I am known for standing up for my rights by refusing to give my seat to a white man on a segregated bus.

My name is Rosa McCauley, but you know me better as Rosa Parks. I was born on February 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama.

When I was two years old I moved to my grandparent’s farm in Pine Level, Alabama. I lived there with my mother Leona and my younger brother Sylvester. I worked in a cotton field nearby. It was hard work, but the farmer paid me fifty cents for just one day of work.

When I was growing up, the South was segregated. Segregation means that black people and white people had to be separated. Blacks and whites were not allowed to use the same water fountains, bathrooms, restaurants, or go to the same schools. I though segregation was wrong.

When I was 10 years old I got into a fight with a white boy. He tried to hit me, so I picked up a brick and I dared him. He ran away. I was confused because when I told my grandma what happened, she got mad at me. She told me that if I talked back to a white person I could get hurt or even killed.

In 1924 when I was 11 years old my mother sent me to live with some of my relatives in Montgomery, Alabama. I went to a better school. However, when I was sixteen I had to quit school and return to home to take care of my mom and grandma who were both sick. As a teenager, I cleaned houses to make money for my family.

Two years later I got married to Raymond Parks and I became Rosa Parks. After I got married I decided to go back to school. I was able to graduate from high school, but it was still hard to find a good job. I was a hospital helper and I would sew to make extra money.

I didn’t like that black people were treated so badly, so I joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It is also called the NAACP (N-double A–C-P).

One day after work I was really tired, and I just wanted to get home. I got on a bus and sat in the middle section. When the bus got crowed, the driver told me and four other African Americans to move to the back of the bus. I knew the law said I had to move for the white passengers, but I also knew that the laws were unfair. I refused to give my seat to a white man. I was arrested.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. heard about my arrest and came and worked with other leaders in my town to come up with a plan to fight against segregation on the buses. The plan was to boycott the buses by refusing to ride them.

The boycott lasted for more than a year. The bus companies lost a lot of money. For the next year, many important leaders worked together to try and change the unfair laws. Our hard work paid off. On November 13, 1956, the United State Supreme Court ruled that the buses had to be desegregated.

I continued to speak out for the rights of black people in the United States and around the world.

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964. It says that African American people must be treated fairly and equally. It ended segregation in all public places, like parks, hotels and restaurants.

In 1965 the president signed the Voting Rights Act. I knew that these two laws would not solve all the problems, so I continued to fight for equal rights.

In 1987 I helped open the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development.

I died on October 24, 2005, at my home in Detroit when I was 92 years old.

My courage to stand up for my rights still inspires people today. One thing I always said was “You must never be fearful of what you are doing if it is right.”

I am Rosa Parks.