Little Rock Crisis

Background: Brown vs. BOE had succeeded in the ruling that Plessy Vs Ferguson no longer applied to the segregation of schools and black students could attend white schools now. Though this was ruled by the Supreme Court, there was no date set so many schools decided to “take time to prepare” or just refused openly to let the students in; Little Rock is one of the events where citizens of the area and the school were physical and quite violent/abusive towards the students.

Who: The “Little Rock Nine” (9 students who were the first to be registered by the NAACP to transfer from a black school to Little Rock school); Citizens; Federal and National Guard; President

When: 1957

Where: Little Rock School, Little Rock, Arkansas

What happened: Segregationist citizens councils held protests at Central High, and physically blocked the students from entering. Governor Faubus deployed the National Guards to support them. This made headlines, with soldiers blocking the 9 black students from entering, and the “Council of Church Women” made a statement to condemn this- they called for citywide prayer service and Eisenhower had to intervene. He called the Governor to him and warned him not to oppose the rulings of the Supreme Court. US Justice Dept. Attorneys requested an injunction against the National Guard deployment, which was granted by Judge Ronald Davies, who ordered the governor to withdraw, which he did. But mainly white parents protested and continued to block the entry of the students. On September 23rd, Police managed to slip the 9 into the school, but the protestors learned that the black students were inside and confronted the policemen outside. Riots started and the students had to be escorted out of the school. A day later, the Mayor of Little Rock urged the President to send federal troops, and he ordered the 101st Airborne Division of the US army to attend Little Rock and federalised the entire 10,000 man Arkansas National Guard. The 101st took immediate action and the 9 students successfully entered the following day. Majority of the Arkansas guard could not be defederalised, and the 101st remained to take over when the paratroopers left at Thanksgiving. They remained there for the rest of the year.

What was the outcome: The 9 were accepted into the school under US Army protection but were subjected to violence and abuse. One girl got acid in her eyes, and another was confronted by an all white male group- she subsequently dumped her lunch on them and was suspended. She was later suspended for the rest of the year, so transferred to New Lincoln High in NY instead. Journalist Daisy Bates, an activist, worked with the 9 throughout their ordeal and managed to cover the story. A lot of Northern journalists were abused by the parents who were rioting.

Significance: Showed brutality and support from the President/National/Federal Guards etc; showed that the black children could be integrated into schools and they stood up for what was their right.

Quotes: 
The 1957 crisis in Little Rock, brought about by the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School, was a huge part of the march toward freedom and opportunity in America. Arkansas Politician Vic Snyder.