

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was a 42-year-old black woman who made history by refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. It happened on December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama. At the time, segregation laws were in place throughout the United States. Segregation was a system that legally separated white and black people. Segregation laws said that black people could not use the same drinking fountains as white people, that black people had to sit in the balconies of theaters, and that black people had to sit in the back seats of buses.

On that December night, Parks was on her way home from her job in the alterations department at a Montgomery department store. She was tired and her feet hurt, she said later. When a white man got on the bus, she broke the law when she refused to give up her seat so he could sit down. The man reported Parks' action to the bus driver, who called the police, and they arrested Parks at the next bus stop.

Parks was booked into the city jail. Within two hours, about 50 people, including several whites, offered to post the \$100 bail so she could get out of jail. Edgar Daniel Nixon, who was head of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), posted Parks' bail money that night. The NAACP worked for civil rights and opportunities for black people, and to repeal segregation laws.

Four days after she was arrested, Parks went to court, where she was tried and found guilty. The same day that Parks appeared in court, Montgomery's black residents began to boycott the city buses. The boycott group, whose spokesman was the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., arranged for car pools to help people get where they needed to go.

The bus boycott was originally planned for just one day, but it lasted 381 days and became a symbol of resistance to an unjust law. The people who refused to ride

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had used their economic power to protest, and the bus company eventually went bankrupt. Parks' case was eventually dismissed. She later moved north to Detroit, Michigan.

- Rosa Parks' act of defiance resulted in change. Discuss how defiance can be positive.

- Was Rosa Parks' action passive? Why or why not?

- Based on what you know about her, how would you describe Rosa Parks' philosophy of life?