

Montgomery Bus Boycott Info & Timeline

Black citizens in Alabama endured daily legal and physical abuse under the degrading Jim Crow system. In schools, restaurants, theaters, public transportation, and almost every other area they were segregated from whites and treated as second-class citizens. In the wake of the murder of Emmett Till, Rosa Parks, an experienced civil rights activist who worked for years with the NAACP and had been trained in non-violent civil disobedience at the Highlander Folk School, refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. She was not the first person to be arrested for refusing to give up their seat. It was also not Mrs. Parks first time refusing to give up her seat but it was her first arrest.

Four days after Rosa Parks was arrested for her defiant bus ride, local activists organized a plan for a one day bus boycott. On December 5, 1955, more than 5,000 people showed up at the Holt Street Baptist Church to hear the plan for the Montgomery bus boycott and the vision for ending the segregation. Dr. Martin Luther King, then only 26 years old, gave the key note speech. The community unanimously approved the boycott and participated. The boycott ended up lasting over a year and effectively ended segregation on the buses in Montgomery.

Timeline of the Montgomery Bus Boycott:

March 1954 - The Women's Political Council (WPC) meets with Montgomery mayor W. A. Gayle to outline their recommended changes for the Montgomery bus system.

March 2, 1955 - Claudette Colvin arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white woman.

March 1955 - Black leaders in Montgomery, including E. D. Nixon, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr., meet with city officials to discuss bus seating requirements.

October 21, 1955 - Mary Louise Smith arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white woman.

December 1, 1955 - Rosa Parks arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger.

December 2, 1955 - The WPC calls for a one-day bus boycott on December 5.

December 5, 1955 - Instead of the expected 60% turnout, an estimated 90%-100% of the black community in Montgomery choose to participate in the boycott. Black leaders meet to discuss the possibility of extending the boycott. The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) is created at this meeting, and Dr. King elected its president. The MIA votes to extend the boycott.

December 8, 1955 - The MIA issues a formal list of demands. The city refuses to comply.

December 13, 1955 - The MIA implements a carpool system to support citizens taking part in the boycott.

January 30, 1956 - Dr. King's home is bombed. In response, Dr. King calls for peaceful protest rather than violent action.

February 1, 1956 - E. D. Nixon's home is bombed.

February 21, 1956 - Over 80 boycott leaders are indicted by the city under Alabama's anti-conspiracy laws.

March 19, 1956 - Dr. King is indicted as a leader of the boycott and ordered to pay \$500 or serve 386 days in jail.

June 5, 1956 - A federal district court rules that bus segregation is unconstitutional.

November 13, 1956 - The Supreme Court upholds the district court ruling, and strikes down laws requiring racial segregation on buses. The MIA resolves to end the boycott only when the order to desegregate is officially implemented.

December 20, 1956 - The Supreme Court's orders of injunction against segregation on city buses are delivered to the Montgomery City Hall.

December 21, 1956 - Montgomery's buses are officially desegregated. The MIA ends the boycott.