

Free biography on rosa parks

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



Since the early colonial period, Black Americans or those with African or Black descent were persecuted by the whites. The United States, for example, had sold Black Americans or those with half African descent as slaves and restricted them in such extent that they were refused food, shelter and the right to fight for their rights as regular citizens of the United States. Although there were movements that fought for the abolishment of slavery and the establishment of equal rights, many still held the sentiment against the Black Americans or the African-Americans throughout the region in the early 1970s. Blacks were segregated from the Whites; had reduced rights and access to public services, and finally, Blacks were ostracized by Whites for things that they did not commit.

Martin Luther King Jr was a known advocate for total equality and abolition of segregation and racism of Black Americans in the region.. However, some of the civil rights advocates aside from King were not given as much introduction to public. Black women also fought for their own ideals and showed to the Whites that Black men and women are alike, who need the same rights and services as the only difference between the two sides is color. Like Martin Luther King, women such as Rosa Parks resisted the racial segregation of the White Americans over Blacks. Rosa Parks embodied the vision of freedom for the Blacks, which became a reality thanks to her first step in defying the oppressive rule of opening one's seat to any White if the one occupying a seat is a Black.

Rosa Parks or Rosa Louise McCauley was born on February 4th 1913 in the city of Tuskegee, Alabama. Leona McCauley was a schoolteacher, while her father James McCauley worked as a local carpenter. However, Rosa's father

had a very low income which led to Rosa not seeing her father often when she was two and a half year old. She was mostly raised by her mother, brother, and grandparents in Pine Level, Alabama. While in Pine Level, Rosa worked in the small farm, tending to the animals and the gardens. She was very shy and obeyed her mother and grandparents. Her parents and grandparents also taught her how to keep her dignity and hold her head high when in public. Rosa also tried to earn money in her youth and helped pick cotton for a white farmer. The job was tedious, and since her employer was a white, she was only given fifty cents for her whole day of work.

When Rosa turned eleven, she moved to an African American school in Montgomery and continued to experience various kinds of segregation. Segregation became synonymous to the separation of both white and blacks. Each sign and establishment noted where the “Whites” would go, and where the “blacks” could go. Blacks were also restricted in various services such as hotels, restaurants, and even drinking from drinking fountains. Rosa was unable to finish her studies in the Montgomery School for Girls since she had to take care of her grandmother and her mother, who were both sick. Life turned for Rosa when she was eighteen when she met Raymond Parks. Rosa liked Raymond’s courage to stand-up for himself and for others. Raymond was a known fighter for black rights in the region of Alabama for a very long time; Rosa was inspired and eventually fell in love with him. In December 1932, Rosa married Raymond and finished her high school education through her husband’s urging. It wasn’t long when Rosa divulged in the field of civil rights movements and joined the National Association for the Advancement

of Colored People, becoming its President's secretary. She also took part in the Voters' League with her husband .

Raymond Parks' active cause when he met Rosa was the case of the Scottsboro boys, who were accused of raping two white women. The Scottsboro case was controversial because the all-white jury voted for conviction of the nine defendants, eight being sentenced to death; despite the obvious evidences of their innocence to all cases framed to them. The case also earned enough protests from various black and white organizations, considering the foul play over the jurisdiction despite the evidences presented. The case was eventually won by the Scottsboro boys, but it took 20 years before all of them could gain their lost freedom. While with the NAACP, Rosa worked in various cases, but these cases were not properly sorted out on public due to the nature of the cases they were trying to defend. Some of these cases were concentrating on flogging, murder, rape, theft, and other criminal offenses that most Whites directed to the Blacks. Rosa also worked briefly at the Maxwell Air Force Base which did not tolerate any form of racist sentiments in its staff. Her time in Maxwell opened up her eyes into how life would have been like if there were no racist sentiments between the Whites and Blacks. Rosa also worked for the white couple Clifford and Virginia Durr as their housekeeper and employed seamstress thanks to Rosa's training in vocational courses. The Durrs did not agree to the racist legislation passed and befriended Rosa, urging her study in Highlander Folk School in Tennessee which concentrated on teaching worker rights and racial equality .

Rosa became notable in her defiant action on December 1, 1955 when she refused to give her seat to a white when she was asked by the bus driver to give the seat away to accommodate the White man. In that same year, the black community was already having large sentiments over the seating policies enforced in Montgomery. Blacks were required to pay their fares at the front and use the back door as a means to exit. Many found this a hassle as it would reduce time, and it is a more efficient way to move out of the bus through the front door. Some white bus drivers would even drive away before any Black passenger would board or re-board the bus. If a bus is crowded, especially at peak hours such as office hours and dismissals, seated Black passengers would need to give up their slot to any White passenger that is on standing room. This is also the same case with standing room; Blacks would be forced out of the bus if they would not give the standing room to the Whites.

On that faithful day, she took a bus while heading home from work, and sat on the given seats for Blacks. Normally, these seats are on the fifth to the final row of a bus. The bus soon became full of passengers, and soon after, the white section was immediately filled. A white man remained standing, and the only possible way to get seated is having one of the Blacks give up their seat. In Montgomery and in other southern cities, African Americans were forced to sit separately with the Whites. If all the seats were filled in the front row, African Americans must give up their seats. The bus driver told Rosa to move and give her seat to the white man since law dictates she gives up her seat to the white man since she's Black American. Rosa stayed put and defiantly said no, even asking the driver as to why she needed to

give up her seat to the White man, considering that she was following the seat plan, and she got in her seat first. She also felt that it was an injustice that she would have to keep accepting oppressive policies in favour of the whites, as if she was not a citizen with equal rights and emotions. The bus driver had reported her insolence to the police and had sent her to jail under the violation of Chapter 6, Section 11 of the Segregation Law of Montgomery. Rosa was incarcerated for a few hours until she was released on bail through the contributions of her friends Edgar Nixon and Clifford Durr, but her arrest sparked the beginning of protests against the unjust laws of the US to the Black community .

Edgar Nixon, who was then president of the heading the NAACP, conferred the Montgomery chapter and used Rosa's case to challenge the segregated bus seating and file a case against it in behalf of Rosa. The Women's Political Council also conferred with Nixon just a few hours after getting Rosa out of jail to discuss how to show their displeasure over the policy. It was through Jo Ann Robinson, head of the WPC, that the idea of a boycott must be done, and become their means to show their displeasure. In just one day, the WPC was able to distribute 52, 000 fliers and spread the word to all Black Americans to boycott the Montgomery bus on Rosa's trial. The Black American community in Montgomery consisted up to 75% of the entire customer group of the Montgomery bus line and should a boycott occur, the company would incur massive losses. Rallies were also planned out in the span of the 24 hours, and decided that they would continue boycotting the bus lines until the Blacks gain the same equality and treatment given to White passengers, and employ black drivers jobs in the said liner. Rosa was

eventually convicted on December 5, 1955 and was ordered to pay \$14, an amount she refused to pay. At that exact moment, Black Americans boycotted Montgomery buses and subsequently boycotted the line for almost 381 days. Most of the protesters walked, carpooled, or took taxis to go to their destinations. Montgomery buses immediately felt the losses incurred by the boycotts, leaving many of these buses parked and idle in their designated company warehouses .

Martin Luther King Jr also joined the protest in behalf of Rosa's quest for equality when he was appointed as the president of the Montgomery Improvement Association. King filed a case questioning the segregation of Blacks and Whites in the buses of Montgomery and requested for the policy's immediate abolishment. The case was first delivered to the United States District Court, which ruled that the segregation policy in buses is unconstitutional and without legal basis. When the case was moved to the Supreme Court, the case was declared in favour of King's defence, noting that segregation is indeed illegal. By December 20, 1956, all Montgomery buses were no longer segregated. Due to her role as the fire-started of the whole Black protest, many white people harassed Rosa and her husband Raymond, causing them to relocate to Detroit in 1957. Upon her move to Detroit, he worked for John Conyers, then US Representative of Michigan and became his administrative assistant until her retirement in 1988. Rosa continued her vision in educating the public and the younger generation to understand civil rights even after her husband's death in 1977. In 1987, she founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development teaching the youth about civil rights. She also won several awards for her

contributions to civil rights such as the Springarn Medal (1970), the Martin Luther King Jr Award (1980), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1996), and the Congressional Gold Medal (1999). Detroit became Rosa's home until she passed away on October 24, 2005 at the age of 92. Rosa was given recognition by the US Senate, allowing her remains to "lie in state" in the famous US Capitol Rotunda. She was the first woman to be given this honor of being honoured in the Rotunda, and the second African-American to be awarded of this honor .

Rosa Parks' contribution against the oppressive laws and policies of the White Americans has shown the ironies of racial segregation and oppression in the United States. On the one hand, the policies and laws in the 1970s pertaining to slavery and racism contradict the 1900 amendment to the constitution that Blacks also have rights like any other American citizen. On the other hand, it shows that there were still Whites who held racist sentiments that should have been hindered by the laws passed before the racism sentiments. Rosa Parks revolutionized civil rights movements by defending Black human rights and injustice, presenting that despite their color, Blacks should be given the just rights and equality exercised by the Whites as they too are humans. Considering the country's creed to support freedom of other nations and the equality of human rights, it is ironic that in its own country, the Americans practice such racist ideals that should have been called off through the law. Rosa Parks' bravery not only became a form of defiance, but also a beacon for other Black people to stand up and fight for their rights. Her part in African American movement for equality reflected on Martin Luther King's book *Stride Towards Freedom*, stating that Rosa's

actions may be understood when she defied the segregation policy unless one took her perspective. It shows that Rosa's actions shows how African American's endured such oppression for a long period of time, and her defiance clearly depicts that their patience had dried out, its time to claim our freedom and equal justice.

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