

An Act of COURAGE

On March 2, 1955, Claudette Colvin was sitting on a crowded bus in Montgomery, Alabama. The 15-year-old was on her way home from hanging out with friends after school.

At the time, laws in many places kept Black people segregated, or separated, from White people. For example, Black people had to sit in the back of buses. And they had to give up their seat if a White passenger wanted it.

But on that day, Colvin was fed up with being mistreated. When the driver demanded she give up her seat, she refused. The driver called the

police, who took Colvin to jail.

Colvin, who died in January at age 86, was the first person arrested for challenging Montgomery's bus policy. Several others were arrested later, including Rosa Parks. Parks's arrest in December 1955 made headlines nationwide. And it sparked a bus **boycott** in Montgomery.

Meanwhile, Colvin and three women sued city officials over the bus policy. The case made it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, the nation's highest court. In 1956, the Court ruled



Claudette Colvin
in the early 1950s

that segregation on public buses was illegal.

A Lasting Legacy

Colvin later moved to New York City, where she spent about 30 years as a nurse's aide. Her important role in history isn't as widely known as Parks's.

Gloria Laster is Colvin's younger sister. She hopes Colvin's story inspires kids to stand up for their rights.

"Claudette was an ordinary person who did an extraordinary thing," Laster says. "Even the youngest person has a voice."

—by Alicia Green

WORD TO KNOW

boycott *noun*. a protest in which people refuse to buy a product or use a service



Rosa Parks on
a Montgomery,
Alabama, bus
in 1956