



Rosa Parks Mother of the Movement

Rosa L. Parks is known as the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement. Her refusal to give up her bus seat triggered the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. Her courageous action was to alter the course of Black American history and introduce to the world one of its greatest leaders—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rosa Louise was born on February 4, 1913, to James and Leona McCawley in Tuskegee, Alabama. The family moved to Montgomery, Alabama, when Rosa was eleven years old. She married Raymond Parks and they continued to live in Montgomery where Mrs. Parks worked as a seamstress.

The Parkses were long-time activists in the pursuit of civil rights, long before it was popular. Mr. Parks was a freedom fighter for the Scottsboro Boys in the 1930s. Both were involved in voter registration drives for Blacks. Rosa Parks was the secretary for the Montgomery branch of the NAACP. She was also the Youth Director for the organization. She was preparing for a major youth conference when arrested for the bus incident.

The petite, modest Rosa Parks recalls the historic day of December 1,

1955. She boarded the bus coming home from work. She sat in the "colored section." as the bus began to fill there was a white man standing. The driver asked three Black people to stand so the white man could be seated. They moved. Rosa Parks remained seated. "I am not going to move. I have paid my money." The driver remarked, "I will have you arrested." She told him, "Go ahead." The Parks case began the Montgomery Bus Boycott which was led by a young, local minister, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The boycott lasted a year and resulted in the outlawing of segregation.

In April 1978, the Rosa L. Parks Foundation was established to build a home and gallery to house her personal papers. The Detroit Historical District has granted the property landmark status. Some of her papers have been donated to Wayne State University of public facilities in the South. The Parks incidents also marked the beginning of a movement designed to change America's face.

Since that historic day in Montgomery, Mrs. Parks has continued her work in the civil rights move-

ment and has received several citations for her outstanding contributions. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) sponsors an annual Rosa Parks Freedom Award. She has received an honorary doctorate from Shaw College in Detroit, Michigan. In 1976, the Mayor of Detroit, Coleman Young, named a street "Rosa Parks Boulevard." In 1977, the United Automobile Workers awarded her the Social Justice Award. In the same year, she received the Humanitarian Award from the Catholic Universities of America, in Washington, D.C. In 1978, the Progressive National Convention presented her with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Walter P. Reuther Library Archives of Urban Affairs and Labor. The Rosa L. Parks Foundation is interested in senior citizens and youth. Mrs. Parks sees a void in the family and the foundation will support programming to promote relations between the very young and senior citizens.

Mrs. Parks was widowed in 1977. Today she lives in Detroit, Michigan, where she cares for her mother. She is an administrator in the office of Congressman John Conyers, Jr.



Rosa L. Parks

'We shall overcome . . .'

"We have inherited a large house, a great 'world house' in which we have to live together — Black and White, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu — a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interests, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



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