



Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, American society was sharply segregated along color lines. Supported by both law and custom, the Jim Crow system—late nineteenth-century rules and regulations that codified a long tradition of prejudice, dehumanization, and discrimination—created separate and unequal services, employment, and housing for blacks and whites. The first episode traces events that brought this discrimination and violence to public awareness and the awakening of the nascent civil rights movement.

1954	
May 17	In <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> , the Supreme Court declares that segregated schools are inherently unequal and thus unconstitutional
1955	
Aug. 28	Emmett Till, a black boy from Chicago visiting his uncle Moses Wright in Mississippi, is murdered for inappropriately addressing a white woman
Sep. 23	Two white men are tried in the murder of Emmett Till but are quickly acquitted
Dec. 1	Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to relinquish her seat in the front of the bus to a white person
Dec. 5	King leads the blacks of Montgomery in a rally to boycott city buses. In response to the blacks' bus boycott, many whites join White Citizens' Councils to uphold segregation and white control of the region
1956	
Nov. 13	The Supreme Court rules that segregation on buses in Montgomery is against the law
Dec. 21	The Supreme Court rules that segregation on Montgomery buses is illegal and the boycott ends

By the early 1950s, change was in the air. Thousands of black soldiers who had fought to liberate Europe from the grip of Nazi fascism and racism in World War II, returned home determined to fight bigotry and injustice. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP)* legal victory in *Brown v. Board of Education* helped to legitimize the emerging struggle: this decision overturned an 1896 Supreme Court ruling known as *Plessy v. Ferguson* which legalized "separate but equal" facilities and services for blacks and whites. The 1954 ruling, in effect, challenged all Americans to live up to the Constitutional vision of a society that promised "liberty and justice for all."

Many white Southerners felt that the tide was turning, that their culture and traditions were under attack, and many responded with violence. The episode's first segment relates the story of one such reaction: the lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till, a black Northerner from Chicago who, during a visit to Money, Mississippi in 1955, was accused of talking to a white woman "disrespectfully."** The allegation suggested that Till had crossed the racial lines in the South—an act of transgression that many segregationists often used to justify terror and violence against black citizens and maintain the Jim Crow system. Episode 1 traces the trial of the two

suspects in the lynching, their rapid acquittal, and the public outcry that followed, due in large part to the courageous protest of Emmett Till's family in court and in the media. Their actions stirred a deep sense of outrage among blacks and some whites, and inspired them to organize for a comprehensive struggle for freedom and justice.

The second segment of this episode begins with Rosa Parks's historic 1955 bus ride. Parks, an

* Under the leadership of Harvard University scholar W. E. B. DuBois and the antilynching advocate Ida B. Wells, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1909. The NAACP's goals include the promotion of equality and justice in America and the eradication of prejudices among all its citizens. Its charter calls for the protection of the interests and opportunities of citizens of color and for the promotion of progressive policies in the fields of education, housing, and employment. For more information see "NAACP," at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9372942> (accessed on April 18, 2006).

** Lynching may be defined as an execution without legal sanction. In this case, however, as in others associated with racial violence, lynching describes ritualized murder, often by hanging, intended to enforce the social domination of one group over another.

NAACP activist and secretary in the Montgomery, Alabama chapter, boarded a segregated bus and, in defiance of the law, refused to give up her seat to a white man. Parks's quiet protest sparked a citywide boycott of the bus system that lasted twelve-and-a-half months. During that time, the young Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged as the movement's most eloquent leader; together with Montgomery's Baptist clergy and the Women's Political Council he led a successful battle that ended segregation on buses in Montgomery.

Although some historians point to the origins of the civil rights movement in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, many others trace the "awakening" of the civil rights movement to the murder of Emmett Till, the arrest of Rosa Parks, and the successful Montgomery bus boycott. These events in Mississippi and Alabama galvanized civil rights activists to begin articulating an alternative vision for America and lay plans to implement it. In the years that followed, the struggle to achieve black freedom would alter the very foundations of the social order in the United States.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Segregation, a social system based on a long history of prejudices and discrimination, was deeply entrenched in people's minds as well as in the culture. How did segregation manifest itself in daily life in the South? How did segregation disenfranchise black Americans?***
2. Why do you think the lynching of Emmett Till became a catalyst in the national movement for civil rights?
3. What choices did the family of Emmett Till and their supporters make in exposing the brutality of his murder? How did these choices shape public reaction to the murder?
4. In what ways did the media educate the nation about the events in Mississippi and Montgomery?
5. What means were available to disenfranchised blacks in America to fight segregation?
6. How did people summon the courage to confront the intimidation, brutality, and injustice they faced under the Jim Crow system?
7. This series is called "*Eyes on the Prize*." What is the prize being sought in this episode?

Document 1: BLACK BOYS FROM CHICAGO

In the South, terror and violence were used to enforce segregation and white power. On August 20, 1955, fourteen-year-old Emmett Till boarded a train in Chicago. Till, nicknamed Bo (or Bobo), traveled to Money, Mississippi with his cousin Curtis Jones to visit relatives who stayed in the South when the rest of the family migrated North. When he arrived with Jones on August 21, 1955, racial tensions were reaching a boiling point. Till, who grew up in the North, did not appreciate the strictness of racial mores in the South, nor did he recognize the risks involved in violating them. In an interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Jones recalled:

We was going to Money, Mississippi, to have a good time. I'd never picked cotton before and I was looking forward to that. I had told my mother that I could pick two hundred pounds, and she told me I couldn't. Emmett Till was fourteen years old, had just graduated out of the grammar school.

My grandfather in Mississippi was a preacher. He had a church and he had a little raggedy

***Disenfranchised persons are deprived of voting rights, and therefore, political power. The term is also used more broadly to describe groups that are denied access to the political process, regardless of their formal voting rights.

'41 Ford, if I'm not mistaken. And he took all of us to church that day, including my grandmother, my three uncles, myself, my cousin Emmett, and my cousin Willa Parker. While he was in the pulpit preaching, we get the car and drive to Money. Anyway, we went into this store to buy some candy. Before Emmett went in, he had shown the boys round his age some picture of some white kids that he had graduated from school with, female and male. He told the boys who had gathered round this store—there must have been maybe ten to twelve youngsters there—that one of the girls was his girlfriend. So one of the local boys said, "Hey, there's a white girl in that store there. I bet you won't go in there and talk to her." So Emmett went in there. When he was leaving out the store, after buying some candy, he told her, "Bye, baby."

I was sitting out there playing checkers with this older man. Next thing I know, one of the boys came up to me and said, "Say, man, you got a crazy cousin. He just went in there and said 'Bye, baby' to that white woman." This man I was playing checkers with jumped straight up and said, "Boy, you better get out of here. That lady'll come out of that store and blow your brains off."

It was kind of funny to us. We hopped in the car and drove back to the church. My grandfather was just about completing his sermon.

The next day, we was telling some youngsters what had happened, but they had heard about it. One girl was telling us that we better get out of there 'cause when that lady's husband come back gonna be big trouble. We didn't tell our grandfather. If we had told our grandfather, I'm sure he would have gotten us out of there. That was Wednesday. So that Thursday passed, nothing happened. Friday passed, nothing happened. Saturday, nothing happened. So we forgot about it.

Saturday night we went to town. The closest town was Greenwood. We must have stayed there till approximately three o'clock that morning. We returned and—my grandfather didn't have but three rooms, the kitchen and two bedrooms—it must have been about three-thirty, I was awakened by a group of men in the house. I didn't wake completely, youngsters, they sleep hard, you know. When they came, my grandfather answered the door and they asked him did he have three boys in there from Chicago? And he stated yes. He said I got my two grandsons and a nephew. So they told him get the one who did the talking. My grandmother was scared to death. She was trying to protect Bo. They told her get back in bed. One of the guys struck her with a shotgun side of the head. When I woke up the next morning, I thought it was a dream.

I went to the porch and my grandfather was sitting on the porch. I asked him, "Poppa, did they bring Bo back?" He said, "No." He said, "I hope they didn't kill that boy." And that's when I got kind of scared.

I asked him, “Ain’t you going to call the police?” He said, “No, I can’t call the police. They told me that if I call the sheriff they was going to kill everybody in this house.” So I told him, I say, “I’ll call.”

That happened Sunday.¹

CONNECTIONS

1. What did the reactions to the brief interaction between Emmett Till and Carolyn Bryant, the white woman in the store, expose about the social system that supported segregation? Why do you think Till’s actions sparked such violence?
2. Curtis Jones was playing checkers with an older man who warned him that Bryant was likely to react violently to Till’s innocent comments. What did he know that the two boys did not? How do people learn the rules and customs of a society? How are these rules and customs enforced?
3. What is the role of intimidation, lynching, and fear in a segregated society?
4. Till’s uncle, Mose Wright, would not go to the police. In a democracy, what institutions are responsible for protecting the vulnerable? What options do individuals and groups have when these institutions cannot be trusted?

Document 2: MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY GOES PUBLIC

In an interview with CBS News, Mamie Till-Mobley recalled her first response to the sight of her son’s mutilated corpse: “instead of fainting, I realized that here’s a job that I got to do now and I don’t have time to faint; I don’t have time to cry [...] I’ve got to make a decision and my decision was that there is no way I can tell the world what I see. The world is going to have to look at this. They’re going to have to help me tell the story.”² In her grief, Till-Mobley made two choices that changed the course of American history: first, she insisted on an open casket funeral for her son, and second, a week later, she had *Jet* magazine and the *Chicago Defender* publish the grisly images of her son’s tortured body. These photographs quickly became a symbol of the violence that simmered just under the surface of segregated communities in the South.

Charles Diggs, one of the first black congressmen after Reconstruction,^{****} argued that “the picture in the *Jet* magazine [...] was probably one of the greatest media products in the last forty or fifty years, because that picture stimulated a lot of interest and a lot of anger on the part of blacks all over the country. And the fact that the Till boy was just a child also added to this mat-



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December 1955. Mamie Till-Mobley weeping over Emmett Till’s casket. Her courageous decision to publish the images of her son’s tortured body made Emmett Till a powerful symbol of racial violence in the South.

^{****}In US history, Reconstruction is the period during and after the American Civil War in which attempts were made to solve the political, social, and economic problems arising from the readmission to the Union of the eleven Confederate states that had seceded at or before the outbreak of war. For more information see “Reconstruction” at Britannica.com, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062908> (accessed on August 1, 2006).

ter.”³ Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Halberstam, who spent much of his earlier career as a journalist covering the civil rights movement, argues that the sensation caused by the Till photographs was the first great media event of the civil rights movement.⁴

Julian Bond, a civil rights activist and chairman of the NAACP, remembers the impact reading about Till’s death had upon him as a young man growing up in Pennsylvania:

My memories are exact—and parallel those of many others my age—I felt vulnerable for the first time in my life—Till was a year younger—and [I] recall believing that this could easily happen to me—for no reason at all.⁵

In a *New York Times* article about the notorious photographs, Chris Metress, the editor of “The Lynching of Emmett Till,” notes: “You get testimony from white people coming of age at the time about how the case affected them, but you don’t get them testifying, like countless blacks, that the *Jet* photo had this transformative effect on them, altering the way they felt about themselves and their vulnerabilities and the dangers they would be facing in the civil rights movement. Because white people didn’t read *Jet*.”⁶

CONNECTIONS

1. Why do you think Mamie Till-Mobley decided to show the public her son’s mutilated body?
2. What was the role of the black press in exposing the violence of the Jim Crow system? Why do you think the mainstream press was initially reluctant to publish the photographs of Emmett Till?
3. What role can the press play in exposing injustice? Are there news stories that have led you to express outrage or influenced you to take action?

Document 3: MOSE WRIGHT STANDS UP

James Hicks, a black journalist, was sent by the National News Association to cover the Till trial. He recalled the courageous decision of Mose Wright to identify his nephew’s murderers at the trial. Hicks points out that in doing so, Wright defied Southern tradition that not only treated blacks as inferior citizens, but also forced them to accept blatant violations of their basic rights.

Somebody had said that Mose Wright had told them from the git-go that he wanted to testify. He wanted to tell how these people got Emmett Till out of his house that night. All the people in Mound Bayou were saying, “Look, this is it. This man gets up there and identifies J. W. Milam and this other man, Bryant, we don’t know what’s going to happen. His life won’t be worth a dime if he testifies against these two white men.” We had been told that this was going to happen, this was a point when the stuff would hit the fan. We black reporters devised our own plan. We were seated in this Jim Crow setup, near a window. On this particular day, every able-bodied white man you saw in the courtroom had a .45 or a .38 strung on him. They were expecting something to happen. One of these young deputies who was wearing a gun, there was only an aisle between us. I said the first thing I will do is grab that .45. Snatch that safety off and then battle as far as we could, because it was almost hopeless. I didn’t know if it would come out too well, but if you blasted a few of them, then

somebody might think you meant business.

When Uncle Mose testified, electricity came over the courtroom. This elderly, gray-haired man sitting up there. The prosecutor said, “Now, Uncle Mose, I am going to ask you, is it a fact that two men came to your house? Now what did they say?”

“They asked, ‘You have a nigger here from Chicago?’” And he told them, “My little nephew is here from Chicago.”

“And what did they say then?”

“He ask me where he was, and I said he was in there in the bed ’cause it was nighttime, and so they said get him up. I got him up and then he, they took him away and they said, ‘I’m going to take this nigger with us.’ I couldn’t do anything.”

The key point came when they said to him, “I’m going to ask you to look around in the courtroom and see if you see any man here that came to you and knocked on your door that night.” And so this old man—I mean, talk about courage—he looked around and in his broken English he said, “Dar he,” and he pointed so straight at J. W. Milam. It was like history in that courtroom. It was like electricity in that courtroom. The judge, he was pounding on his gavel and he was saying “Order, order,” like that. There was a terrific tension in the courtroom but nothing happened. I mean, no outbreak came. I think that was because of the judge.⁷



Mose Wright identifying his nephew’s murderers. Wright defied Southern tradition that forced blacks to accept silently violations of their rights.

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The defendants were acquitted at the trial. Later, in a story they sold to *Look* magazine, they proudly confessed to the murder.

CONNECTIONS

1. Why were black Americans afraid to testify against whites in the South? What does their fear reveal about justice in the South at that time?
2. What, in your opinion, compelled Wright, who knew the dangers of speaking out, to step up and testify against the murderers?
3. How did Wright’s actions and testimony make him a symbol of the emerging civil rights movement?

Document 4: ROSA PARKS REMEMBERS

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-109643



December 1, 1955. Rosa Parks cited the murder of Emmett Till as a motivation for her refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger.

Black citizens in Alabama endured daily legal and physical abuse under the degrading Jim Crow system. In schools, restaurants, theaters, public transportation, and almost every other area they were segregated from whites and treated as second-class citizens. In the interview below, Rosa Parks—who often referred to the Emmett Till lynching as a catalyst for her actions—tells the story of her decision to challenge the regulations that segregated public transportation. Parks, an experienced civil rights activist who worked for years with the NAACP, was well aware of the potential consequences of her actions. Nevertheless, she refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man.

Having to take a certain section [on a bus] because of your race was humiliating, but having to stand up because a particular driver wanted to keep a white person from having to stand was, to my mind, most inhumane.

More than seventy-five, between eighty-five and I think ninety, percent of the patronage of the buses were black people, because more white people could own and drive their own cars than blacks.

I happened to be the secretary of the Montgomery branch of the NAACP as well as the NAACP Youth Council adviser. Many cases did come to my attention that nothing came out of 'cause the person that was abused would be too intimidated to sign an affidavit, or to make a statement. Over the years, I had had my own problems with the bus drivers. In fact, some did tell me not to ride their buses if I felt that I was too important to go to the back door to get on. One had evicted me from the bus in 1943, which did not cause anything more than just a passing glance.

On December 1, 1955, I had finished my day's work as a tailor's assistant in the Montgomery Fair department store and I was on my way home. There was one vacant seat on the Cleveland Avenue bus, which I took, alongside a man and two women across the aisle. There were still a few vacant seats in the white section in the front, of course. We went to the next stop without being disturbed. On the third, the front seats were occupied and this one man, a white man, was standing. The driver asked us to stand up and let him have those seats, and when none of us moved at his first words, he said, "You all make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats." And the man who was sitting next to the window stood up, and I made room for him to pass by me. The two women

across the aisle stood up and moved out.

When the driver saw me still sitting, he asked if I was going to stand up and I said, “No, I’m not.”

And he said, “Well, if you don’t stand up, I’m going to call the police and have you arrested.”

I said, “You may do that.”

He did get off the bus, and I still stayed where I was. Two policemen came on the bus. One of the policemen asked me if the bus driver had asked me to stand and I said yes.

He said, “Why don’t you stand up?”

And I asked him, “Why do you push us around?”

He said, “I do not know, but the law is the law and you’re under arrest.”⁸

CONNECTIONS

1. Often Rosa Parks’s motivation for her refusal to relinquish her seat has been trivialized as “Rosa Parks was tired.” How did she explain her decision?
2. Why did the early struggle against segregation focus on buses and other forms of public accommodations? What leverage were protesters in Montgomery able to use against the bus company?
3. Why do you think Parks became a symbol of the civil rights movement? Why did so many people identify with her cause? How did that identification build support for the emerging movement?

Document 5: A NEW LEADER EMERGES

Four days after Rosa Parks was arrested for her defiant bus ride, local activists recruited a young minister to lead their struggle against segregation in Montgomery. Twenty-six-year-old Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. hesitated but finally accepted their invitation to lead the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association. Word of Parks’s arrest spread. On December 5, 1955, more than 5,000 people showed up at the Holt Street Baptist Church to hear King give the keynote speech where he laid out the plan for the Montgomery bus boycott and a new vision for American democracy:

We are here this evening for serious business. We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens, and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its means. We are here because of our love for democracy, because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action is the greatest form of government on earth. But we are here in a specific sense, because of the bus situation in Montgomery. We are here because we are determined to get the situation corrected.

This situation is not at all new. The problem has existed over endless years. For many years now Negroes in Montgomery and so many other areas have been inflicted with the paralysis of crippling fear on buses in our community. On so many occasions, Negroes have been intimidated and humiliated and oppressed because of the sheer fact that they were Negroes. I don’t have time this evening to go into the history of these numerous cases. [...] But at least one stands before us now with glaring dimensions. Just the other day, just

last Thursday to be exact, one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—not one of the finest Negro citizens but one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—was taken from a bus and carried to jail and arrested because she refused to get up to give her seat to a white person. [...] Mrs. Rosa Parks is a fine person. And since it had to happen I'm happy it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks, for nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity. Nobody can doubt the height of her character, nobody can doubt the depth of her Christian commitment and devotion to the teachings of Jesus. [...]

And just because she refused to get up, she was arrested.[...] You know my friends there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time my friends when people get tired of being flung across the abyss of humiliation where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amidst the piercing chill of an Alpine November.

We are here, we are here this evening because we're tired now. Now let us say that we are not here advocating violence. We have overcome that. I want it to be known throughout Montgomery and throughout this nation that we are Christian people. We believe in the Christian religion. We believe in the teachings of Jesus. The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. And secondly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. This is the glory of our democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a Communistic [sic] nation we couldn't do this. If we were trapped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right.

My friends, don't let anybody make us feel that we ought to be compared in our actions with the Ku Klux Klan or with the White Citizens' Councils. There will be no crosses burned at any bus stops in Montgomery. There will be no white persons pulled out of their homes and taken out to some distant road and murdered. There will be nobody among us who will stand up and defy the Constitution of this nation. We only assemble here because of our desire to see right exist.

My friends, I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and firm determination to gain justice on the buses in this city. And we are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. If we are wrong, then the Supreme Court of this Nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer and never came down to earth. If we are wrong, justice is a lie. And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I want to say that with all of our actions we must stick together. Unity is the great need of the hour. And if we are united, we can get many of the things that we not only desire but which we justly deserve. And don't let anybody frighten you. We are not afraid of what we

are doing, because we are doing it within the law. There is never a time in our American democracy that we must ever think we're wrong when we protest. We reserve that right. [...]

We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. [...] In all of our doings, in all of our deliberations [...] whatever we do, we must keep God in the forefront. Let us be Christian in all of our action. And I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love. Love is one of the pinnacle parts of the Christian faith. There is another side called justice. And justice is really love in [application]. Justice is love correcting that which would work against love. [...] Standing beside love is always justice. And we are only using the tools of justice. Not only are we using the tools of persuasion but we've got to use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education but it is also a process of legislation.

And as we stand and sit here this evening, and as we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick together. We are going to work together. Right here in Montgomery when the history books are written in the future, somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people, black people, fleecy locks and black complexion, of people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights." And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization. And we're gonna do that. God grant that we will do it before it's too late.⁹



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-135428

February 1956. Audience at Montgomery's First Baptist Church, cheering leaders of the bus boycott. The Montgomery boycott marked King's emergence as a leader of the civil rights movement.

CONNECTIONS

1. What words, phrases, or images stand out in King's speech? What did King mean by a transformation from "thin paper to thick action"?
2. What kind of struggle did King propose? What principles did King cite as a foundation for the struggle?
3. Why was the church so central to the struggle for black freedom?
4. What was the role of religion and faith in the arguments King presented? To what religious values and democratic principles did he appeal in his speech?
5. Lillian Smith, the author of *Killers of the Dream* and an outspoken white supporter of civil rights, wrote to King in the early months of the Montgomery boycott. In her letter, she shared her thoughts about the role of religion in the struggle for black freedom:

Dear Dr. King:

I have with a profound sense of fellowship and admiration been watching your work in Montgomery. I cannot begin to tell you how effective it seems to me, although I must confess I have watched it only at long distance.

It is the right way. Only through persuasion, love, goodwill, and firm nonviolent resistance can the change take place in our South. Perhaps in a northern city this kind of nonviolent, persuasive resistance would either be totally misinterpreted or else find nothing in the whites which could be appealed to. But in our South, the whites, too, share the profoundly religious symbols you are using and respond to them on a deep level of their hearts and minds. Their imaginations are stirred: the waters are troubled.

You seem to be going at it in such a wise way. I want to come down as soon as I can and talk quietly with you about it. For I have nothing to go on except television reports and newspaper reports. But these have been surprisingly sympathetic to the 40,000 Negroes in Montgomery who are taking part in this resistance movement. But I have been in India twice; I followed the Gandhian movement long before it became popular in this country. I, myself, being a Deep South white, reared in a religious home and the Methodist church, realize the deep ties of common songs, common prayer, common symbols that bind our two races together on a religio-mystical level, even as another brutally mythic idea, the concept of White Supremacy, tears our two people apart.¹⁰

6. Why does Smith believe that religion and nonviolence would be useful strategies for change? What impact did she suggest that King's religious symbolism would have on white Southerners?
7. What ideology did the White Supremacists espouse? Who were they? Why did Smith and many others believe that this ideology tears blacks and whites apart?

Document 6: WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER

The long bus boycott in Montgomery took a heavy toll on black citizens, yet they chose to walk the many miles to and from work rather than succumb to continued humiliation. Some white women who relied on black domestic help supported the boycott. While the police attempted to crack down on people who provided transportation for the marchers, a system of carpooling quickly developed to offset some of the effects of the boycott. Virginia Durr and her husband Clifford bailed Rosa Parks out of jail after her arrest and were among the most public white supporters of the boycott. In this interview with the producers of *Eyes on the Prize*, Virginia Durr described the strange interplay between blacks and whites in the boycott:

The strange thing that happened was a kind of a play between white women and black women, in that none of the white women wanted to lose their help. The mayor of the town issued an order that all the black maids had to be dismissed to break the boycott. Well, their reply was, "Tell the mayor to come and do my work for me, then." So the white women went and got the black women in the car. They said they did it because the bus had broken down, or any excuse you could possibly think of. And then the black women, if you picked one of them up who was walking, they'll tell you that they were walking because the lady that brought them to work, her child was sick. So here was this absurd sort of dance going on. I saw a woman that worked for my mother-in-law, and they were asking her, "Do any of your family take part in the boycott?" She said, "No ma'am, they don't have anything to do with the boycott at all." She said, "My brother-in-law, he has a ride every morning and my sister-in-law, she comes home with somebody else, and they

just stay off the bus and don't have nothing to do with it." And so when we got out of the room, I said to Mary, "You know, you had been really the biggest storyteller in the world. You know everybody in your family's involved in the boycott." And she says, "Well, you know, when you have your hand in the lion's mouth, the best thing to do is pat it on the head." Always thought that was a wonderful phrase.

The boycott took off some of the terrible load of guilt that white southerners have lived under for so many generations, such a terrible load of shame and guilt that we won't acknowledge. But you can't do things like that to people and pretend to love them too. It's created such a terrible schizophrenia, because when you're a child, particularly if you have blacks in the house, you have devotion to them. Then when you get grown, people tell you that they're not worthy of you, they're different. And then you're torn apart, because here are the people you've loved and depended on. It's a terrible schizophrenia. That's why I think so much of the literature of the South is full of conflict and madness, because you can't do that to people. You can't do that to children. At least under the Nazis they never even pretended to like the Jews, but in the South it was always that terrible hypocrisy. You know, we love the blacks and we understand them and they love us. Both sides were playing roles which were pure hypocrisy. So I thought the boycott was absolutely marvelous.¹¹

CONNECTIONS

1. According to Durr, what tensions in the white community did the bus boycott expose? Why did some whites choose to help the boycotters?
2. Durr argued that as children, Southern whites were encouraged to develop loving relationships with blacks who cared for them. As adults, however, they were told to refrain from interacting with blacks because, it was argued, blacks were inferior. What conflicts and tensions did this message create? What does this message tell us about whites in the South at that time?
3. What did Durr mean by the "pure hypocrisy" that ruled relationships between blacks and whites?

¹ Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 3–4.

² Malcolm West, "Mamie Till-Mobley, Civil Rights Heroine, Eulogized in Chicago," *Jet*, January 27, 2003.

³ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 7.

⁴ Shaila Dewan, "How Photos Became Icon of Civil Rights Movement," *New York Times*, August 28, 2005.

⁵ "Do You Remember?," *The American Experience*, PBS, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_remember.html (accessed on April 25, 2006).

⁶ Dewan, "How Photos Became Icon of Civil Rights Movement."

⁷ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 11–12.

⁸ Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 19–20.

⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Speech at the Holt Street Baptist Church," quoted in Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 48–51.

¹⁰ Margaret Rose Gladney, *How Am I to Be Heard? Letters of Lillian Smith* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1993), 193.

¹¹ Henry Hampton, *Voices of Freedom*, 27–28.