

**Source 2:** Abernathy, Ralph. "Recollection of the First MIA Mass Meeting." In *Daybreak of Freedom: The Montgomery Bus Boycott*. Edited by Stewart Burns. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. pp. 93-95. Available at <http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/rosaparks/1/sources/22/fulltext/>

We, M.L. King and I, went to the meeting together. It was drizzling; I had been working up until the last minute on the resolutions. I was given instructions: one, to call off the protest, or two, if indicated, to continue the protest until the grievances were granted. We had had a successful "one-day protest," but we feared that if we extended it beyond the first day, we might fail; it might be better after all to call the protest off, and then we could hold this "one-day boycott" as a threat for future negotiations. However, we were to determine whether to continue the protest by the size of the crowds. If we found a large number of persons at the church this would indicate that Negroes would be interested in continuing the protest. But, if there were only a few, we felt that Negroes were not sufficiently interested, and that they might return to the buses the next day even in spite of our wishes.

When we got about twenty blocks from the church we saw cars parked solid; we wondered if there was a funeral or a death in the community. But as we got closer to the church we saw a great mass of people. The Montgomery Advertiser estimated the crowd at approximately 7,000 persons all trying to get in a church that will accommodate less than 1,000. It took us about fifteen minutes to work our way through the crowd by pleading: "Please let us through—we are Reverend King and Reverend Abernathy. Please permit us to get through."

Once we broke through the crowd there was another ten minutes of picture-taking coupled with flashing lights, cheering and hand-clapping. Those inside applauded for at least ten minutes.

It was apparent that the people were with us. It was then that all of the ministers who had previously refused to take part in the program came up to Reverend King and me to offer their services. This expression of togetherness on the part of the masses was obviously an inspiration to the leadership and helped to rid it of the cowardly, submissive, over timidity.

We began the meeting by singing Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War. The Reverend Alford, who later resigned from our movement because he felt that the bus boycott should be halted, and that Negroes should, for the sake of peace, accept segregated seating again, offered a prayer which was soul-stirring. Next Reverend U.J. Fields, who likewise eventually broke with our movement but for other reasons (he believed we had misappropriated funds)—read a scripture from the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. After which Reverend King made one of his now famous statements:

There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing in the piercing chills of an Alpine November.

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He has said this many times since, but we heard it on that evening for the first time; it was beautiful.

Mrs. Rosa Parks was presented to the mass meeting because we wanted her to become symbolic of our protest movement. Following her we presented Mr. Daniels, who happily for our meeting had been arrested on that day. The policemen alleged that he tried to prevent a Negro woman from riding the bus, while he claimed he was only assisting her across the street. The appearance of these persons created enthusiasm, thereby giving momentum to the movement.

We then heard the resolutions calling for the continuation of the boycott...unanimously and enthusiastically adopted by the 7,000 individuals both inside and outside the church. We closed the meeting by taking an offering with people marching down the aisles giving their nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars for freedom. The Montgomery Advertiser described the movement the next morning under the heading—"Hymn Singing Negroes of Montgomery, Alabama."