chair back to block her. And when she came back, when she got to the boy, he pushed his chair back. So she was standing there. She said, hollered out, "Will you please move your chair in so I can pass?" So he went, "Oh!" you know, pretending he didn't know she was there. So it got on down to about the fifth boy that did this, and Minnie was mad. (Laughs) So she had this chili. And when he pushed his chair, that came down on his head. (Laughs)

Elizabeth Jacoway (interviewer)

Oh, boy.

Daisy Bates

The chili went all over the boy, and of course they expelled Minnie.

Elizabeth Jacoway (interviewer)

Yeah, and not the boy.

Daisy Bates

Not the boy.

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