

## Rosa Parks Biography

Rosa Parks, also known as ‘the first lady of civil rights’ and ‘the mother of the freedom movement’, was a famous African-American civil rights activist. This biography profiles her childhood, life, career, works, achievements and timeline.

Quick Facts	
Also Known As	Rosa Louise McCauley Parks
Famous as	Civil Rights Activist
Nationality	American
Religion	Methodist
Born on	04 February 1913 AD
Zodiac Sign	Aquarius
Born in	Tuskegee, Alabama, U.S
Died on	24 October 2005 AD
Place of death	Detroit, Michigan, U.S
Eepitaphs	Mother of the Civil Rights Movement
Father	James McCauley
Mother	Leona McCauley
Siblings	Sylvester

Quick Facts	
Spouse:	Raymond Parks (m. 1932–1977)
Education	Highlander Research and Education Center, Alabama State University
Awards	<p>1979 - NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series</p> <p>1980 - Martin Luther King Jr. Award</p> <p>1995 - Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award</p> <p>1998 - International Freedom Conductor Award from National Underground Railroad Freedom Center</p> <p>1999 - Congressional Gold Medal</p> <p>1999 - Detroit-Windsor International Freedom Festival Freedom Award</p> <p>2000 - Governor's Medal of Honor for Extraordinary Courage</p>



Rosa Louise McCauley Parks was an American civil rights activist, often known as the ‘mother of the freedom movement’ and ‘the first lady of civil rights’. She was an African-American civil rights activist who ignited the Civil Rights Movement by taking a brave step that no other African-American person dared to take until then. She lived and worked in Montgomery where

there was a very clear demarcation of what was for black people and what was reserved for white people. Apparently, black people were not allowed to sit alongside white people in the public buses. There were special reserved seats for them in the rear end of the bus and their seating was based completely on the discretion of the driver. One day when Parks was coming back from work, she was asked to get up and give her seat to a white passenger, to which she said no. She was arrested in 1955 for this act, the incident that caused the Civil Rights Movement to flare up. Parks grew up, worked and lived most of her life in Montgomery and along with her husband she was already a part of a social activist group. The magnanimity of her actions made her very famous and she lived all of her life devoting her time and energy for social causes and emancipation of the African-Americans.

### **Childhood & Early Life**

- Rosa Parks was born on February 4, 1913 in Alabama to Leona and James McCauley. She belonged to a middle class background as her father was a carpenter and mother was a teacher. Her parents separated and she moved to Pine level with her mother.
- She attended the Industrial School for Girls in Montgomery but for her secondary education she went to a school set up by Alabama State Teachers College for Negroes. She soon dropped out of it to take care of her family.

### **Career**

- After getting married in 1932, Parks took up small jobs, like domestic worker, hospital aide, etc. as she did not have formal education to pull off any decent job. But on her husband's insistence, she finished high school studies.
- In 1943, Parks became increasingly involved in the Civil Rights Movement for which she joined the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP. As she was the only female there,

she was elected to become the secretary of the organization.

- While she was the secretary, she was given the task to investigate the gang-rape of a black woman named Recy Taylor in 1944. She along with other activists started 'Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor' campaign.
- In the following years, Parks had a job at Maxwell Air Force Base, as federal property did not practice racism. She also took up a job as a housekeeper for Clifford and Virginia Durr, a liberal white couple.
- In 1955, Parks attended a mass meeting in Montgomery to discuss the case of a black teenager Emmett Till getting murdered for flirting with a white woman. The meeting addressed the issues of racial segregation in the society.
- While riding a bus she was asked to leave her seat for a white passenger, she refused to do so and was arrested in 1955. She was charged with violation of Chapter 6, Section 11 segregation law.
- She was bailed out the next evening by the president of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, Edgar Nixon and a friend named Clifford Durr. Nixon with Jo Ann Robinson announced a bus boycott in retaliation.
- Within the next morning, the Montgomery Bus Boycott was announced at black churches, and 'The Montgomery Advertiser' publicized the news. It aimed at demanding equal treatment of blacks, hiring of black drivers, etc.
- It seemed that Parks' case would take years to resolve but with the continuation of the boycott by black citizens for strenuous 381 days, because of which the public bus business seriously suffered, the state hurried up on her case.
- It is considered that Parks played a pioneering role in elevating international awareness of the predicament of African-Americans and the civil rights struggle, as Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his book 'Stride Toward Freedom'

in 1958.

- Although she became famous but Parks had to leave for Virginia in 1957 as she could not keep her job due to sanctions used against activists. She worked as a hostess in an inn in a historical black college.
- In 1965, she was hired as a secretary and receptionist by John Conyers, an African-American U.S. Representative, for his congressional office in Detroit. She worked at the position for almost twenty three years.
- In 1980s she again re-associated herself with the civil rights and educational endeavors. With her speaker fees and the little money that she had she co-founded the Rosa L. Parks Scholarship Foundation for college-bound high school seniors.
- She also co-founded the 'Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development' with Elaine Eason Steele in 1987. It was an institute built with the aim to introduce young people to important civil rights and Underground Railroad sites.
- In 1992, Parks wrote her autobiography, 'Rosa Parks: My Story', which narrates the incidents of her life that led to her decision to keep her seat on the bus. A few years later, she published her memoir, 'Quiet Strength'.

### **Major Works**

- The highlight of Parks' life was her decision to not give up her seat on the bus in 1955. If she did not have taken a stand to fight against disparities in society that day, the Civil Rights Movement might have got delayed.

### **Awards & Achievements**

- For her devotion in Civil Rights Movement, Parks was awarded: Spingarn Medal, Martin Luther King Jr. Award, Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award, Presidential Medal of Freedom, Congressional Gold Medal, Detroit-Windsor International Freedom Festival Freedom Award, etc.

## **Personal Life & Legacy**

- Parks married Raymond in 1963, a barber from Montgomery. He was a member of the NAACP. She remained married to him until his death from throat cancer in 1977. They never had any children together.
- 1970s was a very difficult time in Parks life; she and her husband suffered from stomach ulcers for years. Her husband, her brother and mother were diagnosed with cancer. She had to take care of all of that. And eventually all of them died by the end of 70s.
- Parks died in Detroit in 2005. She was the first woman and second non-U.S. government official to be honored by getting her casket transported to Washington.

## **Trivia**

- There is a highway in Missouri named after her, 'Rosa Parks Highway'.
- Irrespective of her fame, Parks was not a wealthy woman and lived off on her salary money.
- She appeared in the television series 'Touched by an Angel'.
- She was unable to pay the rent of her apartment in Detroit but because of her image and fame, executives of the ownership company announced that she could live there for free for the rest of her life in 2002.
- In 1994, an African-American drug addict broke into her house, stole from her and attacked her.