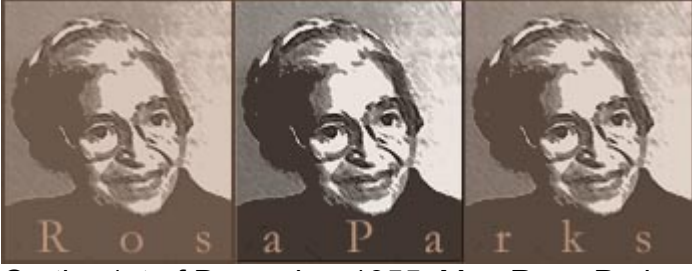


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## Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott



On the 1st of December 1955, Mrs. Rosa Parks, an African-American seamstress, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for not standing and letting a white bus rider take her seat.

It was an “*established rule*” in the American south (at that time) that African-American riders had to sit at the back of the bus. African-American riders were also expected to surrender their seat to a white bus rider if it was needed.

When asked to move to let a white bus rider be seated Mrs. Parks refused. She did not argue and she did not move. The police were called and Mrs. Parks was arrested.

Mrs. Parks was not the first African-American to be arrested for this “crime.” But she was the first to be arrested who was well known in the Montgomery African-American community. She was once the secretary to the president of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. He and other African-American community leaders felt a protest of some kind was needed.

A meeting was called and an overflowing crowd came to the church to hear his words. Dr. King told the crowd that the only way they could fight back would be to boycott the bus company.

On the morning of Dec. 5, the African-American residents of the city refused to use the buses. Most walked, those few with cars arranged rides for friends and strangers, some even rode mules. Only a very small number of African-Americans rode the bus that day.

Dr. King and the other African-American community leaders held another meeting to organize future action. They named their organization the Montgomery Improvement Association and elected Dr. King as its president.

As the boycott continued the white community fought back with terrorism and harassment. The car-pool drivers were arrested for picking up hitchhikers. African-Americans waiting on street corners for a ride were arrested for loitering.

On January 30, 1956 Dr. King’s home was bombed. His wife and their baby daughter escaped without injury. When Dr. King arrived home he found an angry mob waiting. Dr. King told the crowd to go home.

“*We must learn to meet hate with love*” he said.

The boycott continued for over a year. It eventually took the United States Supreme Court to end the boycott. On November 13, 1956 the Court declared that Alabama’s state and local laws requiring segregation on buses were illegal. On December 20th federal injunctions were served on the city and bus company officials forcing them to follow the Supreme Court’s ruling.

The following morning, December 21, 1956, Dr. King and Rev. Glen Smiley, a white minister, shared the front seat of a public bus. The boycott had lasted 381 days. The boycott was a success.