To The National City Lines, Inc.
616 South Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Over a period of years the Negro passengers on the Montgomery City Lines, Inc. have been subjected to humiliation, threats, intimidation, and death through bus driver action.

The Negro has been inconvenienced in the use of the city bus lines by the operators in all instances in which the bus has been crowded. He has been forced to give up his seat if a white person has been standing.

Repeated conferences with the bus officials have met with failure. Today a meeting was held with Mr. J. H. Bagley and Attorney Jack Crenshaw as representatives of the bus company, and Mayor W. A. Gayle and Associate Commissioners Frank Parks and Clyde Sellers. At which time as an attempt to end the Monday through Thursday protest, the following three proposals were made:

1. Jo Ann Gibson Robinson (1912–), born in Culloden, Georgia, earned her B.S. at Georgia State College and taught in Macon’s public schools for five years. She received her M.A. (1948) at Atlanta University and became chair of the English department at Mary Ann College in Crockett, Texas. In 1949 Robinson joined the faculty of Alabama State College. That year an experience on a Montgomery bus provoked her to lead the Women’s Political Council (WPC) in demanding that city officials provide better bus service for African Americans. She became president of the WPC in 1950. After Rosa Parks’s arrest, Robinson utilized elements of a plan for a bus boycott drawn up by the WPC months before. An MIA executive board member, Robinson served on all the MIA’s major committees and edited the monthly newsletter. She was also indicted for her role in the bus boycott. For Robinson’s account of the boycott, see The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, ed. David J. Garrow (1987).

2. See also Minutes, meeting between contact committee of MIA and city and bus officials, 8 December 1955. James H. Bagley, a Harvard Law School graduate, was manager of the Montgomery City Lines. Jack Crenshaw (1905–), a former president of the Montgomery Bar Association, served as legal representative of the Montgomery City Lines during the Montgomery bus boycott. William A. “Tacky” Gayle (1895–1965), born in Montgomery, was commissioner for public works from 1935 until 1951, when he became mayor; he was defeated in 1959 after serving two terms in office. Franklin Warren Parks (1898–1966), owner of a decorating business, was Montgomery’s public works commissioner from 1955 until his death. Clyde Chapman Sellers (1908–1976) had been director of the state highway patrol and a Alabama state legislator before serving one term as Montgomery’s public safety commissioner.
1. Courteous treatment by bus drivers.
2. Seating of Negro passengers from rear to front of bus, and white passengers from front to rear on "first-come-first-serve basis with no seats reserved for any race.
3. Employment of Negro bus operators in predominantly Negro residential sections.

The above proposals, and the resolutions which will follow, were drafted and adopted in a mass meeting of more than 5,000 regular bus riders. These proposals were denied in the meeting with the city officials and representatives of the bus company. Since 44% of the city's population is Negro, and since 75% of the bus riders are Negro, we urge you to send a representative to Montgomery to arbitrate.

The Montgomery Improvement Association
The Rev. M. L. King, Pres.
The Rev. U. J. Fields, Sec'y.
TLc. MLK-MBU: Box 6.

3. The resolutions ratified on 5 December 1955 did not specifically approve the three demands.

"Statement of Negro Citizens on Bus Situation"

[10 December 1955]
[Montgomery, Ala.]

Two days after the deadlocked talks on 8 December, King and the MIA submitted this statement to their adversaries and the press. The next day the Montgomery Advertiser quoted portions of it, attributed to King, in a front-page article. The bus company had argued that Alabama law required segregation; King and the MIA, however, cite the relevant statute and argue that it authorized such a policy but did not require it. They also point out that Rosa Parks was charged with violating the state law because the Montgomery City Code did not require a black person to relinquish a seat unless another one was available in the part of the bus reserved for African Americans. The MIA argues that the state law was flexible enough to permit the group's proposed seating arrangement, which would not eliminate bus segregation.

We have heretofore stated the position of the Negro Citizens of Montgomery with reference to the local bus situation. As good citizens we want to comply with the law until the law is changed or is over-ruled. However, we feel that we have the right to insist that the law be fairly administered.

In answer to our request that the Montgomery City Lines adopt a policy of