



2017 BE INSPIRED Essay Contest | Age Group: Grades 10-12

3rd Place Winner: Suong Tran
Age: 10th Grade
School: Montour High School (Montour)

Rosa Parks

In the history of the United States and the world, the Civil Rights Movement, which occurred in the mid-1900s, had a large impact on those not only closely involved, but the future generations of the world as well. A prominent figure in the movement, Rosa Parks made her name known in 1955 when she refused to give up her bus seat for a white man, in exchange for a seat at the rear. Though her action may have seemed small to some, its effect was felt by many involved in the movement and even encouraged others to join alongside her.

During the mid-1900s, African Americans were forced to use various “colored only” sections at restaurants, in schools, and on public transportation. Parks’ act of defiance shocked the nation, and she became an international icon for the Civil Rights Movement, even being called, “the first lady of civil rights” and “the mother of the freedom movement.” Parks was the secretary of the NAACP’s Montgomery division at the time, where she met other activists like Edgar Nixon and Martin Luther King Jr. Although her act was honored in later years, she initially suffered a great deal; she was fired from her job as a seamstress at a local department store and received numerous death threats. However, Parks refused to give in to the oppression that she and others felt. She continued to stand by her beliefs and fight for the equal rights of African Americans.

Both Angelou and Parks played important roles in the Civil Rights Movement, voicing their beliefs and speaking on behalf of others who had suffered and not received the attention needed to

make a difference. Both African American and women, the two represented the most oppressed populations of the time and would have, therefore, been regarded as little to nothing in the eyes of those against whom they were fighting. The two women used what skills and emotional ties to the movement that they had to aid in forwarding the movement; Angelou, a well-read writer and performer, used her words to shed light on the issues at hand. Parks, a stubborn and strong-willed woman, displayed her obstinate attitude by working to organize some of the various marches and boycotts which drove much of the movement.

From these two powerful women, I have learned that absolutely anyone can make a difference. By performing one small yet meaningful action, anyone can initiate a chain reaction leading to a revolution. While others could have felt the same way as these women, many chose to stay silent instead of acting on their feelings. Angelou and Parks both decided that they had suffered enough and would not let the cruelty they felt worsen or continue for the generations ahead of them, which is why their actions were so significant.

This day and age, we have seen many movements make headlines, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement and the Women's Marches on Washington. While I have not participated in such movements, I support the fact that these individuals deserve the right to speak on behalf of their beliefs. We are granted many freedoms in the United States of America; a privilege which is not seen throughout many other nations across the world. Angelou and Parks are such inspirations to me because these freedoms that we have today would not have been possible without people like them. These women have shown me that fighting for that which I believe may bring short-term consequences, but creates long-lasting ripples which can positively impact the lives of the generations to follow.