

APPENDIX 2.3 Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Heroine

Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Heroine

Background

Family

Rosa Parks was born on February 4, 1913, in a small town in **Alabama**. Her mother was a teacher, and her father was a carpenter. Her parents separated when she was young, and she lived with her mother after that. They lived on a farm with her grandparents and her younger brother.

Walking to School

Rosa Parks knew about the different laws for African Americans and whites even when she was very young. These laws were called **Jim Crow laws**. During all the years she went to school, Rosa had to walk there. All the white students could take the school bus. The schools for the white children were much better than the schools that Rosa and her friends went to. This was because Rosa and her friends were African American. Rosa went to high school in **Montgomery**, but she couldn't finish because she had to take care of her sick grandmother.

Growing Up

When she was nineteen, Rosa married a man named Raymond Parks. He was from Montgomery, and he was part of a group called the **NAACP**. The NAACP wanted **equal rights** for all people no matter what color their skin was. Rosa then got to finish high school, which was very rare for African American women at that time. She also became a part of the NAACP. She was the only woman in the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, and she became its secretary for fourteen years.

Civil Rights Movement

The Rules

In Montgomery, there was a law that **separated** African Americans and whites on public buses. White people got to sit in the front, and African American people had to sit in the back. If there weren't enough seats in the front for white people to sit down, African Americans who were sitting in the back had to stand up.

APPENDIX 2.3 Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Heroine (*continued*)



Rosa Parks Sits on Bus

Her Story

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was coming home from a long day at work. She was sitting on the bus, at the front of the African American

section. As the bus went on its route, it filled up with passengers. The white section became full, and the bus driver asked Rosa and three other African American passengers to give up their seats. The other three stood up, but Rosa was tired of giving in to the **unfair** laws. She did not stand up. The bus driver called the police, and Rosa Parks was **arrested**.

The Boycott

After Rosa was arrested, African Americans all over Montgomery stood up together against the unfair laws. On the day of Rosa's trial, 40,000 African Americans got to work without riding the bus. This was called **boycotting** the buses. They rode in cars together, or took taxis driven by African Americans, or even walked as far as twenty miles. The Montgomery Bus Boycott went on for 381 days, or one year and sixteen days.

APPENDIX 2.3 Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Heroine (*continued*)

Later Life

Working with Dr. King

The Montgomery Bus Boycott made Rosa Parks a heroine of the Civil Rights Movement. She worked with **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, to organize many meetings and events. She gave speeches and supported the Civil Rights Movement. She was very important, but her family suffered because of her work. Her husband was not allowed to talk about her at work, so he quit his job.

Going Back to Family

In 1957, Rosa decided that she disagreed with Dr. King and other leaders about how best to work for people's rights. She broke herself off from the Civil Rights Movement and focused on helping her family. She worked as a seamstress and then a secretary in Michigan. In the 1970s, when she was in her 60s, her husband, mother, and brother died.

Last Years

When she had no more family to take care of, Rosa went back to the Civil Rights Movement. She gave many speeches and donated almost all of her money to it. She was awarded many medals and honors during her life and after she died. One of them was the **Congressional Gold Medal**, the highest American award outside of the military. President Bill Clinton awarded it to her in 1999 and said she was the “Mother of the Modern Day Civil Rights Movement.” She died in 2005 when she was 92.

