

## Montgomery Bus Boycott Timeline

Jan. 1863 Emancipation Proclamation

July 1868 Fourteenth Amendment

May 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson; 'Separate but Equal' ruled constitutional.

May 1909 Niagara Movement convenes (later becomes NAACP), pledging to promote racial equality.

1941 - 1945 U.S. involvement in WWII.

1949 Women's Political Council in Montgomery, Alabama created.

June 1950 - U.S. involvement in the Korean War.

July 1953 African-Americans in Baton-Rouge, Louisiana boycott segregated city buses.

May 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas

Aug. 1955 Murder of Emmett Till.

Dec. 1, 1955 Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat and is arrested.

Dec. 5, 1955 Montgomery Improvement Council formed, Martin Luther King, Jr. named President.

Nov. 1956 Supreme Court affirms decision in Browder v. Gayle which found bus segregation unconstitutional.

Dec. 1956 Supreme Court rejects city and state appeals on its decision. Buses are desegregated in Montgomery.

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**Think Through History:** According to the documents below, what was the purpose of the Montgomery Bus Boycott? How does each author describe that purpose? (Cite ALL THREE documents)

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## Montgomery Bus Boycott

### Document A: Textbook

The Montgomery Bus Boycott In 1955, just after the school desegregation decision, a black woman helped change American history. Like most southern cities (and many northern ones), Montgomery had a law that blacks had to sit in the back rows of the bus. One day, Rosa Parks boarded a city bus and sat down in the closest seat. It was one of the first rows of the section where blacks were not supposed to sit. The bus filled up and some white people were standing. The bus driver told Rosa Parks that she would have to give up her seat to a white person. She refused and was arrested. The next evening, black leaders, many of them church ministers, met to decide if they should protest. A young minister who just moved to Montgomery from Atlanta, Martin Luther King Jr., soon became the leader of the group. King and the others called for a black boycott of the Montgomery bus system. The boycott meant blacks refused to ride the buses. For months, the buses were almost empty because most of the riders had been black. Then, the boycott spread to white businesses in downtown Montgomery. King was arrested and jailed, but he continued to urge his followers to use a path of “non-violent resistance.” This meant that they would break laws that discriminated against blacks, but that they would not use violence... By 1960, black Americans had made some progress toward equality. The Supreme Court and other government actions had opened the door. But most blacks still were forced to live a second-class type of life.

*Source: Bugey J., Danzer, G., Mitsakos, C., & Risinger C. (1984). America! America! (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.), p. 653*

## Document B: Bayard Rustin's Diary

Bayard Rustin, an African American civil rights activist, traveled to Montgomery to advise Dr. King and support the bus boycott. Though he was eventually asked to leave Montgomery because leaders feared his reputation as a gay Communist would hurt the movement, he kept a diary of what he found.

February 24

42,000 Negroes have not ridden the busses since December 5. On December 6, the police began to harass, intimidate, and arrest Negro taxi drivers who were helping get these people to work. It thus became necessary for the Negro leaders to find an alternative—the car pool.

This morning Rufus Lewis, director of the pool...explained that there are three methods in addition to the car pool, for moving the Negro population:

1. Hitch-hiking.
2. The transportation of servants by white housewives.
3. Walking.

Later he introduced me to two men, one of whom has walked 7 miles and the other 14 miles, every day since December 5.

“The success of the car pool is at the heart of the movement,” Lewis said at the meeting. “It must not be stopped.”

I wondered what the response of the drivers would be, since 28 of them had just been arrested on charges of conspiring to destroy the bus company. One by one, they pledged that, if necessary, they would be arrested again and again.

*Source: Excerpt from Bayard Rustin's Montgomery Diary, February 24, 1956. Montgomery, Alabama*

Document C: MLK

At this Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) weekly meeting, King speaks to the crowd.

Democracy gives us this right to protest and that is all we are doing. We can say honestly that we have not advocated violence, have not practiced it, and have gone courageously on with a Christian movement. Ours is a spiritual movement depending on moral and spiritual fortitude. The protest is still going on. (Great deal of applause here)

Freedom doesn't come on a silver platter. With every great movement toward freedom there will inevitably be trials. Somebody will have to have the courage to sacrifice. You don't get to the Promised Land without going through the Wilderness. You don't get there without crossing over hills and mountains, but if you keep on keeping on, you can't help but reach it. We won't all see it, but it's coming and it's because God is for it.

We won't back down. We are going on with our movement.

Let us continue with the same spirit, with the same orderliness, with the same discipline, with the same Christian approach. I believe that God is using Montgomery as his proving ground.

God be praised for you, for your loyalty, for your determination. God bless you and keep you, and may God be with us as we go on.

*Source: Excerpts from a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., as reported by Anna Holden, a teacher at Fisk University. March 22, 1956. Montgomery, Alabama.*