

Daisy Bates

“Daisy Bates was born in the small southern Arkansas community of Huttig in Union County, November 11, 1914. Daisy was raised by friends of the family, the only parents she ever knew. In 1942, Daisy Gatson married L.C. Bates and then settled in Little Rock” (Daisy Bates papers). Daisy and her husband became very strong members of the NAACP. In 1952 Daisy was elected president of the Arkansas State Conference branches. It was in this capacity that Daisy Bates became the advisor to the Little Rock Nine, a group of students who were forcibly integrated into an all-white high school. The Little Rock School Board’s desegregation plan, upheld by the District federal Court and the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, was to begin September, 1957.

In 1954 the Supreme Court declared that there will be no segregation in schools, in the court case *Brown vs. Board of Education*. This integration was begun at Central High School. Nine African-American students for 9 months had to be escorted to school through the side door by police officers. At the beginning of the year they were mobbed by racist white people and even the National Guard was called to defend them. Daisy Bates escorted the students along with the police every day until the crisis was resolved. “She continued to serve the children, intervening with school officials during conflicts, and accompanying parents to school meeting” (Daisy Lee Gatson Bates). Daisy Bates was the soul support for these students and families.

The involvement of the Bates family in the NAACP, the Little Rock Nine experience, and many other involvements, forced them to close their newspaper, “The State Press.” After the newspaper closed, Daisy Bates moved to New York City and spent two years writing a book on the crisis of Central High. Her book “The Long Shadow of Little Rock” was published in 1962. After writing her book, she moved to Washington D.C. to be involved with the Democratic National Committee and poverty programs. In 1965 she suffered a stroke and then moved back to Little Rock. She continued to be politically active, especially in the community.