

Ce'Vanne Ursin
Ursuline Academy, New Orleans, LA
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“The Trail They Blazed”

The United States was built upon the principle of liberty, but history reveals that this freedom was accessible to only a narrow part of society. From slavery to segregation, multiple groups of people were denied dignity and basic rights. Over time, courageous and brave individuals challenged these injustices, expanding civil rights, through protests, court cases and every single day of acts of bravery. In New Orleans, civil rights history feels close and very personal. Louisiana played a central role in the civil rights struggles, from *Plessy v. Ferguson* to the integration of public schools.

Decades later a little girl named Ruby Bridges, a six-year-old girl, walked into an all-white school facing hatred and anger only because she wanted the same education as the other children. Ruby Bridges's impact went way far beyond the desegregation of a single school. It basically shifted the national conscience and created a very long-lasting blueprint for the children in today's world. However, since we no longer face the same visible checkpoints that Ruby Bridges once did, the struggle for freedom today has moved from fighting obvious laws to trying to fix the hidden problems that are built into the world today. Now as for today, I define freedom as the equal starting line. For me this means every single person, regardless of their background, should begin with the same access to tools and opportunities to succeed.

I consider the most important civil rights issues to be the digital divide and educational equality. Just as the trailblazers that literally fought for the right to sit in the classroom, MY generation must fight to have the same resources inside that classroom. In 2026, if one student has high-speed internet and a laptop at home while another student has NEITHER, they aren't beginning their education on the same level. These are the modern-day “locked doors” that prevent real freedom for all Americans. To open these doors, we must look to the strategy of leaders like A. P. Tureaud, who used the law to fix discrimination within it.

A. P. Tureaud was an American attorney who didn't just protest injustice but deconstructed it through the legal system. He spent decades filing the lawsuits that forced our schools and cities to integrate. He understood that freedom wasn't just a feeling; it was a legal reality. Tureaud just didn't want to win a case; he wanted to ensure fairness for everyone that would last for generations.

The fight for civil rights was not only carried through many court rooms by lawyers like A. P. Tureaud, but also through strong words that united ordinary people. During the Civil Rights Movement of the '50s through '70s, songs, slogans and mottos became the heartbeat of struggle. Phrases like “I Am a Man” and “We Shall Overcome” were much more than words; they were huge reminders of hope, unity, and dignity. These

messages gave people of different ages, races, and backgrounds the courage to stand together.

If I were tasked with creating a slogan for a cause, it would focus on equal access to education. My slogan would be “Unlock Every Door.”

Freedom in America has often been a “locked door” for multiple communities. Education is one of the most powerful keys to opportunities, yet not every student starts with the same support or resources. “Unlock Every Door” represents breaking down these barriers that limit students based on income, background, or zip code. The meaning behind this slogan is very simple. NO STUDENT’S future should be decided before they even have a chance to begin. This slogan would remind people that equality in education benefits everyone. When we unlock all doors, it will strengthen the entire nation. When we talk about unlocking doors for others, it also requires responsibility and awareness from the next generation. I may not have experienced obvious discrimination in my own life, but I have realized that not seeing injustice does not mean it does not exist. Sometimes being younger means you are still learning to realize unfair systems. As I grow older, I grow more conscious of everything. My life experience has taught me that awareness is just the first step towards action. If my generation chooses to stay aware and stand for fairness, we will continue unlocking doors like many leaders from the past.