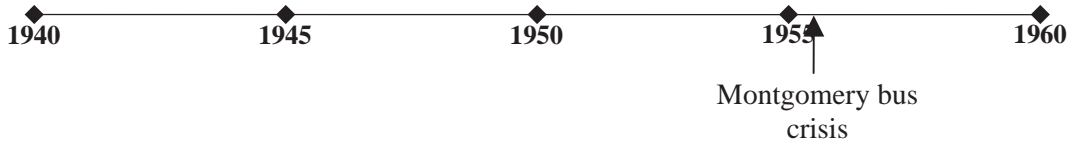


LESSON 8: CIVIL RIGHTS

Student Handout 1: Problem Montgomery Bus Crisis, 1955–1956

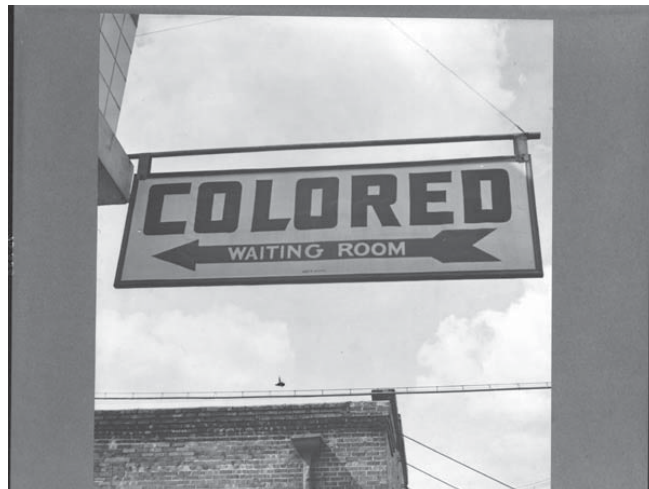


You are an African American activist in Montgomery, Alabama, in December 1955. Here, as elsewhere in the South, the system of segregation is widespread. Even on city buses and in bus terminals, blacks must remain apart from whites, as illustrated in the photo below:

About 75% of the bus riders in Montgomery are black, but blacks can only sit at the back of buses, while the front is reserved for whites. Blacks cannot sit in the white area even if there are seats there and the black section is full. However, if the white area of the bus is full, blacks are expected to give up their seats to whites.

Yesterday, a black woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white rider as a protest against the unfairness of the system.

She was arrested, an action which outraged the black community.



Sign outside Greyhound bus station in Rome, Georgia

A recent protest in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, forced a change in the bus system there. Blacks can now sit in the buses from back to front, while whites sit from front to back. Seating is determined on a first-come, first-served basis, and there is no reserved white area. Blacks no longer have to give up their seats to white riders.

Many people look to you and other black leaders to find a way to protest Parks's arrest and somehow effect change. What will you do?

- A. Establish your goals. What do you want to achieve?
- B. Brainstorm possible strategies you could use to achieve those goals, then write down your top two or three.