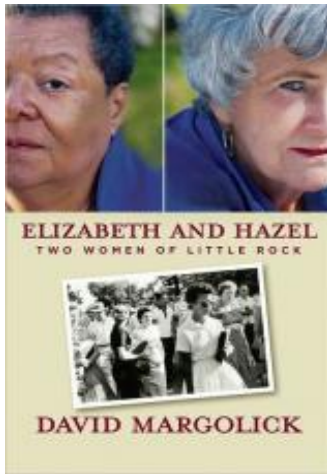

Elizabeth and Hazel: Two Women of Little Rock

by David Margolick



About the Book

The names Elizabeth Eckford and Hazel Bryan Massery may not be well known, but the image of them from September 1957 surely is: a black high school girl, dressed in white, walking stoically in front of Little Rock Central High School, and a white girl standing directly behind her, face twisted in hate, screaming racial epithets. This famous photograph captures the full anguish of desegregation --- in Little Rock and throughout the South --- and an epic moment in the civil rights movement.

In this gripping book, David Margolick tells the remarkable story of two separate lives unexpectedly braided together. He explores how the haunting picture of Elizabeth and Hazel came to be taken, its significance in the wider world, and why, for the next half-century, neither woman has ever escaped from its long shadow. He recounts Elizabeth's struggle to overcome the trauma of her hate-filled school experience, and Hazel's long efforts to atone for a fateful, horrible mistake. The book follows the painful journey of the two as they progress from apology to forgiveness to reconciliation and, amazingly, to friendship. This friendship foundered, then collapsed --- perhaps inevitably --- over the same fissures and misunderstandings that continue to permeate American race relations more than half a century after the unforgettable photograph at Little Rock. And yet, as Margolick explains, a bond between Elizabeth and Hazel, silent but complex, endures.

Discussion Guide

1. How were Elizabeth and Hazel's lives up until September 4, 1957, alike? How were they different? How about after that day?
2. Consider Elizabeth's experience at Central High School: how might her life have been different had she not decided to become part of the small group of blacks attending Central in 1957?
3. How do you think you would have responded to the treatment that Elizabeth and the other black students received? If you had been one of the Little Rock Nine? If you had been one of the white students? (Consider the

time and place --- and be honest.)

4. Author David Margolick notes on page 192: "Lots of students, black and white, identified with Elizabeth. Anyone who'd ever felt abused, or alienated, or lonely, or just different from everyone else --- and who in high school hasn't? --- would have." Are there ways in which you have identified with Elizabeth? How about Hazel?

5. At age fifteen, Hazel became notorious for a moment that was frozen in a famous photograph that spoke of hatred and racism, a moment for which she has since apologized and has tried to atone. "There's more to me than one moment," Hazel has said. Discuss the ways in which Hazel has tried to rise above the moment for which she is remembered. Should she be held responsible forever for something she did at such a young age? To what point should an adult be held responsible for something done in youth?

6. Years later, Elizabeth is astonished to hear Hazel say that she doesn't remember her feelings about what she did on September 4, 1957, or how her family and others close to her felt about it --- that "there wasn't much conversation about it," that it was just a matter of "hamming it up and being recognized --- getting attention." Elizabeth finds this unbelievable (page 235). What do you think motivated Hazel that day? Racism? Just being part of the crowd? Attention seeking? Do you think that she had any sense of the import of her actions at that time? What do you think about Elizabeth's response?

7. By the end of Elizabeth and Hazel, the friendship between the two has unraveled. What do you think that the future holds for the two? Do you see them establishing friendship again? Was it ever a true friendship?

Author Bio

David Margolick long reported on legal affairs for *The New York Times*, where he wrote the weekly "At the Bar" column and covered, among other stories, the trial of O.J. Simpson. He was then a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*. His many books include *BEYOND GLORY: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling*, and *a World on the Brink*; *STRANGE FRUIT: The Biography of a Song*; *DREADFUL: The Short Life and Gay Times of John Horne Burns*; and *ELIZABETH AND HAZEL: Two Women of Little Rock*. He lives in New York City.

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