Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Liz Waid. And I’m Ryan Geertsma. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. Today’s Spotlight is on Ruby Bridges. She was the first black child in the United States to attend an all-white school. This was Ruby’s first official act against racism. But it was not her last. In the past, many black people were slaves in the United States. It is a terrible part of United States history. Slavery officially ended in the 1860s. But black people continued to have limited rights. Laws and customs kept black people and white people separate. They were not permitted to eat at the same restaurant, or even attend the same schools. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. In 1954 this court made an important ruling on the subject of education. The court ruled that keeping white people and black people separate was not permitted under national laws of the United States. They ruled that black children and white should go to the same schools. This ruling happened the year that Ruby Bridges was born. But by the time Ruby was ready to go to school all-white schools still did not accept black children. Ruby lived in the city of New Orleans in the southern state of Louisiana. The schools there tried to delay accepting black children. One method was through a test for black children. The test was designed so that few children would do well, or pass. But Ruby was one of six black children to pass the test. Ruby’s parents were not sure what to do. Should she stay at her all-black school? Or go to the new all-white school? The NAACP is an organization that argues for the rights of ethnic minorities in the United States. Ruby described to PBS how the organization visited her after she passed the test. “I had been chosen to attend one of the white schools, William Franz Public School. They said it was a better school and closer to my home than the one I had been attending. They said I had the right to go to the closest school in my area. They said my going to William Franz would help me, my brothers, my sisters, and other black children in the future. We would receive a better education which would give us better opportunities as adults.” Ruby’s parents decided to send Ruby to William Franz Public School. On November 14, 1960, Ruby began her first day of school. Her mother went with her. The United States government sent national police to protect Ruby and her mother. These Federal Marshals walked with them. Crowds of angry white people met them outside the school. Federal Marshals told Ruby to walk straight ahead and not to look back. The crowds shouted at Ruby and threatened her. But Ruby did not understand that all these people were shouting at her. She finally entered the school building. She described her first day of school in Guideposts magazine: “We spent the whole day sitting in the principal’s office. Through the window I saw white parents pointing at us and shouting. Then they quickly pulled their children out of the school.” Ruby met her teacher, Mrs. Henry. Henry was from the north of the United States, from the city of Boston. Ruby writes: “Mrs. Henry took my mother and me to her classroom. There were no other children in the room. She asked me to choose a seat. I picked one up front, and Mrs. Henry started teaching me the letters of the alphabet.” Every day the Federal Marshals brought Ruby to school. And every day she met Mrs. Henry to learn. Ruby writes in Guideposts: “I started praying on the way to school. The things people shouted at me did not seem to touch me. Prayer was protecting me. After walking up the steps past the angry crowd, though, I was glad to see Mrs. Henry. She wrapped her arms around me. She sat right by my side instead of at the teacher’s desk in the front of the room. Day after day, it was just Mrs. Henry and me, working on my lessons.” Ruby finished the year at William Franz. When the next school year began, Ruby discovered that Mrs. Henry was not her teacher anymore. She had moved back to Boston. But school was easier for Ruby. Other black children were in her class. White children were also in her class. No one talked about her strange first year. Ruby did not think about her experiences much as she finished school. After High School she went to business school and began a family. But in 1993, she would return to William Franz Public School. Ruby’s younger brother died. Ruby agreed to care for his three young daughters. She walked them to their school, William Franz, every day. She devoted some of her time to helping at the school. But, she writes in Guideposts: “Still, I had the feeling that God had brought me back to this school for something more than that. I struggled with it for a while. Finally, I got on my knees and prayed, Lord, whatever it is I am supposed to be doing, you will have to show me.” Around this same time, a man who had known Ruby wrote a book about her experience. Everyone wanted to know what had happened to Ruby as she grew up. People wanted to hear her talk about her story. And through this, Ruby reunited with her old teacher Mrs. Henry. Today, Ruby Bridges and Mrs. Barbara Henry travel around the United States. They tell people about their story. They speak about racism - judging people by the color of their skin. They speak about education. Ruby tells about this lesson she learned in the past. She learned it very young. But people can still learn it today. She tells the Washington Post newspaper: “I was going to school that day. But the lesson I learned that year in an empty school building was that none of us knows anything about hating one another when we come into the world. It is something that is passed on to us. We should never look at another person and judge them by the color of their skin. That is the lesson I learned in first grade.” The writer of this program was Liz Waid. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The voices you heard were from the United States. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, ‘Ruby Bridges; Stopping Racism’. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.