These are first-hand accounts of people who were kids in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. These excerpts are taken from longer pieces of writing.

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|  <br>Gloria Washington Lewis Randall was 15 in 1963 | "What I remember most about our marching in 1963, was my being jailed after leaving Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, making it to City Hall, and being thrown in the paddy wagon with all guys! Being kept at the Fairgrounds, and later being sent to the County Jail, for taking part in trying to stop one of the police officers from [hurting] one of the girls. I was kept in a sweat box for days upon days, and kept in jail over a month before my family located me! They kept saying I was too young to be there, but they tried to lose me.<br><br>"Several other girls from Hayes High School were sent to County Jail as well, for attacking the police officer! I was a sheltered but outgoing person, but never before had I experienced the hostility, hatred, and cruelty that I did on this journey toward equality. The movement was out of money, and those 5 days turned into countless days! They did pray for me at services, nightly, after finding out where I was." |
|  <br>Veronica Jackson was 10 in 1963 | "In 1963 I was 10 years old and believed life in the South was unfair to blacks. I grew up in the West Princeton-Rising neighborhood and was number 8 of 11 children. My father worked for United States Steel (USS) and my mother was a homemaker.<br><br>"Lomb Avenue divided West Princeton-Rising from West End, which was the white neighborhood. We had to cross that Ave when doing neighborhood shopping. The white kids would name call and throw rocks at us.<br><br>"Two of my sisters and one brother, attended A. H. Parker high school during the year of 1963. They were given very stern instructions, that morning of the Children's Crusade, not to leave school for any reason. My brother evidently didn't hear those instructions because he did participate. Thankfully for him he was not arrested. That evening we all watched the evening news and my siblings were pointing out some of their classmates.<br><br>"I saw then that the blacks in Alabama were standing for something. It made me see that equality could be made possible for blacks but only if they fought for it." |
|  <br>Linda C. Thacker was | "In 1963 I had never thought about why my school was attended by whites only. The only black person I knew was Spicy, the woman who came to our home one day a week to iron.<br><br>"Then, one Spring day when I was a Junior at Woodlawn High School, every class received an announcement that there would be a march of black students, and that these students would pass in front of our school. We were instructed to remain inside. We were instructed to be quiet. |

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| 16 in 1963 | “My teacher was wise enough to know we would not be able to stay in our seats, so we were allowed to go to the window when the black students passed by like a parade. There was no sound, no shouting, no raised hands. Just silence. I watched a group of about 50 male and female students, just like me except for the color of their skin, walk in unison. I knew from other events at that time that they wanted an equal education, an equal opportunity to succeed. That touched my heart.<br><br>“That day—that silent march of teenagers—changed me. I saw people with hopes and dreams and desires—just like me.” |
|  <br>Janice Houston Nixon was 8 in 1963 | “In thinking back about the Children’s Crusade I have very vivid memories. Even though I was young, I remember very well the terrible things that happened to black people in the 60s. My sister Carolyn Houston was one who did get arrested along with so many others, and she was put in the Birmingham City Jail. She was only 13 years old. My brother James Houston, was one of those who were taken to the Alabama State Fairgrounds.<br><br>“I remember so well when we picked Carolyn up from the Birmingham City Jail. She spent several days locked up, and the story she told about the inhumane treatment they received was heartbreaking. My other sister Diane Houston was not jailed but faithfully marched for freedom facing dogs and fire hoses.” |
|  <br>Bob Diccicco was 10 in 1963 | “It was 1963. I was 10 years old. I was in the 5th grade and looking forward to the day. My Mom was taking me downtown, on the bus, for a Dr.’s appointment. I was excited because she had promised me a visit to the lunch counter at FW Woolworths for a chocolate milkshake.<br><br>“All I can remember is that we were leaving the store to catch our bus home. We came out onto the street and there was a large crowd. All ages, mostly black, children and adults, yelling and screaming and crying. There were lots of policemen with dogs and bullhorns, and firemen with hoses. The hoses were on full blast, the dogs were snapping and snarling, and adults and children were the targets. I was scared and did not know what was going on.<br><br>“My Mom yanked me back into the store and we exited out another door and the street was calm. We could still hear all the yelling, screaming and the bullhorns manned by the police around the corner.<br><br>“We caught our bus home. I can’t really remember if we talked about what we had seen.<br><br>“I know that I will never forget it.” |

Melvin Todd was 16 in 1963

"My high school principal, Professor P. D. Jackson, was a man that we students feared. At the same time we also loved and respected him. His word was the law at Western Olin High School. He ran a "tight ship." He always demanded the best from both students and faculty. Professor Jackson called a special assembly of the student body, because he had heard that students from all over Birmingham would be gathering in downtown Birmingham to demonstrate for civil rights. During the assembly, Professor Jackson warned us not to leave school for the demonstrations. One student, Bobby McDaniel defied Professor Jackson. Bobby stood up and walked out of the assembly. A few other students followed his lead. This was the first time that anyone had ever disobeyed Professor Jackson. The rest of us students were then herded back into class by our teachers. Once back in class, some of the students opened the classroom windows and jumped out, to go and join the demonstrations. The teachers tried to maintain order in their classrooms but were unsuccessful. Professor Jackson then capitulated, and allowed the teachers to let their student leave school.

"I and several of my friends then walked the six miles from Western Olin High School to the Kelly Ingram Park in downtown Birmingham. On the way, we met up with students from the other Negro high schools (Ullman, Hayes, Carver, Wenonah, Westfield and Fairfield Industrial) and some elementary schools. We arrived to join the demonstrations a bit late and were eager to express ourselves. If it was necessary to get arrested, we were willing to do so. In our young world of peer-to-peer pressure, to be "jailed for freedom" was considered a badge of courage, valor and honor. By the time we got to downtown to demonstrate, the jails were full of school children and some adults. The police then brought in school buses to take the overflow of children demonstrators to the Alabama State Fairgrounds. There were not enough school buses or paddy wagons available to take my schoolmates and me to the Fairgrounds. We were left standing on the street. Since my schoolmates and I wanted to get arrested and go to jail for our freedom, we decided that we would walk the four miles to the Fairgrounds. Our plan was to tell the police guards there that we were part of the demonstrations. Once we arrived, we found that the doors to the enclosed area under the grandstands were not locked, and that there were no policemen or guards present. The police department had been overwhelmed by the size of the demonstrations and there were no policemen available to act as guards. Many of the students that had been jailed under the grandstands simply walked out and went home. Since I was disappointed that I could not legitimately claim that I had gone to jail for my freedom, I decided to go home. I left the schoolmates that had accompanied me and walked the two miles to my home in Ensley. I had dinner as usual with my little sister and parents. After dinner, we turned on the evening news to see what had happened in downtown Birmingham that day. I was elated to see video of many of my friends and schoolmates on national television, braving fire hoses and police dogs. I was disappointed that I had not been fortunate enough to have been arrested and gone to jail with them. I did not tell Momma or Daddy that I had been part of the demonstrations. They did not ask me if I had been involved. I think that they kind of knew that I had been."

Freeman Hrabowski was 12 in 1963

“My memories of Birmingham in 1963 are vivid, indeed. As a ninth-grade student, I listened to adults seriously questioning the idea of asking children to march as a tactic in the struggle for civil rights. In fact, there were many middle-class Black families who, like prominent Black business leaders, were suspicious of Dr. King and the Movement. From my perspective, it was exhilarating to march for such a worthy cause, but frightening to encounter menacing police dogs and to spend time in jail with other children that spring. We believed, however, that we were very much a part of the Movement, and it was cathartic to learn that we could be agents of change. This realization was especially meaningful for me, because I was allowed not only to participate in the Birmingham marches, but to lead a group of kids to City Hall. Such an experience told me that our voices—the voices of the young—were significant, and that young people could think and act responsibly, and that our actions could change the course of history and the world.

“I recall leaving my church (Sixth Avenue Baptist Church) and leading my line downtown, with the goal of kneeling on the steps of City Hall and praying for our freedom. My heart was pounding, and my head was swimming with fear. Before we could reach the steps, however, we were stopped by the Birmingham police. Police Commissioner “Bull” Connor, himself, stopped us and asked me, “What do you want little Niggra?” and, meaning to or not, spat on me. As I replied, “We want our freedom,” my fellow demonstrators and I were shoved into the paddy wagons in a moment of confusion.

“In spite of the inspirational meetings and speeches, those children who went to the jail often found themselves in a frightening situation. For me, incarceration was especially depressing and unnerving because we were intentionally placed with juvenile delinquents who had had very hardened lives. In some cases, these delinquents were proud of us, but in other cases, they could be cruel. Like others, I spent my five days of confinement thinking about the meaning of freedom while constantly worrying about my own personal safety. I must admit that I began to breathe with ease only after my parents secured my release. Even after getting out, I was devastated to realize that I could not return to school. In fact, the local Board of Education had suspended all children who had participated in demonstrations and used this approach to discourage others from doing so. I distinctly remember worrying that, even as an A student, I might not be able to finish school, or that I might miss so much school work that I would be unable to excel. I will never forget the jubilation we all felt that night in one of the Movement’s church gatherings, when we learned that a federal judge in Atlanta had ruled that those of us who had marched could return to school and go on with our lives.

“It was eye-opening to see how Americans of all races responded to the way we, as children, were treated in those demonstrations. It was the first time that people around the nation, including other Black children, had witnessed social action on the part of African American children over television. They saw the gross mistreatment of Black adults and children, alike, by Alabama’s and Birmingham’s White establishment—from the police, who brutally unleashed their dogs to bite us, to

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| | firemen, who used their powerful hoses to knock down little girls and boys.<br><br>“We learned the importance of hating injustice rather than people, and of being on our best behavior and exercising strong self-control, especially when we were confronted by the police during the marches and while we were in jail. We learned, too, the value of controlling our emotions and of conducting ourselves as responsible citizens. Finally, we learned that America, at its best, cares deeply about its children, and that children touch the conscience of adults. The nation’s conscience was stirred, and people of all colors came to see this struggle not simply as a racial conflict but as a question of American justice.” |