



From left to right, Memphis 13 students Harry Williams, Menelik Fombi (formerly known as Michael Willis) and Dwania Kyles walk towards Bruce Elementary School while several adults follow behind.

# , braved first day

done everything they could enforcing Brown '54," said , an NAACP activist.

und willing parents by loors in areas where black near white neighborhood said.

cial Appeal reported that rded Bruce, Springdale, don schools as school of- l the city with the first rs that October morning. ry." Sharon Malone said at Gordon.

then the 5-year-old son ck attorney A.W. Willis, the young pioneers. er changed his name to

simple," Fombi said. elt. Why y'all hate me "



**Twins Sheila (left) and Sharon Malone were transferred Oct. 3, 1961, to Gordon Elementary School, which was closer to their home than all-black Klondike Elementary.**

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By Ernest Withers

Sheila Malone (left) and Sharon Malone (right), twin sisters who were part of the Memphis 13. Photograph is by Ernest Withers, a Memphis-based photographer known for the images he captured of the Civil Rights Movement.



From left to right, Memphis 13 students Clarence Williams, Joyce Bell, E.C. Freeman, and Leandrew Wiggins walk to Rozelle Elementary School while several adults watch over them from behind.



A newspaper clipping showing two Memphis 13 students departing for Springdale Elementary School with their mothers. From left to right: Beatrice Moore, Lillie Belt Holt, Deborah Ann Holt, and Jacqueline Elaine Moore.



A portrait of the Memphis 13 celebrating Christmas together towards the end of 1961, the year that they desegregated Memphis City Schools. Photograph by Ernest Withers.

“We thought we would do something different, and that is start with first grade In all the other places they started with high school. Our **contention** was that no, those white high schoolers are already **tainted**. First graders, no. Let’s go with first grade.”

- Reverend Billy Kyles, in Kiehl, D. (Director). (2012). *The Memphis 13* [Documentary].

*A contention is an idea or an argument in a debate.*

*Tainted means messed up, spoiled, or polluted.*

“And my first grade teacher, she was so nice that you didn’t feel threatened. I didn’t feel scared or threatened or anything because she was so nice. It made you feel like you didn’t have nothing to worry about.”

- Alvin Freeman, talking about Algine Cifelli, Teacher at Gordon Elementary, in Kiehl, D. (Director). (2012). *The Memphis 13* [Documentary].

“Brand new books. Buildings lit up. [I was] walking around looking around like a child in a department store at Christmas time. Because I had never seen anything like that.”

- Sharon Malone talking about Gordon Elementary, in Kiehl, D. (Director). (2012). *The Memphis 13* [Documentary].

"I cried a lot. I just hated school. You know, I hated going to school."

- Menelek Fombi, Bruce Elementary, in Kiehl, D. (Director). (2012). *The Memphis 13* [Documentary].

"I was scared. There was days I didn't want to go, you know, but then, my mom was the backbone, you had to go. You need an education, so that's one of the things she inspired us. You go get your education and you can be anything you want to be. So that's what I did."

- Harry Williams, Bruce Elementary, in Kiehl, D. (Director). (2012). *The Memphis 13* [Documentary].



“I’m glad my mom chose for us to go to Gordon. I’m glad she did that. In fact I’m glad all 13 of us parents they stood up for that because why, why should our kids not have the same?”

- Sheila Malone Conway, Gordon Elementary, in Kiehl, D. (Director). (2012). *The Memphis 13* [Documentary].