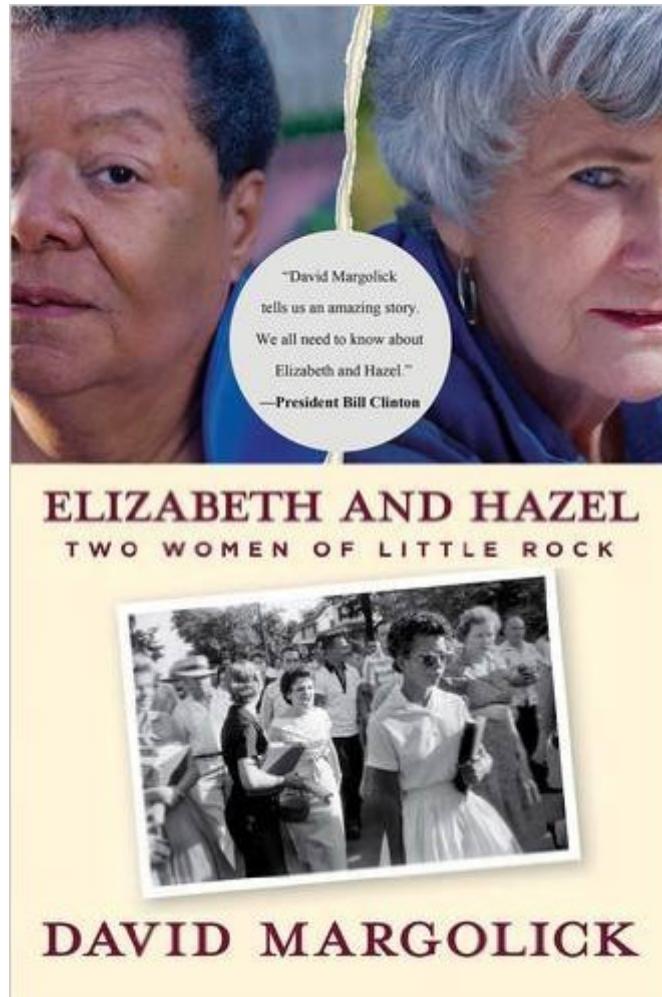


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# Elizabeth And Hazel: Two Women Of Little Rock



## **Synopsis**

The names Elizabeth Eckford and Hazel Bryan Massery may not be well known, but the image of them from September 1957 surely is. This famous photograph captures the full anguish of desegregation, and is an epic moment in the civil rights movement. This text tells the story of two separate lives unexpectedly braided together.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In 1957 a young black girl attempted to enter all-white Little Rock Central High School. Three years earlier, the Brown v. Board of Education court decision deemed that schools across the country be integrated: blacks and whites should study together, the ruling said, and no one gained anything by keeping them apart. But making a statement on paper and putting that statement into practice meant two drastically different things, as the young black girl found out that September morning in 1957. Her name was Elizabeth Eckford, and she and eight other students had been hand-picked to be the first black students to enter Little Rock Central. Eventually they became known as the Little Rock Nine, but due to an inadvertent lack of communication Eckford entered school alone on September 4, 1957. Protestors arrived to make their voices heard. Journalists positioned themselves to record the event. And Eckford, unbeknownst to all, was about to become an integral part of history. Her walk to school was captured in three photographs by three different people who all managed to record almost the exact same moment: Eckford, wearing sunglasses to shield the fear in her eyes and a pretty dress she'd made herself, walks alone. Behind her, among other people, is a white girl whose face exudes nothing but sheer hatred. In two of the pictures from that moment, the white

girl's white is open mid-abuse. In the third--the most famous--her teeth are bared and clenched, as though she is barely restraining herself from attacking Eckford with more than words. That girl was Hazel Bryan Massery, and author David Margolick spent time with both women to write his poignant book *Elizabeth and Hazel: Two Women of Little Rock*, released Oct. 4.

is not always an option, even after 50 years. David Margolik's study of one of American history's most iconic photographs, taken during the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School, reunites the two women in picture, Elizabeth Eckford and Hazel Bryan. Eckford, the 15 year old black girl who was carefully chosen by civil rights leaders in 1957 to be one of nine black students to first integrate the school. She is pictured enduring a gauntlet of screaming whites as she tries to walk towards the school. Her main tormenter, also a 15 year old girl, the white Bryan, is immortalised as a swearing, hateful figure right behind her. Several photographers were present and all took pictures of that moment in history. But history didn't end after the snapshot was taken. Both Eckford and Bryan went through life changes as they moved from the people they had been in 1957 to older, more mature women. Bryan, who transferred away from Little Rock Central, married young and began to look at herself and reconsider her core beliefs. Eckford, who stayed a year or so at the high school, was scarred by her time in the spotlight as one of the "Little Rock Nine". Determined later to be suffering from a form of PTSD from those traumatic days, combined with a depressive nature, Eckford rather drifted through life as a loner, holding jobs and raising two sons, and coming out occasionally to tell the history of the desegregation of the high school. Bryan also was a loner, despite having an active family life, and a few years after the incident at the high school, she called Eckford and apologised for her hateful actions. The years passed and Hazel Bryan became a "searcher" for her role in life.

Elizabeth Ann Eckford walked to school alone the morning of September 4, 1957, due to miscommunication. Her family did not have a telephone so when the plans were changed for the location of the "Little Rock Nine" to meet up, Elizabeth wasn't notified. That one miscommunication forever changed history as she walked to school and had to pass through an angry, taunting crowd shouting racial slurs and obscenities. Humiliated and scared, she was denied entrance to the school so Elizabeth had to endure more taunts and heckling as she made her way back through the angry hate-filled crowd to the bus stop and eventually to her mother's workplace. With cries of "lynch her" and "drag her over to this tree" ringing in her ears, fifteen year old Elizabeth Eckford took a serious verbal, mental and emotional beating that day. A sheep among wolves, Elizabeth's perception of life

would forever be altered by this and the experiences to come at Little Rock Central High School. This book also tells the story of Hazel Bryan, the fifteen year old white girl in the photo, caught screaming at Elizabeth. In the years following this photo, Hazel would eventually realize the implications of her actions and call Elizabeth to apologize. As I read about this iconic photo and how it came to be, my heart broke. As a parent, I'm not sure I could have withstood what Elizabeth's parents watched her go through as they attempted to be part of history and desegregate the school. I don't know that I could have offered up my child as an innocent lamb the way her parents did, even though it was supposedly for the betterment of her future. They trusted those in authority who reassured them this would be for the good of everyone involved.

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