

Five Scenarios

Scenario #1: A bus driver closed the door on a black soldier's hand as he was tossing a cigarette butt while boarding. The soldier perceived it as a vicious and deliberate act of racism. Words were then exchanged between the two, which quickly escalated into a fistfight: "Soldier drew back to hit operator, who struck soldier on head with gun. He reached in his pocket and operator told him to take his hand out or he would kill him. He withdrew his hand and left bus."

Scenario #2: In October of 1943, a teenager named Pauline Carth attempted to board the College Hills line around 8:00 PM. When she was informed that there was no more room for "colored" passengers, she forced her way into the bus anyway, threw her money at the driver and cursed and spit on him. The driver responded by knocking her out of the bus, throwing her to the ground and holding her down until police arrived.

Scenario #3: On a North Birmingham bus, a fight ensued when a black woman allegedly pushed a white woman out of the way while she was boarding through the front door during a rain storm. Soaking wet, these two women "went down the aisle...fighting with their umbrellas." But the battle did not end there. A white man standing in the aisle who had witnessed the fight walked up to the black woman (who by then had found a seat) and hit her with his own umbrella. She, in turn, "grabbed [his] umbrella and [the] handle came off, and she struck back at [the] man with the part she had. Operator separated them and there was no further trouble." Surprisingly, no one was arrested.

Scenario #4: In April of 1944, a white woman boarded the Mountain Terrace bus and started a tirade against blacks, which was her usual custom. At 29th Street she said she was going to see that the color boards were not moved this morning (giving the blacks more room) and moved as far back in the bus as she could in the white section. Later she came to the operator and asked him to make the blacks stop laughing at her. He told her he could not stop them from laughing and she then went into a tirade. A black girl made some remark, the woman rushed back and a fight started. The operator separated them and had no further trouble. "This woman causes some trouble every morning," the driver claimed.

Scenario #5: A fight started when the conductor tried to make a black, and allegedly intoxicated, passenger stop cursing. The black man lunged at the conductor who shoved him back. A fight started and the black man kicked the conductor back into his seat. The motorman came to assist and the black man took out a knife. The conductor took out a gun and hit the black man on the head and knocked him down. Another black man offered to take the first black man off and they got off the train. The train made the downtown loop and stopped at 2nd Avenue and 17th Street where this black man boarded with an open knife in an upraised hand. Another fight started and the conductor shot him.

