

**INTRODUCTION TO NOLA RESISTANCE**

**Grades 6–12**

**LESSON 3: Integrating McDonogh 19**

## **Tessie Prevost Williams Oral History Transcript**

*Williams was interviewed by Mark Cave in at her home in LaPlace, Louisiana, on August 3, 2017, for the NOLA Resistance oral history project. Below is an excerpt from 75-minute interview.*

**CAVE:** Talk about the drive to school. Who was with you?

**WILLIAMS:** My daddy. And he told me—the only thing he told me I remember is that, “Once we get out this car give me your hand and look straight ahead. And don’t you worry about a thing. I’m here. I’m here to protect you. I’m here.” And I remember seeing the picture of me with him, and of course I didn’t look straight ahead. I was looking around to see what was going on. And you could hear this crowd screaming and hollering, screaming and—and I was like—well, and then you saw the police on horses. And it was like Mardi Gras. That’s what it looked like. And we got up and we went up the steps. I went up and he came behind me, and then when we got in there they didn’t know what to do with us. So, I remember my daddy sitting—we were sitting outside the principal’s office in the hallway. He was sitting down. I sat down a little while and might jump, hopscotch, or whatever. And I’m like, “Daddy, well what are we going to do?” He said, “I don’t know baby. I don’t know. You know, I don’t know what they going to do.” So, I don’t remember Leona and Gail while we were in the hallway. I don’t know where they were. I don’t remember them. The only thing I remember is once we got in the classroom it was the three of us. But um....

CAVE: What were you thinking when the kids were being pulled out?

WILLIAMS: I was just wondering what was going on. And I asked the teacher, "Well, where are the children going?" And she said, "Just don't worry about it. Just don't worry about it." And I'm like—because I always was a very inquisitive child, and I would ask and ask and ask and ask until I got an answer. You know, sometimes my mother would always tell me, "Sometimes Tessie..." If I see somebody and I know I know their face, I'm going to keep saying, "Well, I know you from somewhere." And you'll say, "Well, no, no, no, no." And my momma says, "Sometime people don't want to answer." You know? But that's how I was. I always was like that, from a child. And so, she was like, "Well, just don't worry about it." And I'm looking around and I'm like, "Well, where they going? Well, where are—why we can't leave?" You know? And after a while it was just the three of us. And then after that it was just the three of us for an entire year.