

# **TITLE: ONE HEART, ONE MIND**

## **CHARACTERS**

**HAZEL** all scenes -- Hazel is the main white character. At the start of the play, she is unhappy with integration. By the end, she sees Elizabeth as an equal person. She still cannot stop others from treating Elizabeth poorly.

**ELIZABETH** all scenes -- Elizabeth Eckford had to walk in front of a mob of angry white people. She had to go to an all white school. Staff and students did not want her there.

**MOB** all scenes -- angry white students. A good protest sign will show the MOB character.

**FAUBUS** scene 1

**TEACHER** scene 2 & 3 – for a teacher, use a ruler, etc.

**REPORTER** scene 2 & 5 – for a reporter, have a notepad and a pencil to represent the reporter role. The Reporter role can explain a scene and can act as the narrator.

**GUARD** scene 2 & scene.3 / **MINNIJEAN or TERRENCE** scene 4 and 5 -- The guard protects. He blocks Elizabeth; he later saves her. By changing armbands, the guard becomes an African American student for scenes 4 and 5 (a boy or girl depending on casting).

**EXTRAS** – Other characters can come into the scenes with mobs. Feel free to add to the cast

## **PROPS & COSTUMES**

Notepad---Protest sign---Ruler---schoolbooks-- anything to help establish character.

Black students: black T-Shirt or black armband; sign or nametag that says “Black”.

Sunglasses for Elizabeth in Scene 2.

## **SLIDESHOW:**

A PowerPoint slideshow is the backdrop for the play. The slides contain photos and a timeline to show what is taking place.

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**PRESHOW: *Show Slide #1***

## SCENE ONE

*(Exterior – Steps of the State Capital of Arkansas)*

**Show Slide #2 -- ORVAL FAUBUS** standing on the stairs in center stage.

*(FAUBUS turns to a crowd of reporters standing in front of him – use MOB characters or extras for this crowd.)*

**FAUBUS, governor**

I do not mean, and have had no intention of, challenging the federal union. But the maintenance of the peace and order of a community is paramount to other considerations. I have found it necessary, in order to preserve the peace and order of the community and to protect the lives, even of the Negro students and the negro people, to take the actions which I did.

*(FAUBUS walks away from the reporters, spotlight pans to a **REPORTER** standing facing the audience and speaking as if to a camera.)*

**REPORTER**

Ladies and Gentlemen, that was Governor Orval Faubus of the State of Arkansas, announcing to the U.S. that he will employ the National Guard to stop Central High School from integrating.

Will State or Federal law prevail? Will the nine Negro students called the “Little Rock Nine” be able to attend school? Time will tell.

*(REPORTER exits stage.)*

## SCENE TWO

*(Exterior – in front of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas on a fall day)*

**Show Slide #3 -- ELIZABETH** is in a crowd.

*(A single **REPORTER** stands among a MOB of people; the people silently pantomime their protest. **REPORTER** faces the audience and speaks as if to a camera. A lone **GUARD** stands at attention. The **MOB** acts and sounds angry.)*

**MOB**

We do not want them here!

**HAZEL**

Yeah! They got their own schools to go to. They don't need to go to ours.

**MOB**

It ain't right! Integration is communism!

*(MOB is quiet, acting angry. Spotlight shows REPORTER as the MOB freezes...they look angry.)*

**REPORTER**

Good morning! On this day, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1957, I am standing outside Central High School in

Little Rock, Arkansas. An angry group of students, parents and community members stand around me.

Governor Faubus told the state National Guard to stop negro students from going to school today. He is not listening to the national judge, Ronald Davies. Davies said Central High School must integrate. There are still no negro students....wait...the city bus is stopping and a female student is getting out. I believe it is Elizabeth Eckford. She steps out. She is now walking towards the school...it looks like she is going to cross the line of National Guardsmen.

*The MOB turns to face ELIZABETH*

**MOB**

There's one of them now...

*(ELIZABETH enters. She wears big sunglasses and holds a book close to her chest. The MOB walks towards ELIZABETH, chanting.)*

**MOB and HAZEL**

"Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate!"

**HAZEL**

Go back to Africa!

*(MOB freezes in tableaux again, this time angry and mean. ELIZABETH walks through the mob and HAZEL follows her, louder and meaner than anyone else. ELIZABETH*

walks slowly. She stays calm and walks up to the **GUARD**, without reacting to the crowd.)

**GUARD**

*(No longer stiff and still, turns to **ELIZABETH**)*

You will not get in here!

*(**ELIZABETH** turns to go to the bus stop. She walks calmly. The **MOB** continues to from the side, near the **GUARD**. One member of the **MOB** walks to **ELIZABETH**, spits on her, and then goes back to the **MOB**. **REPORTER** crosses to **ELIZABETH** and turns angrily toward the **MOB**.)*

**REPORTER**

Can't you see this is just a child?

*(**REPORTER** goes to **ELIZABETH**, wipes the spit off her, and puts a hand on her shoulder as she waits for the bus.)*

**REPORTER**

Don't let them see you cry.

**SCENE THREE**

*(Interior -- Central High School hallway)*

*Monday, September 23rd 1957. **Show Slide #4.***

*The **MOB** is outside Central High. The black students try to enter for their first day of school. The police are afraid they cannot hold the mob back.*

*The scene begins in the hallway of Central High School. **HAZEL** and **MOB** are in the hallway of the school. **REPORTER** stands to the side of the stage and faces the audience. Spotlight is on the **REPORTER**.)*

**REPORTER**

Today is September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1957, a full 19 days after Little Rock Nine first tried to go to school. The police have walked the students into the building and are now protecting them. A crowd is outside Central High School. It is much larger than before....

*(**REPORTER** voice fades out and spotlight turns to the **MOB** in the hallway.)*

**MOB**

Did you see the crowd this morning?

**HAZEL**

There must be over a 1000 people out there in front of our school!

**MOB**

Yeah! Even the cops look scared! Things could get real bad here if that mob gets in.

*(ELIZABETH enters the hallway)*

**MOB**

Oh, my God! They are in the school! I'm getting out of here.

*(MOB runs off stage as GUARD enters. HAZEL starts to run, but stops, turns and watches as the GUARD enters and turns to ELIZABETH.)*

**GUARD**

Miss, we need to get you out of here. It's not safe for you anymore. The mob is getting out of

control. One Negro reporter has been beaten already. Get down low and crawl toward the

basement. Stay clear of the windows. We have a car waiting.

*(As HAZEL watches, ELIZABETH gets on her hands and knees. The GUARD leans over her, holding her head down protectively. They crawl toward the end of the stage.)*

**GUARD**

Now get in the car. Keep your head down. Stay down until I say we are clear!

*(GUARD and ELIZABETH exit. HAZEL turns to the audience.)*

**HAZEL:**

I watched Elizabeth leave and couldn't help but feel sorry for her. Some of the white students

jumped out of the windows as a form of protest. I started thinking about Elizabeth and what she

was going through....

*(voice fades...)*

**SCENE FOUR**

*(Interior -- Central High Library. October, 1957)*

**Show Slide #5** -- *Students are seated in chairs a semi-circle center stage.*

*MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE and ELIZABETH are stage left. REPORTER stands between HAZEL and one MOB character, on the other side of the stage. Spotlight pans to REPORTER.)*

**REPORTER**

Good evening. It is now October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1957. It's been over a month since the protests at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. We are in the school Library to talk with students about integration. With us are Elizabeth Eckford, Minnijean/Terrence (*depending on boy or girl casting*), Hazel Brown, and Sammy Parker. We wanted to hear from students about the ongoing situation.

**MOB**

Why do Negro students have to integrate in the first place?

**HAZEL**

They have schools of their own, don't they?

**ELIZABETH**

What do you have against black people? Why do you hate us?

**HAZEL**

I don't hate you.

**ELIZABETH**

Dislike, then.

**HAZEL**

I don't dislike you either.

**REPORTER**

Do you think there are other ways to work this out besides protest?

**MOB**

No, I don't. The South has historically been against racial mixing. I think they will fight this thing to the end. We fight for our freedom! That's one thing. And we don't have any freedom anymore.

**TERRENCE/MINNIJEAN**

Freedom? It seems that we are the ones having to fight for our freedom.

**MOB**

What do you call having soldiers around escorting you into the school? That isn't freedom. The soldiers tried to keep you safe, not to force this down our throats.

**ELIZABETH**

They weren't really protecting me when I showed up to school. No one broke up the mob there.

**HAZEL**

I feel guilty about the way we acted that day. I felt ashamed. We should treat others the way we want to be treated. We didn't treat Elizabeth very well at all.

**REPORTER**

Have you ever really made an effort to find out what black people are like?

**HAZEL**

Not 'till today.

**REPORTER**

What do you think about them after today?

**HAZEL**

I came here today thinking that I wasn't going to change my mind. That I was against integration

and that blacks weren't equal...but I don't know. They seem like they are. They have their own

feelings and thoughts just like us.

**REPORTER**

What do you think your parents will say to that?

**HAZEL**

I think I am going to have to have a long talk with my parents.

*(The characters freeze. HAZEL and ELIZABETH look at each other with respect.*

*REPORTER moves out of the scene.)*

## **SCENE FIVE**

*(Interior -- Hallways of Central High School)*

*Show Slide #6 - Mixed students in a class. MINNIJEAN/TERRANCE is in the hallway facing the audience.)*

**MINNIJEAN/TERRANCE**

That day in the library when we sat around talking together, people were on their best behavior. But life at Central High was not easy for any of us. A few of the white students tried talking to us. But over time those few souls were crushed in the machinery set up by segregationists to separate us, to torture us physically and mentally until we left school.

Every day at Central High we had to keep a "high level of vigilance" for our own safety. Every moment of our lives outside of adult supervision, we lived in fear and tried to focus on survival. You would be surprised what people will do when they believe no

one will catch them or hold them accountable. Even the adults would turn their backs to us and hide behind their own prejudices or lack of courage. We were on our own.

*(MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE walks off stage. ELIZABETH enters and works the combination of her locker. MOB and HAZEL walk in and MOB pushes ELIZABETH hard as they walk by. HAZEL watches eagerly and cheers on the event. TEACHER, standing nearby, turns away.)*

**ELIZABETH**

Teacher.....did you see that?

**TEACHER**

You're not that badly hurt, are you?

**ELIZABETH**

Aren't you going to do anything? S/he just pushed me into my locker!

**TEACHER**

I didn't see it happen so I can't just take your word for it. You know the principal's rule.

You

can't make a report unless a teacher sees it.

*(All actors but MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE leave the stage –MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE faces audience.)*

**MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE**

Teachers were either no help at all or were a part of the problem. A few teachers had a hard time just being around us. Like they had never seen a black person in their life....

*(TEACHER walks by and MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE stops her, attempting to hand her a paper.)*

Teacher! I finished the final draft of my history project. Here.

*(TEACHER reaches out. She stops and quickly pulls her hand back to avoid accidental touch. It is as if the teacher thinks the touch will infect her.)*

**TEACHER**

Here. Go ahead and set that on this book.

*(TEACHER holds out a book, hoping MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE will put the paper on it.*

*MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE puts the paper on the book. Then teacher exits the stage.*

*MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE turns to audience.)*

**MINNIJEAN/TERRENCE**

You see? I was almost invisible at that school. I had to pinch myself to know that I was awake.

I'd go home to my Mom and tell her about what had happened at school that day. Mom would tell me that what we were doing was not just for ourselves but also for generations to come. Me? I had to live my life in fear for the next generation.

*(REPORTER enters center stage and turns to audience.)*

## REPORTER

Hazel, the poster child for Southern white anger towards integration, had a change of mind and heart. She did have that talk with her parents, but her parents and her family did not change their minds at all. She would live the rest of her life ostracized from her own family. It was one of the prices people paid who lived through the integration of Central High School.

The school closed the following year and re-open as a private school, returning to an all-white status. However, the example of the Little Rock Nine opened the door for the integration of schools across the country. That is how social change works, one heart and mind at a time.

The nine students that attended Central High School went on to lead successful lives, becoming doctors, getting married, getting involved in community activism. Each has an account to tell of how they survived the experience.

**(Show Slide #7, Epilogue, and Slide #8, until the text rolls.)**

## SOURCE MATERIAL:

1. Integration: Central Students Talk it out "New York Times", October 20, 1957
2. One of the 'Little Rock Nine' Looks back, NPR Day to Day September 4, 2007
3. "Eckford: Central High in 1957 'was not...a normal environment'" CNN Kevin Drew. May 17, 2004.
4. "Every Person has a Story of Courage" Lesson six of National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior resources for teachers.