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Guide to the

**Montgomery Branch, National Association for the Advancement of
Colored People minutes**

1954-1955

Summary

Title: Montgomery Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People minutes

Date: 1954-1955

Size: .2 linear feet (1 box)

Source: .2 /in ft.: Purchase, Styles, Donald, 07/--/1989

Abstract: Two minute books documenting the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Montgomery, Alabama Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), February 22-August 29, 1955, and the Branch membership, January 9-December 12, 1955. Loose sheets of notes taken at meetings but not recorded in the minute books, including notes of an emergency Executive Committee meeting on December 13, 1955, referring to the Rosa Parks bus segregation incident. One prior bus segregation incident is also noted. Correspondence from the Youth Council of the NAACP, membership lists and financial reports for the branch during this period are included. These minutes, particularly those of the Executive Committee, present a clear picture of civil rights activities in Montgomery at this time.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Montgomery Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People minutes, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Creator History

During the mid 1950s the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was the single most important civil rights group in America. The Supreme Court had handed down its decision overturning the separate but equal doctrine of the land on May 17, 1954. This historic victory for the NAACP marked the dramatic opening of a new, intensified front in the battle for equality. Opposition became virulent, White Citizens Councils were formed with the aim of maintaining separate school systems and restriction on civil rights for blacks. Economic reprisals were invoked in several communities in Alabama and other states against persons signing desegregation petitions. NAACP membership was at an all time high since 1947, totaling 309,000.

On November 25, 1955, in response to a petition filed by the NAACP in December 1953, the Interstate

Commerce Commission banned segregation in interstate travel, including railway, bus stations and airports, to be effective January 10, 1956. In Montgomery, Alabama a bus boycott was launched subsequent to the December 1955 arrest of Rosa Parks for refusing to yield her bus seat to a white passenger. Mrs. Parks, adult advisor to the NAACP Youth Council, and other local NAACP officials such as E.D. (Edgar Daniel) Nixon, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy, were actively involved in the bus boycott which led to the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). With the start of the bus boycott and the formation of the MIA the modern freedom movement began.

Before the Parks case received national attention, two other persons had been arrested for refusing to relinquish their seats on Montgomery buses. The NAACP had considered using them as test cases, but it was deemed that they were not suitable candidates for the NAACP to rally around. Following the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, with NAACP official Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as its leader, the MIA and the NAACP sued the city of Montgomery to desegregate buses. The U.S. Supreme Court ordered desegregation of the Montgomery bus system in December 1956.

Scope and Content Note

Two minute books documenting the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Montgomery, Alabama Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), February 22-August 29, 1955, and the Branch membership, January 9-December 12, 1955. Loose sheets of notes taken at meetings but not recorded in the minute books, including notes of an emergency Executive Committee meeting on December 13, 1955, referring to the Rosa Parks bus segregation incident. One prior bus segregation incident is also noted. Correspondence from the Youth Council of the NAACP, membership lists and financial reports for the branch during this period are included. These minutes, particularly those of the Executive Committee, present a clear picture of civil rights activities in Montgomery at this time.