



ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide

July 20th, 2023

The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks (Adapted for Young People) by Jeanne Theoharis

How to Use this Guide:

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](https://www.abhm.org/) Jr Griots (docents) created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* by Jeanne Theoharis (2021 version). Please feel free to print a copy and keep it with your book as you lend to friends and others who are interested. Do not expect to get through all of the questions during the upcoming meeting nor in one sitting. Perhaps consider them as conversation starters or an invitation to reflect more deeply about this book.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. What was Rosa Parks' relationship to her family? How does she describe her grandfather, brother, and husband? How does her activism affect both herself and her family? See pages 9-12, 15-16, 26-28, 142-144.
2. What does Rosa Parks' life exemplify about Jim Crow in the South and racism in the North? Was there a distinction between them and, if so, what were they? What did Rosa Parks' activism look like in the North and why do you think this part of her life is often overlooked? See pages 68, 165-171, 176-177.
3. What myths were discussed and later debunked by *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*? Why did these myths originate and for what purpose? Should this be included in high school curriculums? Who else should read this and why? See pages 74, 128-129, 165-171, 144, 271.
4. In what ways does *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* complicate what we know about the Civil Rights Movement? About the role and treatment of Black women in the movement? How did Rosa grapple with the discrepancies between the movement's goals and the treatment she received? In what ways did it impact what we remember about her? See pages 43-45, 121-122 124, 134, 157, 250.

5. How does activism and organizing impact a person's relationship to their community and their livelihood? For example, Claudette Colvin and Juliette Morgan were ostracized by their communities for their actions both within the movement and outside of it. How does this isolation affect them? What was it about Rosa Parks specifically that made her resistance particularly moving to others? 65-66, 74-77, 100-101, 150-154.
6. What were some of the beliefs Rosa had about activism and the power of the people? How did they manifest and where did they come from? How did Rosa Parks learn to become an activist? What was Rosa Parks' relationship with youth organizers? How did she perceive them and what did she hope for them? See page 24, 27, 56-60.
7. The response to the Civil Rights Movement drew mixed responses from both Black and white Americans. What is the role of the media, government, and other third parties in both supporting or pushing against it? How were appearances considered when deciding to take action? See pages 109-110, 116, 128-131, 136-138, 194-196.
8. Social movements are rarely monolithic in terms of people and goals. How were the various Civil Rights movements impacted by divisions of class, education, gender, and the varying interests and egos of others? How did these divisions manifest in Rosa Parks' life? See pages 150, 159-160, 162, 188-190.
9. How did spirituality and faith help Rosa Parks during particularly difficult moments in her life? In what ways did it help her relationship to the movement and its leaders? What did you think about her religious and spiritual exploration near the end of her life? See pages 145, 179-181.
10. What do you think of the statue of Rosa Parks discussed on page 269? As the book asks, what does the statue convey? What might be missing? What is the harm in misremembering and misrepresenting people in the Civil Rights Movement and Black history, in general?