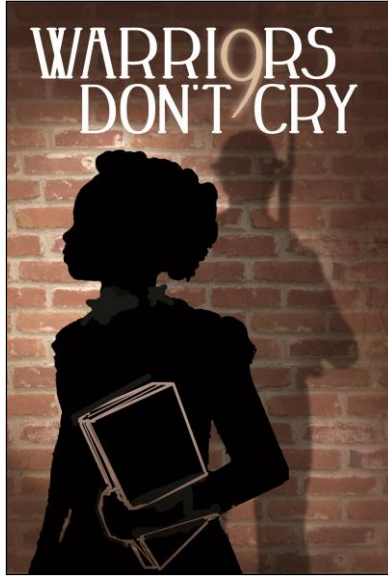


STUDY GUIDE



Warriors Don't Cry

A Little Rock Nine Memoir

By

Melba Pattillo Beals

Adapted for the stage by

Zita Christian and Scott Galbraith

This study guide was designed by The Bushnell to help prepare students for viewing Warriors Don't Cry. Most of the language in the play comes directly from the memoir, including language that is historically accurate for the period, including use of the word "nigger."

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CREATED BY ZITA CHRISTIAN, EMILY ERNST, AND SCOTT GALBRAITH

BIOGRAPHIES

DR. MELBA PATTILLO BEALS (Author) - At the age seventeen Melba Pattillo began writing for major newspapers and magazines. While in college, she met John Beals, whom she later married. She had a daughter, Kellie, and adopted twin sons, Matthew and Evan. Melba later earned a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. She also wrote *White is a State of Mind*, which begins where *Warriors* left off. In 1958, the NAACP awarded the prestigious Spingarn Medal to Pattillo Beals and to the other members of the Little Rock Nine, together with civil rights leader Daisy Bates, who had advised the group during their struggles at Central High. In 1999, Beals and the rest of the Nine were awarded the highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal. Today, Beals lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, and teaches journalism at Dominican University, where she is the chair of the communications department.

ZITA CHRISTIAN, Assistant Manager of Programs, manages The Bushnell's youth-oriented projects and, working with New York's American Place Theatre, formed The Bushnell's Literature to Life series. A multi-published author of both fiction and non-fiction, Christian has created public forums to explore the themes in plays such as *Twelve Angry Men* and *Doubt*; professional development sessions to explore the girls-bullying-girls theme in *Wicked*; and three conferences at The Bushnell including the recent Bushnell Filmmakers Forum in August 2010.

SCOTT GALBRAITH, Vice-President of Programs, began his career as an actor, performing internationally. He later transitioned to the administrative side of the industry functioning as Director of Marketing & Public Relations, as Company Manager, and as Associate Producer overseeing the creation of several new works. Presently Vice President of Programs at The Bushnell, he helmed their production of *The Music Man – A 50th Anniversary Tribute* starring Shirley Jones and Patrick Cassidy, and oversees all in-house producing. He is married and father to two teenagers, each warriors in their own right.

RICHARD C. AVEN (Director) holds a B.A. in music and an M.A. in renaissance literature (Michigan State University), as well as an M.F.A. in theatre (The Theatre School, DePaul University). In 1995, he co-authored *Acting: Preparation, Practice and Performance* with Dr. Bella Itkin, an in-depth application of sensory technique to text. Richard has directed productions by Hellman, Coward, Shepard, Shakespeare, and Chekhov, among others. As Associate Artistic Director of Mixed Phoenix Theatre Group, Richard will be co-producing and directing in the Third Annual Play Reading series in October, 2010.

PRE-SHOW SUMMARY

Summary (in Melba's Words):

"During my junior year in high school, I lived at the center of a violent civil rights conflict. In 1954, the Supreme Court had decreed an end to segregated schools. Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus and states' rights segregationists defied that ruling. President Eisenhower was compelled to confront Faubus – to use U. S. soldiers to force him to obey the law of the land. It was a historic confrontation that generated worldwide attention. At the center of the controversy were nine black children who only wanted to have the opportunity for a better education."

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Leading Up to the integration of Little Rock's Central High School

1896: *Plessy vs. Ferguson*: Supreme Court Case upholding the constitutionality of racial segregation.



1914: Charles Hamilton Houston graduates valedictorian from Amherst, becomes the first black editor of the *Harvard Law Review* and writes, "Education is preparation for the competition of life." As a lawyer, he devotes his life to overturning the *Plessy* decision and ending Jim Crow laws.

1934: Houston, a leading member of the NAACP, takes it upon himself to train a group of young black lawyers in civil rights law. He takes them on the road to document the reality of "separate but equal" in the south. Armed with a typewriter and a camera, the

group slept in cars and ate fruit when hotels and restaurants refused to serve them. One of Houston's best students, Thurgood Marshall, would go on to win 29 of the 30 cases he argued (including *Brown vs. the Board of Education*) and was the first black Supreme Court Justice.

1947: Levi Pearson of South Carolina, tired of seeing his children walk 9 miles to school when the state would only provide buses for white children, files a lawsuit against the school district. Thurgood Marshall is his attorney.



1950s: Psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark conduct experiments with white and black baby dolls. When asked which doll was “prettier” or “had the smartest friends,” black children pointed to the white doll.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WG7U1QsUd1g&feature=Playlist&p=FFA01866CF820011&index=0&playnext=1>



1954: Thurgood Marshall (center) cites the Clarks’ research and argues before the Supreme Court that racial segregation damages the self-esteem of young black children. In the photograph here, Marshall celebrates his victory in *Brown vs. Board*, when the Supreme Court put a unanimous end to segregation “**with all deliberate speed.**” Unfortunately, this vague phrasing of this legislation afforded segregationists the time to organize a violent resistance.

1955: The School Board in Little Rock, Arkansas votes to adopt a plan of gradual integration beginning in September, 1957 (three years after

segregation became illegal).

January, 1956: NAACP officials attempt to register 27 black students in all-white Little Rock schools but are rejected.

February, 1956: NAACP files a lawsuit on behalf of 33 black children denied admission to

four white schools. Eventually, an appeal is successful and a federal judge is forced to order integration to proceed.

Little Rock, 1957



September 4 : On the first day of school, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus (left) orders the Arkansas National guard to block the Little Rock Nine from entering Central High School claiming blood would “run in the streets,” fueling white segregationists. Black students are chased away by a screaming mob of Faubus supporters, and are barred from entering.



Sept 5: Attorney Wiley Branton (center) telephones Thurgood Marshall (right), explaining the situation. Marshall arrives in Little Rock the next day.



September 7: Marshall is escorted by armed guards to the home of Daisy Bates (left) of the NAACP, where he would share a room with Branton. Famous for his humor, Marshall joked that he planned to sneak back to the room when Branton wasn't looking and move his roommate's things to the more dangerous bed near the window.

September 20: Judge Davies ruled that Faubus used the troops to prevent integration rather than to preserve the law as he claimed.

September 23: The Little Rock Nine enter Central High School through a side door. An out-of-control mob, including police officers who had thrown down their badges, forced Melba and the other eight students to evacuate the school.

September 24: Little Rock's mayor Woodrow Mann sends a telegram to President Eisenhower explaining the situation:

"The mob that gathered was no spontaneous assembly. It was agitated, aroused and assembled by a concerted plan of action."

As bomb threats and lynch mobs continued to threaten the lives of blacks, Mann desperately wires the President again:

"I am pleading to you...in the interest of humanity, law and order and...democracy worldwide to provide the necessary troops within several hours."



September 25th: Eisenhower sends the 101st Airborne Division to escort the Little Rock Nine to school (above).

Though forced to obey the Supreme Court ruling, President Eisenhower didn't support *Brown vs. Board of Education*. He later confided to his secretary that the case had created "the most important problem facing the government, domestically, today."

Marshall later said, "[Little Rock was] a black mark on President Eisenhower, and there's nothing in his record that would correct it, in my book."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loPLitU6jVg>

VOCABULARY

Segregate To separate or isolate from others or from a main body or group
To impose the separation of a race or class from the rest of society

Integrate To make into a whole, unify
To join with something else, unite
To open to people of all races or ethnic groups without restriction

NAACP

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization

Jim Crow

A degrading name for black people based on a minstrel show stock character commonly portrayed by white people in “blackface” (clownish black makeup). These stereotypes were created to portray blacks as lazy, stupid, less than human, and therefore worthy of racial segregation. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4xBAsxmVRY&feature=related>

Jim Crow Laws

Named for the black caricature, these laws prohibited blacks from using the same public schools, transportation, and accommodations as whites.

The Doctrine of Separate But Equal

The notion that separating whites and blacks meant they would enjoy equal opportunities. Thurgood Marshall put an end to Jim Crow laws by addressing the reality of this notion.

POST-SHOW

EXCERPT 1 : FREEDOM

Melba

For as long as I can remember, I spent late afternoons with Grandma India in her garden. I would stand beside her skirt as she pulled the weeds or held the water hose. That's when we had our private talks. Once when I was six or so, I explained to her that I believed each human being was really only a spirit -- made by God, and that our bodies were like clothes hanging in the closet. I thought that one day I would be able to exchange my body for a white body, and then I could be in charge.

Grandma

Some of your thinking is right, child. We are not these bodies, we are spirits, God's ideas. But you must strive to be the best of what God made you. You don't want to be white, what you really want is to be free, and freedom is a state of mind.

Discussion questions:

- What does freedom mean to you? Do you agree with Grandma that "freedom is a state of mind"?
- Are there any privileges you enjoy that may not be enjoyed by every American?
- When and where do you feel free? Are there areas in your life where you don't feel free?
- The Little Rock Nine felt strongly that they had a right to a good education and defied authority to get one. What might you be willing to stand up for?
- Does having leaders who look like you affect the way you feel about yourself?
- Consider the way "white" is referred to in our society. For example, a color that resembles the skin of a white person is referred to as "flesh tone." How might such references affect nonwhite people?
- How do you think it would feel to be suspected of a crime based on the color of your skin? Has this ever happened to you?

Did you know?

- When Thurgood Marshall was working on a case in Columbia, Tennessee, he drove 45 minutes back to Nashville every night for fear that he would be killed if he slept in Columbia. One night, he was stopped by police and searched for liquor. Though the police found nothing, they arrested him anyway. Do you think this sort of racial profiling happens today?
- A recent CNN poll showed that 41% of Americans who oppose President Obama, who possesses a Hawaiian birth certificate, believe he was born in another country, making him ineligible to be president.

EXCERPT 2 : IMPACTS OF SEGREGATIONS

Melba

My mother teaches high school English and she is one of the first of our people to attend a white people's university. It is located in an all-white neighborhood we only dare travel through during the day. Sometimes on our way there, we pass Central High School in Little Rock. It's seven stories high and stretches along two city blocks, surrounded by trees and a manicured lawn. It's so majestic - like a European castle. It has several fancy kitchens just for home economics, and all sorts of science laboratory equipment.

Grandma

That's where the richest white families send their children. Folks up North know about Central High School.

Melba

I wish I could see inside.

Grandma

Be patient and one day, God willing, you'll see inside that school. I promise.

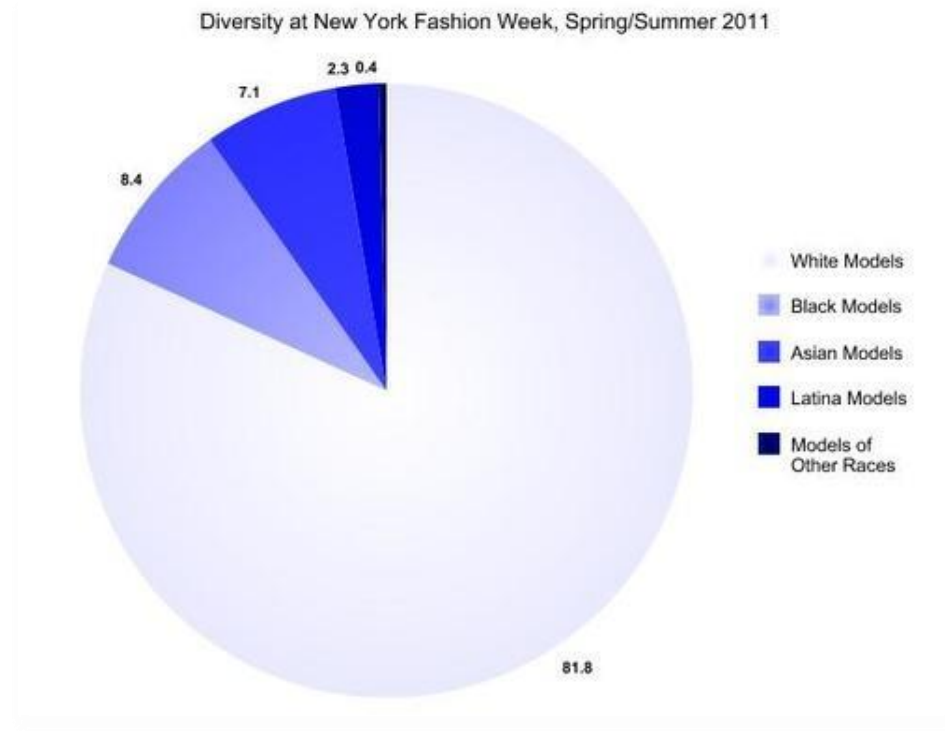
Discussion:

- Consider the definitions of "segregate" and "integrate" and how they apply to the above excerpt.
- Kenneth Clark, an African-American psychologist, said, "*Segregation is the way a society tells a group of human beings that they are inferior to other groups.*"
- In light of the current educational achievement gap between poor and affluent communities, what relevance, if any, does Melba's conversation with her grandmother have for students today?
- How might poor equipment, out-of-date text books or over-crowded schools affect the way you feel about yourself?
- Melba's experience at Central High School happened more than fifty years ago. Why is it important to discuss it now? What could happen if students don't learn about the struggle of the Little Rock Nine?

Did you know?

- When Minnijean Brown was expelled from school, she went to live with Kenneth and Mamie Clark.
- In Prince Edward County Virginia, schools closed from 1959-1964 rather than integrate, denying 2000 black students an education. Some families sent their children to live with foster parents in other cities, such as Baltimore, in order to have access to school. Would you be willing to leave your family and live with strangers in order to get an education? What might happen if you missed out on 5 years of school?

- In 2010, 81.8 % of the models in fashion week were white. How might that affect our notion of what is “beautiful”?



- Dillon County South Carolina didn't put the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision into action until 1970.
- The University of Alabama's football team didn't integrate until 1971, a year after the University of Nebraska's college football team (an integrated team) defeated Alabama (an all-white team) 38 to 6.

EXCERPT 3 : PERSONAL CHARACTER

Melba

The school board said they chose us from all the students who volunteered because we had the scholarship, personal conduct, good health, and mental ability to do the job. Grandma says God blessed our family with all those gifts.

At one point, there had been nineteen of us but ten students chose not to participate because of the threats of violence. It frightens me to see our numbers dwindling.

Discussion

- What do you think the school board meant by “scholarship, personal conduct, good health, and mental ability”?
- Why do you imagine there was so much pressure on the Little Rock Nine to be excellent students? What might have happened if they were not?
- One of the Little Rock Nine, Jefferson Thomas, died in 2010. How would you describe the legacy of the Little Rock Nine?
- How might negative stereotypes about gender, ethnicity, nationality or spirituality affect the way people expect you to behave? Are these expectations something you think about regularly?
- The Little Rock Nine relied heavily on friendship to endure their struggle. How might it feel to face challenges without the help of friends?

Did you know?

- During slavery, it was punishable by death for enslaved people to learn to read. Why might slave owners have wanted to prevent literacy among slaves?
- In the early 20th century, South Carolina schools banned black students from taking classes in reading and writing, limiting them to the study of home economics and agriculture.

EXCERPT 4 : DEFINE “WARRIOR”

Melba

It's mid-October. The newspaper headlines read, "101st Division Cut Back Force Today." The thought of fewer troops terrifies me. But the warrior growing inside me squares my shoulders and puts my mind on alert to do whatever is necessary to survive. A new voice in my head speaks to me with military discipline: Discover ink sprayed on the contents of your locker? Deal with it. Get another locker assigned. Find new books. Kicked in the shin? Tripped on the marble floor? Assess the damage and remain mobile. Warriors keep moving.

When a passerby calls me nigger, I work at not letting my heart feel sad because they don't like me. Allowing their words to pierce my soul is exactly what they want.

My Little Rock Nine friends change, too. We joke less with each other. Instead, we exchange information about how to cope. I neither understand nor control the warrior growing inside me.

Discussion

1. In the context of this story, what does it mean to be a warrior? What qualities does a warrior in this story need to possess?
2. Melba's grandmother tells her that "God's warriors don't cry." If not through tears, what is a healthy way to cope with the type of emotions that the Little Rock Nine experienced?
3. How might having to think about personal safety affect your performance in school?
4. In the book, Melba sites being kicked in the stomach more than once. What would happen in your school if this happened?

Did you know?

- Friends and colleagues remember Thurgood Marshall as someone with a great sense of humor.
- All human beings are 99.9% genetically identical.
- During slavery, articles containing pseudo-science about the inferiority of African people circulated as a means to justify the institution of slavery.
- African American men fought for the U.S. in the Civil War before being allowed to vote.
- It is well recognized that, historically, Native Americans have the highest record of service per capita when compared to other ethnic groups.
<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-1.htm>

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Imagine you've been asked to be the graduation speaker at your school, 50 years after you graduated. How would you describe your high school experience? What part of school life do you hope will have changed since you graduated? What part do you hope will have remained the same?
2. Melba's story is the account of one year in her life dealing with the struggle for integration. If you were to write about one year in your life, which year would you choose? Would you describe a struggle? A celebration? Something else?
3. Pick a *Warriors* person other than Melba and describe an episode in the story from *his/her* point of view.
4. What comparisons can you draw between Ghandi and Dr. King? What influence, if any, do you think they had on Melba's thinking?
5. Internet Search: What is the most recent integration story you can find?
6. Integration today and in 1957: Do you feel that your school is "integrated"? What is its ethnic breakdown?
7. In 1957, Arkansas' Governor Faubus believed strongly in segregation. How do authority figures affect the way people behave? How difficult might it be to stand up against their views? Would you risk expulsion to stand up for your beliefs?
8. In 1957, "nigger" was a common term, used even by elected officials. Discuss the pros and cons of desensitizing the word. Does using the word as a term of friendship claim power over the pain it once inflicted? Or does casual use of the word today diminish and discount the pain that was inflicted?
9. Ask members of your family who lived through the struggle for integration to tell you their stories.