Rosa Parks

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Who is Rosa Parks?

Rosa Parks is known worldwide as the “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement.” Rosa grew up in the southern United States, where African Americans faced racism, violence, and discrimination. She helped African Americans fight for their rights.

From a young age, Rosa believed in equal rights for all people. She fought for equal rights as an activist, writer, and speaker. Rosa’s work has made a difference to African Americans. Her struggles have helped African Americans win the right to vote and attend school. When Rosa writes and speaks, she encourages people to treat all cultures equally and with respect. Many people think Rosa is a hero as her life and work have inspired them.

Whatever my individual desires were to be free, I was not alone. There were many others who felt the same way.
Growing Up in the South

Rosa was born on February 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama. Her mother, Leona McCauley, was a teacher. Her father, James McCauley, was a carpenter. Life for Rosa’s family was very difficult. Her father traveled around the country to find work. He was gone for months and years at a time. After Rosa’s brother, Sylvester, was born, the family moved to Pine Level, Alabama.

Rosa’s grandparents owned a farm in Pine Level. Few African Americans owned land in the South at that time. Rosa helped her grandparents work on the farm. Her grandparents were former slaves. Rosa’s grandparents were very proud not to work for other people. They taught Rosa to stand up for her rights. Rosa’s grandparents also believed school was very important.

Almost 75 percent of the 2.5 million slaves in the United States helped produce cotton.
ALABAMA Tidbits

The first night airplane flight was made at Orville Wright’s flying school near Montgomery.

Tuskegee University was founded in 1881 to train African-American teachers. It is now a private university.

Alabama is the only state that contains all of the necessary resources to make iron and steel.

Alabama workers built the first rocket designed to take humans to the moon.

In 1902, Dr. Luther Leonidas Hill performed the first open-heart surgery in the western hemisphere in Alabama. He repaired a stab wound in a young boy’s heart.

Cotton was Alabama’s main crop in the 1800s. After 1915, the boll weevil—a beetle that infests cotton plants—caused much damage to the cotton crops. Farmers began raising livestock and crops other than cotton.

Think it about it!

How might living in the state of Alabama have influenced Rosa? Research your state’s sites and symbols, and write about how they might have influenced you and your family.