



Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson Plan 1

Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)

(Grades 6-12)

Learning Targets/Objectives:

- Describe the vision and mission of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)

Success Criteria:

- Take notes and respond to quiz questions about the MIA

Anchor Text:

- Montgomery Improvement Association. "Transportation Problems." December 6, 1955. Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/rosa-parks-in-her-own-words/about-this-exhibition/the-bus-boycott/the-montgomery-improvement-association/>

Supplemental Resources:

- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Center. "Montgomery Improvement Association." Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/montgomery-improvement-association-mia>
- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Center. "MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church." Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/mia-mass-meeting-holt-street-baptist-church>

Lesson Content Overview:

The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was the local nonviolent civil rights organization of prominent Black pastors and leaders from Montgomery, Alabama. MIA was established in December 1955 following the conviction of Rosa L. Parks, to provide an organizational and administrative structure for the Montgomery Bus Boycott. On December 1, Parks, an African American seamstress, was arrested for refusing to yield her seat on a segregated Montgomery bus. Four days later, she was convicted and forced to pay a \$10 fine plus court costs.

The bus boycott movement reveals how the forces of African American political, religious, and feminine activism converged into a new civil rights movement. The MIA resulted from the response of the local NAACP, the Women's Political Caucus, and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance to a

specific incident that reflected traditional social and civic injustice practices. The MIA focused national attention on Jim Crow in the South, which catapulted Dr. King into the national spotlight.

The MIA spawned the creation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957, headed by King. In the years after the boycott, the MIA continued to meet monthly. Though the MIA still exists, the association primarily concerns itself with an annual scholarship award, organizing anniversary commemorations of the boycott, and advisory roles in creating museums recognizing the bus boycott and other civil rights milestones. The longest-lasting president of the MIA was Mrs. Johnnie Carr, who led the association from 1967 to her death in 2008. Carr was a lifelong friend of Rosa Parks', dating back to their enrollment in Montgomery Industrial School for Girls in 1924, then as active members of the local NAACP. Carr also helped organize the bus boycott that lasted 381 days. She later filed suit to desegregate Montgomery schools in 1964.

The first mass meeting of the MIA attracted several thousand people to the spacious Holt Street Baptist Church in the Black working-class section of the city. There, King delivered an address he had quickly composed before the meeting. He later recalled his thoughts before the address: "How could I make a speech that would be militant enough to keep my people aroused to positive action and yet moderate enough to keep this fervor within controllable and Christian bounds? I knew that many of the Negro people were victims of bitterness that could easily rise to flood proportions. What could I say to keep them courageous and prepared for positive action and yet devoid of hate and resentment? Could the militant and the moderate be combined in a single speech?"¹ In his speech, King described the mistreatment of Black bus passengers and the civil disobedience of Rosa Parks, and then justified the nonviolent protest by appealing to African American Christian faith in love and justice and the American democratic tradition of legal protest.

As the first president of the MIA, King worked tirelessly to negotiate with City Commissioners, Montgomery mayor W.A. Gayle, and the National City Lines representatives. At one of his first meetings with officials, King said he didn't want to eradicate the Jim Crow law, but wanted to amend it to ensure a "first come, first serve" policy in terms of seating on city buses. King's proposal was "flatly refused."² The refusal of segregationists in Montgomery to modify the city's segregation laws evolved into a nationwide effort to eradicate all laws and policies creating separate worlds for whites and Blacks.

Instructional Sequence:

Opener:

Ask students to work together to analyze the Montgomery Improvement Association's instructions to boycotters "[Transportation Problems](#)."

Class Discussion:

The teacher will explain that this lesson will focus on the organization behind the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The teacher should also use the information from the Lesson Content Overview to review the details about the MIA and the bus boycott.

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr. MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church. December 5, 1955. The King Institute, Stanford University. Retrieved from <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/mia-mass-meeting-holt-street-baptist-church>

² *Alabama Journal*. "Bus Boycott Is Being Aired." December 17, 1955. 1.

Independent Read:

Have students read the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute's article ["Montgomery Improvement Association"](#) and "the ["MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church."](#)

Optional Extension Activity:

Have students research Mrs. Johnny Carr. Students should write down 7-10 accomplishments of Carr's life and describe the type of work the MIA did after the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Formative Assessment:

- Using information gathered from the readings and the teacher-led discussion, students will answer the following quiz questions:
 - Why was the Montgomery Improvement Association established?
 - Name three other organizations that worked with the MIA to plan the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
 - Where was the first mass meeting of the MIA held?
 - What were two concerns Dr. King had about his first speech to the MIA and how did he address his concerns?

Adaptations for Student Needs

IEP:

- Sizes of student groups range
- Students team up with a peer partner, while others would prefer to work individually.
- There is a variety of small-group work
- Chunking information
- Visual cues and wait time
- Visual supports (maps, images, PowerPoint slides, handouts)
- Assessments will be modified, and students given extra time

ELD

- Modified/simplified reading material
- Content-related lists/handouts of key terms
- Text is supported by visuals and connected to real-life experiences