

## Montgomery Bus Boycott Primary Document Set #1

### Document 1: Letter from Jo Ann Robinson to the Mayor of Montgomery

Honorable Mayor W. Gayle

City Hall

Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Sir:

The Women's Political Council is very grateful to you and the City Commissioners for the hearing you allowed our representative during the month of March, 1954, when the "city-bus-fare-increase case" was being reviewed. There were several things the Council asked for:

1. A city law that would make it possible for Negroes to sit from back toward front, and whites from front toward back until all the seats are taken.
2. That Negroes not be asked or forced to pay fare at front and go to the rear of the bus to enter.
3. That busses stop at every corner in residential sections occupied by Negroes as they do in communities where whites reside.

We are happy to report that busses have begun stopping at more corners now in some sections where Negroes live than previously. However, the same practices in seating and boarding the bus continue.

Mayor Gayle, three-fourths of the riders of these public conveyances are Negroes. If Negroes did not patronize them, they could not possibly operate.

More and more of our people are already arranging with neighbors and friends to ride to keep from being insulted and humiliated by bus drivers.

There has been talk from twenty-five or more local organizations of planning a city-wide boycott of busses. We, sir, do not feel that forceful measures are necessary in bargaining for a convenience which is right for all bus passengers....

Please consider this plea, and if possible, act favorably upon it, for even now plans are being made to ride less, or not at all, on our busses. We do not want this.

Respectfully yours,

The Women's Political Council

Jo Ann Robinson, President

Source: Excerpt from a letter written by Jo Ann Robinson, May 21, 1954, Montgomery, Alabama. In this letter Jo Ann Robinson writes the Mayor of Montgomery asking for fair treatment on the buses.

## Document 2: Jo Ann Robinson on the Boycott Leaflet Campaign

I sat down and quickly drafted a message and then called a good friend and colleague... who had access to the college's mimeograph equipment. When I told him that the WPC was staging a boycott and needed to run off the notices, he told me that he too had suffered embarrassment on the city buses.... Along with two of my most trusted senior students, we quickly agreed to meet almost immediately, in the middle of the night, at the college's duplicating room. We were able to get three messages to a page... in order to produce the tens of thousands of leaflets we knew would be needed. By 4 a.m. Friday, the sheets had been duplicated, cut in thirds, and bundled....

Between 4 and 7 a.m., the two students and I mapped out distribution routes for the notices. Some of the WPC officers previously had discussed how and where to deliver thousands of leaflets announcing a boycott, and those plans now stood me in good stead....

After class my two students and I quickly finalized our plans for distributing the thousands of leaflets so that one would reach every black home in Montgomery. I took out the WPC membership roster and called [them]... I alerted all of them to the forthcoming distribution of the leaflets, and enlisted their aid in speeding and organizing the distribution network....

Throughout the late morning and early afternoon hours we dropped off tens of thousands of leaflets. Some of our bundles were dropped off at schools.... Leaflets were also dropped off at business places, storefronts, beauty parlors, beer halls, factories, barber shops, and every other available place. Workers would pass along notices both to other employees as well as to customers....

Source: Excerpt from Jo Ann Robinson's memoir [story about her life], *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It*, pp. 45-47, 1987, Knoxville, TN. Here Jo Ann Robinson explains how she and others produced and distributed the leaflet calling for a boycott in time for thousands of African Americans to stay off the buses on Monday morning, December 5, 1955. Just before she began this work, Robinson and E.D. Nixon had decided over the phone to call for a boycott.

## Document 3: Handbill from Central Alabama Citizens Council Rally

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to abolish the Negro race, proper methods should be used. Among these are guns, bows and arrows, sling shots and knives.

We hold these truths to be self evident that all whites are created equal with certain rights; among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of dead niggers.

In every stage of the bus boycott we have been oppressed and degraded because of black slimy, juicy, unbearably stinking niggers. The conduct should not be dwelt upon because behind them they have an ancestral background of Pigmies, head hunters and snot suckers.

My friends it is time we wised up to these black devils. I tell you they are a group of two legged agitators who persist in walking up and down our streets protruding their black lips. If we don't stop helping these African flesh eaters, we will soon wake up and find Rev. King in the White House.

LET'S GET ON THE BALL WHITE CITIZENS.

The Book "Declaration of Segregation" will appear April, 1956. If this appeals to you be sure to read the book.

Source: Handbill produced by the Central Alabama Citizens Council, February 10, 1956, Montgomery, Alabama. This handbill was given out at a rally in Montgomery. Ten thousand white citizens attended. Leaders of Montgomery's local government, including the mayor, spoke to the crowd about stopping integration.

#### Document 4: Letter from Virginia Durr to Director of Highlander Folk School

January 30, 1956

Dear Myles and Zilphia:

I just received a communication from there giving a summary of the past year's activities and I think you should add how much you had to do with the Montgomery Bus Boycott which is really making history and is of the deepest significance. LIFE, TIME, CBS, NBC, and countless other papers have been down here covering it... I think it is the first time that a whole Negro community has ever stuck together this way and for so long and I think they are going to win it.

But how your part comes in is through the effect the school had on Mrs. Parks. When she came back she was so happy and felt so liberated and then as time went on she said the discrimination got worse and worse to bear AFTER having, for the first time in her life, been free of it at Highlander. I am sure that had a lot to do with her daring to risk arrest as she is naturally a very quiet and retiring person although she has a fierce sense of pride and is, in my opinion, a really noble woman. But you and Zilphia should certainly take pride in what you did for her and what she is doing....

Lots of love to all, come and see for yourself.

VA

Source: Excerpt from a letter written by Virginia Foster Durr to Myles and Zilphia Horton, January 30, 1956. Montgomery, Alabama. Virginia Foster Durr was a white woman who supported civil rights for African Americans in Montgomery. Here, Durr writes the director of the Highlander Folk School and his wife. Highlander was a center for training civil rights activists and labor organizers.

## **TIRED OF GIVING IN – THE ROSA PARKS STORY**

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Split into groups of 3 or 4, read out loud the statement and discuss.**

Were the NAACP right to wait for the perfect person to challenge the bus segregation laws?

If you were sitting next to Rosa on the bus that day what would you have done?

What hardships do you think the people who boycotted the buses faced? Would you have joined in with the boycott?

What do you think Rosa and Martin Luther King would have to say about black rights today?

Does Rosa being asked to give up her seat on the bus remind you of any experiences that you have had?

## **TIRED OF GIVING IN – THE ROSA PARKS STORY**

### **ESSAY QUESTIONS**

**Choose 2 questions.**

**Write a 100 word essay on one of your chosen questions.**

**Write a 500 word essay on the other chosen question.**

- 1) Dr King believed in quiet resistance and legal protest. But in the end Rosa had to break the law to end the bus segregation. Are there circumstances in which breaking the law is the right thing to do?
  
- 2) Why do you think history doesn't tell us much about the other women involved in the bus protests?
  
- 2) Do you think that they would have succeeded if they had taken on Claudette Colvin instead of Rosa?
  
- 3) Dr King said that whilst you can change the law you cannot always change people's hearts. Do you think people's hearts have changed since Rosa made her stand?
  
- 4) Rosa's story takes place in the USA, at the time of the Jim Crow Laws mandating racial segregation. Europe did not have these laws. Do you think things were better for black people in Europe?

## **TIRED OF GIVING IN – THE ROSA PARKS STORY**

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Form a couple, argue for or against in each case, no matter your own personal viewpoint.**

*Use the space to note some points to support your argument.*

A Is Rosa Parks a hero?

B The bus drivers were just following the law. Are they responsible for their actions?

## **TIRED OF GIVING IN – THE ROSA PARKS STORY**

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE - PART ONE**

*After you have watched the show, please answer these questions by circling the only correct answer.*

- 1 Who are married?
  - a. Rosa and Raymond Parks
  - b. Ruby and Raymond Parks
  - c. Rhonda and Richard Parks
  - d. Rosa and Ryan Parks
  
- 2 What does Claudette do?
  - a. Works at the shop
  - b. Works as a teacher
  - c. Goes to school
  
- 3 Do we see Rosa's father in the play?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
- 4 Who is the organiser of the NAACP?
  - a. Mr Knocks
  - b. Mr Knacks
  - c. Mr Nixon
  
- 5 What is the full name of the famous preacher who takes up the cause?
  - a. Martin Luther King
  - b. Farther Luther King Jr
  - c. Michal Jackson
  - d. Martin Luther King Jr
  
- 6 What does the Jr stand for?
  - a. Juror
  - b. Janitor
  - c. Junior
  - d. Jailor

## **TIRED OF GIVING IN – THE ROSA PARKS STORY**

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE - PART TWO**

*After you have watched the show, please answer these questions by*

*circling the correct answer(s). Please note there might be more than one correct response.*

- 1 Rosa McCauley married Mr Raymond Parks. What was his occupation ?
  - a. A butcher
  - b. A barber
  - c. A bus driver
  - d. A preacher
  
- 2 What was the weather like in the play on the day they met?
  - a. It was sunny
  - b. It was snowing
  - c. It was raining
  - d. It was cloudy
  
- 3 Why did Mr Nixon not choose Claudette do the famous bus sit-in and subsequently get herself arrested?
  - a. She was too young
  - b. She was pregnant
  - c. She was too arrogant
  - d. He did not like her
  
- 4 Was Rosa tired?
  - a. Yes she was tired and needed to sit down on the bus
  - b. No she was not tired
  - c. She was tired but not fatigued, she was tired of giving in
  - d. No she was ready to fight
  
- 5 What were the Scottsboro boys accused of doing?
  - a. Riding the freight train
  - b. Assaulting some white women
  - c. Getting into a fight with some white boys
  
- 6 Why did they want Rosa to be arrested?
  - a. To draw attention to the inequalities of the bus system
  - b. To draw attention to the unfair segregation laws
  - c. To ask that the bus company operate a first-come first-served seating
  - d. To ask for courteous treatment on the buses
  - e. To require the bus company to start hiring black drivers for black bus routes.



## **TIRED OF GIVING IN – THE ROSA PARKS STORY**

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE - PART ONE**

*After you have watched the show, please answer these questions by circling the only correct answer  
(continued/.)*

- 7 Where does Georgia Gilmore say the money comes from?
- a. The Club from Nowhere
  - b. The Club from Everywhere
  - c. People Everywhere
  - d. Never never land
- 8 The play is based on a true story.
- a. True
  - b. False
- 9 The story happened in ...?
- a. The UK
  - b. The US
  - c. The USSR
- 10 Did Mr Nixon, MLK & Rosa want her to be arrested?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
- 11 What movement was started by the actions taken by Rosa that day?
- a. The Montélimar Bus Boycott
  - b. The Montgomery Burns Story
  - c. The Mount Rushmore Picture Boycott
  - d. The Montgomery Bus Boycott
  - e. The Montgomery Boat Boycott
- 12 How many actors are on stage in the show?
- a. 2
  - b. 3
  - c. 4
  - d. 5
  - e. 6
  - f. 7
  - g. 8