Panel: “United States As a Work in Progress”

Delaney Cole

**Title:** “The Little Rock Crisis: A Time of Defiance, Division and Unlikely Friendships”  
**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Christine Erickson  
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Delaney Cole started her college education at IPFW in the fall of 2012. In 2014, she declared History as her major and expects to graduate in the fall of 2016. While she enjoys studying a wide variety of historical time periods, American history from 1700-Present and European history from 1800-Present are her favorites. To date, Delaney’s most acclaimed accomplishment has been having her paper *The CTA Scandal of 1986* published online. In the future, Delaney hopes to get her Master’s Degree sometime in the next ten years, but until then she hopes to either work for the Parks Service or a Museum.

**Abstract**

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional and ordered all schools to become integrated. The most well-known integrations were in Little Rock, Arkansas at Central High School. Three years after the Supreme Court Decision was made, nine black students were accepted and registered in Little Rock High School. The racial tension that began after the first day made national headlines and would keep the United States to be divided on the issue of race. While it was not known at the time, the Little Rock Crisis had a profound domino-like effect that nobody could have ever predicted --it spear-headed the Civil Rights movement, leading to the end of segregation. The thought of legalizing integration loomed over the heads of segregationists like a dark cloud which only made them fight against the Supreme Court ruling even harder. The thought of legalizing integration had the opposite effect on integrationists. During the Little Rock Crisis, it was unheard of and frowned upon for a white person and black person to be friends. Despite the anger and hostility that was apparent at the time, Elizabeth Eckford and Hazel Bryan were the exception to that rule. Their friendship began when a infamous picture was taken of Hazel screaming profanities at Elizabeth on the tense first day of school. Hazel would eventually apologize to Elizabeth for that day years later and the two would become friends. Their friendship, which continued for many years helped ease tensions in Little Rock that were still apparent even after the Little Rock Crisis ended. The Little Rock Crisis helped bring the issue of Civil Rights to the national eye, and the nine students who attended Little Rock High School would go on to inspire many to break the racial barriers.

**Bibliographical Note**

For my paper, a majority of my sources were secondary sources, such as *Elizabeth and Hazel* by David Margolick, *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement* by Taylor Branch. My primary sources came from online resources like Newspaper Archives and the Dwight D. Eisenhower library website. The most important primary source collection for this
paper was letters from American citizens to President Eisenhower. These letters help show the views of both integrationists and segregationists.