

# OPINION

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## Fight Back Against Injustice Rosa Parks showed the way

BY U. S. SEN. BARACK OBAMA

Our nation mourns Rosa Parks, a genuine American hero, who died Oct. 24 at her home in Detroit.

Through her courage and by her example, this giant of the Civil Rights movement helped lay the foundation for a country that could begin to live up to its creed.

With a simple act of civil disobedience that will forever be etched in American history, she reminded us of the central truth of the American experience - that our greatness as a nation derives

from seemingly ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

The image of Rosa Parks that will stay with so many Americans comes from a photograph that was actually taken over a year after she refused to give up that fifth-row seat. Taken on the very day that the Montgomery, Ala. transportation system was legally integrated, it shows her once again seated on a bus, hands folded peacefully, gazing out the window with a look of quiet determination. A white man is sitting behind her.



Rosa Parks

Her gaze in this photograph is one of a woman who was not looking for trouble the day she refused to give up her seat; one

who was not planning to get arrested, or there as an NAACP plant, as some have suggested.

And yet, in her eyes you see a woman who was ready for the choice she made. One who when confronted with a decision that could have meant physical harm, and certainly meant the loss of her own freedom, was prepared to accept all consequences in the name of what was right; of what was true.

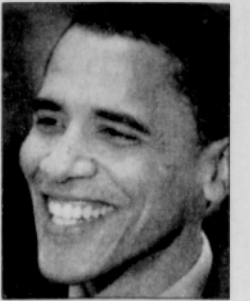
And so as we honor the life of Rosa Parks, we should not limit our commemorations to lofty eulogies.

Instead, let us commit ourselves to carrying on her fight, one solitary act at a time, so that her passion may keep inspiring all of us, half a century later, to find within ourselves that courage to stare down injustice and fight back, no matter what the cost.

Let me leave you with some words of inspiration from Rosa Parks herself:

"As I look back on those days, it's just like a dream. And the only thing that bothers me was that we waited so long to make this protest, and to let it be known where

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill.



ever we go, that all of us should be free and equal and have all opportunities that others should have. And that is why I'm trying to instill and encourage and inspire young people to reach their highest potential."

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama is a Democrat from Illinois and member of the Congressional Black Caucus.



BY REV. JESSE JACKSON

## Bush's Court Pick Insults Rosa Parks' Memory

Bush nominee adverse to civil rights

While the nation and Congress honored Rosa Parks at the Capitol Rotunda Monday, the same morn-

ing President Bush recommended the appointment of Samuel Alito, a state's rights conservative judge, to the Supreme Court.

Alito is considered a favorite of the conservative rightwing in the nation that has stood on the opposite side of history from Rosa Parks. His legal foundation is clearly adverse to civil rights, women's right to self-determination, labor - and it has even earned him the nickname, "Scalito," after the court's most conservative member.

Rosa Parks was arrested for challenging states' rights and segrega-

tion, and the denial of civil rights to all Americans. She defied the supreme laws of the land, challenging the state's policies of segregation. She changed the law and sparked a movement that brought us the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Our nation, and today's Supreme Court, cannot turn its back on these landmark accomplishments.

We want three things to happen: Support for a bill by U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill. to place a permanent statue of Rosa Parks in the Great Hall of Congress. In Rosa

*We cannot honor the legacy of Rosa Parks and at the same time appoint supreme court justices with strict constructionists' state rights legal philosophy.*

Parks' honor, Congress must approve and President Bush must sign legislation to extend the key enforcement provisions of the Voting

Rights Act; and we need a national conference on civil rights to address the key civil and constitutional rights battles of our time.

We must address the lack of access to our current Department of Justice and the likelihood of a Supreme Court hostile to the fundamental legal gains we have made in advancing civil rights for all Americans.

Finally, we cannot honor the legacy of Rosa Parks and at the same time appoint supreme court justices with strict constructionists' state rights legal philosophy.

The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr. is founder and president of the RainbowPUSH Coalition and a longtime Civil Rights advocate.

## Squandered Opportunity for Diversity

President caters to far right wing

BY JOHN J. SWEENEY

It is ironic that on the day we remember civil rights hero Rosa Parks in Washington, President Bush rejected an opportunity to unite our country with a nominee to the Supreme Court who could help bridge the difficult divides of race and class and politics in America today.

Instead, he catered to the demands of the far right wing of his party - a decision guaranteed to spark a fight over the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.

And President Bush squandered an opportunity to bring greater diversity to the Supreme Court by choosing a woman or a person of color for this seat.

On issues of equality, workers' rights and the power of our elected representatives in Congress to improve Americans' lives, Judge Samuel Alito has repeatedly put basic rights at risk.

It is critical that senators of both parties thoroughly scrutinize Judge Alito's record and views on the rights of working people in order to evaluate his suitability for a lifetime appointment to the nation's highest court.

The Supreme Court hears and decides cases involving crucially important rights and protections - from the right to a safe workplace to minimum wages, family leave, freedom from discrimination and the right to form and join a union.

It is imperative that any nominee to the nation's highest court approach cases with an open mind free of ideological bias or agenda, and with understanding and respect for the hard-fought gains workers have won in the legislature, in the executive branch and in the courts.

John J. Sweeney is president of the AFL-CIO.

## Integrated Schools Increase Opportunities For All

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recently upheld a ruling that gave Seattle public schools the authority to use race as a determining factor when admitting students. While many opponents of the practice say the ruling is harmful to the public school system, research shows that all students benefit from ethnically diverse schools. White students are able to learn from others with different backgrounds, helping to dispel stereotypes, and minority students gain access to a variety of networks - such as those that open the doors to college or jobs - that are often missing from racially segregated schools.

The court's decision will strengthen voluntary - and much needed - integration efforts in school districts across the country.

In Seattle, students are allowed to apply to any high school they want. When a school has more applicants than open slots, three "tiebreakers" are used to decide who gets in. Students with a brother or sister already enrolled at the school are selected first. Then, students who will help keep the school in line with the entire district's racial mix, which is over 60-percent minority, are chosen. Any remaining openings go to students based on how close they live to the school. Such "balancing" ensures that all students have access to the educa-

tion and resources they need to succeed.

Study after study has shown that schools with large minority populations have a disproportionate number of under-qualified teachers with fewer years of experience than racially

diverse schools or those with a majority white population. Add to this the lack of essential resources - current textbooks, up-to-date computer labs, tutoring for those who need and want it - and it's no

regardless of their own economic background, when the average student's economic status is higher. Exposure to a world outside of their own also increases a student's ambitions, providing motivation to break down a variety of barriers.

More than half a century after Brown v. Board of Education ended legal raced-based school segregation, many U.S. communities and, as a result, their schools, are voluntarily separated along racial lines.

However, several school districts across the country have be-

*Several school districts across the country have begun to realize the importance of a racially diverse educational system.*

wonder that nearly half of all black and Latino students drop out of high school. Many of those that do graduate are ill prepared for college and the American workforce.

Because race and class often go hand in hand, it is no surprise that economics plays a big part in the success rates of racially diverse schools. Integrated schools tend to have higher enrollments of middle class students. Research has shown that students perform better, re-

gun to realize the importance of a racially diverse educational system. Much like affirmative action, school integration levels the playing field, giving minority students the edge they need to be successful in an increasingly competitive society.

Judge Greg Mathis is Chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a National Board Member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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