

Timeline of the Boycott

1892: In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), the United States Supreme Court held that racial segregation in railway cars was constitutional.

1900-1902: In August 1900, after *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896) allowed segregation in public transportation, the black community in Montgomery, Alabama boycotted streetcars for two years. The boycott ended when a new city ordinance prevented bus drivers from compelling anyone to vacate a seat unless another seat was not open. The ordinance was enforced for the next twenty years.

1953: A bus boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, from June 20 through 24, 1953, resulted in partially integrated buses. This boycott, organized by Reverend T. J. Jemison, served as a template for the Montgomery bus boycott.

In late 1953, in Montgomery, Alabama, Jo Ann Robinson, an English teacher at Alabama State College, and other black leaders organized the Women's Political Council. Members met with Montgomery City Commissioners to discuss bus policies.

1954: The United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Brown, et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, et al.*, 349 U.S. 294 (1955) that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

1955: In Montgomery, Alabama, E. D. Nixon, a union leader and past president of the Alabama NAACP, organized a political forum on February 23, 1955, held by the Progressive Democratic Association, to question candidates for the Montgomery City Commission about their positions on bus seating policies, local black representation, and other issues concerning blacks in the upcoming election.

On March 2, 1955, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to give up a bus seat to a white woman. During her arrest, Ms. Colvin told police, "It's my constitutional right to sit here."

In March 1955, black leaders in Montgomery, Alabama, including E.D. Nixon, Rufus Lewis, Jo Ann Robinson, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, met with Montgomery City Commissioners and bus officials to negotiate seating arrangements on city buses.

On May 31, 1955, the United States Supreme Court issued an order that desegregation pursuant to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 349 U.S. 294 (1955) be implemented "with all deliberate speed."

On October 21, 1955, 18-year-old Mary Louise Smith was arrested for refusing to give her bus seat to a white woman. She was fined \$9.00 for failing to obey the officer who had ordered her to move.

In October 1955, National City Lines of Chicago, owner of the Montgomery bus line, began negotiations with the Montgomery City Commission to renew its franchise contract in Montgomery.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger on the Cleveland Avenue Bus. She was arrested. E. D. Nixon posted her bond.

On December 2, 1955, E. D. Nixon, Rev. Ralph Abernathy and Rev. Martin Luther King created the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to organize ministers and civic leaders. The MIA supported a non-violent protest, seeking not to end segregation, but to improve conditions for black bus riders. The Women's Political Council distributed leaflets calling for a one-day boycott on December 5. A city-wide meeting was held to discuss how long the boycott should last.

December 5, 1955 was the first day of the boycott. The organizers hoped for 60% participation from the black community, but later estimated that the participation was 90-100% of the black community. The MIA, lead by Rev. Martin Luther King, decided to continue the boycott until bus policies were changed.

On December 5, 1955, Rosa Parks was convicted and fined \$10.00, plus expenses (\$4.00) by the Montgomery Recorder's Court.

On December 8, 17-19, 1955, the Alabama Council on Human Relations held unproductive meetings with MIA leaders, Montgomery City Commissioners, and a representative of the bus company.

On December 13, 1955, the MIA car pool began operation. Service ran from 4 a.m. - 11 p.m. Lloyds of London provided liability insurance when local insurance agents cancelled coverage for volunteer drivers and church vehicles.

1956: In January 1956, Montgomery City Commissioners Clyde Sellers and Frank Parks, and Mayor W. A. Gayle announced that they had joined the White Citizens Council.

On January 21, 1956, the Montgomery City Commissioner incorrectly announced the end of the boycott in local papers.

On January 26, 1956, Rev. Martin Luther King was arrested for speeding and was jailed for the first time in his life.

On January 30, 1956, Rev. Martin Luther King's home was bombed. He asked the hostile crowd gathered at his home not to seek revenge, but to peacefully protest instead. Mayor Gayle, the police chief, not the fire chief, and Commissioner Sellers stood with Rev. King on his porch. Mayor Gayle stated that the white community believes in law and order: "I am going to work with my last breath to find and convict the guilty party."

On February 1, 1956, *Browder, McDonald, Colvin, Smith v. Gayle, Sellers, Parks, Ruppenthal, The Montgomery City Lines, Blake, Cleere, Owen, Hitchcock, and Pool* was filed in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, challenging the constitutionality of the bus segregation ordinance.

On February 1, 1956, the home of E. D. Nixon was bombed.

On February 20, 1956, a last attempt negotiation was made between the MIA and City Commissioners.

On February 21, 1956, MIA leaders & other black leaders were indicted under Alabama's anti-boycott law.

On March 19, 1956, Rev. Martin Luther King was indicted as a leader of the bus boycott. He was convicted, fined \$500, and another \$500 in court costs, and sentenced to 386 days in jail. The case was appealed. Other "boycott" convictions were stayed pending Rev. King's appeal.

On June 5, 1956, *Aurelia S. Browder, et al. v. W. A. Gayle, et al.*, 142 F. Supp. 707 (M.D. Ala. 1956) was issued holding that bus segregation was unconstitutional.

On November 13, 1956, in *Gayle v. Browder*, 352 U.S. 903; 77 S. Ct. 145 (1956), the United States Supreme Court affirmed the lower court ruling holding that bus segregation was unconstitutional. City leaders obtained an injunction against operation of the carpool. No organized transportation system was available until December 21, 1956 for the remainder of the boycott.

On November 14, 1956, MIA members decided to continue the boycott until the United States Supreme Court's decision was implemented.

On December 20, 1956, the United States Supreme Court's writs of injunction in *Gayle v. Browder*, 352 U.S. 903; (1956) were delivered to Montgomery City Hall and the Alabama Public Service Commission.

On December 21, 1956, the boycott ended and buses were desegregated.