"One day a half century ago, the black citizens in Montgomery rose up in protest and united to demand their rights—by walking peacefully. It all started on a bus."

—Russell Freedman, from Freedom Walkers

DECEMBER 1949
Days before Christmas, Jo Ann Robinson, Professor of English at Alabama State, is humiliated as a Montgomery bus driver yells, "Get up from there! Get up from there!" 1

MAY 1954
Public school segregation is declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, opening the way for the possibility of other desegregation.

MARCH 2, 1955
Spunky fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin, on her way home from school, tells police, "It's my constitutional right to sit here." 2

SUMMER 1955
Emmett Till's "murder by white men . . . shocked the nation and helped galvanize the civil rights movement." 3

DECEMBER 1, 1955
After work on Thursday evening, Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white person. "The only tired I was, was tired of giving in." 4

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1955
52,500 leaflets announcing a boycott are distributed in Montgomery's black communities.

MONDAY EVENING
"There comes a time when people get tired." 5

At the Holt Baptist Church, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gives the speech "launching his career as a leader of the nation's civil rights movement." 6

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1955
"Don't ride the bus to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday, Dec. 5. If you work, take a cab, or share a ride, or walk."

DECEMBER 1955
Elaborate arrangements are made to transport thousands of boycotters by car. Elderly Mother Pollard prefers to walk: "My feet is tired, but my soul is rested." 8

FEBRUARY 21, 1956
115 boycotters are indicted by a special grand jury under an obscure 1921 law.

JANUARY 26, 1956
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is arrested and jailed, then abruptly released after a get tough policy to harass boycotters is ordered by the police commissioner.

FEBRUARY 21, 1956
115 boycotters are indicted by a special grand jury under an obscure 1921 law.

MARCH 2, 1956
The bus integration order is at last delivered to city officials and becomes law.

JUNE 4, 1956
"The boycotters [are] their first legal victory . . . Segregation on [Alabama city] buses violated the Fourteenth Amendment . . . [and] was declared unconstitutional." 9

381 days after the boycott began, Montgomery, Alabama, integrates its public buses and the boycott ends.

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"Park's defiance on that December evening in 1955 set in motion a peaceful revolution that led to the death of Jim Crow segregation in the South and brought black Americans into the nation's political life. But the success and true impact of the Montgomery boycott depended on the sacrifices and determination of thousands whose names are lost to history—maids, laborers, teachers, students, cooks, and others—ordinary people who rose above the safe routines of their daily lives to become actors in an historical drama that changed a nation."

—Russell Freedman, from Freedom Walkers