



Rosa Parks was born on 4 February 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama, and died in 2005 at the age of 92 in Detroit, Michigan. She became renowned for her refusal, on 1 December 1955, to change bus seats to allow a white person to sit. This happened in the city of Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa was arrested and charged with a violation of the segregation law of the Montgomery City Code and was fined \$10 plus court costs.

Rosa Parks said later, *“I had not planned to get arrested. I had plenty to do without having to end up in jail. But when I had to face that decision, I didn’t hesitate to do so because I felt that we had endured that too long. The more we gave in, the more we complied with that kind of treatment, the more oppressive it became.”*

In the days following the bus incident, other activists worked together to arrange a one-day bus boycott that urged all colored people to not use any Montgomery buses on Monday 5 December. The boycott ended up lasting 381 days. Seventy-five percent of passengers on the buses had been colored – approximately 40,000 – meaning that, by the time the boycott ended over a year later, the bus company was almost bankrupt. Many had to walk 20 miles per day as a part of the boycott.

Finally, in December 1956, segregation on public buses was described as unconstitutional and was overruled by the U.S. Supreme Court in a case called *Browder v. Gayle*.

Accidentally, Rosa Parks had become an icon of fairness for blacks in America. A new organization arose called the Montgomery Improvement Association, and the members elected their president – a young Baptist minister named Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rosa Parks lived a simple life into old age; she nursed her husband, brother and mother through terminal cancers; she donated any speaker fees to civil rights causes; and, after death, she was the first U.S. person who had not been a government official to lie in state in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.

Prayer in honor of Rosa Parks: <https://educationforjustice.org/resource/memory-rosa-parks-role-model-justice-and-peace/>

Question for Reflection: If you had the opportunity to speak with Rosa Parks today, what would you like your conversation to be about?