NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900 USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86) OMB No. 1024-0018

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Frantz, William School

Other Name/Site Number: Frantz Elementary

2. LOCATION

Street & Number 3811 N. Galvez St. Not for publication: NA

City/Town New Orleans Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Orleans Code: 071 Zip Code: 70117

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _X__ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:___ Locally:__

Jon Fricker April 22, 2005

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Jonathan Fricker Date
Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

__✓__ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain):

for Edson Beall 6/8/05

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	___	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	X	District:	___
Public-State:	___	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Non contributing
1	___ buildings
___	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
1	0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: education Sub: school
Current: education Sub: school

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Art Deco

Materials:

Foundation: concrete
Walls: brick
Roof: other: tar and gravel
Other: cast concrete

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The William Frantz School (1937) is a large three-story brick and cast concrete Art Deco-style building constructed in a fairly simple modified L-shape with a double-loaded corridor. The elementary school is located in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans in a mid-twentieth century working class neighborhood. The William Frantz School is virtually unchanged on the exterior and retains some of its character-defining interior features. It is easily recognizable as the building that was desegregated when Ruby Bridges first attended it in 1960.

The façade has a three-part design consisting of a wide three-bay central pavilion flanked by large, slightly recessed wings of equal lengths, with stair towers at each end that recess slightly from the façade. The majority of the building is sheathed in brick. The decorative elements, most located on the building's façade, are of cast concrete. Cast concrete panels unify the central pavilion and the wings by extending across the entire façade, between the second- and third-story window openings. Five bays of windows are located on the façade of each wing. The grouping of the bays on each side reflects the massing of the entire façade: one small central bay flanked by two large bays. This repetition creates a feeling of strength and harmony on an otherwise fairly plain façade.

The Art Deco styling is understated, except for the central pavilion. The three bays are set slightly forward of the building mass to form a more eye-catching entrance. The pavilion is further accentuated by vertically banded concrete panels set between the second- and third-story windows. Three strips of chevrons pierce the parapet wall to crown the pavilion, further emphasizing the verticality of the composition. The entrance surround features a decorative fluted cornice above the name of the school. Raised square panels surround the entryway. The double door entrance is recessed from the plane of the façade by a progression of cast concrete fluting.

The rest of the exterior, including the sides and the rear elevation, are relatively unadorned in

comparison to the façade. The very simple first story serves as a base to the slightly more decorative second and third stories. The door openings on the terminating end of each wing are surrounded by the same raised square panels as the main entrance, and there is a curved metal handrail on each side of the steps leading to the openings. Other exterior features include narrow brick belt courses over the first-story windows and beneath the second-story windows that carry around the corner and terminate at the stair tower outthrust. Another belt course over the third-story windows encircles the building, reaching around the stair tower outthrust and terminating on the rear of the building.

The modified L-shape on the first floor reduces to a rectangle on the second and third floors. The first floor features classrooms along a double-loaded corridor, a lobby, a boiler room, a teachers' lounge, and restrooms. The second floor consists of additional classrooms and the principal's office. The third floor has eight additional classrooms.

The interior of the building is functional and unadorned. The entryway consists of a small, unornamented lobby with a staircase that ascends to the school's office and principal's office. Most of the school's twenty-three classrooms have two doors opening into the hallway, one on each end of the classroom. The wooden doors have multi-light glazing with panels below and are topped by three-light transoms. The interiors of the classrooms have been altered considerably, though some contain original details such as wooden cupboards that resemble china cabinets. Wooden floors are found throughout the building. A typical classroom has blackboards on three walls, two doors, and two window bays. A staircase on each terminating end of the building ascends from the first floor to the third. The steps of each staircase are wooden, as well as the handrails on the solid banisters.

While the William Frantz School has undergone changes to the interior that are typical in the life of an elementary school, its exterior is virtually unchanged. There is no question that it is immediately recognizable as the building that Ruby Bridges entered on November 14, 1960, accompanied by federal marshals (see Part 8).

The Architect:

Orleans Parish School Board architect E. A. Christy designed the Frantz School. As school board architect from 1911 to 1940, Christy designed over 50 primary, secondary and vocational schools as well as various remodelings of schools. His designs reflect the variety of styles popular over an almost 30 year span. Christy is credited with designing the first modern school facilities in the city. Today 48 of his schools are still in use. Collectively they make an important contribution to the city's architectural fabric.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A_X_ B__ C__ D_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G_X_

Areas of Significance: education; ethnic heritage; social history

Period(s) of Significance: 1960

Significant Dates: November 14, 1960

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: E. A. Christy, Architect
Herman T. Makofsky, Contractor

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary:

One of the nation's major battles in court-ordered desegregation, in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), occurred in New Orleans in the winter of 1960-61. The southern reaction to the implementation of *Brown*, termed "massive resistance," saw one of its fiercest expressions in Louisiana. At least one historian, Jack Bass, awards Louisiana a "first place" so-to-speak in massive resistance. "No southern state," he writes, "matched the vigor, imagination, and frenzy displayed by Louisiana in battling to maintain segregated public schools."

The two schools desegregated, the first in the Deep South, were the candidate, William Frantz School, and McDonogh 19 (both in the same neighborhood). Four first graders, one at Frantz and three at McDonogh, became the first blacks to enter public schools in New Orleans since Reconstruction. Protecting them were federal marshals. The nation observed the contrast between the small childrens' stoic dignity and the crowds of jeering woman, whose faces, one historian wrote, were "congealed with hate." John Steinbeck observed and wrote about the scene at Frantz, where little Ruby Bridges faced the hostility alone. Young Ruby was the inspiration for one of Norman Rockwell's most famous paintings, *The Problem We All Live With,* which appeared in *Look* in January 1964.

The case for "exceptional importance" (National Register Criteria Consideration G) is addressed at the end of Part 8.

Historic Context: *Brown* and Massive Resistance

Note: The following is but a brief summary of the above historical context. For a fuller statement, see the 2000 theme study conducted by the National Park Service, "Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the U. S."

Without a question *Brown v. Board of Education* is among the Supreme Court's best known and most far-reaching decisions. It overturned the decades-old legal foundation of Jim Crow segregation, the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896, wherein the high court ruled that segregated facilities were constitutional as long as they were equal - the famous (or infamous) "separate but equal" doctrine. In *Brown,* Chief Justice Earl Warren, speaking for a unanimous court, concluded in the now famous words, "that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place." "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Why? Again quoting Warren, "To separate them [black students] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." In what came to be known as *Brown* II, issued in 1955, the Supreme Court ordered schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed." The South responded with great deliberation and little speed.

The region's dogged determination to evade and otherwise resist *Brown* was and is known as "massive resistance." On March 12, 1956 Southern Congressmen replied to *Brown* with "a declaration of constituonal principles" known as "The Southern Manifesto," signed by nineteen senators and eighty-two representatives. Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia is credited with the first use of the phrase "massive resistance." In seeking to

justify the Manifesto to his colleagues, Byrd explained that its drafting was "part of the plan of massive resistance we've been working on and I hope and believe it will be an effective action." The arsenal of massive resistance was a panoply of legislative enactments, city ordinances, legal decisions and executive orders across the South aimed at maintaining segregation, *Brown* notwithstanding. Legislatures passed laws providing for the closure of public schools if one school desegregated, freezing school board financial assets, etc. The most revolutionary doctrine of the "massive resisters" was that of interposition – the notion that a state could "interpose" its sovereignty between the federal courts and the school system – in effect, that a state could decide which Supreme Court decisions it would follow. As one historian has noted, the doctrine of interposition "ignored both the supremacy clause of the Constitution and the political lessons of the Civil War." Louisiana too would use interposition as the ultimate weapon during the New Orleans school crisis of 1960. The courts (all the way to the Supreme Court) ruled it unconstitutional. (See below.)

The immediate post-*Brown* years saw clash after clash as court-ordered desegregation came to the South, some famous and some little known. The showdown seared in the nation's memory, of course, was in 1957 at Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas. Little Rock's singular status rests upon the intervention of the Eisenhower administration with federal troops. Governor Faubus called out the National Guard to prevent "the Little Rock Nine" from attending Central High. Given the tenseness of the situation, Eisenhower had little choice but to respond with force. To a great extent, the events in Little Rock have overshadowed all other confrontations.

The New Orleans School Crisis

While some feared that New Orleans would be "another Little Rock," it wasn't. State government fought desegregation with a vehemence and frenzy unmatched by others; however, Governor Jimmy Davis stopped short of calling out the National Guard. Hence, the Eisenhower administration, in its waning days, was not forced to send troops to New Orleans. Federal marshals enforced court-ordered desegregation in New Orleans as the nation watched on television and followed events in magazines and newspapers. (The crisis spilled over into the Kennedy administration and was most definitely on Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy's radar screen. For more on Robert Kennedy and the New Orleans school crisis, see below.)

New Orleans' desegregation crisis traces its origins to 1952, when the NAACP filed *Bush v. Orleans Parish School Board*. Attorneys for the plaintiffs were Thurgood Marshall and New Orleanian A. P. Tureaud. (Tureaud devoted his professional life to civil rights litigation.) Federal Judge F. Skelly Wright, with the plaintiffs in concurrence, decided to delay the case until the Supreme Court ruled on *Brown*. In February 1956, in the first of many decisions in the case, a three-judge U. S. District Court in New Orleans ruled that segregation in public schools was invalid under *Brown*. Wright, in ordering desegregation, wrote:

> *The problems attendant desegregation in the deep South are considerably more serious than generally appreciated in some sections of our country. The problem of changing a people's mores, particularly those with an emotional overlay, is not to be taken lightly. . . . But the magnitude of the problem may not nullify the principle. And that principle is that we are, all of us, freeborn Americans, with a right to make our way, unfettered by sanctions imposed by man because of the work of God.*

All in all, the *Bush* case involved forty-one separate judicial decisions between 1952 and 1962, including six instances of the United State Supreme Court affirming the federal court. As Jack Bass observed

in *Unlikely Heroes*, "As much as any case, *Bush v. Orleans Parish School Board* tested the supremacy of federal law." The federal courts, continues Bass, "maintained the rule of law against the most furious legal assault of any state against the supremacy clause of the Constitution." U. S. Attorney General Kennedy took the proactive stance of bringing the federal government into two of the Louisiana school suits as an *amicus curiae* [friend of the court] without any invitation and without any immediate threat of violence. According to an observer writing in 1971, "this step was unprecedented."

Some four years after the 1956 decision, the New Orleans School Board still had not developed a desegregation plan. As one historian has noted, "Nothing happened to suggest that anyone believed the New Orleans schools would ever be desegregated." On May 16, 1960, after the board failed to meet its latest deadline, Wright ordered the public schools of New Orleans to desegregate under a plan of his choosing. Starting in the fall, "all children entering the first grade may attend either the formerly all-white public school nearest their home, or formerly all-Negro public school nearest their homes, at their option."

A complicated battle between the federal courts and the State of Louisiana raged in the summer of 1960. State government spoke with a monolithic voice. Any and everything would be done to preserve segregation, even if it meant closing schools. Like other Southern states, the Louisiana legislature had adopted various segregation statutes in the mid-1950s. A 1958 measure authorized closing of desegregated schools and transfer of school property to private, non-sectarian schools. A poll conducted by the Orleans Parish School Board that summer found that 82% of white parents would rather close public schools than see their child attend classes with African-Americans.

The thrusts and counter-thrusts between the State of Louisiana and the federal courts are far too numerous to detail in this document. As fast as the legislature passed a law or Governor Jimmie Davis issued an executive order, the courts struck it down. (Davis had just won the governorship in a race dominated by the segregation issue. He owed his victory to segregationists. His Executive Order #1, seizing control of the School Board, was among the many struck down by the federal court.)

In New Orleans, the school board sought and received a final reprieve from Judge Wright. As the opening of school dawned, the board was not prepared, and received a delay until November. Desegregation accomplished in November would be by transfer, and, it was felt, would involve fewer students. So, New Orleans schools opened on a segregated basis in September 1960, with "D-day" set for November 14. The school board chose the students using the state's 17-provision public placement law (a segregationist dodge used throughout the South). Of the 136 requests from African-American parents, only five first graders were chosen - all girls and all in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, a depressed blue collar neighborhood. There couldn't have been a worst choice for a social experiment of this nature. By the time "D-day" arrived, the parents of one little girl withdrew her name. Three of the students would attend McDonogh, and only one at Frantz. Despite attempts from everyone, including Governor Davis, to learn the names of the schools and the children, the identities remained a secret until that morning, when the young girls arrived at their respective schools with federal marshals.

The State of Louisiana continued to act as if Little Rock had never happened. Governor Davis called a special session of the legislature to begin November 4. Twenty-nine segregation bills were bulldozed through a four-day session. Writing in 1964 in *Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution*, Anthony Lewis observed quite aptly that the state legislature "executed every possible evasive or delaying tactic that could be put into statute form." One law imposed criminal penalties against anyone who attempted to interfere with the state's control of education, including officers of the federal government. All bills passed

with huge majorities, with an interposition bill passing unanimously. Wright countered with restraining orders, whereupon the State Superintendent of Education declared November 14 a statewide school holiday. Immediately Wright issued a restraining order against the holiday. When an act authorizing a legislative committee to take control of Orleans Parish schools was enjoined, the legislature declared the entire body to be in charge of the schools. In an unprecedented move, Judge Wright enjoined the entire state legislature.

With the power of the federal courts behind them, four first-graders on November 14, 1960, without even knowing it, butted heads with the bastion of segregation, the Deep South. By mid-morning the names of the schools being desegregated were known, and crowds (mainly woman) gathered to jeer. The women hurled vicious insults at the children, lobbed eggs, and spit at them. They were there when school started and when it dismissed in the afternoon. The numbers can't be determined with certainty – reports from the media vary. *The New York Times*, reporting on November 15, estimated the first day's crowd at Frantz to number about 150. *Look* magazine reported that some 400 were there in late November. Other accounts give estimates at Frantz of as much as a thousand at the peak (which one suspects is too high). Little Ruby Bridges was particularly vulnerable, being the only child at Frantz. And it seemed that the protesters sensed this, for all accounts indicate that the crowds were larger at Frantz.

The evening after "D-day" some 5,000 members of the White Citizens Council (a segregationist organization formed in the South in the mid-1950s) attended a rally at the Municipal Auditorium to protest desegregation. Some accounts of the event likened it to rallies in Nazi Germany. Arch segregationist State Senator Willie Ranich advocated a scorched earth policy. Leander Perez, a rabid racist who ruled adjacent Plaquemines Parish, whipped the crowd into a frenzy with one of his typically "over-the-top" speeches. Yes, the views of Ranich and Perez were not those of most New Orleanians, but the voices of segregationists were those being heard. They had seized the day, both locally and in state government.

The following day is the closest New Orleans came to a race riot. A mob composed of teenagers (truant from school) and adults variously estimated at between one and three thousand marched on city hall, the school board office, and Judge Wright's office. City police controlled them with mounted forces and a few firehoses. The mob eventually disbursed, but not before roaming the area throwing stones and bottles at blacks in buses and cars. Breaking his "head in the sand" silence, Mayor Chep Morrison made an appeal on television that night for an end to the violence. His talk stressed the damage that could be done to the city's image from "the ugly irresponsible incidents such as took place today." That evening African-American teenagers took to the streets in response to the white-inflicted violence of the previous day. A few whites were shot and beaten (but none critically). The police made 250 arrests, mainly of blacks.

The ugly crowds continued to throng around McDonogh and Frantz, particularly the latter. The most famous description of the scene at Frantz came from the pen of John Steinbeck. The author was on a roadtrip through America recording his observations when he learned of the disturbances in New Orleans. "While I was still in Texas, late in 1960," writes Steinbeck, "the incident most reported and pictured in the newspapers was the matriculation of a couple of tiny Negro children in a New Orleans school." Steinbeck decided to visit the city to see events firsthand. "Across the street from the school [Frantz] the police had set up wooden barriers to keep the crowd back. . . . The front of the school was deserted but along the curb United States marshals were spaced, . . ."

Steinbeck describes the arrival of Ruby Bridges at Frantz one day:

The show opened on time. Sound of sirens. Motorcycle cops. Then two

big black cars filled with big men in blond felt hats pulled up in front of the school. The crowd seemed to hold its breath. Four big marshals got out of each car and from somewhere in the automobiles they extracted the littlest Negro girl you ever saw, dressed in shiny starchy white, with new white shoes on feet so little they were almost round. Her face and little legs were very black against the white. . . . The little girl did not look at the howling crowd but from the side the whites of her eyes showed like those of a frightened fawn. . . .

The papers had printed that the jibes and jeers were cruel and sometimes obscene, and so they were, but this was not the big show. The crowd was waiting for the white man who dared to bring his white child to school. . . . No newspaper had printed the words these women shouted. It was indicated that they were indelicate, some even said obscene. . . . But now I heard the words, bestial and filthy and degenerate. In a long and unprotected life I have seen and heard the vomitings of demoniac humans before. Why then did these screams fill me with a shocked and sickened sorrow?

The man Steinbeck referred to was Reverend Lloyd Foreman, who along with Mr. and Mrs. James Gabrielle, defied the white boycott of Frantz on "D-day." At McDonogh, no white student returned for the entire school year except for one brief period in January 1961. The boycott at Frantz was never total. As the days passed, a few more parents (besides Rev. Foreman and the Gabrielles) brought their children back. The high point was December 6, when a total of 23 white children attended Frantz. But due to threats and violence, the number dropped, with 10 or fewer white children in attendance for the remainder of the school year. Throughout this period, Ruby Bridges was taught alone by Barbara Henry. Federal marshals escorted Ruby to the bathroom.

Due to the abuse and threats directed toward white parents, cars were needed to transport the children to Frantz, although it was within easy walking distance. Several parents appealed to Save Our Schools (SOS), an organization formed in the summer of 1960, for help. (Despite good intentions, SOS was never a major player because it was perceived to be liberal. Moderate voices were needed in New Orleans, and they were largely silent until the crisis had escalated.) Parents from the uptown section of New Orleans, where most SOS members lived, began what they called a volunteer "carlift" on December 1. The car carrying Yolanda Gabrielle was stoned and manhandled by the crowd. Later in the week, it was pursued by a truck which tried to ram it. White parents and drivers for the carlift received constant threats over the phone, and the homes of whites defying the boycott were stoned. Perhaps the worst incident was in late November when a mob of some four hundred followed Mrs. Gabrielle and her daughter home and smashed their windows, as reported in the press. The carlift stopped a few days after it started when the White Citizens Council distributed a list of all the drivers, describing their cars and providing phone numbers. Starting December 9, federal marshals escorted white children to Frantz (as they did Ruby Bridges).

The extensive nationwide media coverage brought an outpouring of sympathy for the four black girls and the white parents who defied the boycott at Frantz. Ruby Bridges recalls receiving letters of support, money, toys and clothes. Her mother's favorite was a note addressed to Ruby from Eleanor Roosevelt. (The note and other letters were lost in 1965 courtesy Hurricane Betsy.)

Back in Baton Rouge, Governor Davis kept calling special sessions, five in total, extending through

late February 1961. The most menacing legislation was an attack on school board funds that caused considerable difficulties in meeting payroll. All this occurred despite a November 30 decision by a three-judge federal court declaring the Interposition Act and the rest of the legislature's package unconstitutional, a decision upheld by the U. S. Supreme Court on December 12. All in all, over 700 state and city officials had been enjoined from interfering with desegregation.

As events unfolded the United States Justice Department continued to monitor the situation. In an interview given in 1964 by Attorney General Kennedy and Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall, Kennedy indicated that a particularly important issue was the threat to withdraw funds from desegregated schools. It finally boiled down, said Kennedy, to "whether we were willing to put some of these people in jail. Some important public officials. So we were involved, within two months, in a really major struggle with them."

Assistant Attorney General Marshall recalled Kennedy saying, at the time, "We'll have to do whatever is necessary." "He was really mad . . . . It was the first time that either one of us had been involved directly . . . with the way that the segregation system worked in practice, and how difficult it was going to be. And they were so irrational about it down there." The "whatever was necessary" in this instance, was contempt proceedings (or the threat thereof) against various state officials (apparently in reference to the threat of freezing funds in desegregated schools). Anthony Lewis observed in *Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution* (1964) that "as the months went on it became evident that state officials would back down rather than go to jail for contempt of court." (Accounts of Kennedy and contempt proceedings against Louisiana officials vary in the details. According to one historian - Carl M. Brauer in *John F. Kennedy and the Second Reconstruction* - the funding crisis was resolved when Robert Kennedy personally called Louisiana officials to warn them that the government was prepared to seek contempt-of-court sentences, whereupon they backed down.)

What happened at Frantz and McDonogh, of course, was token integration to avoid real integration, as happened across the South. By late December 1960 the crowds had generally died down, and the State of Louisiana had been beaten back by the federal courts. Ruby Bridges finished the first grade at Frantz in a class of one. The cost of being a trailblazer was high. Her parents received innumerable threats and her father was fired from his job. The Gabrielles, one of the two white families not participating in the boycott, were harassed until they gave up and moved to Rhode Island.

Feature-length stories on the Gabrielles appeared in *Look, Good Housekeeping, and Redbook.* The five-page article in the March 14, 1961 issue of *Look* was titled "Exodus from New Orleans." "Millions of Americans," wrote the author, "were shocked" to learn that the Gabrielles had "been forced to leave New Orleans." "They had cheered Mrs. Gabrielle on their television screens as she defied the mobs." In an interview, Mrs. Gabrielle recounted the threats and harassment that caused them to leave the city, her home of some 35 years. She was quick to note, "It is a minority of people who are causing all the trouble."

Psychiatrist Robert Coles, subsequently of Harvard University, counseled Ruby Bridges during her ordeal. He later highlighted the story in a classic child psychology booked called *Children in Crisis.* In 1995, Scholastic Press published Coles' children's book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges,* and in 1999, Ruby Bridges' own account, *Through My Eyes.* Appearing in 2000 was a Disney docudrama entitled *Ruby Bridges.* Today, Ruby Bridges spends most of her time in classrooms across America, via the Ruby Bridges Foundation.

Little Ruby Bridges' iconic walk up the steps of William Frantz appeared in living rooms across America on the nightly news and in various major newspapers and magazines. Her experience was the inspiration for Norman Rockwell's famous painting *The Problem We All Live With*, which appeared as a centerfold in the January 14, 1964 issue of *Look* magazine. It was Rockwell's first work for *Look*. Correspondence at the Norman Rockwell Museum makes it very clear that the idea came from Rockwell rather than the magazine.

The large size (roughly 13 inches by 21 inches) and the absence of text account for much of the painting's impact in *Look*. The previous page simply says, "The Problem We All Live With," by Norman Rockwell. Turning the page, the viewer's attention is riveted on a small, black child dressed primly in white, with a white bow in her hair. In her hand are school books and a ruler. She is marching resolutely with U. S. marshals (two in front and two behind) who appear only from the chest down. A racial epithet appears on the tan backdrop, clearly the wall of a building. About the only color used is the red of a tomato thrown against the wall and the marshals' yellow arm bands. The model was a local (Stockbridge, Massachusetts) black girl named Lynda Gunn.

Look received some fifty letters about the painting (per a letter from the art director to Rockwell dated February 18, 1964). All but six liked it and requested reprints. Rockwell himself also received various letters (now housed at the Norman Rockwell Museum). John Oxnard, Jr. wrote, "You have just said in one painting what most people cannot say in a lifetime."

The letter from Chester Martin, Chattanooga, Tennessee, bears quoting in full:

> *I have never written to a national figure before, nor do I intend to make a habit of it. Allow me to say that I have never been so deeply moved by any picture as by your painting in the current issue of Look Magazine (14 January 1964). Thank you for showing this white Southerner how ridiculous he looks. The truth's pretty hard to take until we get it from a Norman Rockwell.*

The Problem We All Live With is not a little known painting stuck away at the Norman Rockwell Museum. It has become a powerful, recognizable image of the Civil Rights Movement. Like the best of these images, it portrays the quiet dignity of African-Americans as they challenged the entrenched world of Jim Crow. One measure of the image's fame is its widespread use among educators as a springboard for lessons. Linda Pero, the director of collections at the Norman Rockwell Museum, indicated that in the twenty years she's worked there, it is easily the single most requested painting for reproduction.

National Significance:

There is no question that the New Orleans school crisis was nationally (and indeed internationally) known. As one early account observed, the sidewalk in front of Frantz Elementary was "an international spectacle with a huge press and television corps." The story was covered and subsequently discussed by, among others, NBC, CBS, *The New York Times, Life, Time, Newsweek, The New York Herald Tribune, The Nation, The Commonweal,* and *The New Republic.* As mentioned previously, popular women's magazines such as *Redbook* and *Good Housekeeping* did features on the Gabrielle family (as did *Look*).

In response to the charge that the press exaggerated, that they "made" the news, Betty Wisdom, a SOS member, wrote to *The Nation*, taking issue with the idea: "I was there, day after day, escorting

children to school past the howling harridans. The screamers shouted obscenities . . . and then raced home to telephone the returning families and their escorts with threats of arson, acid-throwing, kidnapping, beatings and murder. *These calls were not made to impress reporters; they were made to terrify the recipients.*"

Admittedly, the fact that the New Orleans school crisis received widespread national attention does not in and of itself make the Frantz School nationally significant; however, it does speak to the issue. As evidenced in the preceding narrative, this was not some minor example of southern intransigence that no one knew about outside New Orleans and Louisiana. More importantly, historians consider the New Orleans crisis to be a major example of the southern counterinsurgency known as massive resistance. And massive resistance is clearly a national significant phenomenon in the history of school desegregation.

Francis M. Wilhoit's *The Politics of Massive Resistance* (1973) has the following subheadings in his chapter entitled "Critical Confrontations": Non-violent Showdowns with the Courts, The Little Rock Showdown, The New Orleans Showdown, The University of Georgia Showdown, The Ole Miss Showdown, and The University of Alabama Showdown. Writing in *The Politics of Desegregation*, Robert Crain identifies the "three major crises" as Little Rock, New Orleans and Birmingham. "It [New Orleans] was one of the nation's most chaotic and violent school desegregations." Jack Bass in *Unlikely Heroes* concludes, "No southern state [referring to Louisiana] matched the vigor, imagination and frenzy displayed by Louisiana in battling to maintain segregated schools." From *Fifty-eight Lonely Men* (1961) by J. W. Peltason: "No school board had fought more determinedly to retain segregation than had the Orleans Parish board; they had filed 36 delaying motions." Referring to Judge Wright's restraining order against the entire Louisiana state legislature, the same author observed that "not since the Civil War had any legislature ever so defied a federal judge."

A major book on the *Brown* decision, James T. Patterson's *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (2001), identifies the New Orleans school crisis as one of the four big desegregation controversies occurring between 1956 and 1960. He recounts a few early incidents of southern intransigence and then begins the next section with, "Dramatic as some of these controversies were, they pale in visibility compared to four others between 1956 and 1960. The four are Autherine Lucy and her 1956 desegregation of the graduate school of the University of Alabama; Dorothy Counts attending an all-white high school in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1957; the New Orleans crisis (with a full page picture of young Ruby Bridges); and Little Rock. The latter, of course, Patterson recognized as "easily the most heated confrontation."

Exceptional Importance:

The National Register requires that properties be of "exceptional importance" if their significance occurred less than 50 years ago. Some of the Civil Rights movement is now fifty years old and some is not. The *Brown* decision is 50 years old, as are some of the earliest reactions to it. The New Orleans school crisis, which the *Brown* decision precipitated, is only five years shy of the 50 year cutoff. Hence it seems arbitrary for some of the early school crises in reaction to *Brown* to be considered "historic" and others "non-historic." They all help tell the story of school desegregation (token) in the wake of *Brown*, regardless of whether they are one or two years within the present 50 year cutoff or a few years the other side. (Per National Register Bulletin 22, "Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance within the Last Fifty Years," the 50 year threshold was not designed "to be mechanically

applied on a year by year basis. Generally, our understanding of history does not advance a year at a time, but rather in periods of time which can logically be examined together.") And of critical importance is the fact that enough time has passed for a multitude of scholarly studies to be published on *Brown* and the subsequent "massive resistance."

Perhaps the best argument for "exceptional importance" rests on the historical force which the Frantz desegregation represents: the Civil Rights Movement. No one would dispute that this extraordinary movement is of "exceptional importance" in American history. African-Americans, aided by the courts and pivotal legislation, re-gained the fundamental rights secured some one hundred years ago during Reconstruction. Surely, the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War are the two most important historical phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century. As the site of a major conflict in school desegregation, a bellwether phase of the Civil Rights Movement, Frantz School is of "exceptional importance."

Finally, it is worth noting that the National Park Service has identified the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals building, the scene of all the legal action involving the New Orleans school crisis, as a potential candidate for National Historic Landmark designation.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
___ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: approximately one acre

UTM References:

Zone	Easting	Northing
15	786280	3319700

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated acreage is bounded by N. Galvez St. on the south, Alvar St. on the east and Pauline St. on the west. The north boundary parallels the rear elevation of the school at a distance of 10 feet (extending from Pauline to Alvar).

Boundary Justification: Boundaries were chosen to encompass the significant resource while excluding a non-contributing school building on the rear of the campus.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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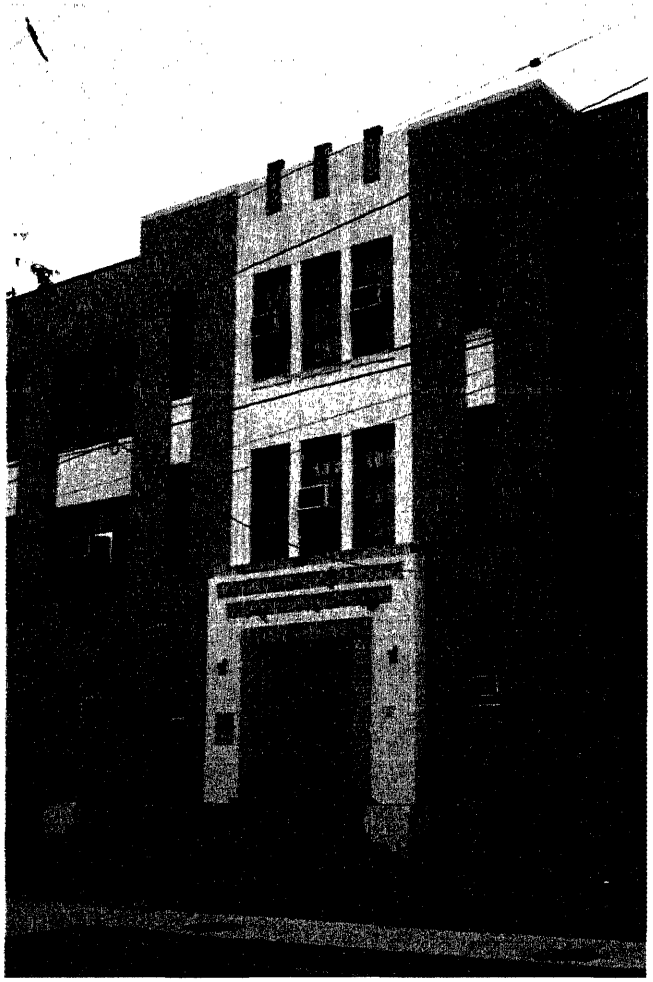
Date: February-March 2005

PROPERTY OWNERS

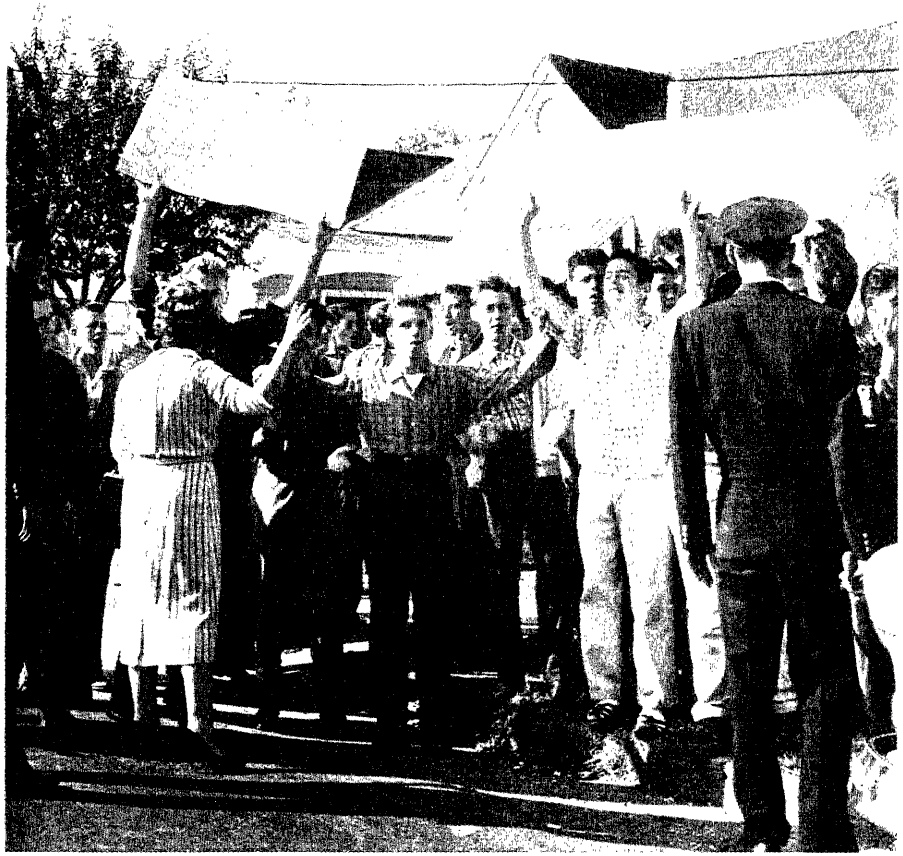
Orleans Parish School Board

The Problem We All Live With
Norman Rockwell
Look, January 1964



Desegregation Day, November 14, 1960

Ruby Bridges enters Frantz with federal marshals



Crowds of women and teenagers gathered outside the schools to heckle and insult the children

Little Ruby was a class of one. Her teacher was Barbara Henry.

The Gabrielles were one of two families
breaking the white boycott at Frantz