



Joseph Lacey

Prompt for Grades 5-8: The Montgomery Bus boycott brought Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King to national attention in 1955-56 as civil rights leaders. Write about their roles in the bus boycott, and then, how Joseph Lacey and his friends helped win that campaign to end desegregation on city busses, including your own feelings about what Joseph did. (Joseph Lacey was thirteen years old at the time and the account below is from an interview 30 years later.)

Account of Joseph Lacey (in *Freedom's Children*, Ellen Levine, 1993)

December 5, 1955-December 20, 1956: Montgomery Bus Boycott, Montgomery, Alabama.

"When the boycott started, I just couldn't wait for morning to come because I wanted to see what was happening. I walked to school. As the buses passed me and my schoolmates, we said, 'Nobody's on the bus! Nobody's on the bus!' It was just a beautiful thing. It was a day to behold to see nobody on the bus.

Everybody stuck together on the boycott. It lasted over a year, and we walked and enjoyed walking. Everybody felt like a part of the struggle because everybody had a part. Even some whites stayed off in sympathy, I'm sure. Most persons going across town would go through the area right below the school, and you could stand on the corner and holler, 'Going across?' and that's all they'd need to hear. 'Come on, get in the car,' and they'd take you across town.

A lot of persons were arrested because they were picking up people. Many were arrested for all kinds of trumped up charges, but still they picked people up.

There was a central car pickup downtown at Posey's parking lot. Also at certain corners, certain churches, certain locations, you knew a station wagon would come by and you'd get a ride.

The churches had station wagons. The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) bought them with contributions coming from the North. MIA couldn't be licensed to shuttle people. So to get around state law, most churches had a station wagon with their names, not the MIA.

I vividly remember the court decision on bus integration. I remember the celebration at the mass meetings. And I remember seeing it on the Douglas Edward news, and feeling that we had won. It was a blessing. It was just a thrilling thing.

I can remember the first time getting on a bus after the decision. I remember thinking, I didn't have to go to the back. Before the boycott, every time we'd go for church picnics, we'd rent a city bus and I'd go sit right behind the driver. You see, that was the only time I could sit behind the driver, when the buses were chartered for that purpose. After the boycott I'd sit right behind the driver. It gave me pleasure."

