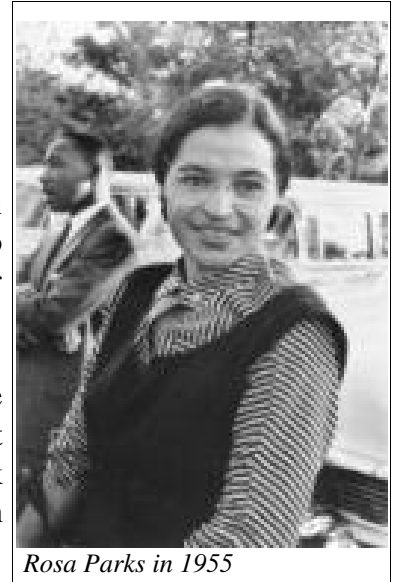


Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was born in 1913. She grew up on a farm in Montgomery, Alabama. She started high school, but had to quit to take care of her grandmother. Parks later had to take care of her mother, too.

Rosa Parks had a difficult life. When she was a girl, some white people from the North started a school for black students. It was burned down twice. The KKK, a group that wanted to hurt black people, *marched* past her house one time. Her grandfather stood in front of their door with a gun until they were gone.



Rosa Parks in 1955

One thing she always remembered was the school bus. When she was a girl, there were only school buses for white children. Black children had to walk to school. She saw that there was a black world and a white world in the South.

Rosa Parks got married, and finished high school in 1933. She got a job as a secretary for the NAACP, an organization that helped black people. Later, she worked for the US military in Alabama. Black and white people worked together at that job, because the employer was the US government. It was the first time she saw everyone working together.

She also did housekeeping for a white couple. They became friends, and helped her go to the Highlander School, a famous school for people who want to change the world. She learned how people were fighting racism around the US.

One kind of racism was happening on city buses in Montgomery. Black *passengers* had to ride in the back of the bus. Even when there were no white passengers, black passengers had to go to the back of the bus. This was the law. About 75% of bus passengers in Montgomery were black.

Rosa Parks hated racism. One time, a bus driver told her to get out of the bus and come back in through the back door. Rosa Parks dropped her purse and, for one second, sat down in a white person's seat. The bus driver got angry, and she had to get off the bus. She had to walk home 5 miles in the rain.

The NAACP wanted to end racism on city buses. It was going to take a long time, and it was going to be a lot of work. They wanted to start with something big. Rosa Parks said she would sit down in a white person's seat on a city bus. This time, she would not get up.

Vocabulary

1. *march* – verb – When many people walk together to change something bad, or to celebrate.
2. *passenger* – noun – Someone who rides in a bus or on a car. “My car can fit 4 passengers, plus the driver.”