*Warriors Don’t Cry*

By Melba Patillo Beals

Genres: Nonfiction, Memoir

Published: 1994

Rating: 5 out of 5 stars

*Warriors Don’t Cry* is a well-written memoir that gave me more of an insight into segregation in America during the 20th century than I ever learned from a textbook. In the book, Melba Patillo Beals recounts her memories of being one of nine African Americans integrating the formerly all-white Central High School in Arkansas.

When Beals was 12 years old, the Supreme Court declared in the 1954 lawsuit *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that segregated schools were unconstitutional. This caused a lot of backlash from segregationists, especially in the Little Rock, Arkansas, the town where Beals lived. A few years later, Beals volunteered to be one of the first African Americans to integrate Central High School in her town, but segregationists protested against the integration. In the end, Beals was able to attend 11th grade at Central High, along with eight other African American students.

Beals writes with precise and candid words about her experiences as an African American growing up in the South. I was quite shocked at the abuse Beals had to endure every day not just at Central High, but also in common places like the grocery store or neighborhood restaurant. I’ve learned about the atrocities of black and white segregation in history textbooks, but *Warriors Don’t Cry* puts this discrimination into the context of Beals’s actual life. Her narration really evokes the emotions she had in reaction to the way she and the rest of the black community were treated.

In addition, throughout the book, the author includes short passages from the diary entries she wrote as a child. The diary entries let me understand better how Beals thought about the difficult ordeal she was going through at Central High. The fear and pain that Beals expressed in those diary entries really hit me. I marveled at how she had the strength to cope with the racial discrimination and at how supportive her family was. Reading the book made me realize how truly lucky I am that I’ve never suffered such discrimination myself.

*Warriors Don’t Cry* is a must-read that makes the bland information stated in a history textbook much more real. The book provides a raw description of racial discrimination that I could comprehend fully through Beals’s eyes. Beals’s memoir truly is a testimony to the bravery and hardships of those, including herself, who helped make unsegregated schools a reality.