

**INTRODUCTION TO NOLA RESISTANCE**

**Grades 6–12**

**LESSON 3: Integrating McDonogh 19**

## **Gail Étienne-Stripling Oral History Transcript**

*Etiénne-Stripling was interviewed by Mark Cave at the Lower Ninth Ward Living Museum in New Orleans on November 18, 2017, for the NOLA Resistance oral history project. Below is an excerpt from their 61-minute interview.*

**CAVE:** Talk about that first day at school—your dad’s decision to make you go to school.

**ETIÉENNE-STRIPLING:** I don’t remember before being—just having a conversation about my going to school. I remember—what I remember about that first day was driving up to the school in the car. I don’t even remember getting in the car, but I remember driving up to the school, and then seeing all the people and the crowds of people, and I didn’t know what was going on. And it looked like they wanted to kill us. I mean as a kid that’s probably—that’s what I thought, and I’m just looking out the window trying to see what was going on. I’ll never forget that day. I’ll never forget that day. I remember going up the stairs. I remember sitting in the hallway at the school. I think Tessie, Leona—we were all out there with our parents. That’s basically all I remember the first day.

**CAVE:** Who took you to school that day?

**ETIÉENNE-STRIPLING:** If I’m not mistaken, my mom and my dad was there, and then afterwards, it was my mom, and then I think my dad, and then later on, it was just the mothers was walking with us.

CAVE: So you lived within walking distance of the school?

ETIÉENNE-STRIPLING: Oh, yeah.

CAVE: Okay, what was your address?

ETIÉENNE-STRIPLING: Fourteen oh three, Charbonnet Street. That was one of the reasons why my daddy wanted me to go there too. Why pass up a school to go to another school when I could walk to this one? It was so close.

CAVE: Yeah, do you remember anything about the morning before you left? Was it—could you tell something was different?

ETIÉENNE-STRIPLING: I don't remember that. You know, I don't know if that's my way of protecting myself as a kid. A lot of that stuff that happened before I got to the school. I don't have any recollection of it at all.

CAVE: Talk about going into the school that first day.

ETIÉENNE-STRIPLING: I remember walking up the stairs going to the school, and I remember the crowd—the bigger thing to me that day was the crowds of people, the way they were acting and making all the noises, and hollering at us, and I'm wondering what did I do to make them act the way they were acting? You see grown people, and I think one lady was pregnant, and they were on neutral ground, and all I see is all of these white people. I don't see any black people, but they tell me that they were there, but all I can see is just the white people and the police trying to keep them back like they want to get to us, and I just didn't understand why.