

Doctor Who: Rosa

Travelling in the TARDIS, the Doctor brings her friends Graham, Ryan and Yaz to Montgomery, Alabama in the 1950s. At first, the friends are happy to be visiting the 1950s. However, they soon realise that it is not a safe place for some people. Meeting a woman named Rosa Parks, Team TARDIS figure out they have arrived just before an important event in history – the Montgomery bus boycott.



Background to the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Between 16th and 19th century, millions of African people were sold into slavery. In the USA, slavery ended in 1865. However, life for many African Americans remained hard. There were rules, called Jim Crow laws, that had to be followed. These included:

- not being allowed to vote in elections;
- only being able to do certain jobs;
- parks, restaurants and public transport being split so African-American people could only go to certain places (these places were not as good as those provided for white people).

The Origins of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

On 2nd March 1955, an African American teenager called Claudette Colvin was getting a bus home from school. The bus was full so the driver ordered Claudette to give up her seat for a white person. At school, Claudette had been learning about how badly many African Americans had been treated. She refused to give up her seat. Claudette was arrested and sent to jail.



On 1st December that same year, Rosa Parks was travelling home from work. She got on a bus driven by a man called James Blake. As the bus filled up, Rosa Parks was told to leave her seat so white passengers could sit down. She refused. The police were called and Rosa Parks was arrested. Writing about the event years later, she said she was “tired of giving in”.

Doctor Who: Rosa

The Bus Boycott

Rosa Parks was a member of a group that wanted to improve life for African Americans. A campaign was started on 5th December 1956 and it was led by Martin Luther King Jr. It called for African Americans to boycott (stop using) Montgomery buses and instead share lifts, walk or cycle to wherever they needed to go. The aims of the boycott were:



- for all passengers to be treated politely by bus drivers;
- for no passenger to be made to give up their seat for people getting on the bus;
- to allow African Americans to become bus drivers.



Almost all African American people in Montgomery joined the boycott and the bus company began to lose money. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders of the campaign were arrested. Rosa Parks and her husband both lost their jobs. Eventually, the campaign was successful. On 21st December 1956, the segregation (split) between white and black people on buses in Alabama stopped.

Did You Know?

In 2014, Asteroid 284996 was renamed 'Rosa Parks'.

Questions

1. Where did the bus boycott take place? Tick the correct answer.

- London
- Washington
- Montgomery

2. Who refused to give up their seat on a bus? Tick two answers.

- Claudette Colvin
- Rosa Parks
- Martin Luther King Jr.

3. What decade did the events of the bus boycott take place in? Tick the correct answer.

- 1940s
- 1950s
- 1960s

4. Draw a line from the date to the event.

2nd March 1955

Segregation on Alabama buses ends.

1st December 1955

Claudette Colvin is arrested.

21st December 1956

Rosa Parks is arrested.

5. What was the name of the bus driver who drove Rosa Parks' bus?

6. Fill in the missing word.

Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders of the campaign were _____.

7. If you could travel back in time and meet Rosa Parks, what would you ask her and why?
