

The Boycott

When nearly everyone stayed off the bus that Monday, December 5th, the community felt the power of their collective action. At a packed mass meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church that night, the community chose to continue the boycott of Montgomery's buses. A 26-year-old Martin Luther King emerged as the leader, telling the gathered crowd, "Right here in Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, 'There lived a great people — a black people — who injected new meaning and dignity into the vein of civilization.'" Parks was on the dais that night and presented as the symbol of the movement, "the victim of this gross injustice, almost inhumanity and absolute undemocratic principle, Mrs. Rosa Parks." The crowd rose to their feet and gave her a standing ovation that lasted for minutes with calls for her to speak. But she didn't get to speak. Later she reflected, "I asked did they want me to say anything — they said you have said enough."

In order to maintain the boycott, the Montgomery Improvement Association was born. The MIA created an elaborate carpool system, designating 40 pickup stations across town where people could go to get a ride. Police and local whites constantly harassed the car pool with tickets and violence. But the community pressed on. "We are having a difficult time here," Parks wrote a colleague, "but we are not discouraged. The increased pressure seems to strengthen us for the next blow."

Rosa Parks lost her job five weeks later, and shortly after Raymond was forced to leave his job as well. They never found steady work again in Montgomery. Despite her own family's imperiled economic circumstances, Rosa Parks spent much of the year traveling to raise attention and funds for the movement at home, helping to turn this local struggle into a national one and raising needed funds to sustain the carpool system and boycott at home.

Related primary source: [Integrated bus suggestions](#). Inez Jessie Baskin Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.