

Read the text about the Montgomery Bus Boycott and answer the questions that follow in the spaces provided.



Throughout the South, African Americans were forced by law to sit on the back of all public buses. If the bus was full, laws stated that they had to give up their seats to any white passengers. Refusing to do so would result in their arrest.

In March 1955, **Claudette Colvin**, a 15-year-old high school was handcuffed, arrested,

and forcibly removed from a public bus when she refused to give up her seat to a white man. Local African American activists began to build a case to challenge state bus segregation laws.

In December, another African American woman named **Rosa Parks** refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. On the city buses of Montgomery, the first 10 seats were reserved for white passengers only. Rosa Parks was seated in the first row behind those 10 seats. When the bus became crowded, the bus driver instructed her and three other passengers seated in that row, all African Americans, to move from their seats for the white passengers boarding. While the other three passengers moved, Rosa Parks remained seated, arguing that she was not in a seat reserved for whites. When the driver, Joseph Blake, was unable to get her to move and he believed that she had defied his order, he called the police. Rosa Parks was immediately arrested, booked, fingerprinted, briefly jailed, then fined.

Rosa Parks' arrest would prove to be incredibly beneficial to the overall Civil Rights Movement. She was a woman of unchallenged character who was held in high esteem by all those who knew her. At the time of her arrest, Rosa Parks was active in the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), serving as secretary to E.D. Nixon, president of the Montgomery chapter. Her arrest became a rallying point around which the African American community organized a bus boycott in protest of the discrimination they had endured for years.

Martin Luther King, Jr., the 26-year-old minister, emerged as the leader of the well-coordinated, peaceful boycott that lasted 381 days and captured the world's attention. During the 13-month boycott, African Americans organized carpools, ride-sharing and walking rather than using the city buses.

After Rosa Parks was convicted under city law, her lawyer filed a notice of appeal. On November 13, 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional; the boycott ended December 20, a day after the Court's written order arrived in Montgomery. For a quiet act of defiance that resonated throughout the world, Rosa Parks earned the title "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement."



1. Why were Claudette Colvin and Rosa Parks arrested?

2. Which section of the Montgomery City Code (below) did they violate?

3. What section of the city code gave the bus driver the authority to arrest them?

4. When could a black rider sit in the white section of the bus?

- a. If all the seats were full in the "negro section"
- b. If they were disabled.
- c. If they were a nurse caring for white children.
- d. If they were of mixed race.

5. What was Martin Luther King Jr.'s role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott?

6. What finally brought an end to the Boycott?

C. 6, § 10

MONTGOMERY CITY CODE

C. 6, § 13

Sec. 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 or 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, §§ 603, 606.)

Sec. 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 such a seat vacant. (Code 1938, § 604.)

Sec. 12. Failure to carry passengers.

It shall be unlawful for any person operating a bus line in the city to refuse, without sufficient excuse, to carry any passenger; provided, that no driver of a bus shall be required to carry any passenger who is intoxicated or disorderly, or who is afflicted with any contagious or infectious disease, or who refuses to pay in advance the fare required, or who for any other reason deemed satisfactory by the recorder should be excluded. (Code 1938, § 699.)

Sec. 13. Smoking.

It shall be unlawful for any person to smoke a cigar, pipe or cigarette upon any bus in the city; provided, however, that