



“I am leaving this legacy to all of you...to bring peace, justice, equality, love and a fulfillment of what our lives should be. Without vision, the people will perish, and without courage and inspiration, dreams will die...”
– Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was an ordinary Black woman who lived in the segregated South of the fifties and stood for justice and equality for her people. One day, when she could not stand the insults of racism for one more moment, she challenged the injustice of having to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man, as declared by law. Facing humiliation, arrest, and perhaps worse, she refused to bow to power and claimed her human right to the bus seat for which she had purchased a ticket.

In Grand Rapids, we have dedicated a sculpture to honor the life of this brave woman who changed American society in a monumental way, but a sculpture alone is not enough. This bronze monument is a message to those who would continue her work, uphold her philosophy, and “demonstrate dignity with pride and courage with perseverance.”

The Rosa Parks Sculpture Committee encourages students in grades 9 - 12 to write who live in Grand Rapids to write an essay about how to live out Mrs. Parks’ legacy by stepping outside the bounds of their reality, taking risks, and shaping lives to make a difference.

The Prompt: Every generation has its own tools, and history remembers not the tools but how they were utilized. Rosa Parks used the tools available to her to mobilize her message whether it was through the radio, word of mouth, and print until it touched hearts and reshaped a nation. Now, the ability to mobilize your message has gotten easier with the use of modern technology (i.e. smartphones, computers, and AI) in which a single post, video, or hashtag has the ability to reach thousands of people with the potential of defining someone’s legacy.

Just like how Rosa Parks used the media of her time to amplify her message. What role should social media play in creating positive change today?

#RosaParks2theFuture
#RosaParksHERStory
#EssaysforRosaPark
#TotheFuturewithParks

Criteria

The Rosa Parks Essay Contest is open to students that live in Grand Rapids or attend a school in Grand Rapids.

Theme – Quiet Courage to Digital Voices

Appearance – Essay must be double-spaced, size 12 Times New Roman or similar font (no italics or other fancy fonts), white paper only and standard one inch margins on the side and top.

Cover Sheet must include:

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|------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Title of Essay | • School |
| • Date | • Home Address |
| • Your Name | • Phone Number |
| • Grade Level | (in case we need to contact you) |

(Please do not put your name or school on any of the other pages of the essay.)

Mechanics – Students should pay attention to:

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|------------------|----------------------|
| • Grammar | • Spelling |
| • Capitalization | • Punctuation |
| • Paragraphing | • Sentence structure |

Composition Structure – Essay shall

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| • Be 1½ to 2 pages long | • Have an introductory paragraph |
| • Have a conclusion | • Have main points with supporting ideas |
| • Have a title that is not a restatement of the theme | • AI should not be used to write or generate your essay. Submissions should reflect your own thoughts, ideas, and words. |

Number of copies – 1

Submission Date and Place – All entries must either be postmarked or emailed by October 16, 2026. Mail to Office of Equity and Engagement, City of Grand Rapids, 300 Monroe Ave NW, Suite 480, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 or Email to crc@grcity.us

Recognition – The winning essays will be announced on December 4, 2026. The decision of the judges will be final, and first place winners may be featured in publications and required to sign a photo release waiver.

Awards –	9-10	11-12
1 st Prize:	\$1,000	\$1,000
2 nd Prize:	\$750	\$750
3 rd Prize:	\$500	\$500

For further information:
Please email crc@grcity.us
or phone (616) 456-3027



Community Relations Commission
c/o Office of Equity and Engagement
City of Grand Rapids
300 Monroe Avenue NW, Suite 480
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Click QR code for
Essay Modules



Rosa Parks

ESSAY CONTEST