

## **In what ways did the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1956, advance the cause of the civil rights movement?**

The Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1956 highlighted and accentuated a litany of discriminatory and antiquated Jim Crow laws that blacks were subjected to throughout the United States. The buoyancy of victory in WW2 and the prevailing liberalism that swept the country helped mobilise the black population in the South like never before. It was a watershed moment for an enthusiastic generation of civil rights activists, who believed in the value of non-violent protest and the success it could achieve.

**Perhaps the most obvious and immediate way in which the Bus Boycott advanced the cause of the Civil Rights Movement was through her accomplished aims.** The segregation of city buses in Montgomery had become a symbol of racial oppression and this grew into and further facilitated tension among blacks and whites. On a most basic and primary level the Boycott brought in what it intended. This was seen in the Supreme Court verdict of November 1956 which outlawed the segregation of buses as unconstitutional. In this simple and straightforward way, the Civil Rights Movement was advanced, one may even say began, through the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1956. This would set the tone of future protests and established boycotts as an appropriate and necessary method for change and for the advancement of the cause of the civil rights movement.

**Perhaps more important than the Boycott's physical legal consequences, was the example it set and the spirit it enshrined and promoted.** For the first time, non-violent, peaceful protestation was seen as an effective method to affect constitutional changes on a nationwide level. The Boycott highlighted the efficacy of a non-violent protest as well as creating a sense of fervour and an egalitarian mindset that prevailed throughout the following years. Black advocacy groups like the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) gained traction from the Bus Boycott, and as the issue of civil rights was becoming a national topic, it advanced the cause of the moment through the spotlight it afforded the plight of the black man.

Rather suddenly, the Boycott encouraged a huge range of other protests across the nation. All which, like their predecessor, had the solemn intention of advancing the cause of the Civil Rights Movement. An example of the sort of follow-on activity that the Boycott produced as seen in 1961. In order to test that anti-segregation laws were in actuality, groups of black and white college students took interstate buses that the laws were applied. **This was a direct descendant of the Bus Boycott in 1956** and can be illustrated as yet another example that proves it advanced the causes of the Civil Rights Movement. The lunch-counter protests in 1960 were similarly effective and led to the desegregation of lunch counters across the Old South. Again, **due to the snowball effect initiated by the Montgomery Bus Boycott, all consequent attempts employing boycotts or other peaceful form of demonstration would advance the cause of the Civil Rights Movement.**

**Perhaps the greatest example of the boycott as an event which consequently advanced the cause of the Civil Rights Movement was the rise of Martin Luther King during the boycott.** King was, at the time of the boycott, a twenty-six-year-old clergyman. It was he who was chosen as the boycott leader and he was elected President of the

Montgomery Improvement Association. His passionate, emotional and rousing oratory would prove a vital tool in establishing civil rights for blacks. His conviction and belief in nonviolent protest would be perhaps the biggest factor in ensuring a smooth acquisition of equal, desegregated rights. As his own career was launched by the Bus Boycott of 1956, it is important to it as the cause for his rise to fame, helping establish and advance the Civil Rights Movement through a national movement. He would later give an historic speech at Washington in 1957, marking another crucial step in the path to Civil Rights. By founding the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957, he also established an important outlet for concerns about the Civil Rights Movement and its progression.

**The Boycott was also hugely responsible for the volume of new media coverage that swarmed around subsequent protests post- Montgomery.** This led to increased support and awareness and helped garner sympathy nationwide for the unfairly discriminated against blacks. By attracting such a strong media presence the cause of the Civil Rights Movement was also advanced considerably. The coverage of civil rights protests became popular news and also effective propaganda. Selma/ Washington marchers were attacked by State Troopers and this was broadcast across millions of homes. Images of children being attacked by Police dogs under the supervision of police chief Bull Connor influencing the masses and applied pressure on Johnson/congress to introduce effective legislation.

To conclude the Montgomery Bus Boycott, as well as the consequential protests and developments, advanced the cause of the Civil Rights Movement across America. The rise of Martin Luther King and his loyal followers proved an instrumental part of the process, legally bringing an egalitarian notion of cooperation and peaceful coexistence to the masses **(summary without repetition)** The Boycott also influenced government policy. It made the issue topical and the government was resolved to find a solution to the topic. The Boycott's direct effect is seen in legislation like the Civil Rights Act, 1957, 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 **(new information)**. These all came after the firestarter that was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. It extended affirmative action **(new information)** and was undoubtedly the most important catalyst that advanced the cause of the Civil Rights Movement nationwide **(answered the Q definitively)**