

James Smith
501 Monroe Street
HUNTSVILLE
Alabama 35802
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Dear Grandson,

Thank you so much for your letter. I'm always so happy to read your letters. In your last letter, you asked me if everyone enjoyed the same rights in the old days. I'm going to tell you what happened at that time.

From the 1880s into the 1860s, a majority of American States enforced segregation through « Jim Crow » Laws. African Americans were kept separate from whites in the southern U.S. for many years. Those laws restricted the rights of African Americans. Colored people could not be served in the same rooms as whites in restaurants. There were not authorised to marry a white person. They were told not to drink from the fountains reserved to whites. There were forbidden to go to the same schools and were not allowed to go to the same parks as white. White people were authorised to vote in the Southern United States in the fifties, whereas black people were not.

They kept on struggling for their rights in spite of the risks, as Rosa Parks had done. She was arrested in Montgomery in 1955 because she had refused to give up her seat to a white passenger in a bus, so she had disobeyed an Alabama law. Black people had to sit at the back of buses. Her arrest sparked a 381 days boycott of the Montgomery bus system and consequently buses were desegregated. Rosa Parks was the mother of the Civil Rights Movement.

Martin Luther King, that you probably know, was the non violent leader of the boycott. He gave his famous « I have a dream » speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. in 1963, a highly symbolic place.

In 1960, a black child called Ruby Bridges would be the first black pupil to integrate an all-white school. Her mother thought she would have an opportunity to get a better education if she went to the new school and a chance for a good job later in life. Four marshals drove and escorted the girl to school. So she was protected on both sides. She was very brave!

Nowadays colored people have the same rights as white people. We can thank Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges and MLK...Those days have changed our lives forever, however 3 African Americans are still killed by the police everyday in the US.

Lots of love

Your Grandfather James

