**Rosa Louise McCauley Parks** (February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) was an [African-American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American) [civil rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights) [activist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Activism), whom the [United States Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress) called "the first lady of civil rights" and "the mother of the freedom movement".[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks#cite_note-1) Her birthday, February 4, and the day she was arrested, December 1, have both become [Rosa Parks Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks_Day), commemorated in the U.S. states of California and Ohio.

On December 1, 1955, in [Montgomery, Alabama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery%2C_Alabama), Parks refused to obey bus driver [James F. Blake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_F._Blake)'s order that she give up her seat in the colored section to a white passenger, after the white section was filled. Parks was not the first person to resist bus segregation. Others had taken similar steps, including [Irene Morgan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irene_Morgan) in 1946,[Sarah Louise Keys](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Keys_v._Carolina_Coach_Company) in 1955, and the members of the [*Browder v. Gayle*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Browder_v._Gayle) lawsuit ([Claudette Colvin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudette_Colvin), [Aurelia Browder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelia_Browder), [Susie McDonald](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Susie_McDonald&action=edit&redlink=1), and [Mary Louise Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Louise_Smith_%28civil_rights_activist%29)) who were arrested in Montgomery months before Parks. [NAACP](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Association_for_the_Advancement_of_Colored_People) organizers believed that Parks was the best candidate for seeing through a court challenge after her arrest for [civil disobedience](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_disobedience) in violating Alabama segregation laws, although eventually her case became bogged down in the state courts while the *Browder v. Gayle* case succeeded.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks#cite_note-2)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Parks#cite_note-Branch-3)

Parks' act of defiance and the [Montgomery Bus Boycott](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery_Bus_Boycott) became important symbols of the modern [Civil Rights Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Rights_Movement). She became an international icon of resistance to [racial segregation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_segregation). She organized and collaborated with civil rights leaders, including [Edgar Nixon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_Nixon), president of the local chapter of the NAACP; and [Martin Luther King, Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King%2C_Jr.), a new minister in town who gained national prominence in the civil rights movement.

At the time, Parks was secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP. She had recently attended the [Highlander Folk School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highlander_Research_and_Education_Center), a [Tennessee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tennessee) center for training activists for workers' rights and racial equality. She acted as a private citizen "tired of giving in". Although widely honored in later years, she also suffered for her act; she was fired from her job as a seamstress in a local department store.

Eventually, she moved to [Detroit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detroit), where she briefly found similar work. From 1965 to 1988 she served as secretary and receptionist to [John Conyers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Conyers), an African-American[U.S. Representative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_House_of_Representatives). After retirement, Parks wrote her autobiography and lived a largely private life in Detroit. In her final years, she suffered from [dementia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dementia).

Parks received national recognition, including the NAACP's 1979 [Spingarn Medal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spingarn_Medal), the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Medal_of_Freedom), the [Congressional Gold Medal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congressional_Gold_Medal), and a posthumous statue in the United States Capitol's [National Statuary Hall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Statuary_Hall). Upon her death in 2005, she was the first woman and second non-U.S. government official to [lie in honor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lying_in_honor) at the[Capitol Rotunda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitol_Rotunda).