

## THE SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT: SOCIAL INTERACTION AND HUMILIATION IN THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS\*

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*This study advances a new explanation of the Montgomery bus boycott, the constitutive event of the U.S. civil rights movement. It introduces new findings to demonstrate that Montgomery, Alabama, was unique in its segregation system, and that unrest among blacks emerged in the narrow time period between late 1953 and 1955. I trace the motivational origins of the boycott in worsening social interactions that caused a sense of abuse and humiliation in black passengers due to three main factors: changing ratios of black and white passengers on the public buses; labor-related issues that frustrated the bus drivers; and the impact of the 1954 Brown decision on the bus drivers. This study calls for a framework that conceptualizes and connects lived experiences and real contentious social interactions with the emergence of protest motivations and social movements. Accordingly, I stress the importance of distinguishing between causes that explain the emergence of movements and factors that explain the momentum and success of movements.*

The Montgomery bus boycott of December 5, 1955 is widely accepted as the constitutive event of the mass mobilization phase in the modern U.S. civil rights movement.<sup>1</sup> As such, it is a central or even paradigmatic test case for theories of social movements. Yet despite various accounts of the Montgomery bus boycott and the civil rights movement, there remain unsolved puzzles. Mainly, why did the Montgomery bus boycott (henceforth the “boycott”) occur in this city and not elsewhere? Why did the boycott target buses and not other symbols of the civil rights movement? And why did the struggle begin in December 1955 and not earlier? The answers to these important questions have theoretical implications that may lead to a better understanding of the U.S. civil rights movement and the emergence of social movements more generally.

Theoretical and empirical advances in the field of sociology have tended to address the Montgomery bus boycott in the context of the emergence of the U.S. civil rights movement as a whole. Namely, they have attempted to explain the emergence of the boycott as part of a much broader array of activity between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s, collectively known as the U.S. civil rights movement (e.g., McAdam 1982, 2009; Morris 1984; Tarrow 1994; Jenkins, Jacobs, and Agnone 2003). This approach is problematic because it sets the theoretical lens and its research questions in a way that the same causal factors, such as political

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opportunities, existing social structures, or networks, are too often assumed to explain the origins of protest motivations (cognitive or emotional) and the dynamics and momentum of campaigns, as well as a campaign's success or failure, over an extended period of time. While helpful for some purposes and questions, this global approach is less useful in answering specific questions concerning the time and place of the Montgomery bus boycott that are of great interest and explanatory value. In fact, the existing paradigm tends to flatten inherent differences in distinct stages in the life of a movement and may thus conceal crucial causes that operate in one stage but do not necessarily exist in other stages, as argued in this article.

Furthermore, existing accounts of the civil rights movement neglect to address causal mechanisms that connect macrofactors (thought to have influenced the movement) to a social-psychological dimension of the lived-experience that is significant to understanding the actual people who were foot soldiers in the movement. Important theorists of the civil rights movement have also acknowledged these shortcomings (Morris 2000; McAdam 2004; see also critical accounts in Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Biggs 2006). This article addresses this issue of causal mechanisms on the lived experiences and social-psychological levels in the context of the boycott. Historical and case-specific sociological studies of the origins of the boycott have focused on structural changes in leadership, rationality of decision making in black and white communities, organization (e.g., the black church in Montgomery), and local and international politics (Garrow 1989; Thornton 2002). I also evaluate these factors and existing explanations in light of an in-depth historical investigation that uncovers new findings, factors, and insights concerning the boycott.

The theoretical framework that I propose in this article advances and elaborates a social-psychological approach that emphasizes the importance of real-life contentious interactions and their impact on the cognitive and emotional states of the people involved. These factors are conceptualized as causes that drive the emergence (or strengthening) of individual's motivations to engage in political protest and to join organizations and social movements more broadly. This approach can be traced to Goffman (1956a, 1956b), who identified the importance of face-to-face encounters and interactions in which the individual—alone or as part of a group—feels embarrassment. He also argued that in every social system there are occurrences in which individuals enter confrontations over inappropriate treatment and misrepresentation of their identity, including one's group identity (Goffman 1956a: 269). Such social interactions also occur in the form of status rituals or other interpersonal rituals that convey deference (Goffman 1956b: 478). Individuals are likely to experience feelings of shame and humiliation when they fail to receive appropriate honor and recognition or when they are being treated badly (Goffman 1956b: 474, 480). Goffman argues that this form of social interaction is also linked to challenges against existing social relations and political power (1956b: 480-81, 493).

Following Goffman, Scheff elaborated the emotional system in social interactions involving deference. "Depending on its intensity and obviousness, rejection usually leads inevitably to the painful emotions of embarrassment, shame, or humiliation," argued Scheff (1988: 395). He posited social interactions that elicit emotional responses of "honor, insult, and revenge, may decide the fate, not only of individuals, but of nations . . . [and] of all life on earth" (Scheff 1988: 397). Put more mildly, Scheff posits that social interactions involving insult, shame, and humiliation can lead to a chain reaction that may spill over to the political domain. This may explain, among other things, explosive emotional episodes and expressed resentment ("shame-anger alternation") with the anger directed against those who insult or humiliate (Scheff 1988: 404).

More recently, Snow and colleagues reconceptualized breakdown theories as including symbolic interaction between members of groups (Snow, Cress, Downey, and Jones 1998). They argue that one set of conditions associated with the emergence of social movements "is that which penetrates and disrupts, or threatens to disrupt, taken-for-granted, everyday routines and expectancies" (Snow et al. 1998: 2). Snow et al. define "everyday life" as daily

practices that are “the routinized patterns of making do, such as daily subsistence routines and chores, that are often performed in an almost habituated, unthinking fashion” (Snow et al. 1998: 4). They stress the causal importance of disrupting these everyday practices in such a way that shake people’s perceptions and cause *new grievances*. One of the four factors that disrupt everyday life consists of “actual or threatened intrusions into or violations of what Goffman (1971) referred to as the immediate protective surround, or *Umwelt*” (Snow et al. 1998: 7). The authors do not refer specifically to social interactions in this category, but their reliance on Goffman and their emphasis on the zone of privacy and protection from intrusion into this domain are closely related to the social interaction approach (Snow et al. 1998: 7-9). Their fourth category, “dramatic changes in structures of social control,” is highly relevant to the social interaction approach. “Dramatic changes in the control and policing of non-institutionalized citizens can also spur mobilization when those changes alter or threaten to alter the routine grounds of everyday life” (Snow et al. 1998: 15). Snow et al. give a pertinent example showing that worsening policing practices toward homeless people in the Boston area spurred mobilization (Snow et al. 1998:15).

Zhao (2001: 355) emphasizes the importance of focusing on interactions between “real humans” in his account of the Tiananmen student movement in 1989. He concludes, “My analysis shows that the dynamic of contentious collective actions, while it is shaped by the structure of state-society relations, develops through the contentious interactions of agents, with outcomes that become certain only very late” (Zhao 2001: 351). Furthermore, following Goffman’s and Scheff’s social interaction approach, Collins (2012) proposed a more developed theory of social interaction in violent conflicts. As he explains, “Face-to-face interaction is crucial for micro-signals and emotions to be sent back and forth, and threat motivates people to assemble” (Collins 2012: 2). Conflicts normally begin in these micro-level social interactions and are often accompanied by “conflict talk” that is “a combination of insulting the other, boasting about one’s own power, and making threats” (Collins 2012: 2). Although this theory is applied to violent conflicts, its social interaction premises are also relevant to the study of nonviolent social movements.

The social interaction approach and its emphasis on cognitive and emotional aspects of mobilization can be seen as part of a broader theoretical shift in the study of social movements and contentious politics since the 1990s and the reemphasis of emotional and cognitive processes in this scholarship (e.g., “oppositional consciousness,” Morris 1999; Mansbridge 2001; Morris and Braine 2001). There is now an extensive body of research that shows the relevance of various types and clusters of emotions in different phases and aspects of social movements (see reviews in Jasper 2006, 2011). In the stage preceding mobilization and the emergence of movements, social interactions and dynamics that cause humiliation and other injuries to people’s self-esteem and social reputation are of special importance (Shultziner 2010). As Jasper notes in his recent review of the literature, “Especially after humiliations, revenge can become a primary goal” of social movements (2011: 290).

Consistent with this general approach, I argue that changing social interactions resulting in increased abuse and humiliation of black passengers on Montgomery’s buses in the mid-1950s explain the emergence of the motivation to protest this quite unique system of segregated bus transportation, and it is this psychological context of widespread humiliation that enabled and led to the boycott in very unlikely circumstances. The first day of the boycott (December 5, 1955) marks a transformative event and the beginning of a new stage in the struggle in which the community itself was transformed. New emotional and cognitive factors came into play, and a new organization (the Montgomery Improvement Association, or MIA) and leadership came to lead the protest. As such, the two stages or phases of the boycott involve different factors and require different levels of analysis. Factors that were dominant in generating the former (i.e., social interactions leading to humiliation) were less relevant to explaining the latter (i.e., the importance of the new leadership, resources, and organization in maintaining the protest and winning it). The inverse is also true: emerging leaders and new

resources do not explain the psychological origins of struggles (see also a comparison of the stages in Montgomery to those of the uprising in Port Elizabeth, South Africa following the Soweto uprising in 1976; Shultziner 2010: 174-177).

In a nutshell, I argue that it was not that black Montgomerians were becoming increasingly sensitive to a stable system of segregation, as commonly assumed; rather, that it was the system itself that intensified the abuse of, and sense of humiliation among, blacks in a relatively short period of time leading up to the boycott. That is, a core argument of this article is that the boycott's causal process unfolded far more quickly than formerly realized. Experiential changes that developed out of these shifts and social interactions laid the psychological groundwork for an otherwise passive generation to challenge the system of bus segregation in Montgomery.

This article adopts a process-tracing approach that is especially effective in elucidating causal links between macro and micro factors (George and Bennett 2005). This approach emphasizes the causal importance of dramatic events to the emergence of movements (Sewell 1996; Snow et al. 1998; McAdam and Sewell 2001; Shultziner 2010: 158-159, 172-173, 176; Shultziner forthcoming). In particular, the reconstruction of the historical course of events leading to the boycott is guided by two principles. The first is to identify and follow meaningful emotional and cognitive developments among the people who eventually engaged in the boycott. This is of course a difficult task when dealing with historical materials and caution is required in the findings. The second is to focus on the causal connections that link certain unique macro factors to the occurrence of these psychological developments, in chronological order. The goal of this methodology is to get as close as possible to the emotional and cognitive domain while tracing its roots in the sequencing of social and political reality of Montgomery. This approach also reconnects with Goffman (1956a: 270) who called us to examine "what categories of persons become embarrassed in what recurrent situations."

This methodology also leads the search and analysis of primary materials and sources. Data comes from a wide range of primary historical materials. The most helpful and relevant data includes interviews with high-ranking city officials, interviews with bus company officials and bus drivers, archives and statistics of the Montgomery City Lines Inc., municipal protocols, transcripts of the bus boycott trials, and participant accounts and memoirs (on extracting emotions pertaining to humiliation from texts see also Scheff 1988: 400; Polletta 1998: 139). The integrative analysis of these materials combines qualitative and quantitative indicators, while comparing, corroborating, and juxtaposing all available indicators. Since some of the data reveal behavioral rather than direct social-psychological factors, interpreting the results requires caution. This methodology may be helpful for studying the emergence of other historical events and the emergence of social movements.

### **MONTGOMERY'S "UNLIKELY GENERATION"**

A striking feature of the Montgomery bus boycott, which sharply contrasts with the 1960s sit-in generation, is the fact that the people who participated in the daily act of resistance and collective action were mainly adult black men and women. The majority of these unsung heroes were ordinary hard-working, lower-class blacks struggling to make ends meet, and who were demographically, socially, and cognitively least likely and prepared to begin a contentious struggle. The black bus riders, unlike the middle- and upper- class blacks who drove private cars, were typically very poor and relied on the buses as the main or sole means to get to their source of livelihood. These bus patrons, many of whom were women<sup>2</sup> who provided for their own families by working as domestics in white households, were particularly dependent on their jobs and, as such, could scarcely afford to alienate or anger their white employers.

Moreover, the blacks who participated in the boycott grew up in the first part of the twentieth century when blacks were still lynched with impunity. This generation was taught not to stand up or talk back to a white person. Many blacks considered it to be irresponsible and dangerous to get arrested, and there was little trust among this generation that the formal legal system would do them justice. Abernathy (1989a: 34) explained that people like him agreed to be drafted in War World II because “we were an obedient generation.” Obedience, passivity, and often complacency characterized this generation up until 1955. For example, in 1943 Rosa Parks boarded a bus from the front, paid her fair, and went straight to the back of the bus, instead of getting off of the bus and reboarding it from the back as was the custom. The driver, James F. Blake—coincidentally, the same driver who had her arrested twelve years later—forced her off of the bus. But as she left the bus, Parks overheard black passengers saying, “She ought to go around the back and get on” (Parks and Haskins 1992: 79). Parks recounts that the pressure for social conformity at the time was strong and that “[t]hey always wondered why you didn’t want to be like the rest of the black people. That was the 1940s, when people took a lot without fighting back” (Parks and Haskins 1992: 79).

The argument that the effects of World War II and economic changes in the United States had caused this generation to grow impatient with the Jim Crow system in the 1950s does not apply well to the reality in Montgomery. Such relative deprivation and social comparisons arguments (Gurr 1970; Wood 1989) are more applicable to the particular circumstances of the leaders of the movement than to most black Montgomerians (Shultziner 2010: 87-89). The city’s black middle and upper classes were generally inactive and complacent despite social and economic changes. For example, when Reverend Vernon Johns, the pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, had a confrontation with a bus driver in 1950, he bravely defied the driver and called on the black passengers to follow him off the bus in protest. No person answered his call. Martin Luther King, Jr. notes that when Johns later reprimanded a woman from his own church who did not follow him she responded, “You ought to knowed better” (King [1958] 1965: 22). Abernathy notes that Johns was extremely frustrated with the black community’s complacent response to injustice, quoting Johns as saying: “Even God . . . can’t free people who behave like that” (Abernathy 1989a: 117). In fact, Johns’ church members eventually dismissed him from the pastorship due to what they considered an aggressive rhetoric for social change and a pattern of rebuking the community for their apathy to injustice (see also Burks 1993: 73). Many middle-class blacks also thought that E.D. Nixon, another outstanding activist, was “a little too aggressive” (Gray 2002: 45). Even after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the NAACP found it hard to find plaintiffs for a class action suit to challenge school segregation in Montgomery (Thornton 2002: 40). Up until December 1955 the black middle class appears to have been generally complacent, inactive, and often divided regarding the structural injustices in Montgomery, except for a few notable brave men and women (King [1958] 1965: 20, 194; Robinson 1987; Burks 1993; Levinger-Limor 2001; Gray 2002).

Similar complacency and passivity is reported for the black lower class. King explains, “the largest number [of black lower class] accepted it [segregation] without apparent protest. Not only did they seem resigned to segregation per se; they also accepted the abuses and indignities that came with it” (King [1958] 1965: 21). King was therefore doubtful that black Montgomerians would rise up in large numbers against bus segregations and unite in a coordinated collective action to this end. King and his wife, Coretta Scott King, both thought that even sixty percent compliance in the first day of the boycott would be a success, and as such saw the overwhelming compliance with the boycott as a sheer “miracle” (King [1958] 1965: 37, 39-40).

The adult black community of Montgomery was thus not a very likely group to engage in a risky and demanding collective action. Most interestingly, beyond the boycott of 1955-1956, adult black Montgomerians did not participate in another mass action on the same scale. Montgomery was not a significant battlefield of any other campaign of the civil rights

movement, and its main four organizations (SCLC, SNCC, CORE, NAACP), notwithstanding the march from Selma to the capital Montgomery in 1965 (after “Bloody Sunday” in Selma on March 7, 1965). On the other hand, neighboring Alabama cities, Birmingham and Selma, were involved in mass mobilization in the 1960s. In fact, many of the boycott leaders left Montgomery before 1960, including King, Abernathy, Robinson, Parks, and others. The amazing flare-up of the boycott movement in Montgomery in 1955-1956 faded quickly, well before the civil rights movement’s peak between 1960-1965. Indeed, the city remained very quiet during this latter dramatic period, in terms of mobilization, whereas blacks in nearby cities were mobilizing to protest.

Yet, the fact remains that this unlikely generation was prepared to step out of old patterns of behavior in December 1955. In order to understand both why this social-psychological climate had formed in Montgomery and not elsewhere, and why it formed around the bus situation in particular, one must first understand Montgomery’s unique bus segregation system.

### **THE UNIQUENESS OF MONTGOMERY’S BUS SEGREGATION SYSTEM**

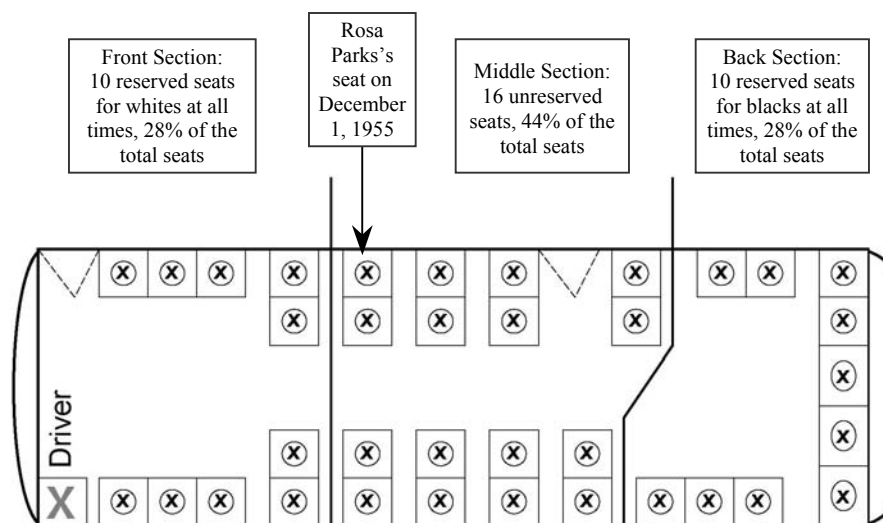
Contrary to common assumptions, the bus segregation system in Montgomery was unique to the American South<sup>3</sup> in the mid-1950s. This section explores the ways in which Montgomery had a system of public bus transportation that encouraged patterns of precarious social interactions, specifically humiliation, that went above and beyond those of other segregation systems in the South.

The Montgomery City Lines Inc. operated the Montgomery public buses in the 1950s. The company was owned by the Chicago-based National City Lines Corporation which had the franchise to run public bus service in 42 cities in 13 states, including two branches in major Alabama cities, Mobile and Montgomery (National City Lines 1967).<sup>4</sup> Most bus companies in the South had a first-come-first-served policy. Even in cities that practiced segregation on public buses the seating arrangements were still relatively predictable and secure: customers were aware of the conventions and knew where they could and could not sit on the bus. For example, Mobile City Lines Inc. (Montgomery’s sister bus company in Alabama) had a seating arrangement whereby whites began sitting from the front of the bus and blacks from the rear of the bus. The dividing line passed where black and white passengers would meet and black passengers would not be asked to relinquish their seats to accommodate more white passengers. Although this type of segregation still constitutes a form of racism, it was at least a predictable and stable arrangement that reduced the tension in an already very problematic setting. Unlike in Montgomery, the Mobile system allowed black passengers to take up empty seats up to the front of the bus. Ironically, it is precisely this Mobile-type of segregated seating arrangement that the black Montgomery leadership asked for well before the boycott began and also during the first two months of the boycott when negotiations were in process between the leadership of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and city officials.

In Montgomery, on the other hand, riding the bus was a psychologically unpredictable and intense experience with a high potential for public humiliation. Buses in Montgomery had three designated sections (see figure 1): a front section consisting of ten reserved seats for whites at all times; a rear section consisting of ten reserved seats for blacks; and a middle section containing sixteen seats which both whites and blacks could occupy on a segregated basis. The actual dividing line between whites and blacks in the middle section was not fixed and could fluctuate during the ride. It was an imaginary and therefore flexible line that the bus drivers would determine based on the ratio between blacks and whites on a given bus route, the hour of the day, or even the specific stop on the route (see also French 1989: 175; Gilliam 1989: 199-200; Thornton 1989: 341; 2002: 41-45). The bus drivers were entrusted with police-power authority and were allowed to carry weapons. By law, bus drivers could order

customers to evacuate their seats and move to another seat in the front or back of the bus, and it was unlawful for a bus passenger to refuse the reseating orders of the bus driver.<sup>5</sup> Since the dividing line was left to the discretion of the bus drivers, the crucial majority of passengers who were ordered to relinquish their seats were blacks. Sometimes the line would even be stretched into the rear section of the bus. That is, some drivers would often violate the bus company's guidelines about reseating.<sup>6</sup> The *de facto* custom of reseating was such that white people were not supposed to stand while blacks were seated. For example, it was unacceptable, or even unthinkable, that a white woman should stand while blacks were seated.<sup>7</sup> And, when Rosa Parks refused to stand up and was subsequently arrested she was sitting in the middle section of the bus (see figure 1 for Parks's seat).

**Figure 1.** The Montgomery Bus Segregation System



*Note:* The bus image is adapted from “Exhibit A” in the case file of *Browder v. Gayle* 142 F. Supp. 707 (1956), located at the National Archives, South East Region. The text additions to the image are the author's.

Indeed, the middle sixteen seats of the bus were very insecure and unpredictable positions for black riders. Despite the common assumption that this humiliating practice and form of segregation was widespread in the South, it was in fact exceptional. The best evidence of this comes from the findings of a special committee for investigating and resolving the bus boycott, which was appointed by Mayor Gayle following the boycott. The committee explored how segregation was practiced in other cities and revealed that the Montgomery segregation system was unique to the South, as confirmed in an interview with James J. Bailey, president of the Retail Furniture Association in Montgomery and a white member of the mayor's committee, who stated, “I don't know why, but it had just happened that her[e] in Montgomery we have the reserved seat sections in the front and the back—most places in the South use the first come, first served seating. But for whatever reason, we started out on the other basic here.”<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, in May 1954 Jo Ann Robinson sent a letter to the mayor asking for modifications in the Montgomery bus segregation system. She explained, “Many of our Southern cities in neighboring states have practiced the policies we seek without incident whatsoever.

Atlanta, Macon and Savannah in Georgia have done this for years. Even Mobile, in our own state, does this and all the passengers are satisfied.”<sup>9</sup>

Beyond the special structure of bus segregation in Montgomery, black customers had to pay in the front of the bus and then get off the bus and board it again from the back door. Sometimes the bus driver decided to drive off before the black customer managed to get back on board. It is unclear if, and how many, other Southern cities practiced this humiliating form of segregation. Furthermore, due to the special configuration of the system and the insecure middle section, bus drivers frequently had to command black bus riders to relinquish their seats in order to accommodate white passengers. The drivers would often do so by shouting derogatory names at individuals or at the whole group of black passengers.<sup>10</sup>

It seems that no other social and political issue have affected black Montgomeries more than this overall humiliating type of social interaction on buses. This is not to say that blacks did not experience negative experiences on buses elsewhere prior to 1955. Surely there were undocumented instances when black passengers were ordered to give up their seats (Thornton 1989: 342; *New York Times*, December 26, 1953, p. 21).<sup>11</sup> However, the special bus segregation system in Montgomery affected an entire community on a daily basis through perverse social interactions and psychological experiences that worsened in their frequency and intensity (see below) compared to other black communities in the U.S.

It appears that the only other city that had a segregation system comparable to that of Montgomery was Baton Rouge, the state capital of Louisiana. Similar to Montgomery, the public transport system in Baton Rouge was based on a system stipulating that blacks had to give up their seats to whites if the front section of the bus was full, and blacks were not allowed to sit in the front section even if there were empty seats in it and no more seats available in the rear section (Morris 1984: 17). Importantly, the black Baton Rouge community protested against this system and the abuse of bus drivers, and petitioned for change in the bus segregation system in 1953. The Baton Rouge city officials initially accepted the petition and allowed a system of segregation based on first-come-first-served basis in which blacks begin sitting from the back and whites from the front with no reserved seats. In response to the new city ordinance, the bus drivers, all of whom were white, went on strike. The Louisiana Attorney General followed with a ruling that the new city ordinance conflicted with the Louisiana state laws and was therefore illegal. The decision angered the black community and prompted a decision to boycott the bus system on June 19, 1953 under the leadership of T.J. Jemison (*New York Times*, June 16, 1953, p. 15; *New York Times*, June 21, 1953, p. 65). The dramatic boycott involved mass meetings and a sophisticated system of carpooling that would later be implemented by community leaders in Montgomery.

The Baton Rouge boycott lasted less than a week because the city officials were willing to compromise and reach a new agreement on a segregation system in which blacks begin sitting from the rear of the bus and whites from the front with an addition of four reserved seats for whites in the front and the row of seats in the back reserved to blacks. The black leadership was in favor the compromise. A majority in the black community then voted in favor of adopting it but others were prepared to continue the boycott (Morris 1984: 24-25). The important point about Baton Rouge in the context of this article is that it was the only other place in the U.S. where a Montgomery-style segregation system existed and it too was challenged by a boycott (two years prior to that of Montgomery). This alternate boycott emphasizes that the unique bus segregation system, which brought blacks and whites into a sensitive social interaction, was a particularly significant issue in the civil rights struggle. Nevertheless, the question of why the boycott occurred in the mid-1950s requires that we first identify the timing and degree of unrest as it developed in relation to the bus situation in Montgomery.



### ESCALATION OF HUMILIATION, 1953-1955

A common notion about the Montgomery bus boycott is that the system and the level of humiliation it inflicted on blacks were rather longstanding and constant<sup>12</sup> and that a gradual process of unrest began after World War II and culminated in the arrest of Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955. The familiar metaphor to describe this long process of unrest is that black Montgomeries' "cup of tolerance" had eventually run out and spilled over to challenge a segregation system that had abused them for decades (e.g., King [1958] 1965: 50-51; see also papers in Garrow 1989). Under this common understanding of the boycott, black Montgomeries mounted their challenge to the bus segregation system due to factors internal to the black community (e.g., newly perceived opportunities, new leadership, stronger organization, resources from outside Montgomery, and rising expectations for progress after WWII). Yet, new findings and new analysis of the data suggest that unrest was not stable, that patience was not slowly eroding over many years, and that anger developed in response to changes in the segregation system and worsening social interactions on the buses. In fact, a marked increase in abuse and humiliation of black bus riders began in earnest in late 1953 and continued into 1955. That is to say, the timing of the boycott is related to new experiences of humiliation and unrest that existed in a much narrower time scale and far closer to the emergence of the bus boycott than previously assumed. Support for this reality in Montgomery can be found in reports and observations by Jo Ann Robinson<sup>13</sup> that are corroborated by primary documents, and in quantitative analysis of the testimonies in court case *State of Alabama v. Martin Luther King Jr.* (1956).

In 1952, Jo Ann Robinson became President of the Women's Political Council (WPC), an academic women's organization intent on improving the situation of blacks in Montgomery (Levinger-Limor 2001). The issue of abuses on the buses does not appear to have been at the forefront of the WPC agenda until late 1953.<sup>14</sup> One of Robinson's first initiatives was to map and document specific areas of contention in the city. In early 1954, Robinson and her WPC colleagues raised several issues with the city officials. The women asked for limited access to the segregated public parks and swimming pools; the hiring of black bus drivers in predominantly black neighborhood at night; and requested that buses would stop at each block, as they do in white neighborhoods. Police Commissioner Dave Birmingham, who was elected in January 1954 with the help of black Montgomeries' votes, was sympathetic to their appeals and allowed black representatives on the parks' boards.<sup>15</sup> The city officials instructed the bus company to add stops in black neighborhoods, but ignored the other requests.

The first documentation of WPC's formal complaint to the city officials and to the bus company over abuse of passengers on the buses is a letter dated February 22, 1954. This letter, which is cited and analyzed here for the first time, was sent in the context of an increase in bus fares, but in it the main objection is not to the increase of fees, but rather to the bad treatment of black passengers.<sup>16</sup> It was only at this point, in early 1954, that the WPC began presenting evidence of the humiliation suffered by black customers at the hands of bus drivers. In addition, a number of social phenomena appeared or amplified during 1954. "The number of Negro men walking increased during 1954 and early 1955. They walked to and from work, to town, to movies, to see their girlfriends, because of fear of riding the buses" (Robinson 1987: 37). Furthermore, black passengers started becoming visibly angered by the bus seating arrangement and the ten reserved seats for whites in particular. Robinson (1987: 35) captures this vividly:

The practice of reserved seats had become an ultimate humiliation. The ten empty seats became an obsession to weary workers, whose tired feet and aching backs urged them to sit down. The number *ten* became a damnable number. . . . [It] signified bad luck. Nobody wanted that number on anything that belonged to him. It loomed large, formidable. It was actually a mental, a psychological omen: Threatening! Deadly!

Robinson's account indicates a transformation (i.e., "had become" rather than "always have been") in the perception of the practice of reserved seats and the emotional responses triggered by it. She notes the emergence of a new mindset related to the buses and the social interactions on them. This specific state of mind was previously undetected, as it appears from her reports. Robinson reports another escalation in the level of agitation "during the 1954-1955 period, when complaints multiplied," and she adds that it was then "that the WPC prepared to stage a bus boycott" (1987: 25-26).

The WPC's documentation of the bus situation also found that "pent-up emotions resulting from bitter experiences on local transportation lines often were released upon husbands, wives, or children, resulting in injuries that necessitated hospital care" (Robinson 1987: 36). Robinson notes that these incidents of domestic violence, as well as adult and child delinquency, had been on the rise but she does not indicate a date for the escalation point of these social problems.<sup>17</sup> She asserts that the growing difficulty on the buses had allowed for these problems to become an unconscious way to release the humiliation and nerve-racking experiences that blacks suffered on the buses. Interestingly, after the bus boycott began, domestic violence incidents reported to the local hospitals decreased substantially. As Robinson recalls, "the superintendent of a local hospital, which customarily treated many weekend fight victims, told a reporter that since the boycott began, the hospital had fewer such patients" (Robinson 1987: 37).

Robinson's account is corroborated by two more sources. The first is an interview with C.T. Fitzpatrick, a native of Montgomery, a white businessman, and a member of the Men of Montgomery, a group of concerned white men who tried to find a solution to the boycott. Fitzpatrick reported that "[a] Negro nurse said that she has been able to go to church on Sunday for the past five or seven weeks, though she used to hardly ever go. A hospital attendant said that the number of knife cases they received over the weekend has decreased a great deal since the boycott."<sup>18</sup> The second source is King who also noted that since the boycott "[t]here has been a decline in heavy drinking. Statistics on crime and divorce indicate that both are on the wane" ([1958] 1965: 164).

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the court case *State of Alabama v. Martin Luther King Jr.* also demonstrates the rising agitation over the bus situation since late 1953. The defense summoned 33 black witnesses who used to ride the buses. They were asked about unpleasant experiences on the buses and then to indicate the year in which they occurred. The answers provided 51 indications of years in which the witnesses experienced abuse, thirty of which (58 percent) are for the years 1953-1955 and the remaining 21 indications are for the years 1937-1952 (see figure 2).<sup>19</sup> The testimony of James H. Bagley, the manager of the bus company Montgomery City Lines, also corroborates the view that dynamics were changing on the buses. When Bagley was asked if he received complaints from blacks he testified, "We had some complaints about seating. I would say the last two years it has been nearly all [about] seating."<sup>20</sup>

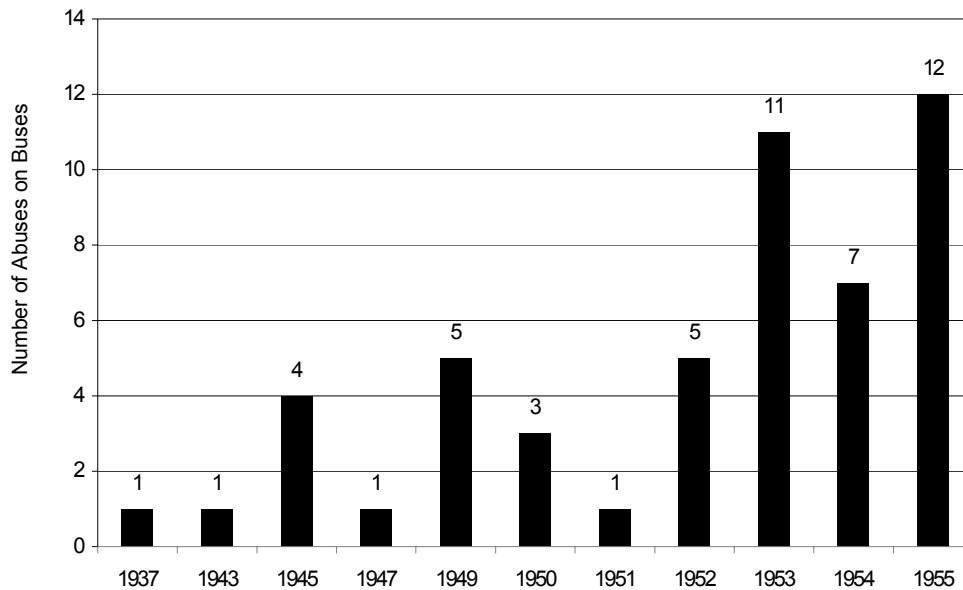
The examination of the period that precedes the boycott suggests that grievances about the bus situation in Montgomery were multiplying since late 1953. Abuse of black passengers was not new but abuse and a sense of humiliation were apparently amplified from late 1953 leading up to the boycott. To put it in the words of Beatrice Charles, a former black bus rider, "This stuff [abuse on buses] has been going on for a long time. To tell you the truth, it's been happening every since I came here before the war [World War II]. But here *in the last few years they've been getting worse and worse.*"<sup>21</sup>

The escalation of humiliation from late 1953 to 1955 created a climate conducive for mass mobilization against the bus segregation system. For example, on March 2, 1955, nine months before Rosa Parks<sup>22</sup> was arrested, a 15-year-old schoolgirl named Claudette Colvin was also arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat.<sup>23</sup> Given the new climate that existed in Montgomery at this period, Colvin's arrest caused widespread anger and nearly launched a bus boycott. Robinson writes that following Colvin's arrest and especially following her con-

viction “large numbers refused to use the buses, but as they cooled off somewhat, they gradually drifted back” (1987: 42). Black Montgomerians were therefore ready to participate in such boycott by the time of Colvin’s arrest.

The examination of the antecedents of the boycott highlights an increase in grievances in Montgomery before December 1955. These findings invite explanations by available theories of social movement. The paradigmatic explanations of the U.S. civil rights movement emergence, and the Montgomery bus boycott in particular, have been those relating to new “political opportunity structures” that were identified by black political entrepreneurs and then leveraged against the Jim Crow system (e.g., in national politics, McAdam 1982, 2009; Abernathy 1989b; Tarrow 1994; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Jenkins, Jacobs, and Agnone 2003; or in local politics, Thornton 1989, 2002; for a more complex evaluation of the interplay of international, national, and local politics as political opportunities see Skrentny 1998).

**Figure 2.** Number of Abuses on Buses by Year Testified in King’s Trial



In the case of the Montgomery bus boycott, however, the motivation for the boycott in the minds of black bus passengers was engendered by real-life personal experiences and not due to a response to abstract and far-removed notions of political opportunities, which were stable compared to the rapidly worsening realities in Montgomery, principally on the buses. I found no new political opportunities that could account for the growing unrest in Montgomery or explain why the boycott began in 1955. Nor did I find evidence that the boycott against the bus system started because black leaders, let alone the bus riders, identified or responded to new political opportunities or tried to mobilize people around such opportunities. There is also little indication that existing organizations were seeking out disgruntled instrumentalist participants and inviting them to protest for collective goods in a “supply and demand” manner (Klandermans 2003: 676-89). In fact, a few courageous leaders who attempted to mobilize black Montgomerians to political campaigns were met with apathy and hostility before 1953, as was discussed above. The major change occurred due to local circumstances from late 1953. Only after Parks’ arrest, this grassroots anger and emotional energies enabled the active leaders (especially Robinson and Nixon) to harness the grassroots anger and emotional energies over experiences of humiliation and call for a rather spontaneous one-day boycott by flyers

and word-of-mouth. Following this surprising success, the boycott was extended and in a well-structured and organized manner (on spontaneity in the early stage of mobilization in the 1960s sit-ins, see especially Killian 1984; and also Polletta 1998; and in Montgomery, King [1958] 1965: 41).

McAdam's (1983: 43) political process approach also identifies the "resources of the minority community that enable insurgent groups to exploit these opportunities." In this category of "mobilizing structures" and "social networks" scholars have later included a range of factors such as the number of organization members, solidarity incentives, leaders, and communication networks, such as churches, friends and families (McAdam 1982: Morris 1984; Opp and Gern 1993; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996: 3-4; Andrews and Biggs 2006: 43-47; compare to Biggs 2006, and Goodwin and Japer 1998: 29, 36, 43-45). Yet, networks of friends, workers, and churches were relatively constant until Rosa Parks' arrest. They cannot explain the rise of discontent and grievances in Montgomery, as reported above. Furthermore, although there were important changes in leadership (e.g., King), and in organization (the MIA), and in the harnessing of some church ministers the "social gospel," these changes occurred only *as a result* of the first-day success of the boycott on December 5, 1955. The majority of black church leadership was not yet ready to protest and refrained from attempting to mobilize for a boycott until December 5, and some continued discouraging it even after the boycott began (see Abernathy 1989a: 114-15; King [1958] 1965: 19; King [1963] 2000: 27, 31). As such, these structural factors are *outcomes* that cannot account for the origins of the boycott. This is not to say that these factors were not significant in the second stage of the boycott—a phase that required organizing and coordinating collective action (e.g., a car-pooling system), strengthening emotional energies among the participants (e.g., leaders' "pep-talks"), and defining political goals and strategies against the city officials (Shultziner 2010: 93-104. These factors were significant, but they lack explanatory power and provide little insight regarding the social-psychological background that allowed the boycott to begin in the first place.

Finally, the political process approach also stresses "cognitive liberation" as a prerequisite shift in consciousness, i.e., when a significant segment of the population come to define their situation as unjust and come to perceive themselves as capable of bringing about political change through collective action. "Shifting political conditions" are assumed to "supply the necessary 'cognitive cues' capable of triggering the process of cognitive liberation" (McAdam 1982: 51; see also page 230). Accordingly, it has been assumed that "conditioning the presence or absence of these perceptions is that complex of social psychological dynamics—collective attribution, social construction—that Snow and various of his colleagues . . . have referred to as framing processes" (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 5; see also Gamson 1992, 1998; Snow and Benford 1992). McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996: 6, original emphasis) further defined framing as "the conscious, strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action."

However, the growing grievances in Montgomery were directly related to a worsening situation on the buses, which is not what political process theorists meant by "shifting political conditions." Similarly, there were no "cognitive cues" prior to December 5, 1955 that signaled or persuaded hardworking black passengers that the time for liberation is imminent or that the system can be successfully challenged and changed through collective action. These perceptions were realized only after a rather spontaneous one-day boycott in response to Parks' arrest. In terms of framing, there was little need for new cultural frames to ignite the boycott. Instead, there were shared experiences regarding the abuse on the buses that did not require new cultural or master frames. Moreover, similar to mobilizing structures, the new "cultural frames" (e.g., King's social gospel) that did come into play were employed in Montgomery *after the boycott had begun*; they were not the causes for the growing unrest in Montgomery up to Parks' arrest.

In sum, the data provides evidence of concrete changes in the levels of abuse, anger, patience, and unrest from late 1953 to 1955. This section thus challenges the prevalent idea that types and levels of grievances in Montgomery were less significant factors in explaining why and how the boycott movement evolved compared to explanations based on political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing. In fact, I found no changes in these three factors before the boycott had begun in December 1955. In order to understand why agitation over the bus situation began to escalate from late 1953, we need to examine the causes of the worsening social interactions and sense of humiliation on the buses during this period.

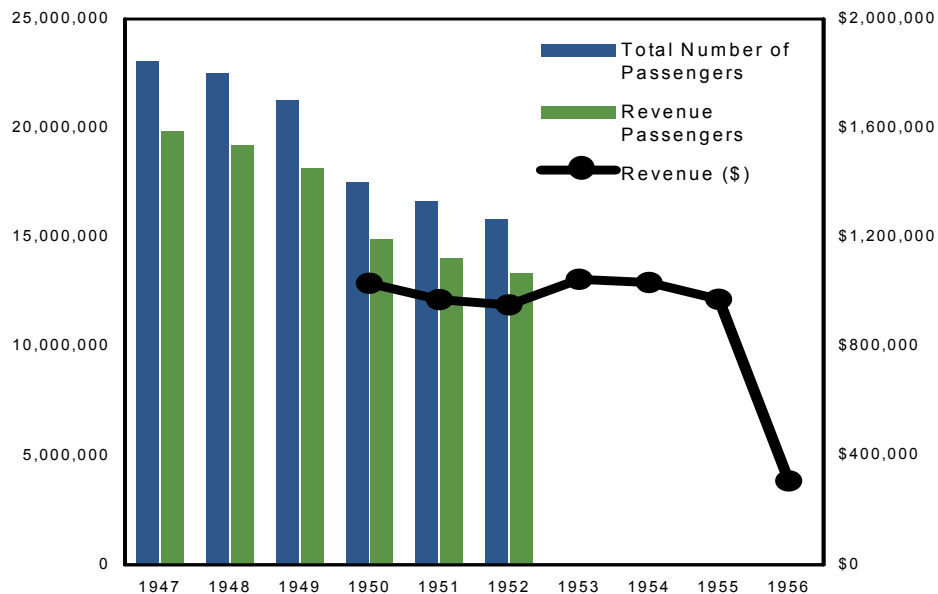
### THE CAUSES OF THE WORSENING SITUATION

The grassroots' unrest that enabled and precipitated the boycott was related to three main dimensions of the daily situation on the buses. These three factors are the inability of the Montgomery bus segregation system to cope with the changing ratio of black and white passengers; bus drivers' growing frustrations over labor conditions in the mid-1950s; and the drivers' reactions to the 1954 Supreme Court ruling banning segregation in public schools. These factors will be discussed in turn.

#### *Montgomery's Bus Segregation System and the Decline of White Passengers*

The situation on Montgomery's public buses changed considerably in the years 1946-1955. In 1946-1947 the bus company was at its peak in terms of the number of passengers. In those years, public buses were still a main means of transportation for both whites and blacks and the bus company's revenues were high. The buses were often fully loaded and overcrowded in rush hours, so much so that buses were added to two bus lines on July 1946 (*Montgomery Advertiser*, July 20, 1946). In that same month, a group of white men (railroad employees) even pressured the city commission to force the bus company to put curtains inside the buses in order to completely segregate whites from blacks, and to prevent them from coming into close contact during rush hours.<sup>24</sup> Since late 1947, however, the Montgomery City Lines Inc. bus company was losing passengers, most of whom were white bus riders who bought private cars. Statistics on the annual number of bus passengers reveals that the company experienced a drop of over seven million (7,242,855) annual passengers, of those close to six-and-a-half million (6,475,372) were fee-paying passengers (i.e., annual revenue passengers in figure 3) in 1952 compared to its climax in 1947 (see figure 3).<sup>25</sup>

In order to enable the bus company to remain profitable the city officials allowed it to increase bus fares more than once between 1952 and 1954. In 1948 the fare was still five cents flat rate, while in 1952 the cash-rate fare rose to ten cents and the economy tokens were now sold at twenty cents per three tokens (*Alabama Journal*, October 7, 1952; *Montgomery Advertiser*, November 26, 1952).<sup>26</sup> Some bus lines were rerouted or eliminated and additional increases in bus fares occurred in 1952-1954, not without formal protest on the side of some black leaders (*Alabama Journal*, February 13, 1954; *Alabama Journal*, February 17, 1954; *Montgomery Advertiser*, March 17, 1954; *Alabama Journal*, March 17, 1954).<sup>27</sup> The fare hike at the end of 1952 augmented the bus company's revenues to just over one million dollars in 1953, and further fare increases slowed down the continued decline in revenue from 1954 until December 1955. That the bus company's revenues continued to drop after 1953 despite rising fares suggests that the bus company was still losing passengers in 1953 and beyond. This reflects the nationwide trend of decreasing use of bus transportation and increasing use of private cars in the United States at the time.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 3.** Passengers and Revenues of the Montgomery City Lines Inc., 1947-1956

The decline of passengers had special effects in Montgomery due to its unique system of bus segregation. The decline of passengers was mainly of white customers. In order to keep the white-only seats occupied, the percentage of white passengers should have been kept at a minimum of 28 percent (ten seats out of 36) on all bus routes (see also figure 1 above). By 1953 or 1954, however, the actual percentage of white passengers on the buses dropped far below 28 on most lines, and on some lines they constituted a tiny minority or were completely absent. Black passengers thus had become the predominant users in most of the city lines, and on many of them they constituted over 90 percent.<sup>29</sup> The ten reserved seats for whites in the front of the bus, therefore, took up a percentage of seats that had become far detached from white passengers' actual occupancy of the buses, except for rush hours on certain routes. In other words, there were simply not enough white passengers to fill their designated reserved seats. In this new reality, the white-only seats had become conspicuously and humiliatingly empty during most hours of the day. It is in this context that we should understand Jo Ann Robinson (1987: 35, emphasis added) noting that "[t]he practice of reserved seats *had become* an ultimate humiliation." On February 22, 1954, Robinson and seven other notable black leaders sent a complaint to the mayor and city commissioners about poor bus services and the empty seats reserved for whites.<sup>30</sup> This point is also corroborated in letter by Rev. Uriah J. Fields, which was published in a Montgomery daily on April 1954: "The Negro citizens of Montgomery are fed up with having to stand up on buses when there are empty seats in the front. Especially buses going to and from areas which are predominantly inhabited by Negroes" (*Montgomery Advertiser*, April 6, 1954). In addition, Robert S. Graetz (1991: 41), a white pastor who came to Montgomery in 1955, notes, "There were never enough white people on board to fill the bus, but no Negro was ever allowed to sit in those front seats, even if there was not a single white passenger on board."

Despite the declining number of white passengers and the growing visibility of the empty seats, the policies of segregation on buses remained unchanged. A few lenient bus drivers allowed black passengers to sit in the front section when the bus entered predominantly black neighborhoods, but generally the harsh policy continued to be strictly enforced. When black passengers attempted to sit in the front section, bus drivers often behaved in a cruel manner, adding insult to injury. Robinson's (1987: 36) account captures those moments on the buses and their psychological repercussions:

Black riders would often forget pride and feeling, forget the terrible offensive names they were so often called when they dared to sit in one of the ten reserved seats. Hurting feet, tired bodies, empty stomachs often tempted them to sit down. Names like “black nigger,” black bitches,” “heifers,” “whores,” and so on, brought them to their feet again.... Whatever the case was, they would be badly shaken, nervous, tired, fearful, and angry.

The visibility of the empty reserved seats and the harsh reactions of the bus drivers against weary black passengers who attempted to sit in these empty seats constituted a new crucial reality of riding buses in Montgomery. Clearly, this change in the ratio of black and white passengers in the context of the special bus segregation system that existed in Montgomery is not what political process theorists normally mean by “political opportunity structure” or “shifting political conditions” (see above). It would be difficult to term those changes on the buses as such without reaching tautological and analytically unhelpful definitions of those concepts (see also Goodwin and Jasper 1999).

#### *The Role of the Bus Drivers*

Bus drivers played a central functional role as the enforcers of segregation. As the foregoing discussion suggests, their behavior contributed significantly to the growing sense of humiliation and agitation among black Montgomarians. Despite overwhelming grievances over abuses on the buses, there is no research to date about the bus drivers of the Montgomery City Lines Inc.<sup>31</sup> The role of the bus drivers has not been discussed or analyzed; it is simply assumed to have been a constant, overlooked by research that has focused instead on the dynamics of the boycott, organizational and political factors, and specifically on the actions of the black community. As I argue in this section, however, increasing unrest among black Montgomarians resulted from worsening attitudes and behavior of bus drivers whose frustrations were growing due to issues related to their working conditions.

In 1955 the bus company employed 94 bus drivers, all of whom were blue-collar, low-income white men. In 1953 they were making \$1.40 an hour and working eight and a half hours a day, six days a week, without any paid vacations. At that period, living costs were increasing and labor-related disputes in the South were intensifying.<sup>32</sup> These new problems affected Montgomery’s bus drivers as much as, or perhaps more than, the rest of the white population. The Montgomery City Lines Inc. bus drivers were organized in an affiliate (local 765) of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America. In October 1950 the bus drivers had their first major dispute over salary increases.<sup>33</sup> In December 1952 the bus drivers also threatened to strike, seeking improved salaries (*Montgomery Advertiser*, December 13, 1952; *Alabama Journal*, December 13, 1952; *Montgomery Advertiser*, December 14, 1952). In 1953 they realized that their bus-driver peers in Birmingham were enjoying better benefits (such as a two-week paid vacation and six-day sick leaves) and were receiving better salaries (some 20 cents an hour more). Dissatisfied with the new contract offers they received, the drivers stopped running the buses on December 12, 1953, at the height of the Christmas shopping season. They returned to the buses four days later, after compromising on a two-phased eight-cent-an-hour salary increase (*Montgomery Advertiser*, December 12-16, 1953; *Alabama Journal*, December 12, 14-15, 1953).

Beyond their frustrations over working conditions and salaries, the bus drivers also had to deal with a more complicated job on the buses compared to their peers in other cities. The bus drivers were entrusted with police powers and were responsible for enforcing the complicated policies of segregation on the buses, an aspect of the job that put them in delicate power relations with their own passengers. One point of contention that was already mentioned is the issue of not allowing black passengers to sit down in white-only seats. Bus drivers had also to be constantly aware of the changing ratio between white and black passengers (and to reseat

the passengers accordingly) as the bus moved between the different parts of the city at different hours of the day. Thus, bus drivers would occasionally need to assert their authority as the enforcers of segregation.

As a result of this system, confrontations were not uncommon. For example, several white passengers who refused to move when they sat next to black passengers in the back section were arrested and fined.<sup>34</sup> Although black passengers were law-abiding citizens and would not risk challenging the bus drivers directly, they also did not always voluntarily move unless it was clear that they had no choice but to do so. Gladys Moore, who testified in *State of Alabama v. King* (1956), gave an example of how such social interactions would be played out: “you are toward the rear of the bus and when the driver tells you to move you look the other way.”<sup>35</sup>

The frustration and strain of bus drivers is captured in occasional complaints of white citizens against bus drivers. For example, in September 1954, a white citizen wrote to a local newspaper a short article addressed to the manager of the Montgomery bus company. He noted tension on the side of the bus drivers on two newly extended routes: “The strain is noticeable on the bus drivers, too. They are hard pressed to meet the new schedules imposed on them” (*Alabama Journal*, September 15, 1954). Another complaint from a white citizen in that same month accused bus drivers of incivility and abuse of little children on school buses (*Montgomery Advertiser*, September 5, 1954).

Compared to white customers, however, black passengers were easy targets and a population against whom the bus drivers could vent their frustrations. Drivers were keenly aware that they could get away with such behavior without being discharged or rebuked. As Ralph Abernathy (1989a: 132) recalls, “Several of the white drivers were determined to harass our people at every opportunity. . . . Clearly this kind of gratuitous cruelty was contributing to an increasing tension on Montgomery buses. We tried to reason with local authorities and with bus company officials. They were polite, listened to our complaints with serious expressions on their faces, and did nothing.”

In this way, black customers became scapegoats for bus drivers’ work-related frustrations and difficulties managing the bus segregation system on their own routes. In early 1954, for instance, following complaints that were raised by the WPC, city officials instructed the bus company to stop at each block in black neighborhoods, just as they did in white neighborhoods. Bus drivers could not simply ignore their duties and not enforce the new rules for they would risk losing their jobs. An easier way to express their frustrations was against the black passengers who thought it was futile and dangerous to complain. Indeed, following this decision, Jo Ann Robinson (1987: 32) writes that black riders “felt proud and happy that the City Fathers have acted favorably on their behalf. For a few days bus operators acted in a generally satisfactory manner toward all passengers, and everyone was pleased.” That is, the bus drivers complied with the new rules, but Robinson (1987: 32) adds, “the joy was short-lived. The mumblings started again, as stories of unhappy experiences began to circulate once more.” A possible explanation of Robinson’s account is that the bus drivers resented the new roles that required them to make additional stops and increase levels of service for black customers, and subsequently retaliated against black passengers.

Finally, the role of the bus drivers in creating a humiliating atmosphere on the buses and contributing to unrest among black Montgomeries is revealed in interviews with two members of the Men of Montgomery (see above). Businessman C.T. Fitzpatrick mentions that the committee investigated the charges against the bus drivers and discovered that “the company had some rough necks who were rough with everybody” and that the bus company “discharged five of the troublemakers during the session.”<sup>36</sup> James J. Bailey, a white business manager was more explicit about the role of the bus drivers in causing the boycott:

The drivers were rude to both white and Negro passengers but they were ruder to the Negroes. . . . I, personally, think that discourteous treatment brought about the demand for change in the seating arrangement. I think that was the main source of dissatisfaction and that



the desire for change in seating would never have come about if the drivers had treated Negro passengers with respect and dignity. I don't think enough Negroes were dissatisfied about the seating arrangement for that alone to cause the boycott. . . .<sup>37</sup>

In sum, a change on the part of the bus drivers' behavior toward black passengers appears to have laid the psychological groundwork for the boycott. One likely reason for this deterioration in the treatment and humiliation of black passengers is the growth of labor-related frustrations and demands on the part of the bus drivers.<sup>38</sup> This factor of worsening social interactions on the side of the white bus drivers toward black passengers over labor issues is hard to conceptualize and explain by the political process paradigm.

#### *The Impact of Brown v. Board of Education*

The bus drivers' mistreatment of black passengers reached a new height following May 17, 1954, the day in which the U.S. Supreme Court handed its famous ruling in the court case *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* (henceforth *Brown*).<sup>39</sup> The ruling—that determined segregation in schools was unconstitutional—was known by segregationists as “Black Monday.” The announcement of the ruling triggered a massive backlash in the South and gave rise to the White Citizens' Councils (WCC), a group of extremist social organizations that avowed to fight integration and keep the South segregated (McMillen 1971). Members of the WCC believed that the ultimate intentions of those pushing for integration were to destroy the “Southern way of life” and push for “intermarriage” and “the mixing of the races,” shared taboos and abominations that needed no further explanation. The so-called mixing of white and black children in the same classroom was inconceivable to many white Southerners, and would indeed take years to be implemented even symbolically in Mississippi and Alabama. *Brown* was seen as an attack against whites and an attempt for a Second Reconstruction, the first reconstruction attack being the policies aimed at defeating the South in the American Civil War (see also McVeigh 1999).<sup>40</sup> These attitudes are vividly expressed in a pamphlet of the Central Alabama Citizen's Council located in Montgomery, AL:

The Citizen's Council is the South's answer to the mongrelizers. *We will not be integrated!*  
We are proud of our white blood and our heritage of sixty centuries.

This integration scheme ties right in with the new, one world, one creed, one race philosophy fostered by the ultra-idealists and international left-wingers.

If we submit to this unconstitutional, judge-made integration law, the malignant powers of atheism, communism and mongrelization will surely follow, not only in our Southland but throughout our nation.

What decision are you going to make for those baby children at home?<sup>41</sup>

These appeals were, in a general sense, tremendously successful in the South as the WCC grew to be the most significant social movement responding to *Brown* at the time. As McVeigh (1999: 1463) argues, conservative movements of this sort, “at least in their formative stages, are engaged primarily in defensive collective action” that seeks to “preserve or restore the established order” and that such movements are based on the “emergence of new grievances.” He adds that under these conditions of new grievances there are also “new incentives to engage in extra institutional political action, in particular, the politics of protest, violence, and terror” (McVeigh 1999: 1474).

Reactions to *Brown* differed from place to place. A major factor influencing responses to *Brown* in a given community was the ratio between blacks and whites. Reactions to *Brown* were mild where the black community was a small minority but “racial tensions ran highest and white intransigence was greatest where the Negro population was the most dense”

(McMillen 1971: 6). In Montgomery, the black community consisted of between 40 and 50 percent of the city's total population by the mid-1950s. The geographic and historic location of Montgomery as the Capital of the eleven states that succeeded from the United States (the Cradle of the Confederacy), and the city's highly conservative white elite, were additional factors exacerbating the reactions to *Brown* among white Montgomerians. One such reaction came in the form of strong pressures for social conformity and ideological intransigence among many white Montgomerians.<sup>42</sup> A more overt and active response was to join the WCC.

Beyond the general factors that made the *Brown* decision sensitive in Montgomery, there is also more specific evidence exemplifying the bus drivers' ideological reactions to *Brown*, and consequently their worsening treatment of black passengers. This connection could be seen by juxtaposing three sources of evidence: interviews with white Montgomerians; interviews with, and field reports on, the bus drivers; and the timing and content of Jo Ann Robinson's letter to Mayor Gayle concerning the bus situation.

In an early phase of the boycott, two prominent white Montgomerians provided Anna Holden, a student at Fisk University, with valuable information about the bus drivers and their reactions to *Brown*.<sup>43</sup> Former Police Commissioner Dave Birmingham explained privately that the *Brown* Supreme Court ruling "agitated the separation issue and generated a lot of misunderstanding between the races. There is more unrest over segregation than there used to be." He also added that "some of those fellows [bus drivers] are mean as hell and they didn't ask them [black passengers] to get up or to go back in a nice way. I would say that five or six of them are as mean as rattlesnakes and they did all kinds of things that made the niggas mad..."<sup>44</sup> Dave Norris, president of a local workers' union council, revealed that many of the bus drivers were affiliated with the White Citizens' Council. He noted, "I am sure that a good proportion of them belong. Men in the lowest income level seem to be the ones who are joining . . . the type of men who do nothing but drink and talk about the 'niggers' for recreation."<sup>45</sup> Both Birmingham and Norris held the bus drivers accountable for the boycott, either directly or indirectly. In their view, the bus drivers abused black passengers to the point of pushing the black community to a mass-scale confrontation.

Holden also made important field observations about, and conducted interviews with, bus drivers early in the boycott. For example, she interviewed two bus drivers on January 21, 1956. She spotted one of those drivers at a WCC meeting in Montgomery. She asked the other driver what he thought started the boycott and he replied, "this NAACP [which stood behind the *Brown* lawsuit] is what started it."<sup>46</sup> Another bus driver told Holden, "They already had all the buses and they weren't satisfied with that. They want to get in the schools and everything else. This is just the first step."<sup>47</sup> Holden also interviewed William C. Welch, the president of the bus drivers' local union. He used the word "nigra" and "nigger" to refer to blacks, instead of "Negro," the common name that was used at the time. Holden reports that she had also seen him with another bus driver at a WCC rally.<sup>48</sup> These reports strongly indicate an ideological orientation and affiliation of the bus drivers with the WCC. This suggests that when the *Brown* decision made dramatic headlines in Montgomery and stirred fears in the white community (Thornton 1989: 343), the bus drivers worsened their treatment of black passengers and tried to "put the Negroes back in their place," which was a phrase commonly used after *Brown*.

Finally, the connection between the *Brown* decision and the surge of abuse of black passengers on the buses is also apparent from the timing and content of a letter that Jo Ann Robinson sent to Mayor Gayle on May 21, 1954. In this letter Robinson protests the situation on the buses and reminds the city officials of earlier requests of the WPC, among which was the request for a "city law that would make it possible for Negroes to sit from back toward front, and whites from front toward back until all the seats are taken" and the request that blacks would not be asked to pay in the front and enter from the rear of the bus. Robinson also wrote that "[m]ore and more of our people are already arranging with neighbors and friends to ride to keep from being insulted and humiliated by bus drivers. There has been talk from

twenty-five or more local organizations of planning a city-wide boycott of busses.”<sup>49</sup> The significance of this letter has been previously noted in terms of the importance of the WPC planning and organizing for the boycott (Garrow 1985; on the WPC see also Levinger-Limor 2001). What has not been noticed is the fact that this letter, which threatens a boycott over the bus situation, was sent merely four days after *Brown*. Rather than raising the issue of school segregation, which was then at the top news headlines, Robinson raises the issue of an aggravation of abuse on the buses. Moreover, she asks for very modest reforms, namely, a modified segregation system in which blacks are not required to relinquish their seats, similar to the segregation system in Mobile, and for blacks to be allowed to enter the bus from the front. That a letter of such nature was sent almost immediately after *Brown* does not seem to be incidental. Without considering the causal connection to the growing abuse on the buses as a result of *Brown*, this letter is highly puzzling.

These complementary sources strongly suggest that *Brown* aggravated the treatment of black passengers and was therefore another event that fueled the unrest among blacks that led to the boycott. A focus on the ideological affiliation of the bus drivers with the WCC helps to explain the ways in which fear and anger unleashed against blacks following *Brown* contributed to the deterioration of service to black passengers on the buses in Montgomery.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the Montgomery bus boycott offered in this article sheds new light on issues surrounding the event that have otherwise remained unexplored or unresolved. I proposed that by exploring the ways Montgomery was unique in the experiences of blacks on the public bus transportation we can better understand why mass mobilization occurred in Montgomery and not elsewhere, why the struggle arose over the issue of bus segregation and not over other acute social, political, or material problems, and why Montgomery remained quiet in terms of protest and mobilization after 1956. This approach also provides an alternative and more complete explanation for the puzzling timing of the Montgomery bus boycott. Black passengers' patience had not been slowly eroded over decades or many years. Rather, they experienced a sharp increase of abuse and humiliation by bus drivers in a defined period of time, beginning toward late 1953. The situation on the buses worsened in terms of the visibility of empty white-only seats and the behavior of the bus drivers, and these new phenomena had a widespread emotional effect on blacks who used the bus services daily. A strong sense of humiliation ensued from these social interactions and this prepared the community to engage in what was initially an “unthinkable” one-day boycott to retaliate against the main location and source of their humiliation, the buses and the bus drivers. Without considering the role of the bus drivers in aggravating the situation in Montgomery, we are left with unanswered questions about how and why strong unrest actually emerged among black Montgomeries who were rather passive until late 1953, why they targeted the buses and not other injustices, and why they did not participate in another sizeable mobilization after the boycott.

Although it is difficult to evaluate the causal weight of each factor, the decline of white passengers which left ten reserved seats visibly empty, and the increasing abuse on the side of bus drivers from late 1953, seem to be the main causes. Each of those affected the majority of black Montgomeries who boarded the buses, and there was no escape from these experiences except for choosing to walk (or take taxis for the very few who could afford it regularly). Each factor on its own generated a sense of humiliation, frustration, and often anger. Their combination was explosive, synergetic, and hard to disentangle. The *Brown* decision certainly aggravated a highly sensitive situation but arguably the escalating abuse from late 1953 was sufficient for the boycott to begin even without the bus drivers' backlash after *Brown*. This decision was handed down in May 1954 whereas the boycott began in December 1955

(though it nearly started following Claudette Colvin's arrest in March 1955). Thus, this escalation intensified the overall sense of abuse that was felt and expressed in various ways in the black community of Montgomery before *Brown*.

Given these new empirical findings about the period leading to the bus boycott, what is then the best way to conceptualize and theorize the birth of the Montgomery bus boycott? I have offered a theoretical framework that stresses the importance of real-life contentious social interactions in generating the social-psychological background of this event. This approach echoes Goffman's (1956a: 270) call to examine "what categories of persons become embarrassed in what recurrent situations." These factors are indeed independent causes that explain the emergence of new grievances and emotional energies that gave rise to the Montgomery boycott movement. While this framework appears suitable to explain the social-psychological origins of the Montgomery bus boycott, it does not yet relate to all the important aspects, factors, and dynamics that became significant after the boycott began on December 5, 1955.

This theoretical framework calls for an analytic distinction between three separate stages in the life cycle of movements: social-psychological antecedents, momentum and resilience, and success or failure in achieving the goals of a movement (see Shultziner 2010: 170-81). It is quite implausible—and given several decades of research, most likely impossible—that one set of factors—such as political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing—would be able to account for both the causes of movement emergence, the causes that keep movements going, and the determinants of their success or failure. Factors and causes that operate in one stage may be remarkably different both in type and in scale than those that operate in another stage. In either case, as Goodwin and Jasper (1999: 51) recommended, "We should never assume a willingness, even eagerness to protest (if only the opportunities were there!) but must see how this is created."

In order to observe why, how, and when protest motivation is created, an analytic distinction must first be drawn between the social-psychological antecedents of the boycott and its outcomes. For example, the factors that caused unrest in Montgomery prior to the boycott cannot be explained by, or reduced to, structural and institutional factors pertaining to movement centers and organizations, which became more significant after the boycott began. In a broader theoretical context, this calls for a distinction between causes that are involved in giving rise to unrest—such as dramatic events and social interactions that give rise to a sense of abuse, humiliation, low self-esteem, and anger—and factors that are more closely related to keeping the momentum of a struggle, such as a sense of pride, joy, high self-esteem, high self-efficacy, and a new or more cohesive group identity (see also distinctions in Jasper 2006, 2012; Shultziner 2010: 150-156; Shultziner forthcoming).

Furthermore, organizational, institutional, and political factors play an important yet different role in different stages of a movement. For example, leaders' political decisions and compromises are critical for success or failure in achieving a movement's ultimate goals but they are often irrelevant to the emergence of new grievances and mobilization in the first stage. Strong and well-organized movement centers and networks are important for sustaining a movement in face of repression but they may not explain why contention emerged in the first place. Leaders, skills, and strategic and tactical calculations often play a crucial role once a movement is rolling but may not have any effect and explanatory power regarding a widespread sense of humiliation among citizens whose social interactions with law enforcement officers have deteriorated. Thus, it may prove more accurate to explain separately the three stages of a movement, as noted above. In the case of the Montgomery bus boycott, the movement's origins cannot be explained by structural and leadership factors that became very important in the second and third stages, namely, *only after* the first-day of the boycott (for a full discussion of these factors during the year-long boycott see Shultziner 2010: 87-108).

Final theoretical lessons would include the need to more closely examine factors commonly associated with the emergence of the U.S. civil rights movement and social movements more generally. The literature on social movements tends to emphasize national, international, economic, and state institutions, as well as other macrolevel factors that impinge upon the political process. As the Montgomery bus boycott case illustrates, however, a social movement could emerge even when macrolevel factors are relatively stable. Furthermore, assumed changes in the macro level do not necessarily translate into new cognitive and emotional orientations and unrest among the oppressed. The causal mechanisms should be demonstrated more concretely on the level of individuals' actual lives and social interactions. The important questions then become: What are the lived experiences of the people who eventually become psychologically ready or inclined to begin a struggle? Are there new social interactions, physically or symbolically, that involve abuse and humiliation? Were there dramatic events that changed the social-psychological climate? (see also Shultziner forthcoming).

As this article suggests, social interactions between those enforcing an oppressive system and the oppressed themselves are of paramount importance in deciphering the emergence or escalation of unrest prior to the emergence of a social movement. Had the bus drivers been more lenient in enforcing (or rather not enforcing) the policy of allowing black passengers to sit in the white-only seats when the buses were being abandoned by white passengers, and had the bus drivers not worsened their behavior so dramatically in such a short time with respect to black customers, the Montgomery bus boycott may have not begun and the mass mobilization phase of the U.S. civil rights movement may have waited for the younger generation that led the sit-in campaigns in 1960. In this respect, the bus boycott was a very early and highly unique protest of an unlikely generation that predated the main phase of mass mobilization during 1960-1965.

In sum, the wider implications of this research for the scholarship are to look for special local factors that trigger action. Worsening social interactions between oppressors and the oppressed may result from a wide array of local factors and even from haphazard events: they are not necessarily dictated by new state policies or predicated on any given set of macrofactors. It is therefore important to examine whether there were in fact changes in real-life social interactions and experiences and what types of social-psychological reactions they may have generated among individuals. Furthermore, in order to uncover social-psychological elements of important episodes it may prove useful to look for evidence from sources such as interviews, health records, organizational and society membership, city protocols, and local rules of behavior in a specific period yet in relation to comparable locations. An implication for social movement activists is to look for specific sources of grievance even in areas that might otherwise seem unlikely bases for promoting change.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The word "modern" distinguishes the movement of the mid-1950s and 1960s from a long legacy of struggle by established organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, since 1909), and various other forms of resistance by African Americans well before the mid-1950 (see also Harding 1983; Scott 1990; Fairclough 2004, and Rodriguez 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Most black passengers were women because many black men emigrated to find work in the industrialized North (Thornton 2002: 32).

<sup>3</sup> The "South" in this paper refers to West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Kentucky.

<sup>4</sup> The National City Lines Reports are located at the University of Chicago Library.

<sup>5</sup> Sections 10 and 11, Chapter 6, Code of the City of Montgomery 1952. Exhibit "B" in court case *Browder v. Gayle*.

<sup>6</sup> See the testimony of the bus company manager, James. H Bagley's, in *State of Alabama v. Martin Luther King Jr.*, Pp. 229-35, 523 (in the Circuit Court of Montgomery County, Alabama, 1956, No. 7399. Located at the Fred Gray Collection, King Library and Archives; and the Alabama Department of Archives and History).

<sup>7</sup> Anna Holden interview with Tom Johnson, January 20, 1956 (Holden n.d.).

- <sup>8</sup> Anna Holden interview with Mr. James J. Bailey, February 2, 1956 (Holden n.d).
- <sup>9</sup> Jo Ann Robinson letter to Mayor Gayle, May 21, 1954 (copy of letter printed in Robinson 1987: iix).
- <sup>10</sup> See the testimonies of the defense witnesses in the court case *State of Alabama v. Martin Luther King Jr.* (1956: 337-469)
- <sup>11</sup> There are a few reports indicating grievances over segregated transportation elsewhere. Furthermore, a court case was filed against the illegality of bus segregation and park segregation laws in Columbia, South Carolina in 1954.
- <sup>12</sup> The idea that abuses on the buses were relatively constant and that black Montgerians gradually got tired of it has been popularized in volume one of the highly successful documentary series *Eyes on the Prize* (PBS Video 2006; see also Williams 2002: 60; and more generally McAdam 1982: 14, 21, 23).
- <sup>13</sup> Jo Ann Robinson's (1987) memoir is one of the best participant accounts of the boycott, but it is not always accurate with regards to dates, which is understandable given that the memoir was written and published almost 30 years after the boycott. The memoir must be read carefully in terms of timelines and needs to be corroborated with other resources.
- <sup>14</sup> S.S. Seay (1990: 147-48), however, reports meeting with a bus company manager to complain about bus drivers' behavior in 1949-1950. Seay notes that nothing came out of the meeting and the issue was not raised until two years later.
- <sup>15</sup> Anna Holden interview with Dave Birmingham, January 31 and February 1, 1956 (Holden n.d.).
- <sup>16</sup> Letter objecting to the increase in bus fares and the bus situation, signed by Jo Ann Robinson, E.D. Nixon, J.T. Brooks, A.W. West Jr., Frizette Lee, Rufus Lewis, J.E. Pierce, and Rev. Hubbard, sent to Mayor Gayle and City Commissioners, February 22, 1954, *Minutes of the City of Montgomery*, Volume dated October 1, 1951 through September 30, 1955, p. 1128 (located at the Montgomery City Clerk Office). Edgar N. French, a minister in Montgomery and central activist in the boycott, recounted that "[b]y 1953, there was a peculiar kind of social unrest.... It was not at all uncommon to hear a colored citizen say... 'WE are tired of *this!*'" (French 1989: 174).
- <sup>17</sup> Robinson (1987: 36-37) recalls that on particularly difficult days, grown men picked petty fights with their wives or children; women "gave their children unnecessary beatings;" and children "resentfully fought other children" and "beat their pets severely for no apparent reason."
- <sup>18</sup> Anna Holden interview with C.T. Fitzpatrick, July 22, 1956 (Holden n.d.).
- <sup>19</sup> Three of the 33 defense witnesses did not indicate years; eight mentioned two years; three mentioned three years; one mentioned 1945 and the five years preceding the boycott; eight witnesses stopped riding the buses after the years of their reported experience. In the five last testimonies, the defense lawyers changed their question from "when was your first experience" to "when was your last experience." This may tilt the results slightly toward 1955. But of those who were asked the former question the majority answered 1953. *State of Alabama v. Martin Luther King Jr.*, Pp. 337-469.
- <sup>20</sup> *State of Alabama v. Martin Luther King Jr.*, P. 354.
- <sup>21</sup> Willie M. Lee interview with Beatrice Charles, January 20, 1956 (Holden n.d., emphasis added).
- <sup>22</sup> In an interview to a Fisk University undergraduate, Willie W. Lee, who interviewed Rosa Parks about her refusal to give up her seat, Parks said, "I was tired of being humiliated" (Willie W. Lee interview with Mrs. Rosa Parks, February 5, 1956 [Holden n.d.]).
- <sup>23</sup> For more information about the Claudette Colvin's arrest see Robinson (1987: 37-39), Gray (2002: 47-49), and for Claudette Colvin's own account see Gray (2009).
- <sup>24</sup> J.H. Bagley letter to Mr. F. Norman Hill, subject "Weekly Report," July 30, 1946; both items are in *National City Lines Inc. Southern Region Collection*, box 509 (located at the Georgia State Special Collections and Archives).
- <sup>25</sup> Data for this chart was obtained from the *National City Lines Inc. Southern Region Collection* at the Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University, and from *National City Lines Inc. Reports to the Stockholders* at the University of Chicago. Archival data about the actual number of passengers is available only until 1952 and needs to be extrapolated from 1953 onwards.
- <sup>26</sup> A four-volume collection of original newspaper clippings about the Montgomery City Lines Inc. constitutes the *Daniels Collection*, which is part of the Archives and Special Collections of the Alabama State University. Clippings are also found at the Alabama Department of Archives and History.
- <sup>27</sup> On February 22, 1954, Jo Ann Robinson and seven other notable black leaders sent a complaint to the Mayor and City Commissioners about the increase of fare and noted the poor bus service and the empty seats reserved to whites, *Minutes of the City of Montgomery*, P. 1128.
- <sup>28</sup> Public Transit Equipment, Passengers, and Passenger Revenue, 1922-2000, Datapedia of the U.S., Issued by Bernan Associates, 2004, P. 317.
- <sup>29</sup> This high percentage seems to have been standard for at least 63 percent of the total company buses because out of 67 company buses 42 were immediately laid up following the boycott; see Anna Holden interview with James H. Bagley (manager of the Montgomery City Lines Inc.), January 21, 1956 (Holden n.d.).
- <sup>30</sup> They complained following the increase of bus fares, see *Minutes of the City of Montgomery*, P. 1128. See footnote number 16 for the names of the black leaders.
- <sup>31</sup> Research on the bus drivers would have been difficult (but not impossible) due to their own traumas and suspicions during and following the boycott. See for example Paul Hendrickson's (1989) account of his attempt to interview James F. Blake, the bus driver who led to Rosa Parks' arrest. Still, Anna Holden did manage to make valuable observations of, and interviews with, several bus drivers during the boycott (see below).
- <sup>32</sup> This is exemplified in serious disruptions in public transportation such as a 69-day strike of disgruntled bus drivers in Montgomery's sister bus company in Mobile, 1950; and a eight-week railroad strike in Louisville and Nashville, 1955, marked by violence. For the railroad strike see *Alabama Journal* May 11, 1955.
- <sup>33</sup> This conflict appears to have been resolved relatively quickly and there was no recourse to strike. See "Newspaper

Clippings Concerning Labor,” Folder Box 580 in *National City Lines Inc. Southeast Region Collection*.

<sup>34</sup> These white passengers were mostly white men from the Maxwell Field Army Base near Montgomery where segregation was banned, see Anna Holden interview with Dave Birmingham, January 31 and February 1, 1956 (Holden n.d.).

<sup>35</sup> *State of Alabama v. King* (1956), P. 368.

<sup>36</sup> Anna Holden interview with C.T. Fitzpatrick, March 27, 1956 (Holden n.d.).

<sup>37</sup> Anna Holden interview with James J. Bailey, February 2, 1956; see also Anna Holden interview with Mrs. Leach, Folder “Montgomery Interviews by Holden, Anna 1955-1956” (Holden n.d.).

<sup>38</sup> It is important to stress that not all bus drivers were always rough with their black customers. There are reports that some bus drivers acted kindly and fairly within the bounds of the segregation system (*Montgomery Advertiser*, September 8, 1947; see also Burns 1997: 231; Graetz 1991: 41; Robinson 1987: 34). However, there were many more humiliating acts of frustrated bus drivers whose treatment probably overshadowed these acts of human kindness.

<sup>39</sup> *Brown et al. versus Board of Education of Topeka et al.* 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

<sup>40</sup> These reactions can also be explained in terms of “siege mentality,” a collective behavior whereby individuals of a given group believe that those who are outside of the group have harmful or negative intentions toward them (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992: 49-50). One of the characteristics of siege mentality is to use all necessary means to protect against the perceived source of threat (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992: 59).

<sup>41</sup> “The Citizen’s Council,” Central Alabama Citizen’s Council, Montgomery, AL, published by the Association of Citizen’s Councils, Winona, Miss. (Headquarters). The pamphlet was collected by Anna Holden in early 1956 and can be found in *Preston and Bonita Valien Papers*.

<sup>42</sup> See interviews by Anna Holden with Rev. Thomas R. Thrasher, January 23, 1956; with the Durrs, February 2, 1956; with Dr. G. Stanley Frazer, pastor, St. James Methodist Church (and member of the Central Alabama White Citizens Council), February 3, 1956; with Mayor W.A. Gayle, February 10, 1956; with Clyde Sellers, Police Commissioner, February 10, 1956; all in Folder “Montgomery Interviews by Holden, Anna 1955-1956” (Holden n.d.).

<sup>43</sup> Anna Gladys Holden (born 1928) was a student at Fisk University and later chair of Nashville’s CORE chapter. She traveled to Montgomery with a research team in the early days of the bus boycott and recorded exceptionally violable observations and interviews. The author would greatly appreciate any help contacting her (or family), Willie M. Lee, and the other members of the research team.

<sup>44</sup> Anna Holden interview with Dave Birmingham, January 31 and February 1, 1956 (Holden n.d.)

<sup>45</sup> Anna Holden interview with Dave Norris, February 11, 1956, P. 5; see also interview with J.H. Bagley, V.D. King, and bus drivers, January 21, 1956, Pp. 3-6; interview with Mr. Day, ex-bus-driver, February 11, 1956, P. 2 (Holden n.d.).

<sup>46</sup> Anna Holden interview with J.H. Bagley, V.D. King, and bus drivers, January 21, 1956, Pp. 3-6 (Holden n.d.)

<sup>47</sup> Anna Holden interview with a bus driver, February 1, 1956; Folder “Montgomery Interviews by Holden, Anna 1955-1956” (Holden n.d.).

<sup>48</sup> Welch was interviewed while in bed and half-asleep when the interview started. Anna Holden interview with W.G. Welch, February 9, 1956, P. 1 (Holden n.d.).

<sup>49</sup> Jo Ann Robinson letter to Mayor Gayle, May 21, 1954 (copy of letter printed in Robinson 1987: iix; see also in Burns 1997: 58).

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