

Rosa Parks

Hello! My name is Rosa Parks and I was an important and influential American. You should know about me because I did not give up my seat on a bus to a white man. My action helped to start the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement aimed its efforts toward changing the laws in Montgomery, Alabama and in other communities across America to give equal rights to all people.

I was born on February 4, 1913. I lived with my mother, brother and grandparents in Alabama. When I was growing up black people did not have the same rights as white people. In those days, schools were different for black children and white children. White children went to better schools. They had heated classrooms and new textbooks. Black children went to school in run-down buildings. They had no heat, no desks, and few books. Black children went to school for part of the year. During the rest of the year they worked in fields to help their families.

In 1932 when I was almost 20 years old I married a man named, Raymond Parks. He was a good man and he helped me to finish high school.

On December 1, 1955, I made a very important decision that changed my life and the lives of many others.

On that day I left work feeling tired. I had worked many hours sewing at my job in a department store. I got on a bus and took a seat. Black people were not allowed to sit in the front of the bus. They had to sit in the back. Only white people could sit in the front. It was the law in Montgomery and many other parts of the South.

The bus began filling up. Soon there were no seats left. The bus driver told me and some others to give up our seats for white people. I was the only one who did not follow the bus driver's orders. He told me he would call the police. I said, "Arrest me for sitting on a bus? You may do that." I was then arrested and taken to jail.

When I was released from jail I decided to not pay the \$14 fine and instead fight to change the unfair bus law. My friends helped to organize a boycott. A boycott is when people come together and refuse to buy or use something. All the black people who usually rode the bus to work agreed to walk instead. This meant that the bus company lost money.

An important minister helped tell people about the boycott. His name was Martin Luther King, Jr. He told people to fight for what they believed in, but to do it peacefully.

While the boycott was going on, my lawyers took my case all the way to the highest court in the United States,

The Supreme Court! My lawyers said that I should not have been arrested. They said that segregation on buses should be against the law because it treats black people unfairly.

The bus boycott lasted for more than a year. Then, on December 20, 1956, the city of Montgomery got an order from the United States Supreme Court. It said that buses could no longer be segregated.

This was a great victory. But, many restaurants, stores and even hospitals were still not open to African Americans. It took many years, and many battles, to end segregation.

I Rosa Parks, worked hard for the Civil Rights Movement. I received many honors and awards for all that I have done. I have met many famous people, including presidents. I helped to find housing for the homeless. I founded an institute to provide education and guidance for young people and teach them about black history. Museums and libraries and even a street has been named after me. I am known for saying, "You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it is right." I hope my story will inspire others to stand up for themselves. I would like for all people to be treated with dignity and respect.