
History | People

This is Rosa: Read the Story of Rosa Parks

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TIME for Kids and American Girl



Rosa McCauley was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1913. When she was 2, her parents separated. Rosa moved with her mother to Pine Level, Alabama,

to live with her grandparents. Rosa's mother taught school in another town. She was able to come home to see her children only on weekends.

Rosa missed her mother, but she loved being with her grand-parents. From her grandfather, she learned how to plant corn and milk cows. Her grand-mother taught her how to cook and make quilts.



HONORARY STAMP On February 4, 2013 (100 years after Rosa was born), the U.S. Postal Service revealed a commemorative stamp honoring Rosa.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE VIA GETTY IMAGE

Rosa's grandparents also taught her about racism. In the American South, laws kept Black people separate from white people. Black people had to use separate entrances, drink from separate fountains, and go to separate

schools and hospitals. Sometimes, groups of white men attacked Black people. They set fire to Black homes, churches, and schools. Rosa's grandfather had to board up the family's windows so no one could break in. Rosa learned to be brave.

When Rosa was 6, she went to the elementary school for Black children in Pine Level. Rosa and her classmates had to walk to school, no matter how far away they lived. White children rode a school bus. Sometimes, white children threw things at Rosa and her friends from the bus.



BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

Pine Level had no junior high or high school for Black children, so Rosa's mother sent her to a school in Montgomery. All the girls there were Black. The teachers were white. Rosa had always obeyed the rules and took care to avoid trouble. But one day, she was walking along the street and a white boy threatened her. Rosa threatened him back. The boy's mother was upset

and talked about having Rosa put in jail. Luckily, that didn't happen.

As Rosa grew up, she made the decision to not let racism make her act out in anger ever again. Still, she knew that things weren't fair, and it bothered her.

Rosa Refuses



ARRESTED Rosa Parks is fingerprinted after an arrest in 1956, during the Montgomery bus boycott.

UNDERWOOD ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for sitting on a bus. As in many cities in the South, the buses in Montgomery, Alabama, were segregated. Black people had to sit at the back. If a white person wanted to sit, a Black person had to give up his or her seat. On December 1, Rosa refused to get up. She was arrested. Many claimed Rosa was just tired. But she was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It was a deliberate protest.

Her arrest caused a bus boycott in Montgomery. The boycott lasted for more than a year. A federal court and the Supreme Court ruled against segregated buses. Rosa's actions inspired many other battles against unfair laws.



WILLIAM PHILPOTT—GETTY IMAGES

Fast Facts

- Rosa married a man named Raymond Parks in 1932. He worked as a barber in Montgomery

- At age 16, Rosa dropped out of high school to care for her sick grandmother and mother. A few years later, she returned and got her diploma.
- In 1996, Rosa received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It's the highest award a civilian can get.
- In 1999, TIME magazine called Rosa one of the most influential people of the 20th century.
- There's a statue of Rosa in the United States Capitol, in Washington D.C.



THE BUS RIDERS (1955)
Demanding dignity