

## **Acknowledgments**

I am deeply indebted to the many people who have taken an interest in this project. They generously devoted their time, their insights and their labor to help me produce a vivid and thoughtful account of the women activists of the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

In Montgomery, several people shared with me their time, memories and insights. Harris, of the Holt Street Baptist Church Historical Society, spoke with me at length about his memories of the boycott and gave me suggestions for my research in Montgomery. I conducted interviews with Mary Jo Smiley, the Associate Minister at Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, and Inell Johnson, a member of the NAACP, the Alpha Iota Alpha chapter of Alpha Chi Ti Omega Sorority, Inc. and the Lilly Baptist Church. Both women invited me into their homes and generously allowed me to audio tape and take written notes while they answered my many questions about their experiences during and after the boycott. These interviews greatly enhanced my understanding of gender relations in Montgomery during the 1950's and my understanding of the lives of key women leaders. Visits to Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, The Troy State University Montgomery Rosa Parks Library and Museum and the Alabama Department of Archives and History gave me a deeper understanding of Montgomery's history and the people working hard to continue the city's legacy of civil rights activism.

The documents I had access to at The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc. were essential to this project. Cynthia Lewis and Elaine Hall gave me permission to visit The King Center archives, where they

suggested relevant files, were attentive to my requests for documents, and made a special effort to suggest new directions for my research. Before taking my summer trip, I met separately with Harvard professors David Hall, Timothy McCarthy and Richard Parker, to whom I am indebted for their advice on resources for this thesis. Harvard professor Marshall Ganz also met with me this past summer. His advice to look beyond churches to other community organizations that have been sources of political training for African Americans influenced the direction of my thesis research. Taylor Branch spoke with me several times by phone, once in July and again in March, impressing upon me the importance of capturing each individual subject's unique viewpoint and sharing his own insights into the boycott. Jane Calhoun helped me obtain timely approval from the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research for the interviews I conducted in Montgomery.

Upon returning for the summer, I needed further guidance to shape my ideas into a well-argued, well-written and well-formatted paper. Heather Curtis and Kimerer LaMothe, helped me find the best advisors for my thesis and Heather Curtis remained in touch to give me guidance throughout the thesis process. I am very grateful to my graduate advisor, Curtis Evans and my thesis advisor, Professor Robert Orsi, who worked with me and with one another intensively for nine months. In addition to meeting regularly every week or two, they were always available when I needed their advice, which was often. Curtis Evans and Professor Orsi guided me to become a more solid writer, researcher and thinker. Curtis Evans was especially helpful in locating new sources for me, challenging me to strengthen my argument, and answering my many technical questions. Professor Orsi also challenged my

argument, while taking me step-by-step through the writing process, addressing structure and style. He edited in great detail several drafts of this thesis, teaching me to improve my writing. Evans and Orsi made the success of this project and the personal growth that I experienced as a result possible.

My parents, Neil and Sayra Meyerhoff each edited an early draft of thesis and my father, Neil Meyerhoff, spent over 5 hours editing a complete draft. Thanks to my family for their enthusiasm for and pride in my work, as well as for their practical support of the project. My friends Melissa Brewster, Heidi Bruggink, Katelin Isaacs and Shai Sachs provided constant companionship and encouragement throughout this project.