

Challenges in Montgomery



Martin and Coretta moved to Montgomery, Alabama where Martin began working as a minister. Alabama, like most of the South, had Jim Crow laws. These laws kept black and white people apart in all public places. In 1954, the United

States Supreme Court decision that school segregation was illegal began to weaken Jim Crow laws. It became illegal to have separate schools for the two races. But carrying out this important decision was a difficult challenge. This 1954 decision made Martin hopeful that all segregation would end one day.

Elizabeth Eckford was one of nine black students to first attend a previously all-white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas.



Counterpoint Governor Breaks Law

In 1954 the Supreme Court decided that all school segregation was illegal in a case called *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. But the governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, said he would never end school segregation.

When nine black students tried to attend Arkansas' all-white Central High School, Governor Faubus sent the state's National Guard to keep the students out. Since Faubus was breaking the law, President Eisenhower sent over 1,000 soldiers to protect the nine students both inside and outside the school. With help from the soldiers, the nine students were integrated into the school. Faubus and others were furious and spoke out strongly in favor of segregation.



Martin enjoys the hard-earned right to ride integrated buses.

Martin's ideas about nonviolent protest helped him lead the Montgomery bus boycott. During the boycott, his home was bombed but fortunately, no one was hurt. He received hate mail and death threats. But Martin insisted that the boycott remain peaceful. Finally on November 13, 1956, the United States Supreme Court declared that bus segregation was illegal. On December 21, after 382 days, the boycott ended and Martin sat down in the front of the bus.