

*“Let’s Talk About…” is a column in our monthly newsletter where we will learn one thing at a time about how we can love others the way they want to be loved. We will learn something each month that helps us understand and respect people who are different from us a little more deeply.*

## Let’s Talk About Black History

February is Black History Month in the United States, so let’s talk about Black history. Around this time last year, we learned about how language matters when we learn Black history. Today, it’s storytime! You’ve probably heard about how Rosa Parks sat down on a bus in Montgomery and changed the course of history, but there’s so much more to that story.

Rosa was not the first activist to protest by staying seated on a segregated public bus when the law said she had to stand up. In Montgomery, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin got arrested for the very same thing just a few months before Rosa did. Many high school and college students were prepared to protest, waiting for the right moment. The adult organizers of key groups, the NAACP and another group called the Women’s Political Council (WPC) did not feel this was the right moment yet. So, they waited.

When Rosa was arrested, Jo Ann Robinson and two of her college students stayed up that very night making flyers, and they got the ball rolling before the NAACP had even heard the news. Jo Ann was the president of the Women’s Political Council and a college professor. The beginnings of the culture-shifting Montgomery Bus Boycott were women and college kids. The men joined their already impactful campaign a week or so later.

You may also remember this bus boycott is where Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began to rise to fame. He was elected the first president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, which formed as part of the organization behind the boycott. If you’d like to read more about the boycott and all these important people, I recommend starting here: [Montgomery Bus Boycott Essay](#)

All this history is fascinating, but what can we *do* with it?

1. Learn it. These are stories we should have learned in school, and the good news is, we are never too old to learn another story! And as we learn our nation’s history, we can share what we learn with others, too!
2. Notice how many crucial parts of this story happen because people who looked pretty much powerless did something. Do not underestimate your own impact. And don’t let others underestimate their impact, either.
3. This boycott happened in 1955. There are plenty of people alive today who saw it happen or participated in it or condemned it. When we consider the broader civil rights movement

that continued on through the 1960s and 70s, there are even more people who remember those days. If that's you, consider sharing your story and perhaps how you thought about it then and think about it now. I'm sure I'm not the only one who would love the opportunity to learn from you!

If you (like me) are a bit too young for that, then try some extra listening this month. Even if the elders in your life don't have civil rights movement stories, take some time and listen to the stories they want to tell you. I am confident you'll learn something about the people you love that way, and you might even gain a new perspective on your own history.

*Our "Let's Talk About..." column is one place where we can help one another learn how to be better allies for all our neighbors. If you have a question you'd like answered, or if there are things you wish others in our congregation better understood about your own marginalized identities or those for whom you are already a strong ally, please submit suggestions to <https://forms.gle/E9eRqZJGLgVagbDZ9> or email me directly at [virginiag@smokyhillumc.org](mailto:virginiag@smokyhillumc.org).*