

ROSA PARKS

Rosa Parks was born February 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. She spent her childhood in Alabama. At the age of 11, she enrolled in the Montgomery Industrial School for Girls, which was a private school. Later, she worked as a seamstress in Montgomery.

Rosa Parks has been called the "mother of the civil rights movement" and one of the most important citizens of the 20th century. In the early 1950s, the bus system in Montgomery, as in many parts of the United States, was segregated. Blacks, who were the majority of the bus riders, were required to board the bus at the front, buy their tickets, and then re-board the bus in the back. Sometimes, they weren't able to get on the bus again before it drove away. They were not allowed to sit in the front of the bus, which often made it difficult to get off at the right stop. Even if they were sitting in the "black section", they were still required to give their seats up to white passengers if the "white section" was full. Black passengers were not even allowed to sit across from white passengers.

In December of 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white passenger. The bus driver had her arrested. She was tried and convicted of violating a local ordinance.

Her act sparked a citywide boycott of the bus system. The boycott introduced the country to a clergyman named Martin Luther King, Jr. who gained national prominence, leading the protest with the words: "There comes a time that people get tired." Eventually, the U.S. Supreme Court made a decision outlawing segregation on city buses. In December 1956, Montgomery's public transportation system was legally integrated.

Over the next four decades, Rosa Parks helped make her fellow Americans aware of the history of the civil rights struggle. This pioneer in the struggle for racial equality earned many honors, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal. She is an example of courage and determination and an inspirational symbol to all Americans.

Rosa Parks died in 2005 at the age of 92.