

A Lesson in Courage

Rosa Parks's actions helped change the country forever.



Characters

Narrators 1, 2, 3

Bus driver

Rosa Parks

Bus riders 1, 2

Police officers 1, 2

E. D. Nixon, *civil rights leader*

Raymond Parks, *Parks's husband*

Protesters 1, 2, 3

Fred Gray, *Parks's lawyer*

Judge

Growing up, Rosa Parks knew what to do when she saw a school bus—hide. The bus wasn't coming to take her to school. It was only for white children, and when the kids saw Rosa walking, they would throw trash at her.

In the 1920s, Southern states were segregated, or separated by race.

African Americans didn't have the same rights as white people. They were forced to sit in the back of public buses and could not go to the same schools as white people.

Rosa Parks hated segregation. She refused to drink from water fountains for "colored" people. (Back then, some people referred to black people as "colored.") She joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to fight for equal rights.

On Dec. 1, 1955, Parks took a stand that helped get rid of racial inequality in the United States. She died Oct. 24, 2005. She left behind a lasting example of strength, courage, and hope.

Scene 1: Downtown Montgomery, Ala.

Narrator 1: Rosa Parks boards a bus on her way home from work.

Narrator 2: She sits in the front row of the "colored" section.

Bus driver: Next stop, Empire Theater!

Narrator 3: After the bus grinds to a stop, a few white people get on. One white man is left without a seat.

Bus driver: (to Parks and the people in her row) Let me have those seats.

Narrator 1: Parks and the people in her row don't move.

Bus driver: (threatening) You know white folks and colored people can't sit in the same row on the bus. Let me have those seats.

Narrator 2: The others get up and move to the back, but Parks stays put.

Rosa Parks: (to herself) The more we give in to segregation, the worse it gets.

Bus driver: (to Parks) If you don't stand up, I'm going to have you arrested.

Parks: (quietly) You may do that.

Bus rider 1: (in a whisper) I wonder what's going to happen.

Bus rider 2: (worriedly) I don't know, but she's in trouble now.

Narrator 3: A few minutes later, two police officers arrive.



A police officer
fingerprint
Rosa Parks
in 1956.

Rosa Parks (2): AP Images

Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on this city bus in 1955.



Bus: Wikimedia Commons/rmhermen

Police officer 1: Why didn't you stand up when the driver spoke to you?

Parks: (*boldly*) Why do you all push us around?

Police officer 2: I don't know, but the law is the law, and you're under arrest.

Scene 2: Parks's house

Narrator 1: After Parks is released from jail on bail, she talks with the local NAACP president, E. D. Nixon; her husband, Raymond Parks; and a few others.

Parks: I know one thing: I will never, ever ride a segregated bus again.

E. D. Nixon: Rosa, how would you feel about making your arrest a test case against segregation?

Raymond Parks: We could take this all the way to the Supreme Court.

Parks: (*after a moment*) I'll do it.

Nixon: Good. Now let's show white people how much they need us. Black people ride city buses more than anyone else. If we don't ride, the bus company could go bankrupt.

Tell everyone—we're going to **boycott**, or avoid, the buses.

Scene 3: A bus stop on Monday morning

Narrator 2: Dark clouds dot the sky. African Americans huddle at bus stops, but they're waiting for taxis owned by African Americans—not for buses.

Protester 1: I'm glad we're finally teaching the bus company a lesson.

Protester 2: Me too. I am tired of standing on buses when there are empty seats in the white section.

Protester 3: I would rather walk to work every single day than put up with segregation any longer.

Scene 4: The courthouse

Narrator 3: The courtroom is packed. Parks's lawyer speaks on her behalf.

Fred Gray: The defendant pleads not guilty.

Narrator 1: The bus driver takes the stand.

Bus driver: I asked her to move. She refused.

Judge: I find Rosa Parks guilty. She must pay a \$10 fine, plus \$4 in court costs.

Narrator 2: Parks's supporters react angrily, booing the decision.

Parks: You haven't heard the last from us.

The guilty **verdict**, or decision, was exactly what Parks wanted. She immediately appealed the decision. When the state court ruled in her favor, the city took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the meantime, the bus protest continued. On Nov. 13, 1956, the African Americans' efforts paid off. The Supreme Court justices ruled that Alabama's segregated buses broke the rules of the Constitution.

A month later, Rosa Parks stepped on a bus for the first time in more than a year. This time, she sat in the front seat.