

## Ruby Bridges

**Ruby Bridges** was 6 years old when she became the first African-American child to integrate a white Southern elementary school. She remembers the day she walked into an all-white school, escorted to class by her mother and U.S. marshals due to violent mobs.

“The morning of November 14, federal marshals drove my mother and me the five blocks to William Frantz [Public School]. One of the men explained that when we arrived at the school two marshals would walk in front of us and two behind... It reminded me of what Mama had taught us about God, that he is always there to protect us. ‘Ruby Nell,’ she said as we pulled up to my new school, ‘don’t be afraid. There might be some people upset outside, but I’ll be with you.’

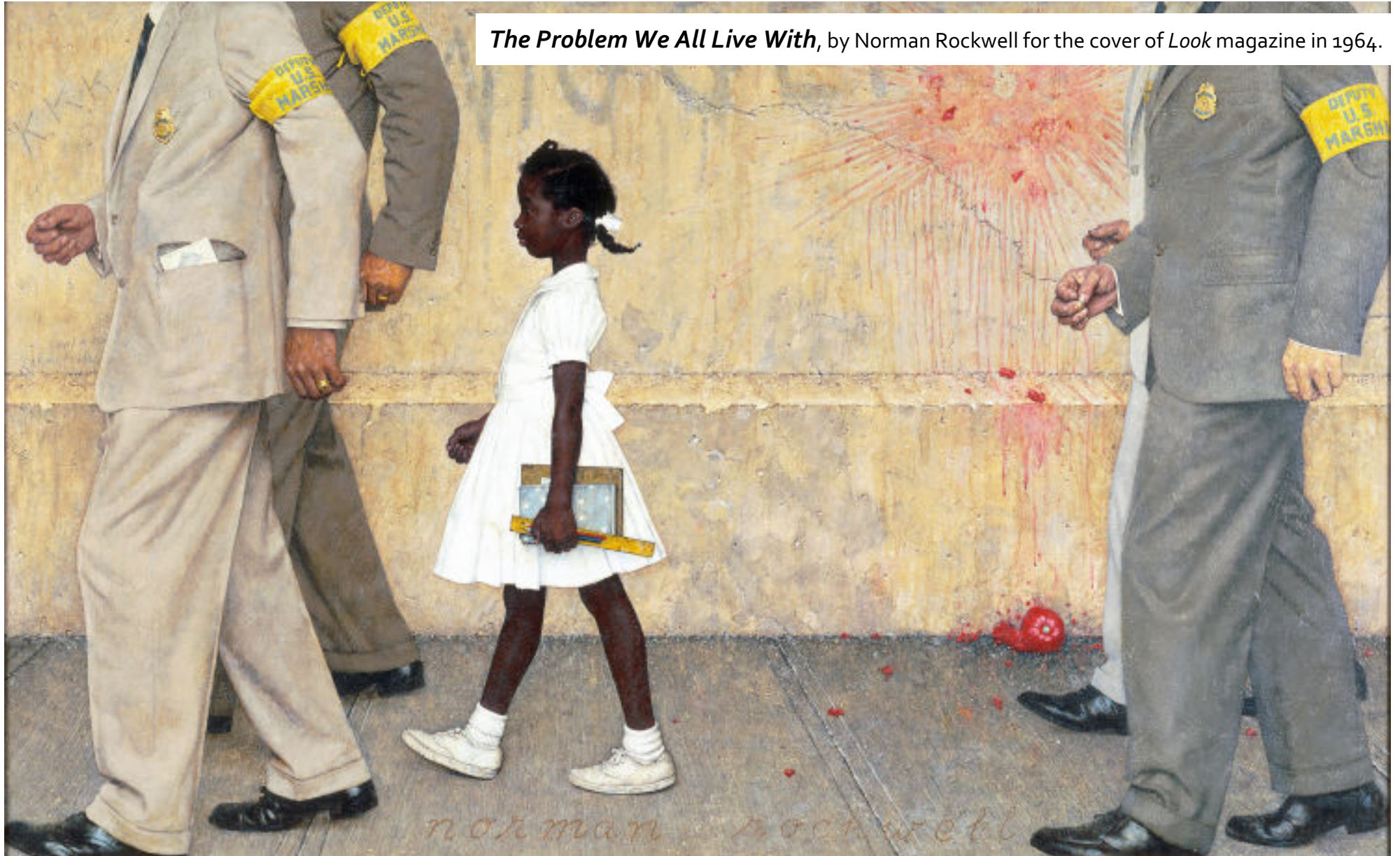
Sure enough, people shouted and shook their fists when we got out of the car... I held my mother’s hand and followed the marshals through the crowd, up the steps into the school... We spent that whole day sitting in the principal's office. Through the window, I saw white parents pointing at us and yelling, then rushing their children out of the school. In the uproar I never got to my classroom. The marshals drove my mother and me to school again the next day. I tried not to pay attention to the mob. Someone had a black doll in a coffin, and that scared me more than the nasty things people screamed at us.

The next morning my mother told me she couldn’t go to school with me. She had to work and look after my brother and sister. ‘The marshals will take good care of you, Ruby Nell,’ Mama assured me. ‘Remember, if you get afraid, say your prayers. You can pray to God anytime, anywhere. He will always hear you.’

That was how I started praying on the way to school. The things people yelled at me didn’t seem to touch me. Prayer was my protection.”

Ruby's faith and courage paved the way for continued Civil Rights action, and her story would inspire future generations. In 1999, now a parent herself and an activist for racial justice, Ruby formed the Ruby Bridges Foundation, headquartered in New Orleans. As its motto goes, "Racism is a grown-up disease and we must stop using our children to spread it."

*The Problem We All Live With*, by Norman Rockwell for the cover of *Look* magazine in 1964.



## Jackie Robinson

**Jackie Robinson** broke the color barrier when he became the first Black athlete to play Major League Baseball in the 20th century.

After his discharge from the Army in 1944, Robinson began to play baseball professionally. At the time, the sport was segregated, and African-Americans and whites played in separate leagues. Robinson began playing in the Negro Leagues, but he was soon chosen by the president of the Brooklyn Dodgers to help integrate major league baseball.

From the beginning of his career with the Dodgers in 1947, Robinson's resolve and strength of character was tested. Some of his new teammates objected to having an African-American on their team. People in the crowds jeered Robinson, and he and his family received violent threats. Others, however, defended his right to play in the major leagues, including league president Ford Frick, baseball commissioner Happy Chandler, Jewish baseball star Hank Greenberg, and Dodgers shortstop and team captain Pee Wee Reese. In one incident, while fans heckled and harassed Robinson from the stands, Reese walked over and put his arm around his teammate, a gesture that has become legendary in baseball history.

Jackie Robinson was named Rookie of the Year in 1947, National League MVP in 1949, and a World Series champion in 1955. In 1952, he publicly called out the Yankees as a racist organization for not having broken the color barrier five years after he had begun playing with the Dodgers.

In 1972, the Dodgers retired his uniform number of 42.

