



**History In-Service Team, Supporting  
Leaving Certificate History. [www.hist.ie](http://www.hist.ie)**

Later Modern, Europe and the Wider World

Topic 6: The United States and the World, 1945-89

Documents for Case Study:

The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1956

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## Introduction to the Series of Documents

The USA topic (Later Modern Europe, Topic 6, *The United States and the world, 1949-1989*) is nominated as the prescribed topic for documents-based study, for examination in June 2008 and June 2009. The case studies are:

- The Montgomery bus boycott, 1956.
- Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam, 1963-1968.
- The Moon landing, 1969.

The History In-Service Team [HIST] prepared an in-service day [autumn 2006] focusing on teachers' needs in relation to this topic, with a variety of appropriate methodological approaches considered with reference to the syllabus aims, objectives and learning outcomes. Suitable sources of different types were also presented at this in-service session.

The suite of documents prepared for each of the three case studies features documents of different types and enables the student to look at the case study from different points of view. They also root the case study in the context of the topic as a whole, with associated elements, concepts and key personalities also featuring.

Each set of documents is accompanied by a general introduction, a series of biographical notes of people mentioned in the documents, and an extensive glossary of key terms that arise from the case studies.

Teachers need not feel that they must deal with every document that is presented, nor indeed with whole documents. Although designed to constitute a logical, sequential, evidence-based investigation of each case study, the material can just as readily be used selectively by teachers as their needs require, with specific documents or parts of documents chosen as the teacher deems suitable.

These documents are presented in such an order that, if followed, enables students to develop awareness of the issues and events relating to the case study on an incremental basis, with each document introduced and glossed as appropriate and accompanied by a series of questions to assist in their interrogation.

Teachers may see some similarity between this material and that prepared by the National Library of Ireland and the NCCA in relation to the topics prescribed for documents-based study in the examination years 2006 and 2007. This material, available on [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie) and [www.hist.ie](http://www.hist.ie), as well as on the 2006 HIST CD, has met with a very positive reaction from teachers to date. It is to be hoped that this latest support project will be equally well-received.

The research and writing of the materials was carried out by Ms Jane Finucane (TCD). The materials were edited for publication by the HIST Team [Pat Callan, National Coordinator, John Dredge, Linda Neary, Gerard O'Sullivan, Regional Development Officers]. I would like to express my thanks to Dr Ciaran Brady (TCD) for his encouragement in initiating the project.

Teachers are encouraged to contact the HIST team with any comments or suggestions on the use of this material.

Pat Callan,  
National Coordinator,  
Leaving Certificate History,  
November 2006.

## Introduction to documents relating to the case study, “Montgomery Bus Boycott,1956”

The Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-6) was one of the most significant incidents in the history of the civil rights movement. Beginning with the arrest of Rosa Parks (Document 1), it quickly developed into a non-violent campaign (Document 2 , Document 6) which set the tone for much of the action for black rights in the 1960s and introduced Martin Luther King Jr. to the American public (Document 3, Document 6, Document 12). Alongside the very visible bus boycott itself, Montgomery’s black community launched a legal case (Document 10, Document 11) which, like the boycott, had its roots in earlier activism (Documents 7, Document 8). It was the success of this case that brought victory to the boycotters (Document 12).

This legal victory had the potential to challenge all cases of segregation in the U.S (Document 11, Document 12). However, the Boycott and its effects had convinced the organizers that legal action alone would not advance civil rights (Document 12). During and after the Boycott, its leaders tried to change behaviour and attitudes: this challenge continued throughout the 1960s as the Civil Rights movement gathered pace. Statements from hostile, supportive, and interested white citizens and politicians (Document 3, Document 4, Document 7, Document 8, Document 9) and from central and marginalised figures in the black community (Document 1, Document 5, Document 6) show how complex a task this would be.

In the context of the Leaving Certificate Syllabus, the Montgomery Bus Boycott is treated as a case study for the *Society and Economy* perspective. Most obviously, it is a useful example of racial conflict. The documents chosen also cast some light on the role in society of work (Document 4, Document 12) and of women (Document 1, Document 4 , Document 10); on crime (Document 8), big business and economic growth (Document 3, Document 12) and urban poverty (Document 5, Document 7).

The introduction to each document is kept to a minimum. Contextual information, along with explanations of words, can be found in the sections on biographical notes and glossary. Words which are underlined are included in these sections: generally a word is underlined only in its first appearance in a document. Where first names are not included in the document, they are given in square brackets [ ]. Anything in square brackets is not in the original text.

**Teachers can access relevant web sites on this case study using the resource finder on [www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie)**

### **The Montgomery Advertiser**

**<http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/frontpage.htm>**

This site has a multitude of newspaper articles, timelines, audio and video clips on Rosa Parks, her colleagues, and the impact of the boycott.

**Rosa Parks <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-189420203914406728&q=rosa+parks>**

Short video, on Parks (including interview) and the boycott

### **BBC news report**

**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/1/newsid\\_4398000/4398912.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/1/newsid_4398000/4398912.stm)**

Contemporary BBC new report, with timeline and background information.

## Biographical Notes

### Mac Sim Butler

Sheriff Montgomery's highest law-enforcement official, elected to his position.

### Ralph Abernathy

Advisor to [Martin Luther King](#) during the Montgomery bus boycott and later civil rights protests. He was Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Montgomery.

### Claudette Colvin

Arrested in March 1955, aged 15, for allegedly breaking the law on bus segregation. She was a member of the [NAACP](#) Youth Council. Charges against her for breaking segregation law were dropped, and she was convicted of assault and battery. Shortly after her arrest, she became pregnant and left school. She was a plaintiff in the [Browder v Gayle](#) lawsuit.

### Virginia and Clifford Durr

A white couple who were active in the civil rights movement, and joined [E.D. Nixon](#) in bailing [Rosa Parks](#) out of jail and in persuading her to allow her case to be used to mobilize the community. Clifford Durr, a lawyer, represented Rosa Parks in her criminal appeals to state courts: he had been willing to represent [Claudette Colvin](#) in similar appeals, but Nixon had advised against this.

### James Eastland

Mississippi Senator (1943-78), Democrat, figurehead of the anti-[integrationist](#) movement. During the bus boycott he was the speaker at a Montgomery rally which attracted 10,000 people, and spoke in favour of disobedience to any anti-segregationist court ruling.

### Dwight D. Eisenhower

Republican. U.S. President, 1953-61. Under his administration, the Civil Rights Act (1960) was passed. This aimed to protect voting rights for black Americans.

### W. A. Gayle

Montgomery's Mayor during the boycott. He formed a bi-racial council to negotiate in December 1955. In January 1956, he joined the White Citizens Council. He was responsible for the city's "[get tough policy](#)". He was a defendant in the [Browder v Gayle](#) case

### Billy Graham

Extremely popular preacher and evangelist with strong connections in government, close to several U.S. presidents, in particular Richard Nixon.

### Robert Graetz

White Lutheran Minister who served a black congregation at Montgomery's Trinity Lutheran Church. He preached in support of the boycott and contacted [TIME](#) Magazine to persuade its editors to cover the boycott.

### John Edgar Hoover

Director of the [F.B.I.](#) from 1924-72. Because of the volume of data he had collected on politicians and the general public, he was extremely powerful.

### Luther Ingalls

Attorney, and organiser of the Montgomery [\[White\] Citizens Council](#). He was a member of the bi-racial committee established by [Mayor Gayle](#) to try to solve the boycott question. He favoured the continuation of [segregation](#), and warned of violence when [integration](#) was imposed.

### Martin Luther King, Jr

Baptist Minister and Civil Rights leader. Active in the [NAACP](#) before moving to Montgomery in 1953. He had concluded that the struggle for civil rights must go beyond court action, and studied the tactics of Mahatma Gandhi. Elected leader of the [Montgomery Improvement Association](#), he became nationally known during the boycott. He was arrested in February 1956 and found guilty of breaking Alabama law on boycott conspiracy. In 1957 he established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (see [Southern Negro Leadership Conference](#)) to fight segregation and discrimination.

**Willie M. Lee**

A researcher from Fisk University, Tennessee, who observed the boycott and recorded interviews and meetings. Fisk University was a black university with connections to the [NAACP](#).

**Edgar Daniel (E. D.) Nixon**

Head of the Progressive Voters' League in Montgomery and President of the local [NAACP](#), he was one of the city's most important black political leaders. Nixon posted bail for [Rosa Parks](#) after her arrest, and asked her to allow him to organize a protest movement around her case.

**Rosa Parks**

In 1954, Rosa Parks was a seamstress, secretary of the Montgomery branch of the [NAACP](#) and an organizer of its youth council. She had received political awareness training at the Highlander Folk School. Her arrest for not giving up her seat on a Montgomery bus was the event which sparked the Boycott. She lost her job because of her activism, and moved to Detroit in the early 1960s.

**Joseph Francis Rummel**

Catholic Archbishop of New Orleans (1935-64). Successfully banned segregated pews in 1949, but his attempts to desegregate Catholic schools in his diocese from 1956 failed due to local opposition.

**Clyde Sellers**

Elected Montgomery's police commissioner in 1955. This was a political role, and he sat on the city commission. He announced in January 1956 that he had joined the [White Citizens Council](#), and in June 1956 threatened arrest of drivers who disobeyed that Montgomery segregation code.

**Emmet Till**

A 14-year-old boy from Chicago, lynched in Mississippi in 1955 for whistling at a white woman. His murder became a media phenomenon when his mother insisted that his corpse should be put on display, and, with the [NAACP](#), appealed for an end to [lynching](#) and [Jim Crow](#). The federal government made no public statement on the matter.

## Glossary

### **Browder v Gayle**

Lawsuit launched by the [Montgomery Improvement Association](#) with the help of the [NAACP](#), on behalf of Aurelia Browder, Susie McDonald, [Claudette Colvin](#), Mary Louise Smith, who had all experienced discrimination on Montgomery busses. On June 5, 1956, a three-judge [federal district court](#) panel ruled in favour of the lawsuit, ruling that segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment, and that the rules outlined in the city code of Montgomery were not valid. This ruling was based on the court's interpretation of the [Brown](#) decision. The judgement was not enforced until the [Supreme Court](#) had heard the city's appeal and confirmed that segregation was illegal.

### **Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas.**

Case brought on behalf of Linda Brown, challenging segregated schooling. Brown's lawyers argued that "separate but equal" education could never in fact be equal. This was rejected by lower courts, but the [Supreme Court](#) ruled in 1954 in favour of Brown. The [federal district court](#) which ruled that segregation in transport was illegal in the [Browder v Gayle](#) case based its decision on this precedent.

### **Century of Litigation**

The tactic announced by [segregationists](#) after Supreme Court Rulings on both the [Brown](#) and the [Browder v Gayle](#) lawsuits. They implied that reforms required by law would not be put into effect, and that black Americans would have to appeal to the courts repeatedly.

### **City Commission, Montgomery**

The Mayor and City Commission were elected, and within the limits of state and federal law were responsible for law and its enforcement in Montgomery. The commission reacted to the boycott at first by negotiating, then by closing negotiations and announcing a ["get tough" policy](#). Council members were applauded at Eastland's WCC Rally. They were losing defendants in the [Browder v Gayle](#) case.

### **Confederacy**

Confederate States of America (1861–65), the government of the Southern states (formally eleven, in practice thirteen) which declared their secession or withdrawal from the Union during the Civil War. The abolition of slavery was one of the major causes.

### **Dixie**

The South. The term became popular after 1859, with the song *I wish I was in Dixie*. This was adopted as the anthem of the [Confederacy](#) cause

### **Emancipation**

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It declared that all slaves in the [Confederacy](#) were legally free.

### **Federal Bureau of Investigation**

Law enforcement agency with huge power and influence. FBI administration tended to be suspicious of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s, suspecting communist involvement.

### **Federal District Court**

A court responsible for cases relating to federal government in a state, or part of a state. Unlike judges in a State Court, who are elected or appointed by their state, Federal district judges are appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. It was possible to bring the [Browder v Gayle](#) case to a federal court because it challenged Gayle and the Montgomery Authorities on the basis of the U.S. Constitution.

### **Federal District Judges**

Judges appointed to a [Federal District Court](#)

### **Figaro**

French newspaper: at the time of the Montgomery Boycott, the second most popular in France.

**Get Tough Policy** Announced by the Montgomery [City Commission](#) in January 1956, this was a refusal to negotiate any longer with the bus boycotters, and an indication that the commission would use all legal means to damage the boycott. It was followed by arrests of leaders for illegal boycott, and withdrawal in some cases of police protection.

### **Integration**

The removal of racial [segregation](#)

### **Jim Crow**

Legal [segregation](#) of black people. The original Jim Crow was a character in a minstrel show.

### **Lynching**

Execution without legal trial, usually by a mob. Lynchings in the U.S. took place most commonly in the Southern states, with white perpetrators and black victims. The number of lynchings has been estimated at almost 5000, 1882-1952. The majority took place before 1939. Very few occurred after 1952.

### **Manchester Guardian**

The English newspaper now known as the *Guardian*.

### **Montgomery Advertiser**

Montgomery's daily newspaper. Due to [E. D. Nixon's](#) connections in the paper, the boycott was announced by the newspaper on the day before it began: this acted as an advertisement for Montgomery's black community. The newspaper reported extensively on the boycott, admitting that the black community had grievances but never declaring full support for the boycott.

### **Montgomery Improvement Association**

Founded on the first day of the boycott, to manage its development. The MIA organised carpools, meetings and sermons, negotiated with city authorities and cooperated with the [NAACP](#) to bring legal challenges to segregation. It continued to press for desegregation in Montgomery throughout the 1960s.

### **Mind of the South**

A study of the Southern States by W.J. Cash, published in 1941 and considered important and convincing by the northern press. Cash argued that the history of the Southern states had left their inhabitants with a shared state of mind, very different from the attitudes of Americans from Northern states. He considered them romantic, anti-intellectual and prejudiced.

### **Miscegenation**

Marriage or sexual relations between people of different races. Several U.S. states had laws against miscegenation until 1967, when the [Supreme Court](#) declared them unconstitutional.

### **NAACP**

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded in 1909. In the early part of the twentieth century, it focused on [lynching](#). From 1939, legal action became an important part of its operations. It won court decisions on all-white juries, voting and property decisions, and segregation in education ([Brown](#)). It helped to launch the bus boycott and the [Brown v Gayle](#) case. [Claudette Colvin](#), [Martin Luther King](#), [Rosa Parks](#), [Ralph Abernathy](#) and [E. D. Nixon](#) were all members before the boycott.

### **Negro**

The standard description for black people from the sixteenth century until the nineteenth-century, and was still common and inoffensive until the 1960s, and used by black and white civil rights campaigners. The black power movement of the mid-sixties first protested against the use, and it is now considered inappropriate or offensive.

### **Segregation**

The separation of people by race, based not only on discrimination but on legal requirements. Segregation by race in public facilities was common in the Southern States of America, but also existed in the North, or in federal institutions like the army. Legal segregation was challenged and eradicated, with most progress between 1954 ([Brown](#)) and 1967 ([miscegenation](#)). The continuing effects of black poverty are sometimes referred to as *de facto* segregation.



### **“Separate but equal”**

In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in the *Plessy v Ferguson* case that segregation was not illegal so long as the facilities provided for black people were equivalent to those provided to white people. This condition was the legal basis for [segregation](#). The Supreme Court ruled in the *Brown* case (1954) that there were circumstances where separate facilities could never be considered equal.

### **Southern Negro Leadership Conference**

Association founded to build on the gains of the Montgomery boycott. Martin Luther King was elected president in February 1957; in August, the name was changed to Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). It acted as an umbrella organization for local groups, organizing mass-protests and voter registration.

### **Supreme Court**

The highest court in the U.S. It gives the final interpretation on the Constitution and Federal Law.

### **TIME Magazine**

Major American weekly, published in New York. It has had the largest circulation of any news magazine since 1927. It covered the bus boycott, and ran a cover story on [Martin Luther King](#) in February 1957; in 1964, it named him “Man of the Year”.

### **U. S. District Court**

(See [Federal District Court](#))

### **Uncle Tom**

The hero of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1851-2), a slave who is content with his condition. Frequently used to describe a black person who is considered too submissive to white people.

### **White Citizens' Councils**

Community groups set up in the Southern States after the *Brown* case (1954) to fight school desegregation and to preserve race relations as they were established in the South. By 1957, Alabama's White Citizens Council had 100 000 members. The group described its aim as non-violent activity: education, legal action and political campaigns. Many local officials were members of councils.

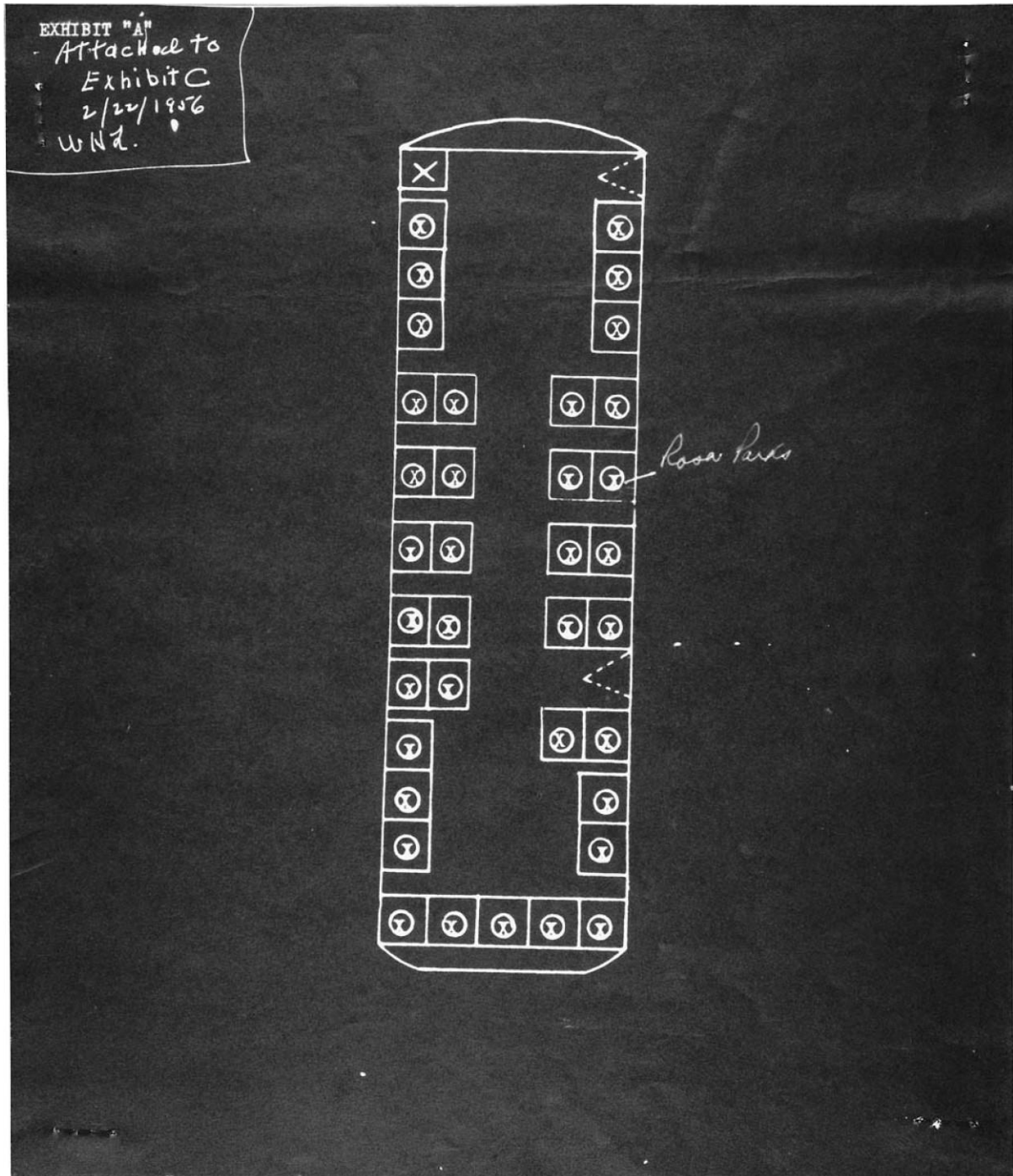
## Documents included in Case Study

<b>Document 1</b> Photos and extracts relating to the arrest of Rosa Parks.	<b>page 10</b>
<b>Document 2</b> Advertisement placed in the <i>Montgomery Advertiser</i> , December 25, 1955	<b>page 13</b>
<b>Document 3</b> Letter from Robert Graetz to <i>TIME</i> magazine, December 22, 1955.	<b>page 15</b>
<b>Document 4:</b> Letters to the <i>Montgomery Advertiser</i> , January 1956	<b>page 17</b>
<b>Document 5:</b> Interview with store maid, by Willie M. Lee: January 27, 1956	<b>page 19</b>
<b>Document 6</b> Minutes of a mass meeting at Ralph Abernathy's First Baptist Church, January 30, 1956	<b>page 20</b>
<b>Document 7</b> Letter from Virginia Durr to Clark Foreman, Palmer Weber, and Corliss Lamont, February 24, 1956	<b>page 22</b>
<b>Document 8</b> Confidential Statement by J. Edgar Hoover, FBI, on Racial Tension and Civil Rights, March 1, 1956, delivered to Maxwell M. Rabb, Secretary to the Cabinet.	<b>page 24</b>
<b>Document 9</b> Letter of President Eisenhower to Billy Graham, March 22, 1956.	<b>page 26</b>
<b>Document 10</b> Testimony of Claudette Colvin at the <i>Browder v. Gayle</i> lawsuit, May 11, 1956	<b>page 28</b>
<b>Document 11</b> <i>Montgomery Advertiser</i> , November 14, 1956, "Supreme Court Outlaws Bus Segregation"	<b>page 30</b>
<b>Document 12</b> Montgomery Improvement Association Press Release Announcing Southern Negro Leaders Conference, January 1957	<b>page 32</b>

Document 1

Photos and extracts relating to the arrest of Rosa Parks  
Four separate items- 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d.

Document 1a Illustration of where Rosa Parks sat in the bus, December 1955

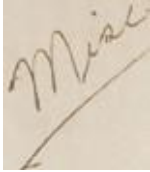


Source: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration  
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This source may be downloaded from the US National Archives website at  
[www.archives.gov/education/lessons/rosa-parks/](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/rosa-parks/)

Document**lb**

.Arrest record for Rosa Parks, December 1955



POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF MONTGOMERY

Date 12-1-55 19\_\_

Complainant J.F. Puk (W/I)

Address 22 Uo. wie St, Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Offense Misc, Reported By as above

Address S Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time Offense Committed 12-1-55 6:06 pm

Place of Occurrence In Front of Empire Theatre (On Montgomery Street)

Person for Property Attacked \_\_\_\_\_

How Attacked \_\_\_\_\_

Person Wanted \_\_\_\_\_

Value of Property Stolen \_\_\_\_\_ Value Recovered \_\_\_\_\_

DeWit of Color)la!!!! il.n,dMC!!!!. ud /ve V;ll-o( pirOC.IJ JI M.)

Who received a call \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ the bus operator said he had \_\_\_\_\_ colored female  
sitting in the \_\_\_\_\_ in Of the Bus, and should not have been there.  
role (DM & /s o S>v her

\_\_\_\_\_ bus operator signed a warrant for her. Rosa Parks (cf) \_\_\_\_\_ Court  
Rosa Parks (cf) \_\_\_\_\_ ed!!!!. th c, ptd section 11 of the Montgomery City Code.

Warrant 114254 \_\_\_\_\_

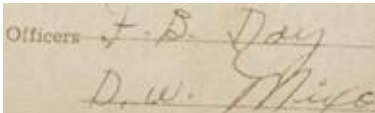
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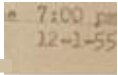
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[www.archives.gov/education/lessons/rosa-parks/](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/rosa-parks/)



## Document 1c

Rosa Parks Radio Interview, by Sidney Rogers, April 1956

ROSA PARKS: [...] I left work on my way home December 1st, 1955. About six o'clock in the afternoon, I boarded the bus in downtown Montgomery on Court Square. As the bus proceeded out of town, on the third stop, the white passengers had filled the front of the bus. When I got on the bus the rear was filled with colored passengers, and they were beginning to stand. The seat I occupied was the first of the seats where the [Negro](#) passengers take on this route ...

PARKS: Well, we didn't know just what to expect. In our area we always tried to avoid trouble and be as careful as possible to stay out of trouble, along this line. I want to make very certain that it is understood that I had not taken a seat in the white section as has been reported in many cases. The seat where I occupied, we were in the custom of takin' this seat on the way home, even though at times on this same bus route, we occupied the same seat with white standing if their space had been taken up, the seat had been taken up. And I was very much surprised that the driver at this point demanded that I remove myself from the seat.

The driver said that if I refused to leave the seat, he would have to call the police. And I told him, "Just call the police." He then called the officers of the law. They came and placed me under arrest, violation of the segregation law of the City and State of Alabama Transportation. I didn't think I was violating any. I felt that I was not being treated right, and that I had a right to retain the seat that I had taken as a passenger on the bus. The time had just come when I had been pushed as far as I could stand to be pushed, I suppose. They placed me under arrest. And I wasn't afraid. I don't know why I wasn't, but I didn't feel afraid. I had decided that I would have to know once and for all what rights I had as a human being and a citizen, even in Montgomery, Alabama.

<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/10/25/1412239> has a transcript and an audio link for the interview

## Document 1d

Code of the City of Montgomery, Alabama. Charlottesville, 1952

### Chapter 6, Section 10. Separation of Races – Required

Every person operating a bus line in the city shall provide equal but separate accommodations for white people and negroes on his buses, by requiring the employees in charge thereof to assign passengers seats on the vehicles under their charge in such manner as to separate the white people from the negroes, where there are both white and negroes on the same car; provided, however, that negro nurses having in charge white children or sick and infirm white persons, may be assigned seats among white people.

Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the operators of such bus lines from separating the races by means of separate vehicles if they see fit. (Code 1938, s[ection]s 603, 606)

### Chapter 6, Section 11. Same – Powers of persons in charge of vehicle; passengers to obey directions

Any employee in charge of a bus operated in the city shall have the powers of a police officer of the city while in actual charge of any bus, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of the preceding section, and it shall be unlawful for any passenger to refuse or fail to take a seat among those assigned to the race to which he belongs, at the request of any such employee in charge, if there is a seat vacant. (Code 1938, section] 604)

Source: [http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about\\_king/details/560605.htm](http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/details/560605.htm)

## Exploring the Evidence

1. What information can be gathered about the arrest of Rosa Parks by examining the allocation of seats on the bus, and the arrest record?
2. On what basis does Rosa Parks claim in the interview that she did not break the law?
3. What legal obligations does a bus-driver have, according to the Montgomery city code?
4. How does the Montgomery city code illustrate the concept of [‘separate but equal’](#) provision for black and white people?
5. What impression of Rosa Parks’s character is given in the interview?
6. Did Rosa Parks break the law as expressed in the Montgomery city code chapter six, section 10 or section 11?
7. Does the case of Rosa Parks, as presented in these documents, provide useful information about the attitudes of authority figures in Montgomery to black people?

## Document 2

### Advertisement placed in the [Montgomery Advertiser](#), December 25, 1955

We, the [Negro](#) citizens of Montgomery, feel that the public has a right to know our complaints and grievances which have resulted in the protest against the Montgomery City Lines and our refusal to ride city busses. We, therefore, set forth here some of the many bitter experiences of our people, who have, at various times, been pushed around, embarrassed, threatened, intimidated and abused in a manner that has caused the meekest to rise in resentment: ...

Every effort has been used to get the bus company to remove the causes of these complaints. Time and time again complaints have been registered with the bus company, the [City Commission](#) and the manager of the bus company. Committees of both sexes have been conferred but to no avail. Protests have been filed with the mayor, but no improvement has been made.

In March we held a conference with the Manager of the Montgomery City Lines and made a very modest request: (1) that the bus company attorney meet with our attorneys and give an interpretation to laws regulating passengers and (2) that the policy of the bus on seating be published so that all bus riders would be well-informed on the policy of the bus. To this date this has not been done. The manager read to us the city code and informed us that this is in the hands of every bus driver. ...

Our Proposal:

The duly elected representatives of the people have the approval of the bus riders to present three proposals:

1. That assurance of more courtesy be extended the bus-riders. That the bus operators refrain from name calling, abusive language and threats.
2. That the seating of passengers will be on a "First-come, First-Served" basis. This means that the Negro passengers will begin seating from the rear of the bus toward the front and white passengers from the front toward the rear, until all seats are taken. Once seated, no passenger will be compelled to relinquish his seat to a member of another race when there is no available seat. When seats become vacant in the rear Negro passengers will voluntarily move to these vacant seats and by the same token white passengers will move to vacant seats in the front of the bus. This will eliminate the problem of passengers being compelled to stand when there are unoccupied seats. At no time, on the basis of this proposal, will both races occupy the same seat. We are convinced by the opinions of competent legal authorities that this proposal does not necessitate a change in the city, or state laws. This proposal is not new in Alabama, for it has worked for a number of years in Mobile and many other Southern cities.



3. That Negro bus drivers be employed on the bus lines serving predominately Negro areas. This is a fair request and we believe that men of good will, will readily accept it and admit that it is fair...

THE NEGRO MINISTERS of Montgomery and Their Congregations

THE METHODIST MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE The Rev. J. W. Hayes, President

THE BAPTIST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE The Rev. H. H. Hubbard, President;  
[The Rev. R. D. Abernathy, Secretary](#)

THE INTER-DENOMINATIONAL MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE The Rev. L. Roy Bennett,  
President; The Rev. J. C. Parker, Secretary

THE MONTGOMERY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION [Dr. M. L. King, Jr., President](#); The  
Rev. U. J. Fields, Secretary

Source: The Martin Luther King Papers. Volume III, Stanford, 1997, pp 89-92

© 1956, Montgomery Advertiser

### Exploring the Evidence

1. According to the Advertisement, what action was taken by protesters before the boycott, and why?
2. How do the signatories describe themselves in the advertisement and in the signatures?
3. What problems does the second proposal seek to avoid?
4. What impression of the protestors and their proposals do the ministers try to create?
5. On the evidence in the text, do the signatories oppose segregation?
6. According to the Montgomery City Code (Source 1c), would proposal number 2 be legal?
7. What may have been the advantages and disadvantages of paying for an advertisement in order to communicate this message?

### Document 3

#### Letter from [Robert Graetz](#) to [TIME](#) magazine, December 22, 1955

National News Editor  
TIME Magazine  
TIME & LIFE Building  
9 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York 20, New  
York December 22,  
1955

Subject: Bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Sir:

I am writing this letter to you, because I have long been impressed with the fair and unbiased treatment you give in your news stories. (I am a regular cover-to-cover TIME reader.) I have been particularly impressed with the bold and courageous way in which you have handled the extremely touchy subject of race relations.

There is a story in the making here in Montgomery, Alabama, that may be just as explosive as the [\[Emmett\] Till](#) case, before it is over and done. I am referring to the protest which the [Negroes](#) (and many whites) of Montgomery are making against the local bus company. Undoubtedly you have received some reports about this over the AP [Associated Press] and up wires.

What you may not know is that only part of the story is actually reaching the public through the normal channels of communication. The local newspapers have consistently printed one-sided stories about the developments in this protest. They have at times (purposely, or otherwise) omitted pertinent facts that would have put a much more favorable light on what the Negroes are asking for.

In addition, all of the "law-enforcement" agencies in the city and county have been doing everything possible to break the back of our campaign. Laws that have rarely been enforced are now being pulled out of the books and being used against the Negroes (but, we hear, not against the whites). For example, hundreds of people double-park on the downtown streets while waiting for parking places or while waiting for a passenger to get out, do some quick shopping and return. Recently, however, many people have been charged and fined for blocking traffic, if they happened to be picking up or letting out Negroes.

I am a white Lutheran minister, serving a Negro congregation. I cannot even give my own members a ride in my car without fear of being stopped by the police and accused of running a taxi. On last Monday Sheriff [\[Mac Sim\] Butler](#) himself watched me put several Negroes in my car, while parked in a legal parking zone. Then he stopped me, accused me of running a taxi, took me in for questioning, searched my car (without showing me a warrant or indicating that he had one), and finally released me. The same thing is being done over and over in this city every day.

If you want a good look at the way a one-race press and a one-race police force band together to discredit fifty thousand people who are tired of being treated like animals on the city busses, and who are registering their feelings by refraining from riding those busses, then I urge you to send a reporter to Montgomery as soon as possible.

There are many more discriminatory factors that have been introduced into this whole picture, in some cases by rather high officials. But the worst factor of all is that it has become almost impossible to tell our story to the people of the city without having it distorted and turned against us. [...]

I respectfully request that the contents of this letter be kept confidential until such time as they have been verified by you. Please advise me as to your reaction to my request that you have this story covered by your own staff member.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Graetz

Copies: Dr. King, Atty. Gray, Rev. Hughes

Source: Stewart Burns (editor), *Daybreak of Freedom. The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Chapel Hill, 1997), pp 104-5

© 1955 R Graetz

### **Exploring the Evidence**

1. Why, according to Graetz, should *TIME* magazine send a reporter to Montgomery?
2. How does Graetz claim that the law is used to disrupt the boycotters' campaign?
3. What connections does Graetz himself have with the boycott?
4. What aspects of this letter might attract the *TIME* editorial staff to the Montgomery bus boycott?
5. How informative is this letter? What information is withheld, and why might this be?
6. Graetz uses the 'Till case' as a comparison which may draw *TIME*'s staff to the Montgomery story. What was attractive to the illustrated press about these stories? What advantages did the Montgomery boycott have over the lynching of Till as a news story?
7. Both document 2 and document 3 are attempts to present the boycott story to a wider audience in a new light. What are the similarities, and what are the differences between the two?

## Document 4

### Letters to the [Montgomery Advertiser](#), January 13, 1956

“[Negroes](#), Look Around You,” by Hill Lindsay

Editor, The Advertiser:

The white people of Montgomery are typical of the other white people of America, slow to anger and slow to make up their minds. But once they do they have always come out victorious.

The bus fare has already been raised 50%. Should you continue the bus boycott six months the loss would be repaid in 18 months and you will keep on paying and paying as long as you live. So what have you gained?

Where is your appreciation, your sense of duty? Look around your home. Who furnished the "know how" to build your homes and furnish them? Who furnished the "know how" to prepare your foods and medicines, give you electricity, make your clothes, design and build your cars every other convenience you so richly enjoy, that goes with civilization. Now what have you done for yourself?

You are indebted to the white people of Montgomery for life itself. As the white doctor brought most of you into the world. The white man paid about 95 percent for your education, furnished you jobs and a place to live, etc. Now suppose the white people of Montgomery would not hire you any longer or give you a place to live, where would you go or do? (sic)

Hill Lindsey

Source: *Montgomery Advertiser*, January 13, 1956.

© 1956, *Montgomery Advertiser*

...

"Housewife Counter-Boycott," by Mrs. George L. Foster

Editor, The Advertiser: All conversations now seem to eventually get on the subject of the bus boycott but as Mark Twain remarked about the weather, "no one seems to do anything about it."

Although I've never had a maid to complain about any mistreatment by a bus driver I have heard of many cases of rudeness of the drivers towards Negro passengers.

Noticing since the boycott how most of the Negroes have become sullen and indolent I feel perhaps the bus drivers dealing with these people collectively have seen a side of them that we dealing with them singly have not seen and evidently the patience of the most tactful drivers has been tried. There are many Negroes like Julie Seale Harris (*Grandma*, January 4th) that want to ride the busses but are afraid to. Where are these people getting this fear and who is putting this fear into them that they cannot ride to work or to town without being afraid of bodily harm?

I think those people who want to ride the bus should band together and ride the bus. There is safety in numbers. On the other hand, most of us housewives have been patient through this past month, allowing our household servants to be late and to leave early when a ride is available (most of the servants taking advantage of us).

The time has come when we housewives must quit being so lazy, get together and tell the help to either ride the busses and get to work on time or quit. We white people have tried to be understanding of our servants for years and I feel we were understanding until some outside influence put fear in them.

We have been good to our Negroes but now is the time to make them understand a few things. We should quit paying taxi fare, quit going for them or taking them home, quit paying their social security tax, quit lending them money for debts contracted for unnecessary items, etc.

Montgomery Advertiser, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1956.

Source: Stewart Burns (editor), *Daybreak of Freedom. The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Chapel Hill, 1997) , pp 115-119

© 1956, Montgomery Advertiser

### **Exploring the Evidence**

1. Why, in the opinion of Hill Lindsay, can the boycott be described as a failure?
2. Why does Mrs. Foster believe that housewives have the answer to the boycott?
3. In what ways, according to the two correspondents, has Montgomery society been good to black residents?
4. What assumptions about black people underlie these letters?
5. How convincing is Hill Lindsay's judgement that the boycott has failed?
6. How did the bus company's finances and housewives' need for servants affect the course and the outcome of the boycott?
7. Do early texts on the boycott (Documents 2, 3 and 4) identify the treatment of black people as a legal problem?

## Document 5

### Interview with Store Maid, by [Willie M. Lee](#): January 27, 1956

Time: Afternoon [January 27] Place: Street Age: 30-35

[Maid]: I'm so mad I don't know what to do. Do you know those bastards put Rev. [Martin Luther King](#) in jail last night, and this morning they all parked on the corners and asking folks how come they didn't ride the bus. They think they bad 'cause they got guns, but I sho hope they know how to use 'em, cause if they don't, I'll eat 'em up wid my razor. If they can use 'em, they bet not come up on me and hit me 'cause he'll never use it then 'cause he'll be in pieces so fast he wont know what hit 'em.

[Lee]: Before the people stopped riding the buses, did you ever have to get up and stand so white people could sit down?

[Maid]: Yea, that happen almost every day. But let me tell you 'bout this. One morning I got on the bus and I had a nickel and five pennies. I put the nickel in and showed him the five pennies. You know how they do you. You put five pennies in there, and they say you didn't. And do you know that bastard cussed me out... I rode four blocks, then I went to the front door and backed off the bus, and I was jest hoping he'd git up. I was going to cut his head slamp off, but he didn't sey nothing. Dey started this thang, and now they can't finish it. They didn't have a bitter need to 'rest Miss [Rosa Park\[s\]](#). All they had to do was talk to 'er lack she was a lady, but they had to be so big and take her to jail. Dey bit the lump off and us making 'em chew it. I know ole [Clyde Sellers](#), ole dog, wish he could spit. But God fix 'em all colored folks ain't like they use to be. They ain't scared no more. Guns don't scare us. These white folks jest keep messing up. Dey gona have a war if they keep on. We be jest forced to kill 'em all 'cause if they hurt Rev. King, I don't mine dying, but I sho Lord am taking a white bastard with 'em. If I don't have my razor with me, I'll use a stick.

[Lee]: You know, I was reading in the paper a couple of days ago that the commissioner wanted to settle by giving ten seats to whites and ten to colored. What do you think about that?

[Maid]: That ain't nothin'. That's the same thang we had all the time. They jest want to make fools outta us. But 'fo we get on the buses, they going to let us keep our seats when we get 'em, they going to be courteous and give us colored drivers. You can do anything for 'em, but jest don't set beside 'em. Now you know it ain't no harm in that. I don't wont they no good, men 'cause a white man can't do nothing fur me. Give me a black man any day. And I never worry 'bout any no good white bitch taking a man o' mine. She ain't woman 'nough to take 'em.

You know I'm going to New York when this is over and git me a job and work up there.

Source: Stewart Burns, (editor), *Daybreak of Freedom. The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Chapel Hill, 1997), pp 126-7

© 1997 W L Lee

### Exploring the Evidence

1. What restriction on seating is the store maid willing to accept, and why?
2. How does she believe the boycott came about?
3. What solutions does she have to the different problems she faces?
4. What is the store maid's attitude towards white people?
5. How do the store maid's personal experiences affect her view of the boycott?
6. How well-educated and well-informed does the interviewee seem?
7. In what ways does this interview challenge points raised by Mrs. Foster? (Document 4)
8. What might have been the effect of this interview if it had been published?
9. How can the view of this store maid be used to develop to our understanding of the boycott?

## Document 6

### Minutes of a mass meeting at Ralph Abernathy's First Baptist Church, January 30, 1956

(Notes were taken by [Willie M. Lee](#).)

Hymn--"Onward Christian Soldiers"

Prayer

Scripture

Hymn--"Plant My Feet on Higher Ground"

Speaker #1--Presiding Officer

"It's time for the white man to realize that he is not dealing with a child. Even the ["Uncle Toms"](#) are tired of being 'Uncle Toms,' and this reminds me of something which was supposed to have happened in Mississippi a couple of years ago.

"The whites in Mississippi wanted to show to the world that they were not as bad as they were said to be. So they went all over Mississippi searching for 'Uncle Toms.' Finally, they dug up the best one they had in the state and told him that he would be put on television, that the whole nation would see him, and he must tell them what wonderful relations existed between white and colored folks of Mississippi. Finally the day came, and he was on television. He looked at the white folks all around and said,

'Did you say I'll be heard in Boston, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and all over the world?'

'Yes, now tell the people how wonderful it is here.'

'You really mean I'm on all over the country and that's the God sent truth?'

'Yes.'

'HELP!!!'

"So you see 'Uncle Tom' is fed up too."

Speaker #2--Rev. [M\[artin\] L\[uther\] King](#)

"Some of our good white citizens told me today that the relationships between white and colored used to be good, that the whites have never let us down and that the outsiders came in and upset this relationship. But I want you to know that if M. L. King had never been born this movement would have taken place. I just happened to be here. There comes a time when time itself is ready for change. That time has come in Montgomery and I had nothing to do with it.

"Our opponents, I hate to think of our governmental officers as opponents, but they are, have tried all sorts of things to break us, but we still hold steadfast. Their first strategy was to negotiate into a compromise and that failed. Secondly, they tried to conquer by dividing and that failed. Now they are trying to intimidate us by a get-tough policy and that's going to fail too because a man's language is courage when his back is against the wall.

"We don't advocate violence. We will stay within the law. When we are right, we DON'T MIND GOING TO JAIL! (The applause rang out like a great clap of thunder). If all I have to pay is going to jail a few times and getting about 20 threatening calls a day, I think that is a very small price to pay for what we are fighting for (applause very loud). We are a chain. We are linked together and I cannot be what I ought to unless you are what you ought to be.

"This good white citizen I was talking to said that I should devote more time to preaching the gospel and leave other things alone. I told him that it's not enough to stand in the pulpit on Sundays and preach about honesty, to tell the people to be honest and don't think about their economic conditions which might make them dishonest...

Speaker #3--Mr. Rufus Lewis

"The 'Get-Tough Policy' will not stop us. (No's and Amen's rang out). I want you to know that there is one sure fire way to deal with Mr. [\[Clyde\] Sellers](#)--by the vote. He was put in by the lack of your vote. So pay your poll tax now and get ready to vote."

...

There was thundering applause throughout the talk.

Collection from the mass meeting the week before: \$2046.26.

Source: Stewart Burns, (editor), *Daybreak of Freedom. The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Chapel Hill, 1997), pp 126-7

© 1956 W L Lee

### Exploring the Evidence

1. What explanation for the boycott has been offered to Martin Luther King, and why does he reject it?
2. Why, according to Martin Luther King, is it acceptable for a Minister to participate in a political struggle?
3. What solution to the boycott is advocated by Rufus Lewis?
4. What does the "Uncle Tom" story suggest about the effects of mass media?
5. What is the tone of the different speakers when they discuss white people?
6. Can the attitude of Willie Lee, who records the meeting, be gleaned from his notes?
7. This document records the official face of the boycott: how do the ideas expressed compare with those of the store maid in Document 5?
8. Financial questions are raised several times in this document. How can they be related to the boycott?



## Document 7

### Letter from [Virginia Durr](#) to Clark Foreman, Palmer Weber, and Corliss Lamont, February 24, 1956.

24<sup>th</sup> February, 1956

Dear Clark, Palmer and Corliss:

I am waiting for Cliff to get back from Court and thought I would write you and tell you what is going on down here and how exciting and thrilling it is. I am so sorry that I missed you when you called up the other night.

It is really wonderful. Sort of a second [Emancipation](#). And taking place in the Cradle of the [Confederacy](#). It makes you feel that every little effort, every little push has been worthwhile. When we came here five years ago [E.D. Nixon](#) who is the leader of the [Negro](#) community in politics...told us then that it was not the "White Folks" that were the trouble. The trouble was that the Negroes were all split up and jealous of each other and divided into cliques and you couldn't get them together on anything. We went to a few meetings and they were rather sparsely attended and what he had said was absolutely true. I think the change started when they arrested that little [Claudette Colvin](#) girl last spring...and then [Mrs. Parks](#) took up the fight and refused to move and got arrested. She is simply wonderful, calm, composed, cool and collected. She is so brave, and so intelligent and so determined. So as the Negroes said when they "messed with her they messed with the WRONG ONE" and the whole Negro Community united over night and with each stupid and vicious attack on them they got madder and madder and more determined and instead of a handful you now have forty or fifty thousand simply determined to stick it out until Hell freezes over. To arrest all of their leaders was the very thing that was needed to make them more determined and especially to arrest their preachers. I have picked up and carried [many who are boycotting the buses]...and they all express the same determination. One old lady said last night that she simply got tired finally of "greens and cabbage and wanted something different."

All the big newspapers have people here and the Radio and TV and [Figaro](#) and the [Manchester Guardian](#) and that of course is a big factor in giving the Negroes the feeling that they have support all over the world and certainly the papers in the rest of the country have done a good job of coverage. I think with the horrors in Mississippi and all the grim, discouraging goings-on that this burst of hope and fight back and unity is encouraging to even the most case-hardened reporter. Also the Negroes are so good laughing and cracking jokes and hugging each other and all the Preachers had their flocks—there was a sort of holiday air about it all. Clark and Palmer know what I mean and I wish Corliss could have seen it too. All laughing and slapping each other and saying "Man, Man, where you bin, must have slept late" and then all dying laughing. Even the deputies and the police officers were laughing and being nice.

BUT there is another side to the story. There were a lot of cars parked around the jail and a lot of youngish thug-like-looking men sitting in them, some with overalls on, and all mean-looking with their feet up and not saying anything, just waiting and watching and of course the [White Citizens Councils](#) grow apace day by day and there is a real blackmail going on. They work the blocks and buildings and ask each one to join and if they don't—Well, there is no doubt you get on a black list. One of the fairly liberal people we know here left town today, said if he didn't join the WCC he simply could not make a living here at all and as much as he has ever done is to go to a meeting of the Southern Regional Council. Fortunately we have been on the black list so long that we are more or less used to it. There are a number of unpleasant things to put up with as people whom we see every day say the most horrible things. "But they smell so bad, so dirty, so

unmannerly, so ugly, so obnoxious in every way BUT just let them get a toe hold and none of our white women will be safe, [miscegenation](#), intermarriage, etc.” They never see the contradiction and if you point it out they get mad. All of you read *The Mind of the South* again by W.J. Cash. Anchor has it now in paper and it is better than it has ever been.

Source Patricia Sullivan (editor) *Freedom Writer. Virginia Durr. Letters from the Civil Rights Years*. London, 2003, pp 108-9

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### Exploring the Evidence

1. Why, according to Virginia Durr, was the black community unsuccessful in politics for so long?
2. How does she explain media interest in the case?
3. How, according to Durr, does the White Citizens Council attract new members?
4. What contradiction does she find in the attitudes of white people to integration?
5. In what way and to what extent does Durr see herself as part of the black community's struggle?
6. How does Durr portray Rosa Parks and her role in precipitating the boycott?
7. Both Virginia Durr and the unnamed speaker at Abernathy's Church (Document 6) use images from nineteenth-century history in their discussions of the boycott. What effect does this have?

## Document 8

### Confidential Statement by [J. Edgar Hoover, FBI](#), on Racial Tension and Civil Rights, March 1, 1956, delivered to Maxwell M. Rabb, Secretary to the Cabinet.

[The document formed the basis of a presentation which he made to the Cabinet that day.]

... The troubled areas are further disturbed by the ratio between the races. The 1950 Census reflects those over 21 who were of the white race totaled 88,195,191, while the non-whites totaled 9,208,116. The geographic distribution of the races is as follows

Area	Non-white	White
Northeast	1 376 701	25 642 897
North Central	1 519 841	27 722 586
South	5 693 181	22 616 396
West	616 393	12 213 396

The Southerners advance the view that the more [Negroes](#) who leave the South the better since this will distribute the “race problem” more evenly across the country and eventually will make for less tension in the South. From 1940 to 1959, the proportion of Negroes declined from 49.2 per cent to 45.3 per cent in Mississippi; 42.9 per cent to 38.8 per cent in South Carolina; 35.9 per cent to 32 per cent in Louisiana; 34.7 per cent to 32 per cent in Alabama and 34.7 per cent to 30.9 per cent in Georgia.

Proponents of [Integration](#)

The following organizations presently advancing integration are the ones which have figured in the rising tensions and are the principal targets of attack in the South:

#### [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#)

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was created in 1909 and has more than a quarter million members in the various states. The NAACP has provided the leadership in forcing various issues involving the Negro before the Courts. Over the years, it has investigated acts of violence, racial disturbances and incidents.

Following the May, 1954, Supreme Court decision [\[Brown\]](#), there was a marked increase in NAACP activities. Court actions were initiated against a number of local school boards in the South and a campaign has been launched to extend the principles of nonsegregation in other areas such as housing, interstate travel, and health facilities.

The Communist Party has instructed all Negro comrades to join the NAACP but, despite the determined effort of the Communist Party to infiltrate the NAACP, this organization reaffirmed its anti-Communist stand at its last convention in Atlantic City in June, 1955. Since then the Communist Party has intensified its efforts to infiltrate the NAACP particularly at local levels...

One recent incident which has a potential for acts of violence is a citywide boycott by Negroes of buses in Montgomery, Alabama, which started in December, 1955, designed to force an end to segregation on buses. Considerable tension and several shootings preceded the boycott. Police cars escort the buses through the Negro sections to prevent acts of violence. A bomb was exploded on the front porch of the residence of one of the leaders in the boycott; and two days later, February 10, 1956, an explosive device was detonated in the front yards of another leader. Two pro-segregation groups promptly offered \$1,000 reward for information leading to the

conviction of the wrongdoers. After the boycott had been on for over two months, bus service had fallen off 50 per cent. There is considerable tension in Montgomery with the possibility of additional incidents. A State Grand Jury was convened on February 13, 1956, to determine whether the boycott was a violation of a state law making boycotts a misdemeanor, punishable by 6 months in jail or \$500 fine.

On February 21, 1956, the Grand Jury indicted 115 Negroes under a 1921 law which makes a conspiracy to interfere with or hinder business a misdemeanor. In reporting its findings, the Grand Jury reported growing tensions, observed that small incidents have been magnified and stated, "... if we continue on our present course... violence is inevitable. The leaders of both races are urged to take a long and thoughtful look into the future."...

### Pro-segregation Activities

We now come to a consideration of the organized activities in the South which either could control the rising tensions or become the medium through which tensions might manifest themselves.

To our certain knowledge, 127 organizations have come into being since May 17, 1954, all designed to maintain [segregation](#).

In no instance have we been advised that any of the so-called [\[White\] Citizens Councils](#) advocate violence. Senator [\[James\] Eastland](#) in addressing a rally of the Citizens Councils of Alabama at Montgomery on 2/10/56 in urging resistance to integration said, "the fight we wage must be a just and legal fight. Acts of Violence and lawlessness have no place in our organization."

### Progress in Civil Rights

Despite the tension which now exists, progress in civil rights has been made. Acts of violence have declined. In 1939, the FBI, at the direction of the Department of Justice, started investigating civil rights violations involving acts of violence. In the past 17 years, a total of 39 [lynchings](#) have occurred, as contrasted with 317 lynchings in the preceding 17-year period. No lynchings have been reported in the last 4 years.

Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Presidential Library.

© U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

### Exploring the Evidence

1. What, according to Hoover's report, is the connection between population and racial tension?
2. What is the relationship described here between the NAACP and the American Communist Party?
3. What progress in civil rights has been made, according to Hoover?
4. In his efforts to analyze and prevent violence, what organisation(s) does Hoover see as offering some hope?
5. Whose words and views does Hoover cite in this document, and what is the significance of his selection?
6. What elements does Hoover emphasise, and what does he omit, in his account of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?
7. The Grand Jury reported growing tensions, observed that small incidents have been magnified and stated, "... if we continue on our present course... violence is inevitable". How well does this statement fit with the progress of the Montgomery Bus Boycott?
8. Can the details of progress in civil rights contained in this document help in identifying the origins and success of the Boycott?

## Document 9

### Letter of [President Eisenhower](#) to [Billy Graham](#), March 22, 1956.

PERSONAL

22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1956

Dear Billy

I have been urgently thinking about the matters we discussed in our conversation the day before yesterday. I refer particularly to that part of our talk that dealt with the opportunity open to ministers of promoting both tolerance and progress in our race relations problems. I think we agreed, for example, that they could discuss the mounting evidence of steady progress towards elimination of racial difficulties, even though all reasonable men appreciate that eventual and complete success will not be attained for some years. Ministers know that the peacemakers are blessed; they should also know that the most effective peacemaker is one who prevents a quarrel from developing, rather than one who has to pick up the pieces remaining after an unfortunate fight.

As I told you, my mind constantly turns to the ease with which effective steps might be taken in the adult as compared to the juvenile field. Of course the kind of evidence that we should like to see pile up is the kind that would convince [Federal District \[Court\]](#) judges in the several localities that progress is real. All of us realize, I think, that success through conciliation will be more lasting and stronger than could be attained through force and conflict.

Certain questions occur to me that might be worth your consideration:

- a. Could we not begin to elect a few qualified [Negroes](#) to school boards?
- b. The same to [City Commissioners](#)?
- c. The same to County Commissioners?
- d. Could not universities begin to make entrance into their graduate schools strictly on the basis of merit – the examinations to be conducted by some Board which might even be unaware of the race or color of the applicant?
- e. Could there be introduced flexible plans for filling up public conveyances so that we do not have the spectacle of Negroes in considerable numbers waiting for a ride on a public conveyance, while numerous seats are held vacant for possible white customers?

It would appear to me that things like this could properly be mentioned in a pulpit. Another thought that occurs to me is that you might express some admiration for the Catholic Archbishop, [Joseph Francis Rummel](#), in Louisiana, who had the courage to desegregate his parochial schools. Such approval on your part would not necessarily imply that the same thing could be done in all schools and without delay. You would merely be pointing out that in a special case, and under the strict supervision possible in privately supported schools, one man had the courage to give this kind of [integration](#) a good trial to determine the results.

Likewise there could be approval expressed concerning the progress made in certain areas in the border States, and in all other areas in the South where any type of advance at all has been effected. Thus these things would be called to the attention of Federal Judges, who themselves would be inclined to operate moderately and with complete regard for the sensibilities of the population.

This letter does not require an answer; it is merely some thoughts that have occurred to me on the subject. It constitutes gratuitous advice – and is probably worth exactly what all that kind of advice usually is.

With warm personal regard,  
Sincerely

[Archive copy unsigned]

Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Presidential Library  
© U.S. National Archive and Records Administration

### **Exploring the Evidence**

1. What, according to Eisenhower, is a minister's role in race relations?
2. Who must be persuaded that progress is being made in race relations?
3. How should Graham use the example of Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel?
4. Would Eisenhower's listed proposals suggestions end segregation?
5. What sort of people does Eisenhower expect to be influenced by religious ministers like Graham?
6. What is the tone of the last paragraph, and why might this tone be used?
7. What elements of this letter may be influenced by the Montgomery Bus Boycott?
8. What exactly does Eisenhower hope to achieve, and how compatible is it with the aims of the Montgomery movement?
9. Compare Eisenhower and Martin Luther King (Document 6) on the subject of ministers using their positions to influence race relations?

## Document 10

### Testimony [Edited] of [Claudette Colvin](#) at the [Browder v. Gayle](#) lawsuit, May 11, 1956

FRED GRAY, COUNSEL FOR PLAINTIFFS: Prior to December 5, 1955, last year, did you ride the city busses?

COLVIN: Yes.

GRAY: How often did you ride?

COLVIN: Twice a day.

GRAY: Have you rode the busses since then?

COLVIN: No. ...

GRAY: Will you please tell the Court exactly what happened on March 2, 1955?

COLVIN: I rode the bus and it was turning in on Perry and Dexter Avenue, and me and some other school children, I sit on the seat on the left hand side, on the seat just above the emergency door, me and another girl beside me.

GRAY: You say another girl was sitting by you and another girl was sitting across from you, do you mean those two girls were [Negroes](#)?

COLVIN. Yes, sir. And he drove on down to the next block, and by the time all the people got in there, he seen there were no more vacant seats. He asked us to get up, and the big girl got up but I didn't. So he drove on down into the Square, and some more people boarded the bus...

COLVIN: ... So, [the bus driver] directly asked me to get up first. So I told him I was not going to get up. He said, "If you are not going to get up I will get a policeman." So, he went somewhere and got a policeman. He [policeman] said, "Why are you not going to get up?" He said, "It is against the law here." So I told him that I didn't know that it was a law that a colored person had to get up and give a white person a seat when there were not any more vacant seats and colored people were standing up. I said I was just as good as any white person and I wasn't going to get up. So he got off. And then two more policemen came in. He said, "Who is it?" And he was very angry about it. He said: "That is not new, I had trouble out of that thing before." So, he said: "Aren't you going to get up?" ... I said, "No, sir." I was crying then, I was very hurt because I didn't know that white people would act like that and I was crying. And he said, "I will have to take you off." So I didn't move. I didn't move at all. I just acted like a big baby. So he kicked me and one got on one side of me and one got the other arm and they just drug me out. And so I was very pitiful. It really hurt me to see that I have to give a person a seat, when all those colored people were standing and there were not any more vacant seats. I had never seen nothing like that. Well, they take me down, they put me in a car and one of the motorcycle men, he says, "I am sorry to have to take you down like this." So they put handcuffs on me through the window...

GRAY: What were you charged with?

COLVIN: I was charged with violating the City Code, or certain sections of the City Code.

GRAY: You were convicted?

COLVIN: Yes, I was.

WALTER KNABE, COUNSEL FOR DEFENDANTS: You have changed, that is, you and the other Negroes have changed your ideas since December 5, have you not?

COLVIN: No, sir. We haven't changed our ideas. It has been in me ever since I was born.

KNABE: But, the group stopped riding the busses for certain named things, that is correct, isn't it?

COLVIN: For what?

KNABE: For certain things that Reverend [\[Martin Luther\] King](#) said were the things you objected to?

COLVIN: No, sir. It was in the beginning when they arrested me, when they seen how dirty they treated the Negro girls here, that they had began to feel like that all the time, though some of us just didn't have the guts to stand up.

KNABE: Did you have a leader when you started this bus boycott?

COLVIN: Did we have a leader? Our leaders is just we ourself.

Source: SER-DNA. Transcript of Record and Proceedings, *Browder v. Gayle*, May 11, 1956, cited in Stewart Burns, (editor) *Daybreak of Freedom. The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Chapel Hill, 1997), pp 74-7

## Exploring the Evidence

1. According to Colvin's testimony, how did she speak and behave when she was accosted and arrested in March 1955?
2. What is the difference of opinion between Colvin and Knabe on the beginning of the bus boycott?
3. Does Colvin's account of her arrest suggest that overt racism was common in her experience?
4. Why might Colvin deny that the boycott has a leader and claim, 'our leaders is just we ourself'?
5. From the evidence presented here, can it be suggested why the arrest of Rosa Parks and not the arrest of Claudette Colvin led to a successful boycott of Montgomery busses? Comparison with document 7 may be useful.
6. How accurate is Colvin in identifying the treatment of black women in particular as a cause for concern?
7. Why is Knabe eager to argue that the boycott was organised by Martin Luther King?  
(Compare documents 7 and 8)



## Document 11

Montgomery Advertiser , November 14, 1956

### SUPREME COURT OUTLAWS BUS SEGREGATION,

By Bob Ingram

Laws requiring racial segregation on buses in Montgomery and throughout Alabama were declared unconstitutional yesterday in another historic decision by the U. S. Supreme Court.

And while the decision dealt specifically with Alabama statutes and ordinances of the City of Montgomery, in effect it also outlawed similar segregation laws throughout the South since this ruling sets the precedent for all similar cases in the future.

The ruling yesterday brought an immediate prediction from a Negro leader here that a decision to end the 11-month bus boycott would "unquestionably" be made at a mass meeting tonight.

Calling the decision a "glorious daybreak to end a long night of enforced segregation," the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. declared emphatically that his race would use "every legal means" to see that the court's decision was complied with in Montgomery.

#### OMINOUS RUMBLING

But from white leaders of the city and state came warnings of possible violence and bloodshed if any attempt is made to carry out the decision.

C. C. (Jack) Owen, president of the Alabama Public Service Commission, declared that segregation must be maintained "to keep down violence and bloodshed."

And Luther Ingalls, local leader of the pro-segregation Montgomery [White] Citizens' Council chapter, predicted flatly that "any attempt to enforce this decision will inevitably lead to riot and bloodshed."

#### BOYCOTT RESULT

The court's decision yesterday stemmed directly from Montgomery's long boycott. The tribunal, in a unanimous decision, upheld a June 19 decision of a special three-member panel of federal judges which had ruled that Montgomery's bus segregation laws were unconstitutional.

Amid all the confusion as to the decision, one fact appeared to stand clear - the court's decision had ended with abrupt finality any legal efforts the city or state might initiate in an attempt to preserve segregation on public conveyances. There is no appeal from a U.S. Supreme Court decision.

The court order was not only unanimous, it was also brief. After citing the 1954 school segregation case [Brown] and also citing subsequent decisions which outlawed segregation in public parks, playgrounds and golf links, the court ruled briefly:

MOTION GRANTED "The motion to affirm is granted and the judgement is affirmed."  
This affirmation left no doubt that the Supreme Court was outlawing segregation on all bus systems.

Source: *Montgomery Advertiser*, November 14, 1956 © 1956, Montgomery Advertiser

## Exploring the Evidence

1. What is the significance of a Supreme Court decision, according to this article?
2. What contrast can be seen in the reported reactions of the boycott movement and the prosegregationists?
3. What is necessary, according to the article, before the boycott can be declared over?
4. How do the statements of Owen and Ingalls support one another?
5. What aspects of the decision on segregation seem to interest the journalist most?
6. “The court’s decision stemmed directly from Montgomery’s long boycott”. Does the article demonstrate this? What is the connection between the boycott and the ruling?
7. How does the court’s decision relate to the original demands of the boycott’s organizers as advertised in document 2?

## Document 12

### Montgomery Improvement Association

#### Press Release Announcing Southern Negro Leaders Conference, January 1957

For immediate release ...

“Working Paper #4: The Relationship of Community Economic Power Groups to the Struggle”

In the past we have given all too little attention to the economic power groups in the struggle for equality. However, the bus protests have clearly revealed certain economic facts.

1. The Negro's dollar is a factor in the economic organization of the community.
2. His refusal to ride had a catastrophic effect on the economics of the bus companies.
3. The unintended but nonetheless direct effect of the protest on down town merchants is real, indeed.

These very real economic facts have at certain stages caused bus companies, formerly unsympathetic to our cause, to see that they need the revenue of Negro riders... At this point two things occur:

1. The political leadership and the bus officials part company. The opposition is divided.
2. The bus companies may be prepared to make common cause with protest leaders.

If this analysis is correct, the following questions are worthy of discussion.

1. When can protest leaders approach bus officials to devise common strategy?
2. How can we foster that period in the struggle?
3. Should Southern Negro leaders arrange conferences with the home offices of the companies working in more than one city of the South?
4. Can some approach be made to local businessmen in terms of the economic consequences in the present transportation confusion?

“Working Paper #7: The Role of Law in Our Struggle: Its Advantages and Limitations”

Historically, the major emphasis in our struggle to obtain civil rights has been legal and legislative. For forty-six years the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has brilliantly and successfully represented Negro Americans before the courts of the land. From time to time, widespread campaigns to enact favorable legislation have been waged. However, since the Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954 [Brown], a new stage has been set. While there is still much legal work to be done, there is ample and convincing evidence that the center of gravity has shifted from the courts to community action. It is on the community level that court decisions must be implemented. The job before us now is to demonstrate that our cause is basic to the welfare of the community; and we must challenge our white fellow citizens: to win them to believe in and to practice democracy. Law will be very important in this process, but something new must be added. In other words, we must determine when pursuing a legal course is helpful and when it will merely strengthen the tactics of the White Citizens Councils such as the "century of litigation" threat. An example of this is seen in Birmingham where the bus protestors were first arrested and charged with disorderly conduct rather than violation of jim crow bus laws... We must understand that our refusal to accept jim crow in specific areas challenges the entire social, political and economic order that has kept us second class citizens since 1876. Those who oppose us, understand this, and that is why they resist our every effort with every instrument at their command, including violence.

Source: Stewart Burns, (editor), *Daybreak of Freedom. The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Chapel Hill, 1997), pp 336-40

## Exploring the Evidence

1. What, according to working paper 4, are the possible economic effects of a boycott?
2. Why does working paper 7 argue that legislation is no longer the focus of civil rights activity?
3. Why, according to working paper 7, is the reaction to civil rights activity so extreme?
4. What evidence does this document produce that the Montgomery Improvement Association is moving beyond local politics?
5. Why can working paper 7 define acceptance of civil rights as ‘democracy’?
6. How has discussion of political opposition changed since Martin Luther King’s speech at Abernathy’s church in January 1956? (Document 6)?
7. How does this document draw on the Montgomery Bus Boycott for future strategies?