



Women of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Jo Ann Robinson Thought about a Boycott for Years

Jo Ann Robinson was born in 1912 in Georgia. She was at the top of her high school class and was the first in her family to graduate from college. Later, Robinson became an English professor at Alabama State University.

In 1956, she was arrested for helping to lead the Montgomery bus boycott. A police officer threw a rock at her window and acid was poured on her car.

For Robinson, the idea of a bus boycott started seven years earlier. In 1949 she boarded a bus just before Christmas. There were only two people on the bus, and she sat in the white section. The driver stopped the bus, stood over her and yelled at her to get up. Robinson left the bus in tears.

That year, she joined the Women's Political Council (WPC), a group of over 200 Black women working for equal rights. The next year, in 1950, she became its president. The WPC recorded stories of all the horrible ways Black people were treated on city buses. They wrote letters to the bus company demanding change. They asked for more polite drivers, more stops in Black neighborhoods and more seats for Black riders. They said that Black people should be allowed to pay and enter at the front of the bus. They met with the mayor and city leaders, but the segregation continued.

Robinson and the WPC grew angry as they watched more and more Black people get mistreated and arrested on buses. They talked about the idea of a boycott. When Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on December 1, 1955, the WPC decided the time was right. The next day they sprang into action, handing out 35,000 flyers announcing the boycott. For 382 days, the women of WPC organized and led the boycott. Their strength and courage helped put an end to segregation on public buses once and for all.



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