

Parks on Trial

"Gratifying" and "unbelievable" were the words Parks used to describe the sight that Monday morning as nearly all of black Montgomery stayed off the buses—the way people "were willing to make the sacrifice to let it be known that they would be free from this oppression." "The only thing that bother me was that we had waited so long to make this protest."

The streets around the court were clogged with people, as was the courtroom. Both Parks and Nixon were astonished because black people tended to stay away from the courthouse, a site of injustice, if they could help it. One of the members of Parks' Youth Council, Mary Frances, observed, "They've messed with the wrong one now," turning it into a small chant.

Parks had been charged with a violation of city law. But when Blake had ordered Parks to move, there were no other open seats on the bus. From protests in the early 20th century, Montgomery city law forbid asking someone to move if there wasn't an open seat. So under city code Parks should not have been asked to give up her seat. That day in court, the prosecutor requested the charges be changed from a violation of city code to state law. Parks's lawyer Fred Gray objected but the judge okay-ed it.

Related primary source: [Browder vs. Gale \(1956\)](#)