

## **Civil Rights in the USA**

People come in many shapes, colours and sizes. We're all special in our very own way. Did you know that some years ago, in the USA black people were treated unfairly because of the colour of their skin?

### **Segregation**

People were forced to live in different communities based on skin colour. This was the law in the USA many years ago. These laws were called segregation laws because the word 'segregation' means 'to separate'. Black and white people were:

- not allowed to go to the same schools
- not allowed to eat at the same restaurants
- not allowed to use the same toilets

The quality of the places the black people were allowed to go was often worse, such as the schools and libraries. For example, black children would have fewer job opportunities when they left school. If a black person tried to complain about this, they would get into trouble with the police.

### **The Montgomery bus boycott**

During the 1950s, even buses were segregated. White passengers sat in the front, while black passengers had to walk all the way to the back. One day, a brave woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. When she disobeyed, she was arrested and sent to jail. Her courage led to the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955. People who supported Rosa decided to stop riding buses and walk instead. This gained the attention of American law makers and bus segregation was soon outlawed in 1956.

### **Martin Luther King Jr.**

Martin Luther King Jr. was also an activist and leader in the civil rights movement. He led many peaceful marches and gave many speeches about equal rights for all. His most famous speech was called "I have a dream". Later, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his successful efforts for peace.

### **Equality law – The Civil Rights Act**

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended Segregation laws in America. People could now live, work and eat wherever they wanted. The Civil Rights movement changes the way people lived together in America. Although racism still exists, Civil Rights laws protect black people if they are ever unfairly treated at work or in public.