

Lesson Plan and Curriculum Outline for CITIZENSHIP, EDUCATION Program in the  
FREEDOM SCHOOLS

Time Span and Schedule of Lesson Plans and Sessions:

Adults - Tuesday July 30 to Thursday August 23  
Junior High - Monday July 29 to Monday August 19  
Senior High - Wednesday July 31 to Wednesday August 31

NOTE: This curriculum guide and lesson plans are made up with adults primarily in mind, however, much of the material can be used with the younger grades. The teacher has the responsibility of selecting and using which parts he chooses for his classes.  
This outline is intended as a guide and resource for those who feel that they would like some help in teaching citizenship.

Session I - Tuesday - July 30 (Adult session)

TOPIC: The Montgomery Bus Boycott: 1955

Source: "Stride Toward Freedom" by Martin L. King. (paperback book)

- AIMS:
1. To present a dramatic account of history that a Negro community in the deep south made.
  2. To bring a light the personal side of an event which made headlines around the world.
  3. To provide students with the facts and emotion of an incident of social change.
  4. To provide a situation which may later be used in helping the residents of Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End in solving the problems and challenges of their life in the community and city.
  5. To bring the struggle for Freedom being waged in the South into clearer and more meaningful focus for northern Negroes.

APPROACH: Since the Montgomery situation has a chronology, it is possible and strongly suggested that the teacher present the case in narrative and story form. It can be divided into the following parts.

- a) The Negro community in Montgomery before the boycott.
- b) How the idea of the boycott began.
- c) How the Negro community organized.
- d) What opposition came from whites and Negroes.
- e) The Boycott.
- f) What were the results?
- g) Why the boycott was important and what techniques were used.
- h) What pattern did it begin the fight against segregation.

THE STORY OF THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT: 1955

Background of Montgomery before the Boycott:

1. There were two air force bases in the Montgomery area and one in every fourteen employed civilian in Montgomery was employed there. These bases were fully integrated, but in the city itself there was a tight pattern of segregation. Montgomery was a big market for cotton, livestock, lumber, and fertilizer, but it had no industries. Therefore 63% of the Negro Women were maids and domestic workers. Since Negroes were employed only in these kinds of jobs the Negro community was quite poor and suffered economic deprivation. Only 31% of the Negro families had flush toilets and only a few had decent homes.

2. There was complete segregation between the Negro and white communities. The schools were segregated and unequal; the taxi's were segregated; public parks, libraries, swimming pools, eating places, buses, and almost every aspect of public and private life was fully segregated. There was no cultural or professional organization that was integrated, not even the Ministerial Alliance. The only group that was making any attempt at bringing the races closer together was a chapter of the Alabama Council on Human Relations, but this group really had had no effect on the larger Negro or white communities.
3. The laws and the political biases of Montgomery had worked to keep Negroes who were voting down to a minimum. In 1954 there were over 30,000 Negroes of voting age in Montgomery, but no more than 2,000 were registered. If a Negro tried to register, he was given an unfair test to complete; long complicated forms to complete, and if he passed these tests he was often threatened by the registrar for having gotten "uppidy" or "out of his place". Sometimes a group of Negroes went down to the court house to register and if there were over fifty the registrar would close his office for the day saying he was sick. Thus it is easy to see why there were no Negroes in public office in either the city or the counties of Montgomery.
4. In the Negro community the only organization which was attempting to do anything was the NAACP, but most of its time was taken up with defending Negroes in unfair court cases or paying bail money for Negroes who were arrested on false charges. They had little time to organize the community socially or politically, though they urged people to vote at every chance they got. There was also a great lack of unity among the leaders of the community who fought so hard among themselves that nothing was accomplished for the rest of the Negro community. Another factor was the indifference of those Negroes in the community who were educated. Most of them seemed to be satisfied that they were better off than the average Negro and they made no attempt to help their brothers who were miserable. There were few exceptions, but most of them turned their backs on the problems of the Negro community. Many of this group had a prominent position which they were afraid to loose if they began working for equal rights. But most of them were just apathetic and even those who had bothered to register often forgot to vote and did not help others to register and vote. The Negro ministers were apathetic on the social issues. But even those who weren't felt that their job was only to minister to the spiritual side of man and not get involved in "wordly" issues. They had forgotten that if a man is hungry and cold he can not think about anything but where to get food and shelter for himself and his family.
5. Even those people in the Negro community who were not educated did not stand up against segregation. Most of them were afraid and went along accepting it without any protest. They even accepted the abuses and indignities which went along with it. They were afraid to protest because they were afraid of what would happen to them if they did. They would loose their jobs, their homes, and maybe even their lives. Thus their minds were conditioned to the evil system of segregation, and they were so brain washed that they could not even think about living any other way. They felt inferior and acted like children in front of white people.
6. The only place that any attempt at bringing segregation out in the open was on the city buses. It was a common thing to hear white bus drivers and other white passengers on the buses call Negroes "nigger" or "coon" or "black cows" or "black apes".

BUS BOYCOTT (Cont)

5. Often Negroes were forced to get on the front of the bus to pay their fares and then to get off again and go around to the back door to get a seat. Sometimes while the Negro person was going around to the back door to get a seat, the driver would shut the doors and pull away with Negro's fare in the box. When the buses were filled with Negro passengers and only a few whites, Negroes were forced to stand rather than sit in the white sections. Negro women were made to stand up—so white men could sit down; If Negroes refused to stand or to move their seat for a white person, they were arrested.

These practices made many Negroes angry but, other than a few brave individuals, no one really did anything to stop them.

b. HOW THE BOYCOTT BEGAN:

On December 1, 1955, an attractive Negro seamstress, Mrs. Rosa Parks, boarded the Cleveland Ave. Bus in downtown Montgomery, she was returning home from her regular days work at a department store. Tired from long hours on her feet Mrs. Parks sat down in the first seat behind the section reserved for whites. Not long after she took her seat, the bus driver ordered her, along with three other Negro passengers, to move back in order to accommodate boarding white passengers. By this time every seat in the bus was taken. This meant that if a Mrs. Parks followed the drivers command she would have to stand while a white male passenger, who had just gotten on, would sit. The three other Negro passengers immediately obeyed the driver's orders. But Mrs. Parks quietly refused. The result was her arrest.

Many people in both the white and Negro communities thought that Mrs. Parks had been planted there by the NAACP, BUT she had not been. Mrs. Parks stated simply that "I can take it no longer." She was expressing feelings and longings for Freedom and dignity that had been inside her ever since she was a child and she had finally answered them. Mrs. Parks had made history for this role. She was a charming person with a radiant personality, soft spoken and calm in all occasions. Her character was impeccable and her dedication deep rooted. All these traits made her one of the most respected people in the Negro community.

When the word of Mrs. Parks' arrest got around through telephoning and talking back and forth it was agreed that the Negroes should boycott the buses. The feeling was among Negroes that "we have taken this kind of thing too long already. Only through a boycott can we make it clear to the white folks that we will not accept this type of treatment any longer!"

Dr. Martin Luther King, who had recently moved to Montgomery to pastor a church, was asked by several Negroes in the community if he agreed and he did. He and other ministers immediately, that Friday, the day after Mrs. Parks arrest, began mimeographing leaflets concerning the arrest and the proposed boycott and the mass meeting to be held that night.

That night there were more than 40 people from every segment of Negro life present. Lawyers, doctors, housewives, maids, laborers, union leaders, school-teachers, and clergymen. The meeting consisted of retelling the story of Mrs. Parks' arrest, presenting the proposed boycott and cries of "now is the time to move. This is no time to talk, it is the time to act!"

But there were many questions that the people at the meeting had and they were practical and important questions.

## BUS BOYCOTT (cont)

How long would the protest last? How would the idea be spread further throughout the community? How would the people be transported to and from their jobs? It was decided that the boycott would be called for Monday, December 5, and that on that day no Negro would ride the buses. Also a mass meeting and rally was called for that night at 7 p.m. at the Holt Street Baptist Church. In order to give people further instructions, it was also agreed that all the Negro Taxi's in the city should be asked to transport all the people on that day for the same price that they would have paid on the bus. Leaflets were drawn up and distributed throughout the Negro community calling for one day boycotting. Everyone in the community pitched in and helped in some way. An unexpected thing happened. The white papers had gotten word of the protest and in order to let the white community know about it they printed big headlines in their papers that Negroes planned a bus boycott. But this helped the leaders of the movement, for then many more of the Negro community found out about the bus boycott as well, when they read the papers.

On the morning of the boycott, Monday Dec. 5, 1955, hardly any Negroes rode the buses. People filled the streets walking to work, or to school. Negro Taxi's gave people low rates for rides. Not only were the streets filled with Negroes walking, but there was a spirit in the air that everyone felt. Heads were high and proud. People wore smiles and greeted each other. Cars of various individuals were packed full carrying people to downtown places of work. Many Negro domestics walked all the way through the center of town more than four miles, to the white neighborhood where they worked. They were tired and it was cold, but they were walking. Police trailed the empty buses trying to find reasons for arresting someone; they arrested only one person, a college student was helping an elderly lady across the street and he was charged with "intimidating passerby".

On that same day, Mrs. Parks trial was held. After the judge heard the case, he fined Mrs. Parks \$14.00 and she appealed the case. This was one of the first of many cases in which a person was convicted for disobeying the segregation law, and this was to be important later on.

That night at the mass meeting thousands of people showed up. There had been a new spark in the Negro community and people were concerned and acting for the first time. Martin Luther King was elected president of the movement which was called the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and other Negroes from all parts of the community assumed various roles. People were cooperating for the first time. There was a central cause and everyone was trying to contribute what he felt he could to the movement. For the first time people from all economic backgrounds were joining together despite the difference in status and educational levels. Lawyers exchanged telephone numbers with men who were day laborers and the wives of ministers shared their homes and their ideas with women who worked as maids for white people.

The decision that everyone in the community made was to continue the boycott until the demands of the Negro community were met. The demands were drawn up into a resolution which had to be met by the city before Negroes would ride the buses of Montgomery again.

1. Courteous treatment by the bus drivers was to be guaranteed
2. Passenger were to be seated on a first-come, first-served basis.
3. Negro bus drivers were to be employed on predominantly Negro routes.

This resolution was passed unanimously. The people expressed their determination not to ride until conditions were changed.

Committees were set up in the community to handle the details of the boycott. A car pool association was set up. People had to be stationed at various parts of the city to take people to and from their jobs.

But despite the car pools many people were so captured by the spirit of the movement that they insisted on walking. The act of walking had taken on a symbolic importance. Once a car pool driver stopped beside an elderly lady who was trudging along with obvious difficulty. "Jump in Grandmother," he said, "You don't need to walk." She waved him on saying "I'm not walking for myself, I'M walking for my children and my grandchildren!" and she continued along on foot toward her home.

One interesting thing happened. Many white housewives, though by no means in agreement with the boycott, would not be without their Negro maids and they everyday picked up their servants in the morning and returned them to their homes at night. Thus helping out the transportation problem.

Once the boycott was in full swing, sympathetic people, both Negro and white, from all over the nation and the world began sending contributions and letters of congratulations to the MIA. An office was set up and people became full time employees of the movement.

Other problems arose when there was opposition from some members of the white community. There was bombings of Martin L. King's home and other Negroes were threatened. Policemen gave Negro car pool drivers speeding tickets for no reason at all and often the drivers were harrassed by white youths as they drove through the city. In order to prevent violence and to give the Negroes guidance in the trying days, Martin King and others told the people about Ghandi and his non-violent campaigns for Indian Freedom which did not mean that they sit back and do nothing but rather that they engage in all activities possible to destroy segregation except fighting physically or trying to convince the enemy in any other way than morally and economically persuading them to change. Intensive drives of voter registration were carried on and many many Negroes for the first time saw the importance of their voting to change the power structure in the city.

Non-violence was a hard thing for many Negroes to accept but after many speeches by the leaders and admonitions that violence would only hurt the cause and not help it, most of the Negro community was willing to try it out. Many became convinced of this technique, others adopted it as a religious philosophy.

As the boycott progressed into its later stages the white community organized itself against the boycott. They indicted the leaders; got the car pool enjoined (or temporarily halted) by the courts. However, the MIA had taken its case to court too and they were using every legal and moral pressure to make the white community understand that they would not turn back short of victory. There were too many months of snow and cold and hardship that the people had to go through, but the boycott continued and no Negroes rode the buses. Many of the bus lines had to close down routes for lack of riders and lack of finances. Still the people walked and walked, knowing that they were on the path of the right way.

In November of 1956, a year later, a year of hardship, sacrifice, conviction, dedication and determination, the news of the Supreme Courts ruling on Montgomery Bus Boycott came down. It was Tuesday, November 13th 1956. The ruling stated that "The United States Supreme Court today affirmed a decision of a special three-judge U.S. District Court in declaring Alabama's state and local laws requiring segregation on buses UNCONSTITUTIONAL."

When the protest was officially called off by the leaders, the community participated in workshops to prepare them to ride the buses when they were integrated. They role-played various situations, sometimes acting as hostile whites, other times as potentially violent and bitter Negroes. A list of suggestions was drawn urging people to be courteous and polite and not to act superior. The leaders stressed that this was not only a victory for the Negroes, but for the whole Montgomery community as well as for the South in general.

Even when the Ku Klux Klan rode through the Negro neighborhood one night threatening to burn houses and shoot people, all the Negroes turned on their porch lights and sat on their steps or on their lawns and walked about the streets instead of hiding. The Klan came riding in and Negroes paid little attention. Some even waved. Others just smiled and shook their heads. The Klan soon left, highly disappointed. The people knew they had won and did not have to prove it.

**RESULTS:** The buses of Montgomery were integrated. Many whites refused to ride the buses, but those who did grudgingly obeyed the new ruling. There were surprisingly few incidents or trouble. The bus companies even trained their drivers in courtesy and demanded that they abide by the law.

However, there were no profound changes in the laws and attitudes of the white community immediately after the boycott. Instead, things on the surface were better and ground was laid for future progress in race relations. The victory of the boycott was twofold. One: it had shown that mass action could effect social change when people stuck together and worked together. Second: the buses were integrated and this action paved the way for the integration of other public facilities in the city.

Montgomery taught a lesson to the world. Massive non-violent action did succeed and did bring about change. It showed that in America the Negro people are no longer willing to sit back and endure indignities and inequalities. It stirred other cities in the nation and created the basis for other southern communities to abolish aspects of segregation. Churches in the white community began to speak out against segregation, and other prominent business and professional people in the white community. The boycott showed how effective economic pressure could be to change unjust laws. And even individual citizens in both communities recognized the strength of each other and have opened up new channels of communication and action. There is still a long way to go. This is 1963, and 9 years after Montgomery, segregation still exists. But it was an important part in the Negro Freedom Movement.

**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:** It is suggested that the teacher read through this material several times, getting the picture and the tone. Then he might like to make an outline for himself, to use when he presents it to the class. It is hoped that the teacher will not read this to the class, but instead give them a picture of what happened, including quotes from Mrs. Parks and others for motivational purposes.

Some suggestions for questions and important points to be stressed:

1. What was the significance of knowing about the Negro community before the boycott? What changes did we see take place? Why?
2. Discuss why Mrs. Rosa Parks' action upset the people in the community more than the things which had happened to others.
3. Why were so many Negroes willing to be non-violent for the first time? Were they caught up in the spirit of protest? Did the leaders lead well by explaining the importance of non-violence?

4. Why was it important that Negroes in Montgomery register and vote? Was it because they wished to show the white community that they were not going to stop protesting when the boycott was over? Did they want to present themselves as a political threat as well as a moral threat?
5. What lessons in strategy and planning do we learn from the Montgomery story? Can we use similar tactics here in our community? If so, which ones? Which other ones too?
6. What did Montgomery do for Negroes all over? Did it give them pride and courage? Did it help them to see the value in uniting? Did it help them want to work in their own communities?