

# Is rosa parks a true hero

People



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Hero A hero is a person, typically a man, who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities. Despite what some may argue, Rosa Parks is a perfect example of a Civil rights hero. This can be seen not only through the famous Montgomery Bus ride, but also through other examples where she showed courage, made achievements, or proved herself to have noble qualities. These include: Sparking the Montgomery bus boycott, helping the formation of the MIA, Being directly connected to the Browder versus Gayle lawsuit, Working with Martin Luther King, Featuring on International news, Writing her Autobiography and gaining honors and Awards. In the segregated Montgomery of Dec. 1, 1955, the first 10 rows of a bus were reserved for white riders. As the bus went along its route, more people got on, and the white section of the bus filled up. When another white man boarded, the driver ordered Parks and three blacks seated next to her to move. Parks refused and was arrested.

This act of individual resistance, especially in a time where there was lynching for blacks who stepped out of line was rare, especially for a woman. Although it seems insignificant, Parks' resistance on Dec. 1, 1955 changed the course of history and led to her other major accomplishments, eventually making her an American Hero. 2 Sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks on 1 December 1955, the Montgomery bus boycott was a 13-month mass protest that ended with the U. S. 3 Supreme Court ruling that segregation on public buses is unconstitutional. It started off, with a one day boycott, where people were asked to stay off the buses.

However, On 5 December, 90 percent of Montgomery's black citizens stayed off the buses. That afternoon, the city's ministers and leaders met to discuss

the possibility of extending the boycott into a long-term campaign. During this meeting the MIA was formed. 3 The Montgomery Improvement Association's (MIA) role was to oversee the continuation and maintenance of the boycott. The organization's overall mission, extended beyond the boycott campaign, as it sought to "improve the general status of Montgomery, to improve race relations, and to uplift the general tenor of the community. 1 King was elected president of the association shortly after the formation. Parks recalled: "The advantage of having Dr. King as president was that he was so new to Montgomery and to civil rights work that he hadn't been there long enough to make any strong friends or enemies" 4 The bus boycott demonstrated the potential for nonviolent mass protest to successfully challenge racial segregation and served as an example for other southern campaigns that followed.

In *Stride Toward Freedom*, King's 1958 memoir of the boycott, he declared the real meaning of the Montgomery bus boycott to be the power of a growing self-respect to animate the struggle for civil rights. 4 That evening, at a mass meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church, the MIA voted to continue the boycott. King spoke to several thousand people at the meeting: "I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and bold determination to gain justice on the buses in this city. And we are not wrong. ... If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong.

If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong" 5 On the 8th of December, after unsuccessful talks with city commissioners and bus company officials the MIA issued a formal list of demands: courteous treatment by bus operators; first-come,

first-served seating for all, with blacks seating from the rear and whites from the front; and black bus operators on predominately black routes. The demands were not met, and Montgomery's black residents stayed off the buses through 1956, despite efforts by city officials and white citizens to defeat the boycott. Although Rosa Parks was not the leader of the MIA, or the leader of the boycott, she was a huge influence on the entire revolt. Rosa was a role model to all of African Americans involved in the Boycott; She was subconsciously the leader of the group; whenever people had enough and wanted to quit, they would think of Rosa Parks who put her life on the line to fight for her rights and for the rights of all those around her. This shows her heroicness, and all of the African Americans of Montgomery saw the hero in Rosa, and it gave them the extra push to help pursue her dream. Shortly after beginning the Montgomery Bus Boycott in December 1955, black community leaders began to discuss filing a federal lawsuit to challenge the City of Montgomery and Alabama bus segregation laws. They sought a declaratory judgment that Alabama state statutes and ordinances of the city of Montgomery providing for and enforcing racial segregation on " privately" operated buses were in violation of Fourteenth Amendment protections for equal treatment. 2 On the 5th of June 1956, the federal district court ruled in Browder v.

Gayle that bus segregation was unconstitutional, and in November 1956 the U. S. Supreme Court affirmed Browder v. Gayle and struck down laws which put an end to segregated seating on public buses. The order to desegregate the buses arrived the following month, it stated: 1. Black and white people could sit wherever they wanted to sit. 2. Bus drivers were to respect all

riders. 3. Black people were now allowed to apply for driver positions. 2 On the 21st of December 1956 King officially called for the end of the boycott ; the community agreed.

The next morning, he boarded an integrated bus with Ralph Abernathy, E. D. Nixon, and Glenn Smiley. King said of the bus boycott: " We came to see that, in the long run, it is more honorable to walk in dignity than ride in humiliation. So ... we decided to substitute tired feet for tired souls, and walk the streets of Montgomery" 5 King also stated, looking back upon the Boycott: " the Negro citizen in Montgomery is respected in a way that he never was before"5 Although MLK emerged the hero, the credit is also merited by others, in particular Rosa Parks. King and Rosa became national heroes during the boycott, and the MIA's tactics became a model for the many civil rights protests to follow. Reflecting on his the experience with MIA, King said: " I will never forget Montgomery, for how can one forget a group of people who took their passionate yearnings and deep aspirations and filtered them into their own souls and fashioned them into a creative protest, which gave meaning to people and gave inspiration to individuals all over the nation and all over the world" 3 The desegregation of the bus's affected everyone's life's in Montgomery and gave them hope.

Rosa was present throughout the boycott and spread her noble qualities, giving hope and courage, she worked hand in hand with MLK throughout the boycott, but was often in his shadows. Throughout the Boycott, Rosa often appeared on national news, this not only helped to spread her ideas, hope and wisdom to the rest of the world, but it also risked her life even more. National coverage of the boycott and King's trial resulted in support from

people outside Montgomery. In early 1956 veteran pacifists Bayard Rustin and Glenn E.

Smiley visited Montgomery and offered King advice on the application of Gandhian techniques and nonviolence to American race relations. Rustin, Ella Baker, and Stanley Levison founded InFriendshipto raise funds in the North for southern civil rights efforts, including the bus boycott. King absorbed ideas from these proponents of nonviolent direct action and crafted his own syntheses of Gandhian principles of nonviolence. He said: "Christ showed us the way, and Gandhi in India showed it could work" 7Other followers of Gandhian ideas such as Richard Gregg, William Stuart Nelson, and Homer Jack wrote the MIA offering support.

Rosa made her image public which turned even more people against her. Risking her life for the benefit of other is truly heroic qualities that you cannot find in many. Despite the previous facts proving Rosa Parks to be a hero, many still argue that she is not. It can be said that Rosa Parks had planned her act of Defiance to "spark" the Montgomery bus boycott. The evidence given to support this idea is: first, Parks had long been a member of the local NAACP and had been involved in a case of the very same nature in an incident that happened on March 2, 1955, a full nine months before Mrs.

Parks arrest. ; Secondly, she was not the first African American to refuse to give up her seat (there were in fact several examples dating from just a couple years earlier) 8 so why would the NAACP suddenly act upon Rosa? And lastly, the speed in which the boycott was enacted and that the NAACP was ready for court is proof that it was a planned event. The historians who argue this case cause confusion and doubt: she the hero that she has been

made out to be? Is the result of her actions any less important if it had been a planned action, instead of the spontaneous decision of one woman “tired of living in”? The answer is No, Rosa is known for her spontaneous act of resistance, nevertheless, could this theory be one day proven true, it wouldn't make any less a hero of her. Proof of her heroism can be seen through her autobiography *My Story* was written and published in 1992 by Rosa Parks herself. The book told the story of Rosa's life leading up to the day she got on that bus and decided that she was not giving up her seat. Rosa later published another book called *Quiet Strength*, which described her faith and how it helped her on her journey through life.

This allowed her to spread her ideas and feelings to people who look up to her. 4 In addition to her book, she has been recognized for many honors and awards: in the late 1900's, the NAACP awarded Rosa Parks the Spingarn Medal, their highest honor and the Martin Luther King Jr. Award. In September of 1992, she was awarded the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience award for her years of community service and lifelong commitment to social change through non-violent means and civil rights. In 1996, Rosa Parks was presented, by President Bill Clinton, with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

This is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a civilian by the United States Government. In 1998, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center presented Rosa Parks with the International Freedom Conductor Award. In 1999, she was presented with the Congressional Gold Medal, later that year she was awarded the Detroit-Windsor International Freedom

Festival Freedom Award. In 1999, Time Magazine named Rosa Parks as one of the 20 most powerful and influential figures of the century.

In 2000, the State of Alabama awarded her the Governor's Medal of Honor for Extraordinary Courage. She also received the Alabama Academy Award the same year. 7 During her lifetime, Rosa Parks was awarded more than two dozen honorary doctorates from universities worldwide. She was also inducted as an honorary member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Rosa Parks, along with Elaine Eason Steel, started the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development in February of 1987. The Institute was developed in honor of Rosa's husband, Raymond Parks who had died in 1977 of cancer. The Institute's main function is to run the " Pathways to Freedom" bus tours, which take young people around the country to visit historical sites along the Underground Railroad and to important locations of events in Civil Rights history. 7 Three days after her death in October of 2005, The House of Representative and the United States Senate approved a resolution to allow Rosa Parks' body to be viewed in the U. S. Capitol Rotunda. Rosa was the first woman, and the second black person to ever have the honor of lying in state in the Nations capitol.

Lastly, On the first anniversary of her death, President George W. Bush ordered a statue of Parks to be placed in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D. C. When signing this resolution, President Bush stated: " By placing her statue in the heart of the nation's Capitol, we commemorate her work for a more perfect union, and we commit ourselves to continue to struggle for justice for every American. " 3 Her worldwide recognition for her



tremendous impact on the world can be easily seen through just her awards ranging from the late 1900's to far after her death.

Although Rosa is no longer here, her legend will live on forever and since the rest of the civil rights movement stemmed from what became known as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rosa Parks is known as the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement. Her act of individual resistance is one of seminal events in the civil rights movement. Parks' made her heroic stand in an atmosphere of lynchings for blacks who stepped out of line, putting her at great risk. Her actions changed the course of history and made her an American icon. ince the rest of the civil rights movement stemmed from what became known as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rosa Parks is known as the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement.

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