

# The Long Journey from the back of the bus....

In Montgomery, Alabama, occurred an example of the Negroes' use of mass passive resistance. Seated in the colored section of a bus on her way to work one morning in 1955, Mrs. Rosa Parks was rudely ordered by the driver to move back and give her seat to a white man. She refused and was arrested. In protest, 98 per cent of the city's 50,000 Negroes subsequently refused to ride the buses. With the boycott supported by the Negro churches, car pools were organized and community meetings were held to demand courteous treatment from drivers, seats on a first-come, first-served basis and Negro drivers for bus lines serving colored neighborhoods. When Fred D. Gray, a lawyer and a minister, consequently draft-exempt, instituted suit to end segregated travel he was arrested and his draft status was immediately changed to 1-A.

In February, 1956, the mass arrests of almost 100 Negroes, including twenty-four ministers, began, among them the nationally known secretary of the A.M.E. Zion Home Missions Board, Dr. S. S. Seay. All were indicted on boycott charges and the twenty-seven-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr., a minister, was sentenced to 386 days at hard labor. Pending his appeal, the trials of the others were postponed, as the "Walk-Don't-Ride" boycott continued, with nightly prayer meetings held in the Negro churches. "We will not resort to violence," Reverend King declared. "We will not degrade ourselves with hatred. Love will be returned for hate."



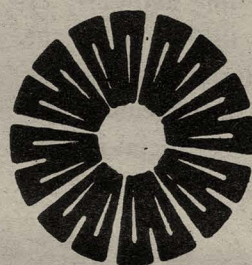
An empty Montgomery bus during the boycott. Negroes normally constitute more than half of the city's bus riders. Without Negro patronage the company was forced to raise fares for white riders.



Mrs. Rosa Parks, a seamstress, whose arrest for refusing to move to the back of the bus started the boycott, is fingerprinted after her indictment by a grand jury under a seldom-invoked anti-boycott law.

*We salute Black Historians*

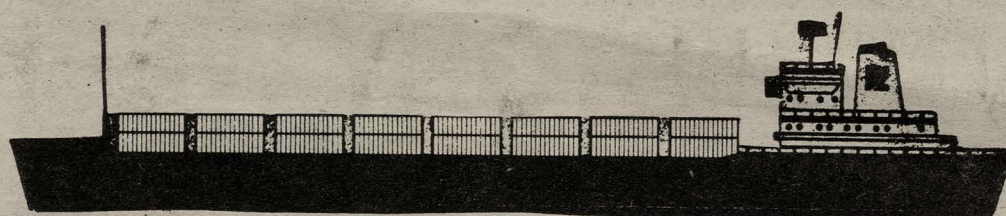
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