

INTRODUCTION TO NOLA RESISTANCE

Grades 6–12

LESSON 1: Stories of Resistance

Don Hubbard Oral History Transcript 1

Hubbard was interviewed by Mark Cave at Hubbard Mansion Bed and Breakfast on September 18, 2017, for the NOLA Resistance oral history project. This is an excerpt from their 120-minute interview.

HUBBARD: There was a thing that when I was in school, I remember we got dressed up to go down to the McDonogh monument, which is a square that's right across the street from Gallier Hall, and the kids in public schools would bring flowers to put at the monument for John McDonogh. My mother dressed me up and got me ready to go to the monument, and I remember my mother came and it was mandatory, that public school children had to do that. I remember, I might have been in second grade, we were lined up to go and put our flowers at the monument and my mother came and she took me by the hand and said, "Come on let's go," and I didn't understand why we left. Later on I found out that my mother was concerned that they had the black kids waiting in the back of the line in the hot sun while the white kids went first. And we were to be last in line, and she refused to allow me to stand out in that hot weather, waiting to go put a flower at McDonogh's monument, so she came and took me. And the school told her that it was mandatory that all the kids go to the McDonogh monument, and my mother said not only was I not going to do it, but they were still going to allow me to go to school. So I never went. So then from that, you start to understand different things that your parents put into your head.

Like, for an example, you know if you went to Canal Street, you were not going to be hungry, you'll eat before you leave home, you're not going to need a hot dog. This is the way that we have to go to Canal Street. When my mother went to pay a bill or to shop, if we saw the kids at the lunch counters, we were not going to be hungry because my mother had conditioned me not to want anything, because she didn't want to tell me that I couldn't eat there. But I was always a kid who wanted to know why. Why, momma, why we can't sit in the front of the streetcar? Why can't we ride in front of the bus? My mother always—and it stuck with me—she always had one answer. She said, "Baby, they're waiting for you to change it." And I didn't understand it. She said, "They're waiting for you to change it." So, later on in life, you get to say well, now I understand what she means, they're waiting for you to change it. So that was my introduction to civil rights, between my dad and my mom, and my grandmother teaching voter registration in our home, and figuring I had to do something to change it.