

WHEN I WAS A KID

Childhood Experiences of Famous People

One day in 1955 Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. This bold act landed her in jail—and in an honored spot in history.

Rosa Parks (4 February, 1913-24 October 2005)

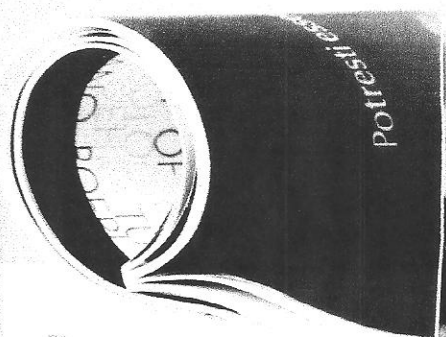


THERE WAS A TIME not long ago when it was legal to discriminate against black people in the United States. That's when Rosa McCauley* was growing up in Montgomery, Alabama. Segregation, or separation of groups of people, was the way of life in many states. As a young girl in the 1920s, Rosa wasn't allowed to attend the "whites only" school in a clean brick building near a playground. Instead, she, her younger brother, and 60 other black children squeezed onto benches in a one-room schoolhouse with no windows, desks, or books. Movie theaters,

restaurants, and water fountains were separate—and unequal. By law, black people had to sit in the back of a bus and stand if a white person needed a seat. When Rosa was 11, she went into a store with her cousin, Annie Mae, who asked for a soda. The answer: "We don't serve sodas to colored people." This was legal, but Rosa knew it was wrong. "My mother helped me grow up feeling proud of myself and other black people, even while living under racist conditions," Rosa has written. Her mother's advice, Rosa has said "helped me to do difficult things later in life."

Rosa's grandfather also inspired her. Many nights, with his loaded shotgun nearby, he stayed awake ready to defend his family against the Ku Klux Klan. This group of white men in hooded robes galloped through towns, terrorizing black residents by firing guns and setting fires. "I remember going to sleep hearing the Klan... and being afraid the house would burn down," Rosa recalls. Rosa thought her grandfather, a former slave who had been beaten as a boy, never seemed afraid. Years later Rosa acted bravely, too, when she refused to give up her seat on a city bus. That's how she was raised.

TEXT BY LYNDA DEWITT



Authentic reading

*When Rosa McCauley was an adult she married a man called Mr Parks.

Right or Wrong?

1. One day Rosa refused to give her seat to a white man on a train.
2. Rosa Parks grew up in the United States.
3. Rosa went to a "whites only" school.
4. White kids had a nice clean school.
5. Rosa was an only child.
6. Her school had no windows.
7. Black people sat at the front of the bus.
8. The person in the store refused to serve sodas to Rosa and her cousin because they couldn't pay.
9. Rosa's mother taught her to be proud to be black.
10. The Ku Klux Klan terrorized black people.
11. Rosa's grandfather always kept a gun near him to defend the family from wolves and other wild animals.
12. Her grandfather had been a slave.

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