



“I said give me those seats!” the bus driver bellowed. Mrs. Parks looked up in surprise. The two men on the opposite side of the aisle were rising to move into the crowded black section. Jimmy’s father muttered, more to himself than anyone else, “I don’t feel like trouble today. I’m gonna move.”

Mrs. Parks stood to let him out, looked at James Blake, the bus driver, and then sat back down.





“You better make it easy on yourself!” Blake yelled.

“Why do you pick on us?” Mrs. Parks asked with that quiet strength of hers.

“I’m going to call the police!” Blake threatened.

“Do what you must,” Mrs. Parks quietly replied. She was not frightened. She was not going to give in to that which was wrong.

Some of the white people were saying aloud, “She ought to be arrested,” and “Take her off this bus.” Some of the black people, recognizing the potential for ugliness, got off the bus. Others stayed on, saying among themselves, “That is the neutral section. She has a right to be there.”

Mrs. Parks sat.

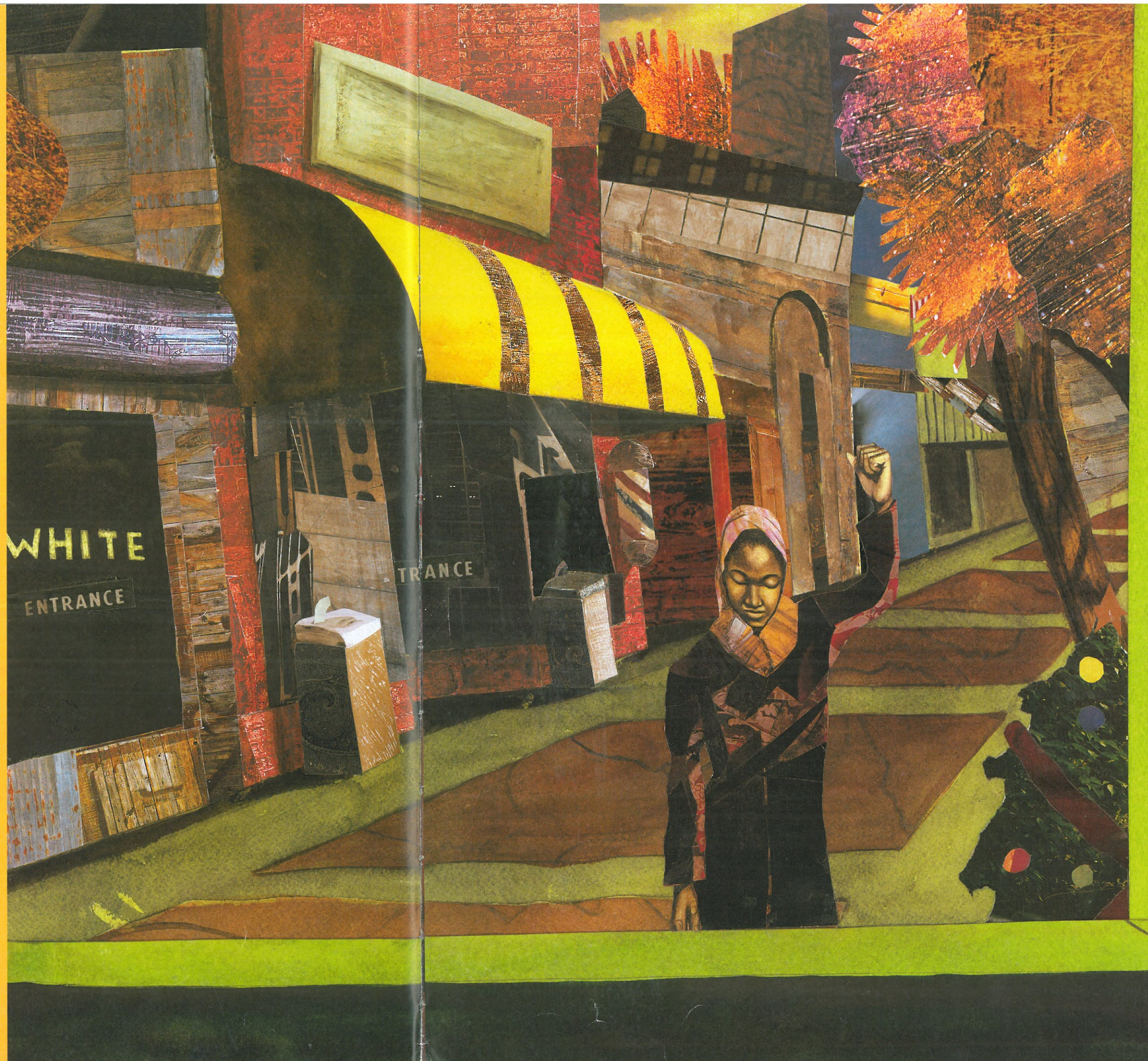




As Mrs. Parks sat waiting for the police to come, she thought of all the brave men and women, boys and girls who stood tall for civil rights. She recited in her mind the 1954 Brown versus Board of Education decision, in which the United States Supreme Court ruled that separate is “inherently unequal.”

She sighed as she realized she was tired. Not tired from work but tired of putting white people first. Tired of stepping off sidewalks to let white people pass, tired of eating at separate lunch counters and learning at separate schools.

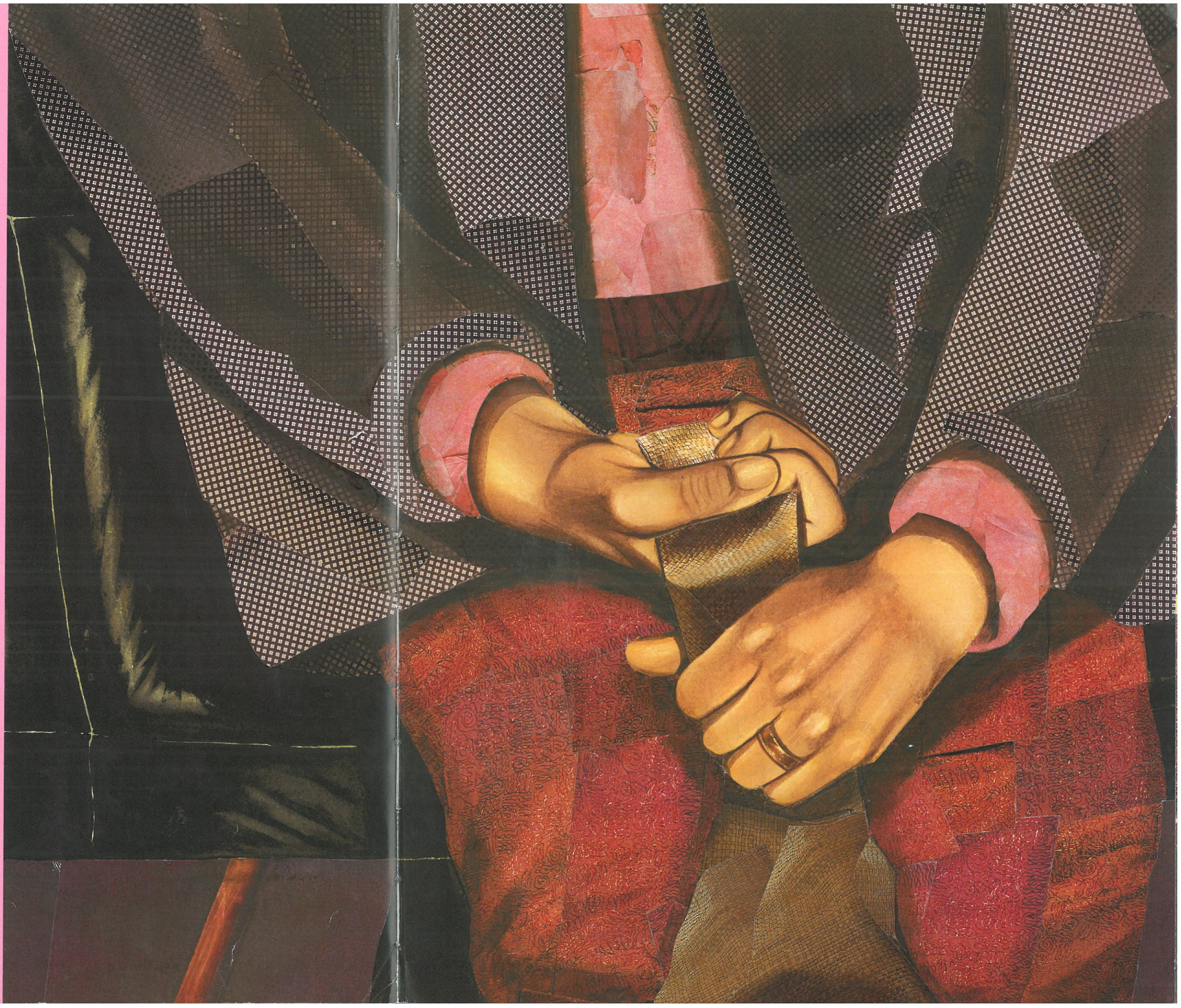
She was tired of “Colored” entrances, “Colored” balconies, “Colored” drinking fountains, and “Colored” taxis. She was tired of getting somewhere first and being waited on last. Tired of “separate,” and definitely tired of “not equal.”



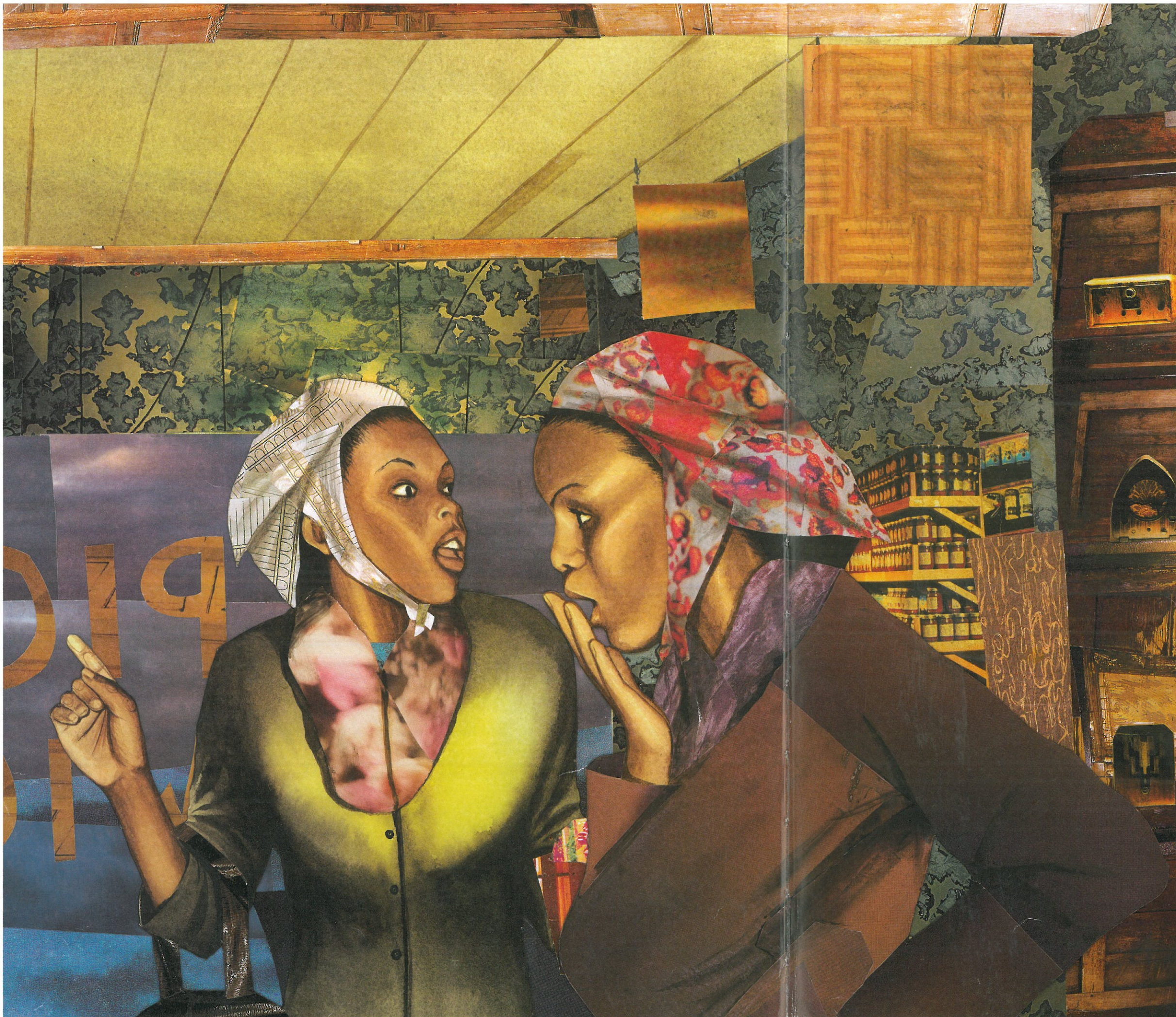


She thought about her mother and her grandmother and knew they would want her to be strong. She had not sought this moment, but she was ready for it.

When the policeman bent down to ask “Auntie, are you going to move?” all the strength of all the people through all those many years joined in her. Rosa Parks said no.







Jo Ann Robinson was at the Piggly Wiggly when she learned of the arrest. She had stopped in to purchase a box of macaroni and cheese. She always served macaroni and cheese when she baked red snapper for dinner. A sister member of the Women's Political Council approached her just as she reached the checkout lane.

"Not Mrs. Parks!" Mrs. Robinson exclaimed. She then looked furtively around. "Pass the word that everybody should meet me at my office at ten o'clock tonight," she said.

Mrs. Robinson was also Dr. Robinson, a professor at Alabama State, the college designated for "Colored" people, and she was the newly elected president of the Women's Political Council. She rushed home to put dinner on the table, cleaned up the kitchen, and put the kids to bed. She kissed her husband good-bye and hurried to the college. It was dark when they finally gathered.





The twenty-five women first held hands in prayer in hopes that they were doing the right thing. After all, they were going to use the stencil maker, printer, and paper of Alabama State without permission. If they were caught at the college, they all could be arrested for trespassing. But they were working to undermine a vicious law. They decided they would stand under the umbrella of courage Rosa Parks had offered, keeping off the rains of fear and self disgust.

The women quickly formed groups to carry out each task. Making the stencils was the most difficult because the machine keys had to be struck very hard so that the letters would be clearly readable. If a mistake was made, the whole page had to be thrown out; it took a lot of concentration.

