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| The Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was formed on 5 December 1955 by black ministers and community leaders in Montgomery, Alabama. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., the MIA was instrumental in guiding the [Montgomery bus boycott](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_montgomery_bus_boycott_1955_1956/), a successful campaign that focused national attention on racial segregation in the South and catapulted King into the national spotlight. In his memoir, King concluded that as a result of the protest ‘‘the Negro citizen in Montgomery is respected in a way that he never was before’’ (King, 184).   Following the arrest of [Rosa Parks](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_parks_rosa_1913_2005/) on 1 December 1955 for failing to vacate her seat for a white passenger on a Montgomery city bus, [Jo Ann Robinson](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_robinson_jo_ann_1912_1992/) of the [Women’s Political Council](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_womens_political_council/) and [E. D. Nixon](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_nixon_edgar_daniel_1899_1987/) launched plans for a one day boycott of Montgomery buses on 5 December. A planning meeting was held in King’s [Dexter Avenue Baptist Church](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_dexter_avenue_baptist_church/) on 2 December. Ninety percent of the black community stayed off the buses on 5 December, prompting calls for boycott leaders to harness the momentum into a larger protest campaign. At a meeting held at Mt. Zion AME Church on the afternoon of 5 December, Montgomery’s black leaders established the MIA to oversee the continuation and maintenance of the boycott and elected King, a young minister new to Montgomery, as its chairman. The organization’s overall mission, however, extended beyond the boycott campaign to advance ‘‘the general status of Montgomery, to improve race relations, and to uplift the general tenor of the community’’ (*Papers* 3:185).   The MIA’s earliest ofﬁcers were: Martin Luther King, Jr., president; L. Roy Bennett, ﬁrst vice president (later replaced by [Ralph D. Abernathy](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_abernathy_ralph_david_1926_1990/)); Moses W. Jones, second vice president; Erna Dungee, ﬁnancial secretary; U. J. Fields, recording secretary (later replaced by W. J. Powell); E. N. French, corresponding secretary; E. D. Nixon, treasurer; C. W. Lee, assistant treasurer; and A. W. Wilson, parliamentarian.   Following the MIA’s initial meeting, the executive committee drafted the demands of the boycott and agreed that the campaign would continue until these demands were met: courteous treatment by bus operators; ﬁrst-come, ﬁrst-served seating; and employment of Negro bus drivers. During the next year the association organized carpools and held weekly mass meetings with sermons and music to keep the African American community mobilized. When fundraising allowed for a paid staff position, Reverend R. J. Glasco was appointed King’s executive secretary. MIA ofﬁcers negotiated with Montgomery city leaders, coordinated legal challenges to the city’s bus segregation ordinance with the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_national_association_for_the_advancement_of_colored_people_naacp1/) and supported the boycott ﬁnancially by raising money through passing the plate at meetings and soliciting support from northern and southern civil rights organizations.   The MIA suffered a setback in the spring of 1956. In February 1956 Montgomery ofﬁcials indicted 89 boycott leaders, including King, for violating Alabama’s 1921 anti-boycott law. King’s trial, [*State of Alabama v. M. L. King, Jr.,*](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_state_of_alabama_v_m_l_king_jr_1956_and_1960/) held 19–22 March, ended with his conviction, but no one else was brought to trial.   In November 1956 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a federal district court’s ruling in [Browder v. Gayle](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_browder_v_gayle/), putting an end to segregated seating on public buses. The order to desegregate the buses arrived the following month, and on 21 December 1956 King ofﬁcially called for the end of the boycott. King emerged as a national ﬁgure during the boycott, and the MIA’s tactics became a model for the many civil rights protests to follow. Reﬂecting on his the experience with MIA, King said: ‘‘I will never forget Montgomery, for how can one forget a group of people who took their passionate yearnings and deep aspirations and ﬁltered them into their own souls and fashioned them into a creative protest, which gave meaning to people and gave inspiration to individuals all over the nation and all over the world’’ (*Papers* 5:359).   Following its success in Montgomery, the MIA became one of the founding organizations of the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_southern_christian_leadership_conference_sclc/) in January 1957. Although the MIA lost some momentum after King returned to Atlanta in 1960, the organization, under Abernathy, [Solomon Seay](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_seay_solomor_snowden_sr_1899_1988/), and [Johnnie Carr](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_carr_johnnie_rebecca_daniels_1911/) continued campaigns throughout the 1960s, focusing on voter registration, local school integration, and the integration of public facilities. Carr was president for over four decades.  **SOURCES**   Uriah J. Fields, Minutes of Montgomery Improvement Association Founding Meeting, 5 December 1955, in *Papers* 3:68–70.   Introduction, in *Papers* 3:1–33.   King, Address Delivered at the MIA’s ‘‘Testimony of Love and Loyalty,’’ 1 February 1960, in *Papers* 5:358–363.   King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 1958.   King, Testimony in *State of Alabama v. M. L. King, Jr.,* 22 March 1956, in *Papers* 3:183–196.   MIA, Press Release, Bus Protesters Call Southern Negro Leaders Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration, 7 January 1957, in *Papers* 4:94–96.   Robinson, *Montgomery Bus Boycott*, 1987. |