

S5 Rosa Parks

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Instead of going to the back of the bus, which was designated for African Americans, she sat up front. When more white passengers boarded, the bus driver asked her to move. She refused. Her refusal was the beginning one of the largest social movements in history, the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Rosa Louise McCauley was born on February 4th, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. Her mother was a teacher and her father a carpenter. Her parents separated when she was young, and she moved with her mother and her brother to her grandparents' farm. She attended the elementary school where her mother was a teacher. She then attended an industrial school for girls and later enrolled at Alabama State Teachers College for Negroes (present-day Alabama State University).

Unfortunately, Rosa had to quit school in order to take care of her mother and grandmother. It was common for Rosa to witness racial discrimination while growing up. She became active in the Civil Rights Movement at a young age.

Rosa married a barber called Raymond Parks when she was 19. He was also actively fighting to end racial injustice. They worked together with many social justice organisations. Eventually, Rosa became secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

By the time Parks boarded the bus in 1955, she had been fighting for Civil Rights for a long time. Her refusal to move seats sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Some people have tried to diminish her involvement by saying the reason she did not give up her seat was because she was tired. She denied this claim and later stated:

“People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”

Rosa showed great courage that day. She was arrested and jailed for refusing to give up her seat. Several African American leaders decided to boycott the city buses. One of the leaders was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, who became the President of the Montgomery Improvement Association. The boycott lasted 381 days and forced the U.S. Supreme Court to rule segregation laws as unconstitutional.

After the boycott, Rosa and her husband moved to Hampton, Virginia and later permanently settled in Detroit, Michigan. Her hard work and dedication to the Detroit's Civil Rights Movement further cemented her legacy of resistance against racial discrimination.

Her husband passed away in 1977 and in the following years, Rosa suffered from financial and health troubles. She was evicted from her home but was helped by local community and church members.

On October 24, 2005, at the age of 92, she died of natural causes leaving behind a rich legacy of resistance against racial discrimination and injustice.