Mary Seacole (1805 - 1881)

Mary was born in 1805 in Jamaica. Mary's mother was Jamaican and her father was a Scottish soldier. Mary's mother was a nurse and when she was 12, Mary started to help her mom look after the sick. When she was older, Mary took over a hospital for soldiers in Jamaica; she cared for the soldiers and their families.

In 1854, Mary decided she wanted to care for soldiers fighting in the Crimean War. Mary traveled to England and went to the War Office in London. She wanted to help with the work Florence Nightingale had started, but was turned away due to racial prejudice, which means people being treated differently because of the colour of their skin.

Mary was so determined to help that she paid for herself to travel to Crimea. She opened the 'British Hotel' in Balaclava, just 2 miles from the fighting and cared for the soldiers. She provided them with food and treated them with her herbal remedies. Mary became known as 'Mother Seacole'. She would even help soldiers in the middle of battle, for this she became loved and respected by both the soldiers and the British people.

In 1856, the war ended. Mary returned to Britain with little money. She was very popular with soldiers, so they raised money for her. Mary wrote a book about her life called 'Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands'.



Mary Seacole was a great role model for women. She made her way in the world independently and was proud to be half-Scottish and half-Jamaican.

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Rosa Parks (1913 - 2005)

Rosa Parks was born in America and as a child she became aware that people were treated differently because of the color of their skin. She noticed that Black people were kept apart from white people; in many buildings they had to use different entrances, at the bus stop Black people had to stand in line while the White people sat and waited on a bench, they had to use different public toilets and go to a different church. Rosa didn't understand why Black people were being treated differently because of the color of their skin and she didn't think this was fair. However, Rosa grew up following the rules that the government had made and didn't make a fuss.

When catching a bus, Black people had to sit on seats at the back of the bus while White people sat on special seats at the front of the bus and if the bus was full, a black person was expected to give their seat to a White person even if they would have to stand for the whole journey.

On December 1st, 1955, Rosa caught a bus home and sat in the seats for the Black people. The bus was full and when a White person got on the bus Rosa refused to give her seat, just because she was Black. She was arrested by the police and fined for breaking the rules, but thousands of other Black people and some white people as well, agreed with Rosa and made this clear to the American government. They refused to take the bus to work or school and marched through the streets for 381 days. The bus companies lost a lot of money!

Eventually they changed the rule and Black people no longer had to sit in a separate section of the bus or give up their seat to someone just because of the color of their skin.



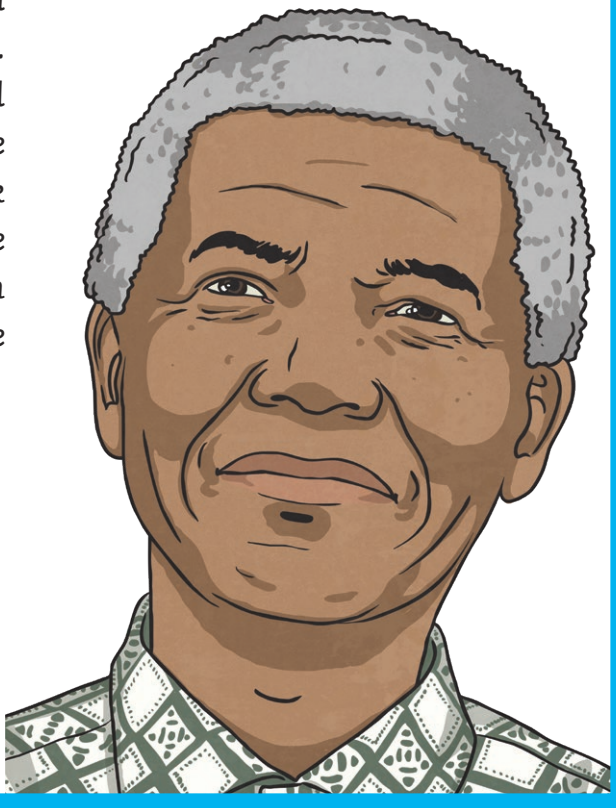
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Nelson Mandela (1918 - 2013)

Nelson Mandela was born on July 18th, 1918 in South Africa. His name was Rolihlahla and the name Nelson was a nickname given to him by his school teacher. He attended a Christian school and later went to college, then on to studying law at university. He became a lawyer in 1942.

In 1815, South Africa became part of the British Empire and White and Black people fought over land. When Mandela was growing up, black people had little to say over how South Africa was run. Most Black people worked as servants and on farms, in factories or coal mines.

In 1948 the South African government made new laws to keep White people and black people apart. A White person and a black person could not marry, share a table in a restaurant or even sit together on a bus; Black children went to separate schools to white children. A group called The African National Congress (The ANC) thought this was wrong, they wanted Black South Africans to have the same rights as White South Africans. Nelson Mandela became a part of this group. He spent many years being chased by the South African police for trying to change the rules so that they were equal for both Black and White people. He was arrested and spent 27 years in prison. Finally in 1988, the South African government began to change things and in 1990 Nelson Mandela was freed from prison and called for all South Africans to live in peace. He became the leader of the African National Congress Party and in 1994 his party won the elections. Nelson Mandela became the first Black South African President. Many people around the world thought he was a hero and respected him for his courage and wisdom in bringing people together and living in peace.



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Martin Luther King Jr. (1929 - 1968)

Martin Luther King Jr. was the leader of the African American civil rights movement. He spoke out against laws which kept Black and White people separate, and led marches demanding fair laws for all people.

He was born on January 15th,1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. His father was a pastor and his mother had been a teacher. Martin loved to play with his friends but as he and his friends got older, two of them stopped playing with him because he had Black skin and they had White skin. He was very upset, he couldn't understand why the color of his skin should make a difference.

Martin studied hard and when he was only fifteen years old he went to Morehouse College in Atlanta. He decided to become a minister and began his first job in 1954. One year later Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat on a bus and Martin Luther King Jr. led a march through the city to show that he and many other people thought that it was not fair that people were being separated because of the color of their skin.

One night, when Martin Luther King Jr. and his family were out, a bomb was thrown through the window of his house. Other people were angry and wanted to retaliate with violence, but Martin said things needed to be solved peacefully, that it was important for White and Black people to get along. He continued to lead peaceful marches and in 1963, in Washington D.C., he made a speech at one of them which has become very famous. He said, "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."



Rules in America began to change and slowly things for Black people started to become fairer, with them having some of the same opportunities as the white people. Sadly on April 4th, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was shot outside his motel room and he died. In 1983, the US President declared that the third Monday in January each year would be a holiday to remember all of the many achievements he had made and the ideas of living in a world which was fair to everyone no matter what the color of their skin.

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