

Rosa Parks and the American Civil Rights Movement

Posted on October 18, 2019

Introduction

The American Civil Rights Movement[1], which started in the 1950s, was aimed to improve the conditions of the black American community in the southern region of America. Rosa Parks was one of the people who initiated this movement by their acts of bravery. Parks, who was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, on February 4, 1913, belonged to the African American community of the city. She moved to Montgomery at the age of 11, where she was enrolled in a school founded by liberal women from Northern states. Her refusal to give up her seat to a white man became the initiator of the Civil Rights Movement that started in 1955. Her arrest and jail time increased her popularity in the eyes of Civil Rights activists of the time. These Civil Rights activists, by observing her potential to oppose racial discrimination, helped in her case in court, and she was later released. However, her effort to stand for the rights of black Americans is the reason we live in a country with no racial discrimination, which gives equal opportunities to all of its citizens. This essay is focused on the contribution of Rosa Parks' in starting the Civil Rights Movement and was her act was the only force behind starting the movement or were there other factors too.

Discussion

Rosa Parks has been under the influence of racial hate since her childhood. When she moved to Montgomery, Alabama, in her childhood, she faced racial hate. The multiple examples of the racial hate she faced and how she reacted to it can be seen in her book when she was a child. She was once pushed by a white boy on roller skates, to which she reacted by pushing him back. She did the same when a white boy from the streets mocked her on her way to school. She threatened to beat him and showed she was a strong woman.

Rosa Parks' refusal to leave her seat for a white man got her arrested. She was held in custody, arrested and fined for acting against the law. It was the time when Montgomery buses had sections for blacks and whites. The blacks were asked to sit in the back of the bus, and they had to leave their seats for whites when there was no room left. Sometimes, the bus drivers ask blacks to leave the buses when they get full at peak times to facilitate the white people. Rosa Parks, in her book, answers why she made that decision. She says that it's not true what people say that she didn't give up her seat because she was tired. She describes that she didn't leave her seat because she was tired of giving in again and again (Parks).

Parks commented on the actions taken by others at the time of her arrest. She explains that when she refused to give up her seat, three other women stood up and went back. She says that if those three women had helped her resist and got arrested, she would have had more support, but she does not demand any more of them or consider them responsible. When she got arrested the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People^[2] (NAACP) helped her in the case. They managed an attorney for her and paid her bail (Parks).

Her arrest initiated a chain of events. After her arrest, the associations in Montgomery state started demanding their rights. The first official step was taken by Martin Luther King, who was one of the ministers of the town. He organized a public boycott of buses called the “Montgomery Bus Boycott”. In this boycott, the black community refused to travel on the buses and in collaboration with a cab company owned by a black person, they refused to travel on buses. They demanded that the segregation laws between blacks and whites should be demolished, which later became the basis of the Civil Rights Movement.

Parks’ arrest case also created concern in other associations like the Montgomery Improvement Association^[3] (MIA). This association was formed on the day Parks’ was released when Reverend Abernathy met with some other respectable members of the community (Parks). In the meeting, it was discussed that there is a need for a stronger association that is controlled by the black motivators and also financially supported. The association pledged to work for the rights of black people and was operated by the influential black people of the community. The association raised its voice against unfair treatment, segregation, and white supremacy. The association was headed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who took the initiative as the leader of the boycott. The initiatives taken by these members gave rise to an association that made their first step in the boycott by the memorable speech that was given by Dr. King.

After the successful start of the new association, the initial efforts of individuals found a common platform. Dr. King, Fred Gray, and other influencers. The association, in collaboration with cab companies, started giving rides to black people at lower rates. This caused a decline in the number of black people on the Montgomery buses, and most of the time, buses were left empty from the bus stations. When Rosa Parks joined the MIA, she took charge as a member of the board of directors. That was the point when she became part of a team that worked for the purpose that she was arrested for.

Rosa Parks’ initiative to resist giving her seat to a white man was the reason to start the Civil Rights Movement. Her action became the cause of a chain of events that was inspired by her act of bravery. Rosa Parks, in her book, mentions that on that day, she had a choice to silently leave her seat for that man like the other three women did. But what message we get from her resistance is that she was against the segregation that was becoming a cause of racial hate in American society. It was her initiative that forced the white-dominant government of America to abolish racial discrimination in schools and gave the rights of voters to the African American people. Congress approved the [Civil Rights Act](#) in 1964 and made a rule that the states that did not obey the “desegregation” laws would

not receive funds from the government. The movement faced a setback when Martin Luther King was assassinated, but the American black community did not stop their efforts, and they continued with their struggle.

Conclusion

In short, the steps taken by Rosa Parks can be claimed to have initiated the Civil Rights Movement. Her one action changed the lives of the suppressed and hate-struck black community. She proved that if a person is determined to make the change, his actions can bring comfort to the lives of many people. The Civil Rights Movement was supported by NAACP and MIA and it was the continuous efforts of the movement that eventually resulted in equal rights acceptance by the government. However, no doubt Rosa Parks was the initiating force of the change, but the process took the help of other inspirational people in the community who committed to changing the age-old discrimination and racial hate in American society.

Works Cited

Parks, Rosa, and James Haskins. *Rosa Parks: My Story*. New York: Dial Books, 1992.

1. The African-American Civil Rights Movement (1954 – 1968) that was aimed to secure the rights of Black people ↑
2. The organization found in 1909 to protect African American Rights. ↑
3. The Association formed by black ministers and leaders of Montgomery, Alabama. ↑