



Constitutional Writes

The official newsletter of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

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Construction Begins on New Visitor Center



Participants break ground for the new visitor center May 20, 2006. (L to R) Congressman Vic Snyder, Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey, Central High Museum, Inc. president Colette Honorable, Joseph Hurst, Central High principal Nancy Rousseau, Senator Mark Pryor, Thelma Mothershed Wair, Superintendent Mike Madell.

More than 100 people gathered at the historic site on Saturday, May 20 for the formal groundbreaking ceremony for the new Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site visitor center. Senator Mark Pryor, Congressman Vic Snyder, Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey, and National Park Service Deputy Regional Director Dave Given all spoke. Two of the Little Rock Nine, Thelma Mothershed Wair and Elizabeth Eckford, also attended the event.

The City of Little Rock partnered with the NPS to sponsor the event, and used the occasion to begin the 500 day countdown until the 50th anniversary in 2007. As part of the ceremony, Howard Hurst, president of Tipton Hurst florists (the company that originally owned the property where the new facility will be constructed) donated 500 flowering plants to InnerCity Future Net, a neighborhood organization that works to transform vacant lots in the area into community garden spaces.

Actual construction began in mid-June and the formal dedication of the visitor center is scheduled for September 24, 2007, as part of the 50th anniversary commemoration events. Noacon, Inc., from Fairfield Bay, is the general contractor for construction of the 10,000 square foot building. In addition to serving as a visitor center, the facility will house the administrative offices for

site staff and collections storage space for archives and artifacts. The restored Mobil Magnolia service station (the current visitor center) will remain operational as an education center.

The site's historian monitored the early stages of the construction project for possible archeological features on the site. Work uncovered a brick-lined well, as well as a concrete structure which may have served as part of an underground furnace housing for the greenhouses that formerly occupied the site. Both features were photographed and documented before work continued.

In addition to the building construction, design and fabrication of the facility's new interpretive exhibits is proceeding on schedule. Installation of the new exhibits is scheduled to begin in June 2007. The new visitor center will help accommodate the growing number of visitors who are interested in learning more about the Little Rock desegregation crisis and its role in the civil rights movements in the U.S. Visitation to the historic site has increased from 21,084 in 2001 (the year the NPS assumed operation of the visitor center) to 44,293 in 2005. The new facility will have about 3,000 square feet of exhibit space—almost six times the space available in the current facility.



ajc architects Quatrefol

Visitor Center
Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site



Architect's rendering of the new visitor center.

Laura A. Miller, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources

50th Anniversary Just Around the Corner

September 2007 will be a very special time in Little Rock, as the city remembers and recognizes the people and events that placed the community at the center of one of the country's most important battles for equal rights. The highlight on the anniversary commemoration will be held on Tuesday, September 25, when citizens come together on the front lawn of Central High School to honor the Little Rock Nine. President Bush has been invited to speak at this event. All other living Presidents have been invited. This event is sponsored by Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey's 50th anniversary commission. [Note that this event will be held the day after the dedication of the new visitor center.]

The 50th Anniversary Commission also is sponsoring several other events during the mid-September period, including judicial and education forums and a community festival to celebrate our common humanity. Many other institutions in Little Rock are also sponsoring events during this period. For example, the Clinton Presidential Center will be hosting an exhibit featuring the original *Emancipation Proclamation*. The Arkansas Repertory Theatre will premier a specially-commissioned play about the Central High crisis, and the Arkansas Art Center will host an exhibit of photography by Ernest Withers and Will Counts.

In addition to opening and dedicating the new visitor center, the National Park Service has many events scheduled to commemorate the 50th anniversary. Some of these events will begin as early as the autumn of 2006. Others will continue to be held well into 2008, recognizing other chapters of the desegregation story such as the Lost Year and the work of the Women's Emergency Committee. Some of the other events and programs that we are planning include a Democracy Center for students (in partnership with the Clinton Library) and a series of vignettes that will be aired on Arkansas Public Radio.

The National Park Service and United States Mint have also been working closely to develop the commemorative coin to honor the Little Rock Nine and Central High School. The coin, authorized by Public Law 109-146, is expected to become available in May 2007. A "first day of issue" event is expected to be held in Little Rock during the spring of 2007.

Please watch for future mailings for additional information about these and other anniversary programs and events and keep an eye on our website for updated information - www.nps.gov/chsc.

R. Michael Madell, Superintendent



Workers remove the concrete pad on the vacant lot, site of the new visitor center, June 2006. NPS photo.



Well uncovered during excavation for the new visitor center foundation. NPS photo.

49th Anniversary Program

***Mendez v. Westminster*: For all the Children / Para Todos Los Ninos A Story of School Desegregation Among Mexican Americans in California**

Saturday, September 23, 2006 at 3:30 p.m.
Central High School National Historic Site, in conjunction with *Unity in the Community: A Gateway for Humanity*, will commemorate the 49th anniversary of the desegregation of Central High School with a special workshop and documentary screening. Join Sylvia Mendez, one of the plaintiffs of the *Mendez v. Westminster* case, and Sandra Robbie, the producer of “Mendez vs. Westminster: For all the Children / Para Todos Los Ninos,” a 27-minute documentary about school segregation among Mexican Americans in Orange County, California, for the program in the Central High School library. Teachers attending the event will receive inservice credit. The event is free and open to the public. Please call 501 -374- 1957 or visit our website at www.nps.gov/chsc for more information.

In 1954 the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court case outlawed legal segregation in education. Seven years earlier, in 1946, *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.* set the precedent for the historic *Brown v. Board* decision.

The *Mendez* suit was filed against four California school districts by Latino parents seeking to end segregation in the schools there. The case was initiated by Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez, who were tenant farmers in Westminster, Orange County. The Mendez family was upset to find out that they could not enroll their children in a school close to home because of their ethnicity. The Mendezes, and other Mexican American families, were also upset by the fact that many Mexican Americans fought and died in World War II along with white soldiers for the United States, yet their children were denied educational opportunities in the same country because of their ethnic origin.

Segregation in Orange County was not limited to schools. Similar to the treatment of African Americans in this era, Latinos were segregated and treated unequally. There was “Mexican housing,” “Mexican seats” in movie theaters, and “Mexican days” at the public swimming pools, usually on the day the pool was to be drained and cleaned.

The Mendez family, along with other concerned parents, decided to take action. They filed a class action lawsuit in 1945 in federal court against four Orange County school districts, seeking an injunction to end school segregation. With the legal guidance of Thurgood Marshall and other NAACP lawyers, they won their suit. Mexican American children could no longer be denied educational opportunities based on ethnic origin and were granted access to an equal education.

The *Mendez* case served as a precedent for the arguments in the *Brown v. Board* case. Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund went on to fight many more civil rights cases in an effort to end segregation in education.

The Westminster School building is now used as a community service center. The building stands as a concrete symbol of the historic *Mendez v. Westminster* case that ended *de jure*, or legal, school segregation of Latinos in California’s public schools.

Spirit Trickey, Park Ranger



The Mendez Family and Friends after the filming of the *Mendez v. Westminster* documentary, including (Far Left) Sandra Robbie, (Center Left in blue dress) Sandra Mendez, and (Center Right in white) Sylvia Mendez. Photo Courtesy of the Mendez family.

Staff Notes - New Arrivals and Farewells



Amy Garrett

Amy Garrett is the new Education Specialist at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. Most recently, Amy served as Park Ranger/Education Coordinator at Homestead National Monument of America in Nebraska. During her time there, Amy pioneered the use of distance learning technology at the park and helped other parks in the Midwest Region gain access to this emerging technology. Amy won the national Freeman Tilden Award in 2003 for her efforts. This award is given for excellence in park interpretation and education.

Prior to her work at Homestead, she worked at Death Valley National Park and Yellowstone National Park, where she began her park service career. Amy also served 4 years in the U.S. Army with tours in Ft. Hood, TX and Germany. She graduated with a B.S. in English from Central Michigan University.

Lea Flowers Baker, Education Specialist, has left the historic site to join her husband in Mexico City, Mexico. She is taking a job as history instructor at the American School Foundation. Lea wishes to thank everyone that she has worked with over the past two years and hopes that she can keep a connection as a volunteer when she is home! She would also like to thank the Little Rock Nine and considers it a great honor to have worked with many of them.

From all the staff to Lea: Thanks for all your hard work and dedication to Central High School and the National Park Service. We wish you the best of luck in the future!

Alyssa Warrick became a member of the Little Rock Central High School National Historic staff as a park guide on February 14, 2006. Alyssa is a native of Rogersville, Missouri (near Springfield). Alyssa's career with the National Park Service began at Governors Island National Monument and Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial. Alyssa graduated with a B.A. in History from Truman State University in Kirksville,



Alyssa Warrick

MO. Alyssa stated that she is excited to be a part of the new changes and feels privileged to have the opportunity to interpret the story of the Little Rock Nine and the 1957 crisis.

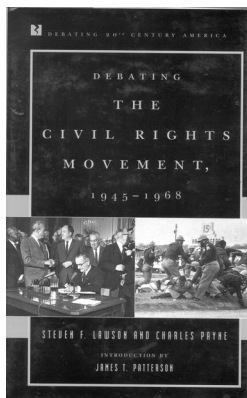
Rhonda Allen is leaving her post on August 24th to depart on a 100-day journey around the world. As a Semester at Sea voyager, she will conduct field research, take five academic courses, complete service projects, and sightsee in Japan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, Turkey, Croatia, Egypt, Myanmar, Spain, and India. She will return to the United States in December, 2006 and complete a six-month nonprofit internship at the East Harlem School in New York.

She says, "I have truly appreciated my experiences as a park guide at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site. Our site's interpretation of the desegregation crisis has enabled me to participate in living history. I have gained a greater sense of societal awareness that will characterize my interpretation of the diverse cultures around the world."



Rhonda Allen

Bookstore Browsing



Ranger Recommendation

Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968, by Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, contains two treatments of the Civil Rights Movement detailing different aspects of this turbulent time. Lawson depicts a more traditional view, largely highlighting the federal government's response and chronicling various stops along a timeline of sorts (including the crisis at Central High School). Payne's article challenges the traditional depiction of the Movement as one led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, maintaining that the real heroes of the Movement are those whose names often are not recorded in the annals of history, including women and students.

The ordinary people who laid their lives on the line for civil rights should not be forgotten. This volume also contains multiple primary sources, including speeches, congressional testimonies, and even some rare documents from civil rights groups in the South.

Alyssa Warrick, Park Guide

This item and many other educational materials about the Civil Rights era are available for purchase at the historic site bookstore. You can also now browse our website for bookstore selections by going to www.nps.gov/chsc and clicking on Bookstore!



Education Corner

New Curriculum Available Featuring Central High School and Hoxie:

A new curriculum that focuses on the media's treatment of the Hoxie schools in 1955 and Little Rock Central High School in 1957 is now available. Funded by the Lower Mississippi Delta Initiative, a grant provided by the National Park Service, and written by John Way and Nick Adams of the Crossett schools, the curriculum includes a lesson plan, narrative on both the Hoxie and Central High School desegregation crisis, a CD-ROM featuring news articles, and a DVD of *Hoxie: The First Stand*, for use in the classroom.

Another collaborative effort between the education staff at the historic site and Little Rock Central High School 9th Grade Academy is "Liberty and Justice for All." Making Civil Rights Real in America. This curriculum unit, written by George West, Cynthia Mahomes, April Rike, and Chuck West, features activities that tie the Central High School desegregation crisis to all facets of American history, including the development of the U.S. Constitution, reform movements of the mid 19th century, and the post-Civil War era.

Also available for teachers is a new lesson plan on Dunbar Junior and Senior High School that narrates the history of this remarkable school for African Americans in Little Rock and Arkansas before integration. Teachers may request the curriculum units by calling the education specialist at (501) 374- 3067. Lesson plans also are available on the park website at www.nps.gov/chsc.

"From Central to History"

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the desegregation of Central High School, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site partnered with KUAR Public Radio (89.1 FM), local NPR affiliate, to create one-minute radio vignettes highlighting stories of the 1957-'58 desegregation crisis at Central High School.

"From Central to History" features about forty vignettes of previously recorded sound bites from oral history interviews, as well as newly recorded material. The vignettes will air on KUAR from September 2006 and run through September 2007.

The vignettes will provide listeners with interesting and unique information from people who lived through the tumultuous times during the 1957 desegregation crisis at Central High School.

Staff from CHSC wrote the vignettes, and KUAR staff assisted in the production side of the project.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, or for more information about the 50th Anniversary, please write 2125 Daisy Bates Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202 or email spirit_trickey@nps.gov or call 501 -374- 1957.

Calling All Volunteers!



Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site is looking for volunteers to work at the Visitor Center. Currently, we have openings for volunteers in interpretation (historic research, photography, video), and gardening (Commemorative Garden, Visitor Center). Our volunteers will

be part of the team that will assist visitors from AROUND THE WORLD that are expected to visit the site in 2007 for the 50th anniversary.

Thanks to all the volunteers who help staff the visitor center and the bookstore during their summer break, hope to see you next summer.

If you love visiting America's National Parks, here is an opportunity to be a part of one! Contact Spirit Trickey, Volunteer Coordinator, at 501 -374- 1957 for more information.

We hope to hear from you soon!



Reese Lancaster
Volunteer and Central High
Freshman

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the
Interior

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site.

Editor

Tarona A. Bennett, Park Ranger

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Scheduled Programs

September 17-23

Join park rangers in celebrating Constitution Week. Receive a pocket-size copy of the Constitution.

Saturday, September 23

Documentary Film and Workshop, Central High School Library, 3:30 p.m. In conjunction with Unity in the Community to commemorate the 49th anniversary of the Little Rock Nine, join Sylvia Mendez, one of the plaintiffs of the *Mendez* case and Sandra Robbie, the producer of "Mendez vs. Westminster: For all the Children / Para Todos Los Ninos." Special presentation following the film.

October 31, 2006

Join park rangers for the annual Big Boo!seum Bash Tuesday night from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Take a shuttle to several different museums and historic sites for games, activities, and candy.

November 11, 2006

Celebrate Ruby Bridges Day at the Visitor Center.

January 15, 2007

Join park rangers for a special program on Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

February 19, 2007

Daisy Bates Holiday. Park Rangers will conduct a special program on Daisy and L.C. Bates and the role of the NAACP in the desegregation of Little Rock's schools.

March 2007

Join park rangers for a "Film Festival" in partnership with Market Street Cinema featuring a variety of films pertaining to the Civil Rights Movement.

April 2007

Celebrate National Park Week with us and learn more about Little Rock's own National Historic Site.

Park Rangers are available to give tours of the visitor center exhibit, commemorative garden, and the exterior of Central High School. Tours of the school are conducted for groups of 10 or more by reservation. Off-site visits for classes or groups can be arranged as well. The Visitor Center features the exhibit, "All the World is Watching Us: Little Rock and the 1957 Crisis," as well as a bookstore with a wide selection of educational materials.

Contact a park ranger for more information on program topics and scheduled events. Reservations are required for tours and can be made by calling the park at 501-374-1957.