

Rosa Parks

Who was she and what difference did she make?



Early Years

Rosa Parks was born Rosa Louise McCauley in Alabama, USA on 4th February, 1913. Her mother was a teacher and her father was a carpenter.

Her parents separated when she was a girl and she went to live on her grandparents' farm with her mother and younger brother where she attended church and school.



Segregation

As a child, Rosa experienced a lot of **racism** and saw how Black and White people were separated by law in American society.

She attended a secondary school for Black children, who all had to walk to school, whilst the White children

racism: When people are not given respect, their rights, dignity or value because of their race. A race is a grouping of people who share some of the same physical features (such as skin colour and hair texture) and non-physical features (such as culture, history, religious beliefs and language).



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Segregation on Buses

At bus stops at this time, there had to be two queues of people: one for Black people and one for White people - and the White people got to sit on a bench.

This was so that when the bus arrived, the White people could take the seats at the front of the bus first. Then, the Black people could get on and use any free seats at the back of the bus.



The Event That Made History

On 1st December 1955, after a long day at work, Rosa boarded the bus home and sat on the first row of seats intended for Black people.

By the time the bus reached its third stop, all the 'White only' seats were full. Rosa and three other Black people were sitting on the front row of the Black section of the bus.

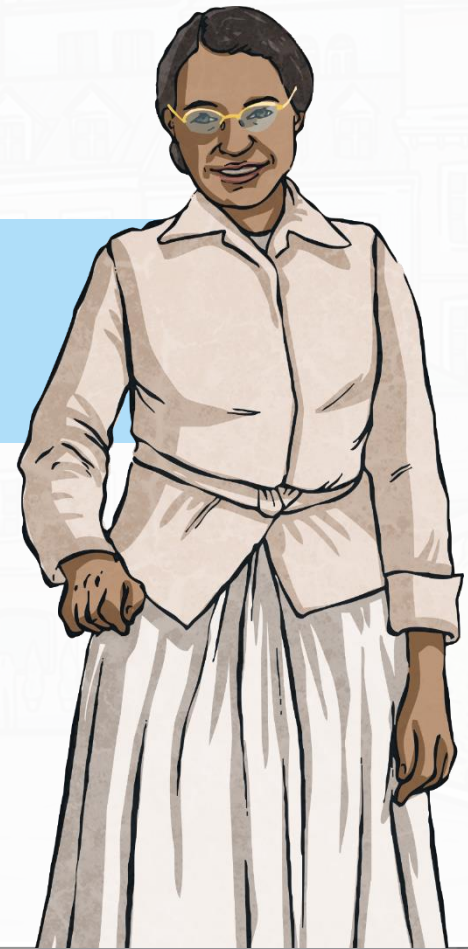
So, the White bus driver stepped back into the bus to tell the Rosa and the three other Black people to move back to give their seats to the White people.



Rosa Refused to Move

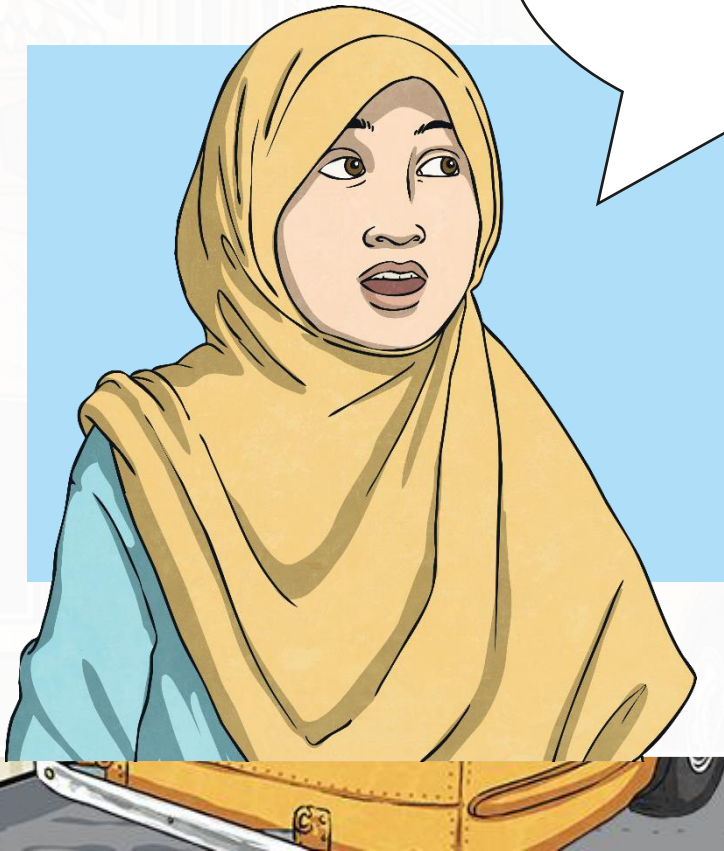
After being asked to move by the White bus driver, the other three Black people moved further back in the bus to give the White people their seats. But, Rosa moved to the side and not back.

The driver told her that if she did not move back then he would call the police, and she told him to do just that—so he did.



Why Didn't She Move?

Why do you think she didn't move?



Why Didn't She Move?

Rosa did not feel that she should have to move. She was feeling more and more angry about the terribly unfair segregation that had been happening to Black people. Rosa felt that Black people in society were being treated worse than White people and also being injured or killed in some situations.



Why Didn't She Move?

In her autobiography, she wrote:

“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.”



What Happened Next?

Indeed, the bus driver did go on to call the police and Rosa was arrested.

Three of Rosa's friends bailed her out of prison the next day and set to work on organising a 'bus boycott' – where Black people would refuse to use any buses until the situation changed.

On 5th December 1955, Rosa was charged with 'violating a local ordinance' (breaking the rules) and 'disorderly conduct' (causing trouble).

She was found guilty and fined.

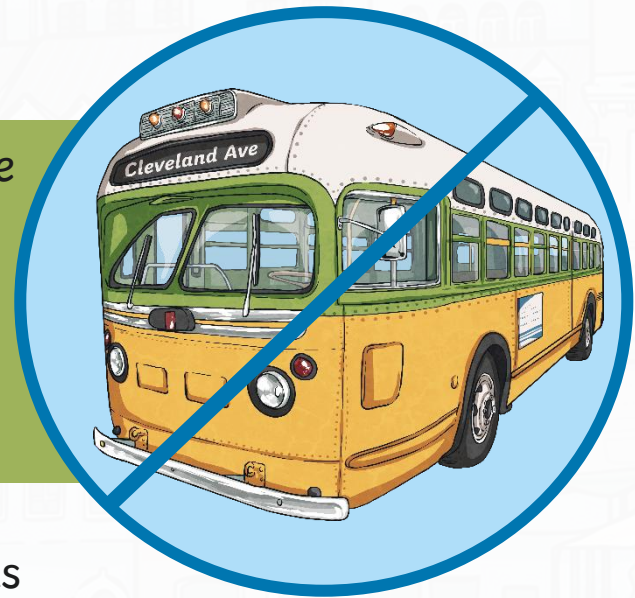


The Bus Boycott

The bus boycott was totally supported by the Black community and also some White people, who were also growing tired of the unfair treatment of Black people in their community.

For 381 days, 40 000 black people and some White people did not use the buses in Rosa's home city of Montgomery. They found other ways to get to work or simply walked to show their support for the cause.

There were so many people involved that this could not be ignored; it was noticed by the newspapers and the rest of America.



A Victory for Rosa!

Eventually, the government noticed and finally laws were passed to remove segregation from buses. The boycott officially ended on 20th December, 1956.

Even though segregation was still in place in many other areas of society, such as toilets and public buildings, this was a victory for equality and it made a significant start to improving the rights of Black people in society.



The Aftermath

Do you think that everybody in society accepted the government's decision after the bus segregation laws changed?



Why or why not?

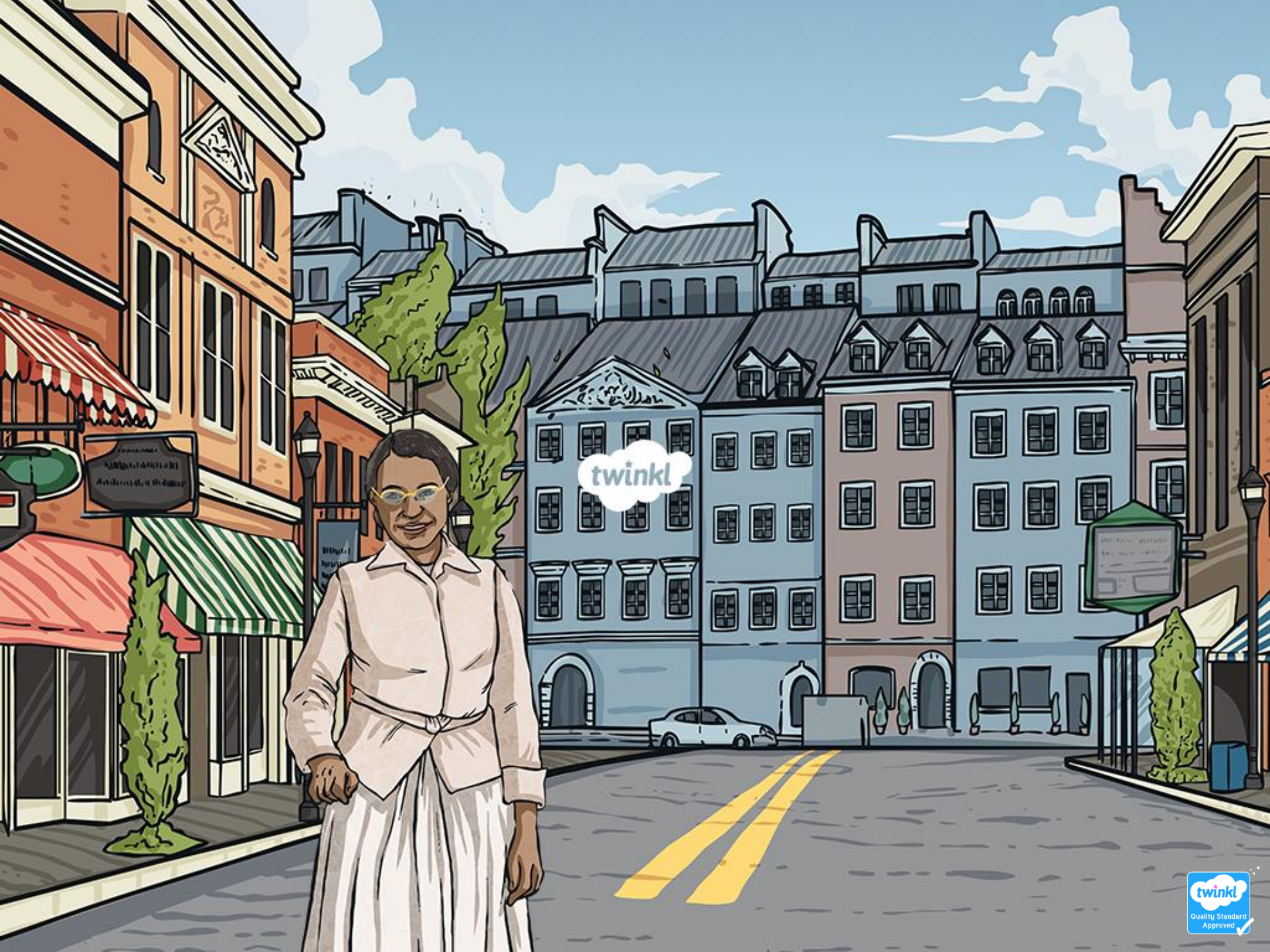
The Aftermath

Not everybody in society accepted the government's decision after the bus segregation laws changed.

There was still a lot of violence after the laws changed. Some White people were violent towards Black churches and homes.

Eventually, things calmed down and the violence abated. However, there was still a long, long way to go to change the attitudes of some people within society.





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