

Claudette Colvin

Many people know of Rosa Parks because of her part in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. In December 1955, 42-year-old Parks would not give up her seat to a white passenger to protest segregation on Montgomery, Alabama's buses. At the time, Black passengers had to sit in the back of the bus separate from white passengers. Parks's protest helped start the bus boycott. During the yearlong boycott, Black passengers did not ride the buses in Montgomery. People may not know that Parks was not the first to protest this way. Nine months before Parks, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin refused to give up her seat on the bus. Colvin was pulled off of the bus by police officers and arrested for breaking Montgomery's segregation laws.



Colvin protested before Parks, but bus boycott leaders thought Colvin was too young. They decided that Parks should represent the movement instead. However, Colvin still played a significant role in the boycott and the Civil Rights Movement. She and four other Black women took the mayor of Montgomery to court. The women won their case, and segregation on buses was made illegal. Colvin may not be as well-known as Parks, but she is an example of the power of young people to create change.



Comprehension Questions

1. How did Colvin's protest impact Montgomery and the Civil Rights Movement?
 - She refused to ride the bus and inspired others to do the same.
 - She was arrested for protesting segregation on buses and started the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
 - She followed Rosa Parks' lead and refused to give up her seat on the bus in protest of segregation.
 - She was arrested for breaking segregation laws and helped to change the laws in court.
2. Rosa Parks is a more well-known figure in the Civil Rights Movement because ...
 - Parks protested before Colvin and sued the mayor to help change segregation laws.
 - Parks protested because Colvin was arrested for challenging segregation laws.
 - Parks was chosen to represent the movement by leaders because she was older.
 - Parks was chosen to represent the movement by leaders because she protested before Colvin.
3. Leaders of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Civil Rights Movement decided that Rosa Parks would better represent the movement than 15-year-old Claudette Colvin. Do you agree or disagree with this decision? Explain. Be sure to evaluate how the boycott and Civil Rights Movement may have been impacted by being represented by Colvin.
