

Civil Rights


BHS/J6 HISTORY JOURNAL

2021
ISSUE3



'I have a dream'

THE WINDRUSH SCANDAL / ROSA PARKS / JIM CROW
LAWS / PAUL STEPHENSON / GHANDI



“I have a dream that one day my four little children will live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of the skin but by the content of their character ”

Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech is still remembered for the enormous impact it had on the civil rights movement, but this was far from his only contribution. He led countless protests against segregation in the US. He also campaigned fiercely against poverty.

However, he was not alone. Within this edition, you will learn about a number of progressive thinkers who took action in the fight for equality.

You will read examples of hope, promise and progress.

Miss Brownell

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Martin Luther King Jr

Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the most famous advocates in American history. He was instrumental in bringing about the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which officially outlawed segregation in the USA. He preached nonviolent civil disobedience leading marches, peaceful protests, and boycotts across the country. His goal was to obtain political and social equality of people of colour.



In the early 1950s, King, whilst enrolled in Boston University, met Coretta Scott King, an intelligent woman of colour. The couple married in 1953 and settled in Montgomery, Alabama, where they started a family together. In 1954, King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. By this time, he was already a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP). In 1955, a black woman named Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man.

This kickstarted an event known as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, in which people of colour avoided using public transport. King was chosen as the protest's leader and official spokesperson. The boycott lasted 382 days, putting an economic strain on the public transit system and Montgomery's business owners. Ultimately, this protest resulted in the Browder vs. Gayle case of 1956, ruling bus segregation unconstitutional. In 1957, King and other activists set up the Southern Christian Leadership Society (SCLC), an organisation dedicated to achieving racial equality. As the head of the SCLC, from 1957 to 1968, King travelled across the country and around the world, giving over 2,500 speeches, and meeting with political leaders, activists, and religious figures.

He drew inspiration from Gandhi, a non-violent activist in India who had advocated for Indian independence from British rule. In 1963, following the Birmingham campaign, a movement organised by the SCLC to integrate the black and white communities of Birmingham, Alabama, and subsequently his famous 'Letter from Birmingham Jail', King alongside other members of the SCLC and NAACP organised a mass protest known as the March on Washington DC. The objective of the March on Washington was to draw attention to inequalities that the African American communities were still facing. Over 250,000 people gathered to listen to the series of speeches and protests. The last speech was given by King himself, appropriately coined the 'I have a dream' speech.



The 'I have a dream' speech is one of the most iconic and influential speeches in American history. King quoted lines from the American Declaration of Independence and referenced Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which had formally ended slavery nearly 100 years earlier. He talked about the injustices people of colour continued to face despite the so called 'American dream', ultimately resulting in one of his most famous lines of all time; 'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.'

Less than a year after the March on Washington, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed congress. This act officially prohibited segregation and discrimination based on race. King was assassinated four years later, in 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee.

Blythe Ray (Y11)





The Jim Crow Laws

After the Civil War and the banning of slavery in America, the Jim Crow Laws were put in place in southern states, denying black people the same rights as whites, the first of these in 1865. Black and white people were segregated, meaning they were essentially separated from each other. Transportation, cinemas, public bathrooms, schools and restaurants were among the places segregated. There were sometimes separate buildings, and on buses, if a white person wanted to sit down and there was no room, a black person would have to either stand up, or possibly leave.

The Jim Crow Laws also followed the belief whites were superior to blacks, and things such as a black person shaking hands with a white person and blacks and whites eating a meal together were against the law. Whites were also allowed the right of way at all times on roads, and were always served first at hotels and restaurants. Blacks were not allowed to be referred to with titles such as Miss, Mr. or Mrs. by a white person, and were not allowed to show affection to each other in public, as whites would be offended.

When a black person talked to a white, they were supposed to never say a white person is lying, never claim or demonstrate to have more knowledge than them and never laugh at them in a way which shows disrespect.

A series of laws passed in the Southern states also made it near impossible for African Americans to vote, and they were deprived of their right to vote for nearly a century.

There were many protests against the Jim Crow Laws, but it wasn't until after World War Two when a change started to happen. In 1948, President Truman signed an order banning segregation in the armed forces. In June of 1964, three civil rights activists tried to help African Americans vote, and this caused a lot of attention from the country. Finally, President Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act and signed the degree on July 2nd, 1964.

Throughout the 20th century, the Jim Crow Laws were overturned, and segregation in education, transport and employment was banned. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 also helped black people gain the right to vote again. The Civil Rights Act had a huge long-term impact on the country, ending years of segregation and discrimination in America.

Chloe Gregory

Tutor Reading: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Harper Lee's 1960 Pulitzer Prize winning novel 'To Kill a Mockingbird' is a book that everyone interested in Civil Rights should read. But why?

What's the Plot?

'To Kill a Mockingbird' opens a window onto Depression-era small-town America, through the eyes of 6-year-old Scout Finch. It is a coming-of-age tale, charting the events of two summers in her life, offering a mixture of comedy and tragedy. As we see Scout begin to understand (if not accept) the inequalities of society at the time, we come to comprehend the challenges faced by the most vulnerable in society: the shadowy neighbour, Boo Radley; the impoverished, uneducated Mayella Ewell; the innocent black man accused of a capital crime, Tom Robinson.

Where is it set?

The action of the novel takes place in the fictional town of Maycomb in the state of Alabama: the home of both Harper Lee and Martin Luther King Jr, as well as the site of many Civil Rights protests, including the 1955 Bus Boycott, inspired by Rosa Parks. Alabama was a hot-bed of racial tension, especially during the Depression; competition for jobs was at its peak, with white men seeking positions once only thought fit for black men.

Equally important is *when* the story is set. Although written in 1960, 'To Kill a Mockingbird' is set in the 1930s. This allowed the first readers a distance from which to view the past; Lee believed that had she set it in 1960, the story would have been rejected as 'too uncomfortable'. It was, however, embraced by the America of the time, with 8 Oscar nominations for the film adaptation in 1962, including the Best Actor Award for Gregory Peck, who played Atticus Finch, the character based on Lee's own father.

Who was the author?

Harper Lee was born in 1926, in Monroeville, Alabama, and her early life (like Scout's) was influenced by her father's position as a lawyer, and the racial inequalities in society. During her early years, Lee saw her father defend two black men accused of murder, only for both of them to be handed down the death sentence, despite a lack of evidence. After this, so heavily affected by the outcome of their trials, Lee's father refused to take another criminal case. Harper Lee was also influenced by the Scottsboro rape trial of 1931, in which 8 black men were condemned to death, and by the trial of Walter Lett, accused of raping a white woman. This case was covered by her father, who was, at the time, a newspaper editor and was almost certainly the true inspiration for the trial of Tom Robinson.

On Lee's death in 2016, President Obama said that '...she changed America for the better', whilst Martin Luther King Jr acknowledged her contribution to the peaceful Civil Rights movement, saying 'To the Negro in 1963, as Atticus Finch, it had become obvious that non-violence could symbolise the gold badge of heroism rather than the white feather of cowardice'.

Why everyone should read *To Kill a Mockingbird*

This is a book that everyone should read. It reminds us that society is still unequal; at a time when we support the Black Lives Matter movement, this was never more important. It presents a society that is flawed, but not without hope, as we see characters taking 'baby steps' (in Atticus' words) to a more equal future. It challenges stereotypes; makes us question our own actions; it reminds us what it is to be human- and that this is not defined by the colour of one's skin. Please, read it.

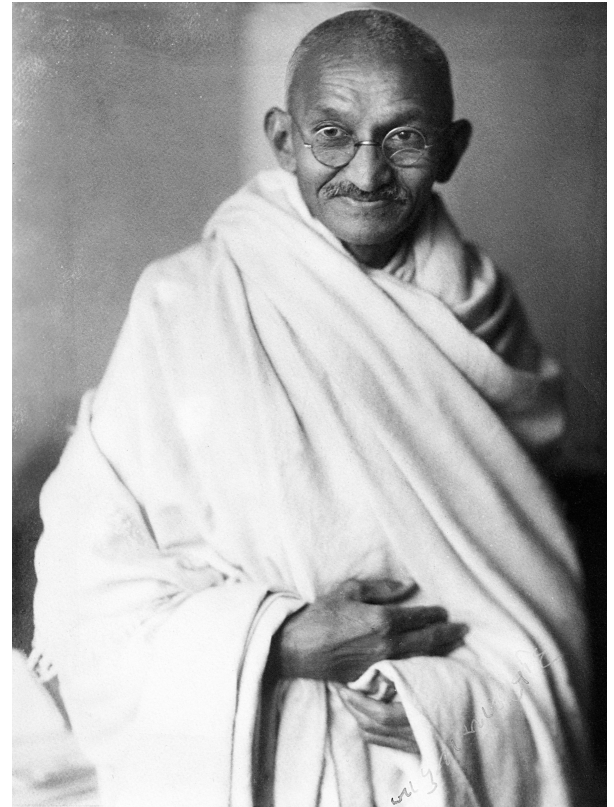
Mary O'Loughlin (Y9)



Gandhi and Staygraha

Gandhi, nicknamed “the great soul” began his humanitarian legacy in South Africa. In early 1893 after being educated in England, Gandhi moved to South Africa under a one year contract to practice law. Sadly he was subjected to racism and restrictive laws which were in place against Indian labourers. It was when being forcibly removed from a first-class carriage on a train that Gandhi decided to take action in the defence of his rights. Gandhi remained in South Africa for 21 years and campaigned against the imposed legislation to take away the vote from South Africa’s Indian population by forming a Natal Indian congress and successfully drawing international attention to the injustice face by the Indians.

In 1906, some South African governments wanted to further the restrictions on the Indians. In opposition to this, Gandhi launched his first act of mass civil disobedience in the form of a peaceful campaign. He developed the phrase satyagraha (meaning to hold on to truth) to describe the non-violent civil resistance he was promoting. After protesting for 7 years, Gandhi was successful and was able to negotiate a compromise with the South African government.



A new satyagraha was launched during the first world war in support of British-Indian soldiers whose service in the war was made mandatory. Thousands of people answered his call to protest, and by 1920 he was the leader of the Indian movement for independence. He continued protests throughout Britain, which resulted in being jailed between 1922 and 1924 by the British government; however by this point, Gandhi was a massively influential figure with millions of followers. In the 1930s, he restarted his campaign, only to land him in prison again. This sentence was short lived as he was invited to represent the Indian national conference party at a round table conference in London, proving his persistent action to make effects.

Gandhi returned to India in 1932 and restarted his peaceful campaigning. This landed him once again in jail, but he continued his cell protests where 8 months later he began a "fast unto death" (hunger strike). This was to fight against the formation of a new Indian constitution which was supported by Britain. This would result in India's lowest class who were known as "the untouchables" to be given their own separate political representation for as long as 70 years. Gandhi believed this would further isolate and separate this class from the rest of India's society. From his prison cell in Yerovda, he said: "This is a God-given opportunity that has come to me to offer my life as a final sacrifice to the downtrodden." His fast lasted 6 days and came to an end when the British government reversed the decision which would separate "the untouchables" from the other social classes, so his fast was a huge success. Gandhi frequently turned to hunger strikes as a form of protest as he knew the British government would collapse under the pressure of public concern for "the great soul"/ Mahatma. Gandhi's influence only grew as India progressed towards independence and now has a legacy as one of the twentieth century's greatest political and spiritual leaders and the father of the Indian nation. In dedication to Gandhi's efforts towards peace, statues in cities such as Leicester, London and Manchester have been erected; however, this has proved a controversial decision. During the black lives matter campaign, awareness was spread about many branches of racism, one of which being racist historical figures. Gandhi fell under this branch due to being strongly "anti-black". As a result, there was a lot of opposition to the statues across the country alongside other historical figures such as Churchill. Students from Manchester appealed his statue due to his "well documented anti-black racism" and derogatory views towards native Africans. Similar appeals took place in Leicester and London.

While a figure's racist acts should never be celebrated, many argue that the statues are a celebration of Gandhi's progressive and radical movement towards peace and stand as a representation of the extensive list of transformative things he achieved. This defence led the UK appeals to be unsuccessful. In a university campus in Ghana, an appeal proposed by professors and students to remove a statue of Gandhi was successful and the statue was relocated. The university did not want to be in any way associated with his referrals to africans as kaffirs (a racist slur) and his claims of Indians being a supreme race over africans.

In a way, the controversy has its benefits.

The statues are a stimulus for the conversation and education about the multiple sides to a renowned symbol of peace and shows that maybe we shouldn't be too quick to put people onto a moral pedestal

Emily Allsup (Y13)

‘Statues are a stimulus for conversation’



Rosa Parks

When thinking of the Civil Rights struggle, bold young and fresh-faced people such as Martin Luther King Jr tend to come to mind. Yet Rosa Parks' decision to not move seats on a segregated bus made her a leader of the Montgomery bus Boycotts notorious even today. Although she was not the first to protest against the segregated bus system, she was one of the most prominent figures of the movement. Before the famous protest on the 1st of December 1955, Rosa Parks had had multiple issues with that particular bus driver before, such as him making her have to walk 5 miles home in the rain.

The most important and revolutionary run-in occurred when her seat- which was in the black division of the bus, was needed for a white man to sit in. Her refusal to move from her rightful place on the bus served as a rejection of the humiliation caused by the indignity of segregation but also the racism of that time. The bus driver proceeded to call the police, who in turn forced her into handcuffs and led her away to the station. Rosa's plight inspired 40,000 citizens to take part in a revolutionary Bus Boycott. After these protests in Montgomery, Parks became a secretary, and use this to speak and promote civil rights. During her life, she saw an end to legalized segregation. She won many awards, such as the Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Award for Freedom. After her death in 2005, Parks left behind a nation she loved and an improved lives for many.

Melissa Eddon Y10



Lilith Cooper (Y9)

Paul Stephenson OBE is an English Civil Rights activist, community worker, and long-time campaigner for civil rights for the British African-Caribbean community in Bristol, England. He is known mainly for his Civil Rights activism and community relations.

In 1963, Stephenson led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company, protesting against the fact that the company refused to employ Black or Asian drivers or conductors. At the time he was a young social worker. The company eventually revoked its colour bar, after the boycott had lasted 60 days and was supported by thousands of Bristolians who wanted to be treated fairly. This boycott is known as the Bristol Bus Boycott. This historical event goes to show that things can be changed, you just need to have the confidence to help out yourself, instead of waiting for someone else to do it.



Paul Stephenson OBE and Civil Rights



In 1964, he was asked to leave a public house because of his skin colour. He refused to leave until he was served, which resulted in a trial on a charge of failing to leave a licensed building. This act made him nationally famous and is truly inspiring to many. He was being treated unfairly because of the colour of his skin, but he wouldn't allow his rights to be abused. He wanted him and others to be able to live their lives as they wanted to the same extent as any white person.

His campaigns were important in paving the way for the first Race Relations Act, in 1965, and he was later awarded an OBE in 2009 "for his services to equal opportunities and to community relations in Bristol".

More recently, on October 20th 2020, Great Western Railway named one of its Intercity Express Trains in Paul Stephenson OBE's honour.

Lily Myers

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: The Windrush Scandal

Imagine that yesterday you went to work as a doctor, nurse, teacher. You earned the money so your children could go to school yesterday and your partner had a round of chemotherapy, free on the NHS. You went to the gym, met your friends from years ago and went back to your nice, snug home with your own things in it. An average, but pleasant life. Well-earned, not taken for granted but never under threat either. Today you and your husband face deportation, your house is no longer be your home and your neighbours no longer your friends. The plans of university for your children and the peaceful days of retirement no longer float on the horizon, instead years of rebuilding a life from nothing, remaking friendships and trying to support the needs of your family. That is a reality faced suddenly by innocent people who, just yesterday, were British civilians living British lives in British homes. Then suddenly they're forced to say goodbye to.

The nation and people they had trusted. In 1948 Britain faced major labour shortages in the after-effects of the devastating losses of World War II. To attempt to help themselves by filling this deficit, Britain came up with an act. The British Nationality Act 1948 gave citizenship of the United Kingdom and right of settlement in the UK to everyone who was then classed a British subject because they had been born in a British colony. Thanks to the act and encouragement from British government campaigns in Caribbean countries, there was a wave of immigration between 1948 to 1970 from Caribbean countries to England. In total, around half a million people moved from the Caribbean to Britain. Naturally, many children travelled from the Caribbean with their parents to make a new, 'ideal' life for themselves in England.

They were considered British subjects at the time and so were given no documents upon their entry to England. Also, because many of the Windrush generation arrived as children on their parents' passports, and the Home Office destroyed thousands of landing cards and other records, many had no documentation to prove their right to live in England. They worked for England, went to school in England but had virtually no proof of their existence here or, rather, had no evidence deemed legal by the Home Office. The 1971 Immigration Act gave Commonwealth citizens already living in the UK indefinite leave to remain and for around 40 years things were alright.

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‘They were now considered strangers in the country they had grown up in’

The legal problems really emerged in 2012 with the introduction of the hostile environment policy comprised of administrative and legislative measures to make staying in the United Kingdom as difficult as possible for people deemed illegal immigrants by creating a really hostile environment. The Home Office demanded proof of residency that predated 1973, requiring people to produce at least one official document from every year they had lived here and evidence from when they arrived; impossible for the children of the Windrush generation who had simply travelled on their parents’ passports, the Home Office had destroyed their landing cards and they had no records from every year they had existed here in the only home they had known. They were now not only considered strangers in the country they had grown up in, and for many the only home they could remember, but were now deemed illegal and criminals.

Other than morally degrading and demeaning, how did this affect the lives of these ‘criminals’? Many were kept in immigration detention centres, prevented from travelling abroad, threatened with forcible removal or even deported to countries they could barely remember or had no memory of. Even if they were not forcibly locked up or removed, daily life was made progressively more and more difficult if they chose to remain. They began losing access to housing, free healthcare, bank accounts and driving licenses. It was emotional, and physical, blackmail in the extreme.

And it is still going on today. Osmine Brown is 22, has lived in Britain for 18 years and can barely remember his country of birth, Jamaica. Osmine has autism and a learning age of 6-7, and in 2018 was jailed for stealing a friend’s phone, a crime he denies. If he were white and born on English soil he would face only the one punishment, jail, but because of the colour of his skin and where his parents were living when he was born, he also faces deportation away from his family, friends and the only home he has really known. Thrown into a confusing, unknown world that he doesn’t understand with no one around him to help, he risks an interminable cycle of crime or even a threat to his survival.

Even trying to stay on the right side of the law is no safety net. Ken Morgan, previously an English teacher, was barred from returning to home to England after a fault that was not his own, therefore deported in all but name, for 25 years. Ken travelled to England in 1960, aged 10 years old and, unlike many, had his own British passport. He went to school in London, lived in England and worked in the British education sector for over 30 years. He had built a life, a family and a home. And then it was pulled from under him instantaneously and cold-heartedly. He decided to attend a relative's funeral in Jamaica in 1994. On returning, he was barred from entering London and had his passport confiscated on unjust and unlawful, for that time, grounds. So he was stranded in Jamaica for 25 years, a quarter of a century. When the Windrush scandal finally emerged in 2017, he was given a temporary visa for travelling to the UK and while there applied for British citizenship. After 2 years, they rejected his application because he had been out of the country 5 years ago and had spent over 450 days out of the country in the application period. What they failed to recognise or acknowledge was that both of those were due to being wrongly barred previously and that due to the 2 year delay, he had been out of the country while waiting for the application to be processed; both mistakes were by the same people rejecting his application. Ken Morgan, after being destitute on the streets for years, managed to start a business and end up making a living for himself working for a prestigious university.

The endings are not always this happy though. In 2001, Nathaniel went on holiday to Jamaica with his daughter Veronica and were told on setting off to come home to the UK that he would not be allowed back into the country. The passport he had had for some 45 years, which declared him a citizen of the UK and Colonies, wasn't valid anymore. Nine years later Nathaniel died in Jamaica, unable to afford treatment for prostate cancer which would have been free on the NHS.

Mistakes happen, of course. Blaming and finger-pointing is useless; what is important is understanding why they happened and learning from them. But has anything really been learned from the Windrush scandal?

With Black Lives Matter prevailing in the media recently, it would seem we are closer to equality than ever before. Certainly, more Black people are able to have their stories heard than ever have before. And the story certainly evoked anger and outrage amongst much of the public towards the Home Office on their handling of the scandal. But thousands still await financial recompensation, which for many is far more urgent and important than moral symbolism, recognition from BLM and shallow apologies from the Home Office. The hostile environment policy that exposed these issues is still in place to this day, showing that the self-same attitudes towards immigrants haven't changed. They may have changed on the surface, that's the easy part to change what you say, but apologies only go so far. But the question here isn't have the lessons been learned, but have the lessons been learned and actually implemented?

Grace Weerakoon (Y12)

The Murder of Derek Bennett

On 16th July 2001, Derek Bennet (age 29) was killed by 4 gunshots fired by marksmen in London. Derek Bennett had previously grabbed a man round the neck whilst being chased by police; the police then shouted at him to let go as Derek held a gun to the man's head. Within minutes, he was dead. What the police had previously thought to be a gun turned out to be a novelty lighter replicating that shape. What made matters worse, was that Derek Bennett was a psychiatric patient who was later going to be referred to a hospital; was ill he didn't need to be killed, he needed help.

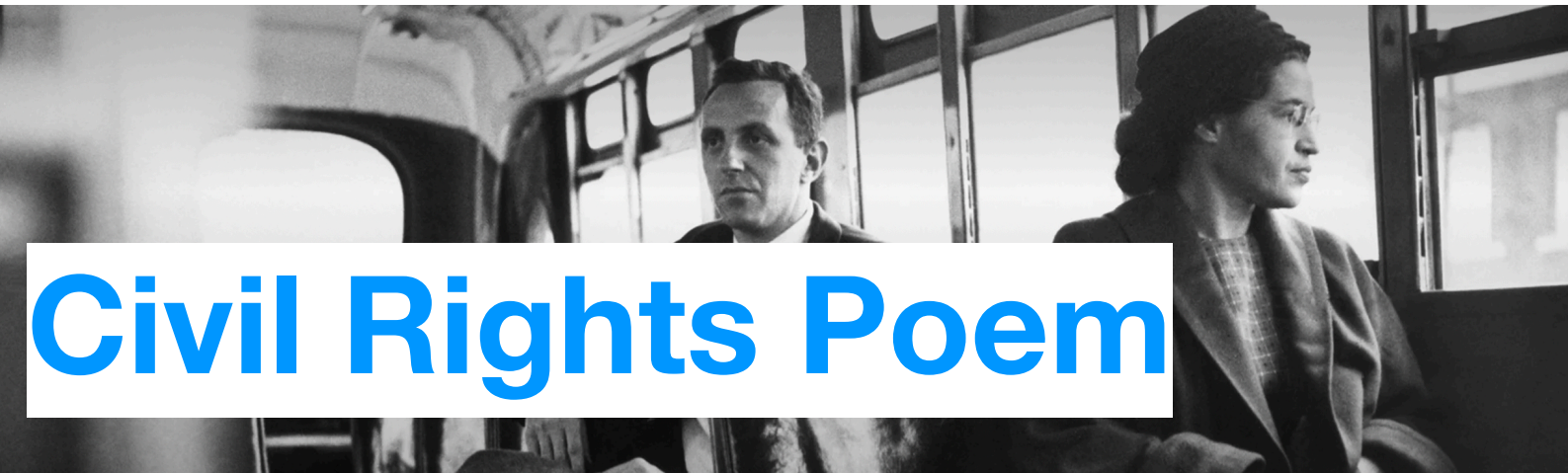
His death was said to be a lawful killing meaning the court decided that the killing of Derek was committed with the public's best interest at heart. Many people believe that the decision of the court was 'outrageous', but nothing changed, and Derek's family left the court devastated. If Derek had a real gun and shot the police, the court would probably have sent him to a hospital instead of prison, but yet when he faked having a gun he had to die. Maybe the police felt threatened and they killed him in the moment, but they still shouldn't have killed a mentally ill man. Just because he came across as a threat doesn't mean he was one. How should the policemen be able to get away with the death, when if he shot them, he would be punished. Derek Bennett deserves Justice.



Maisie Lee



Abigail Hitchenor (Y7)



As I stepped onto the bus after my long day at work my feet ached, all I wanted to do was sit down.

As I walked all the way to the back of the bus I felt faces frown.

I looked around there was no seats on the black part of the bus, all I wanted to do was sit down.

My feet so weary, I sit on the white part of the bus, the white people start to cuss, all I wanted to do was sit down.

A white lady, wants my seat, she thinks she is better than me, I am black I shouldn't be here, but all I want to do is sit down.

The Police arrive to take me away, they drag me off the bus by my arms for being a black woman on a white seat, all I wanted to do was sit down.

By Isabelle Dolman (Y7)