

Bus Boycott in Alabama

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"Woman fingerprinted. Mrs. Rosa Parks, Negro seamstress, whose refusal to move to the back of a bus touched off the bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala." Associated Press photo - New York World-Telegram & Sun Collection, 1956. Prints and Photographs Division o

Rosa Parks was fingerprinted after a subsequent arrest for violating anti-boycott laws in 1956.

On Dec 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks, an African-American, refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white passenger, as local law required. She was arrested. A few days later the black community in Montgomery began a bus boycott. What's a boycott? A boycott is when a large group of people refuse to take part in, or make use of, something as a way of showing their disapproval. Because so many black people rode the bus, a boycott would cause the bus system to lose a lot of money.

The bus boycott was an immediate success. African-Americans walked, took taxis, and even rode horses, but they did not ride the bus. King agreed to head the organization leading the boycott, and Rosa Parks became a hero. It was the beginning of a new life for Parks and King. At the time, King was a new pastor. He had just finished school and had moved with his new wife to Montgomery to be a preacher.

The bus boycott lasted more than a year. Many people tried to get King to end the boycott by threatening him. King and the boycotters finally won. On November 13, 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., agreed that Alabama's bus segregation laws were unconstitutional. (Unconstitutional means that the laws did not follow the U.S. Constitution and had to be struck down.) Because the U.S. Supreme Court made the decision, all states had to follow the ruling. King celebrated by riding the bus seated next to a white man.