



Women of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

The Women Who Took the Bus to Court

The year 1955 was a time of struggle on the buses of Montgomery, Alabama. Most people know about the arrest of Rosa Parks that December. Fewer people know about the brave actions of these women:



CLAUDETTE COLVIN
Arrested March 2

Colvin was 15 when a bus driver demanded she give up her seat for a white woman. She refused, saying it was her constitutional right to sit. Colvin studied Black history in school and belonged to a civil rights group. She was not going to give in. Two police officers handcuffed her and dragged her off to jail.



AURELIA BROWDER
Arrested April 19

Browder was also arrested for not giving up her seat to a white person. She was strong and proud and stood her ground. She was a seamstress and owned several businesses. Browder had 21 children and still found time to finish high school and college in her 30s. She was not going to let a bus driver push her around.



MARY LOUISE SMITH
Arrested October 21

Smith was an 18-year-old maid earning \$2 a day. Her boss owed her \$11. She took the bus to her boss's house to collect the money, but no one was home. Smith was upset as she got back on the bus. That's when the driver asked her to give up her seat. She wouldn't move. She said, "I got the privilege to sit here like anybody else." The driver called the police.



SUSIE MCDONALD
Arrested October 21

McDonald was a widow in her 70s who walked with a cane and wore flowered dresses. Her neighbors called her Miss Sue. She was light-skinned with blue eyes and straight tan hair. Sometimes people thought she was white, but McDonald always corrected them. She made sure the bus driver knew she was a proud Black woman the day she refused to give up her seat for a white person.



In 1956 the courts ruled that "Segregation of black and white passengers on motor buses... violates the Constitution and laws of the United States."

These four brave women joined together as part of a Court case on February 1, 1956. The case was called *Browder v. Gayle* (W.A. Gayle was the mayor of Montgomery). They claimed that segregation on buses went against the U.S Constitution. They demanded their civil rights. For many months, the lawyers argued and the judges studied the facts. On November 13, 1956, the U.S. Supreme Court made its decision—segregation on buses was against the Constitution and had to stop. A few weeks later the 382-day Montgomery bus boycott ended. Colvin, Browder, Smith and McDonald are four of the unsung heroes of this struggle.