No Darkies Sit In This Section of The Bus: Yesterday and Today

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Abstract

Yesterday as a darkie you would be told to sit in the back of the bus. Today without asking people of color do it subconsciously. Just take a moment to think about it. If you were told back in the days before the civil rights to sit to the back of the bus though, you would not like it; you would. Today, without question it is done without asking or being told. Then of course if you are being asked or ordered to give up the seat towards the front of the bus, you might question it and even be annoyed. There were four women that for whatever reason in their minds felt that they wanted to sit where they wanted to and would not have it any other way. Two of those women Charlotte L. Brown (1839 - ?) and Elizabeth Jennings Graham (March 1827 – June 5, 1901) both fought for their rights to either ride a New York City Street Car or file a lawsuit against a streetcar company in San Francisco for forcibly removing her. Both women won their cases. They got the rest the country thinking about segregation, but the South was still behind the times and were not willing to give up what they felt at the time was their right. Not until two women, one we have heard of and the other we never knew existed paved the way for what was to become a movement, defiance, a right of passage, a moment in time that we tend to remember, but do not know much. These two women are Claudette Colvin and Rosa Louise McCauley also known as Rosa Parks.

Why Blacks felt the need to protest. Why African-Americans feel today, they need to be heard and not silenced. These women sat on the bus for their rights, and this is something we should learn from to start or at the very least journey into the learning of what these women brought forth into our lives. It all began with the presence of one unknown woman and the life of another who would later become celebrated for starting a movement.

Claudette Colvin

Claudette Colvin (born September 5, 1939) is the forgotten pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement. For she was arrested on March 2, 1955, for denying to give up her seat on a bus in segregated Montgomery, Alabama. This incident took place nine months before Rosa Parks' had gotten arrested for the same crime. Colvin was among the five complainants initially involved in the federal court case filed by civil rights attorney Fred Gray on February 1, 1956, as Browder v. Gayle. Colvin testified before a three-judge board that heard the case in the United States District Court. The judges determined that the state of Alabama law requiring on bus segregation be unconstitutional on June 13, 1956. Later that year, the United States Supreme Court on December 17, 1956, endorsed the ruling to end bus segregation. Soon after the United States, Supreme Court issued a directive to Montgomery County and the state of Alabama to end bus segregation. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was soon after called off (Biography.com, 2018). Montgomery County's black leaders were reluctant to bring forth Colvin as a pioneer for they had discovered that she had become pregnant by a married man. It was to their discovery sometime later that Colvin was not pregnant, but by the time that was finally discovered Rosa Parks had already been the face of the movement to the world (Kramer, 2015). Years later Colvin stated, "Young people think Rosa Parks just sat down on a bus and ended segregation, but that wasn't the case at all" (Barnes, 2009; Hoose, 2009).

Early Life

Claudette Colvin was born September 5, 1939, and adopted by Q. P. and Mary Anne Colvin. Her father mowed lawns, and her mother worked as a maid for a living (Phibbs, 2009). Claudette Colvin grew up in a deprived black neighborhood of Montgomery, Alabama (Blattman,

2017). In 1943, at the age of four, she had acknowledged the struggles of segregation. During one experience she was at a retail store with her mother when a pair of Caucasian boys entered. The boys had asked her to touch hands with them to compare them. Her mother upon seeing this slapped her across the face and told her that she was not allowed to touch them (Hoose, 2009).

Bus Incident

By 1955, Colvin was a student at the segregated High School Booker T. Washington in the city (Jet.com, 2005). She had relied on taking the city bus to get to school and back home. It was due to her parents not owning a car. When Colvin was not in school, she was a member of the NAACP Youth Council. She had been enthusiastic in learning about the Civil Rights Movement while in school (Adler, 2009). Well, the day soon came that the rights that she learned and that of everyone else to follow would be tested. For on March 2, 1955, Colvin boarded the Capitol Heights bus from downtown to return home from school. She quietly sat down near the emergency exit, but in the colored section of the bus (Shipp, 2005). That time agreed that if the bus became crowded and the "white seats" in the front section of the bus were occupied, then the Blacks must give up their seats so that the Whites can occupy them. The Blacks must move further back on the bus, whether there were seats back there or not occupy. It just so happen that a white woman who had gotten on the bus was left standing. The bus driver, Robert W. Cleere, ordered Colvin and three other black women to move to the back of the bus. Three of the four women moved to the back of the bus, but Colvin continued to stay seated even after Mrs. Ruth Hamilton who was pregnant decided to sit next to her. The driver became aware of what had taken place through the mirror and was not happy with the situation. According to Colvin's recollection, "He asked us both to get up. [Mrs. Hamilton] said she was not going to get up and that she had paid her fare and that she didn't feel like standing" (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 2017). Colvin recalls saying, "So I

told him I was not going to get up either. So he said, 'If you are not going to get up, I will get a policeman.'

Police officers Thomas J. Ward and Paul Headley had arrived on the scene, and upon boarding the bus, they were told by the driver that the women had refused to move to the back of the bus. The officers had convinced a male passenger that was sitting behind them to step back a seat so that Mrs. Hamilton could occupy that seat. Colvin had no intention of moving and refused to move when instructed. Colvin was forcibly removed from the bus and arrested by the police (Gray, 2009; Younge, 2000). Nine months later the NAACP secretary Rosa Parks would be arrested for the same crime but would become famous for it (Barnes, 2009). Claudette Colvin recalls: "My mother told me to be quiet about what I did. She told me to let Rosa be the one: white people aren't going to bother Rosa, they like her" (Hoose, 2009). During that time that she was refusing to get up, she had a thought of a paper she had written earlier that about a local custom in which Blacks were not allowed to try on clothes or even use the dressing rooms in the department stores they entered (Brinkley, 2000). Adler 2009, in an interview, Colvin stated, "We couldn't try on clothes. You had to take a brown paper bag and draw a diagram of your foot and take it to the store" (para. 6); and "She couldn't sit in the same row as us because that would mean we were as good as her" (Barnes, 2009). "The bus was getting crowded, and I remember the bus driver looking through the rear view mirror asking her to get up for the white woman, which she didn't," said Annie Larkins Price, a classmate of Colvin's. "She had been yelling, "It's my constitutional right" (Dawkins, 2005, p. 6B). Colvin decided on that day that she was not going to move." Colvin eventually was handcuffed, arrested and forcibly removed from the bus in front of a confused and worried crowd of passengers. Colvin had shouted several times that her constitutional rights were being violated (Barnes, 2009; Gray, 2009). Colvin was convicted of causing a disturbance,

violating the segregation bus laws, and battery. Later that day the kind Reverend from her church had bailed her out. The Reverend had told her that she had brought the Revolution to Montgomery (Adler, 2009).

Browder v Gayle

Fred Gray who was a civil rights attorney brought together the five litigants before the court in the Brower v. Gayle case to bring forth that bus segregation in Montgomery, Alabama was unconstitutional. The litigants were Aurelia S. Browder, Susie McDonald, Mary Louise Smith, Jeanette Reese, and Claudette Colvin was brought before the court to testify in the case filed by civil rights attorney Fred Gray (Biography.com, 2018). In court, Colvin described her arrest: "I kept saying, 'He has no civil right... this is my constitutional right... you have no right to do this.' And I just kept blabbing things out, and I never stopped. That was worse than stealing, you know, talking back to a white person (Brinkley, 2000)." The United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama released a judgment announcing that the state of Alabama and Montgomery's laws requiring bus segregation unconstitutional on June 5, 1956. Alabama State and local representatives appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court. The United States Supreme Court summarily acknowledged the decision by the United States District Court on November 13, 1956. On December 20, 1956, the United States Supreme Court declined to reexamine the previous ruling and ordered Montgomery County and the state of Alabama to terminate bus segregation permanently (Spratling, 2005).

Life after Activism

Colvin had left Montgomery in 1958 to New York City with her son Raymond (Younge, 2000), hoping to have a better life there through employment Colvin found very quickly due to the federal court case which overturned bus segregation work was going to be very difficult to obtain.

Just before Colvin left for New York, Rosa Parks left for Detroit for a better way of life. Both would be disappointed (Spratling, 2005). Colvin stated that after her actions on the bus, the very same people she felt she was helping in her community identified her as a troublemaker, which forced her to drop out of college (Biography.com, 2018).

In New York, the young Claudette Colvin and Raymond initially lived with her elder sister, Velma Colvin. Claudette got employment as a nurse's aide in a nursing home in Manhattan, where she worked for 35 years, retiring in 2004. Claudette Colvin had never married, and while living in New York, she had another son who eventually turns out to be an accountant in Atlanta. He married and started his own family. Raymond Colvin perished in 1993 in New York, at the age of 37 from a heart attack.

Claudette Colvin stated, "I feel very, very proud of what I did," she said. "I do feel like what I did was a spark, and it caught on" (Kitchen, 2005, p. 1). Colvin also stated, "I'm not disappointed. Let the people know Rosa Parks was the right person for the boycott, but also let them know that the attorneys took four other women to the Supreme Court to challenge the law that led to the end of segregation" (Spratling, 2005). Colvin has often said she is not mad that she did not get the acknowledgment deserved; rather, is disheartened. She felt as if she was "getting her Christmas in January rather than the 25th" (Kitchen, 2005).

Legacy

Nevertheless, Colvin can be said to be the spark that lit the Montgomery Bus Boycott Movement, but she seldom told her story after she moved to New York City. So by this time, the dialogue in the black community was centering on black enterprise rather than integration issues. National Public Radio's Margot Adler has stated that many black organizations felt Rosa Parks

would be a superior test case for integration for she was an adult, and had the kind of hair and presence desired to make her look middle-class (Adler, 2009).

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks became an active member of the Civil Rights Movement in December 1943. She joined the Montgomery chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and was selected the secretary of the organization. Rosa Louise McCauley also known as Rosa Parks was born on February 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama. Her parents were Leona Edwards, a teacher, and James McCauley, a carpenter. In addition to African lineage, one of her great-grandfathers was Scots-Irish, and one of her great-grandmothers was a Native American slave (Brinkley, 2000, Webb, 2004). Rosa Parks resided with her mother in the community of Pine Level, an area outside of Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa McCauley grew up on a farm with her mother, brother, and maternal grandparents. They all became members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). McCauley would attend rural schools until the age of eleven (Shipp, 2005). Parks attended the Industrial School for Girls in Montgomery and later attended a laboratory school set up by the Alabama State Teachers College for Negroes for secondary education. She later dropped out to care for her grandmother and mother who had become ill (Schraff, 2005, p. 23 - 27).

Most of the Confederate states had implemented new foundations and electoral laws that successfully disqualified black voters and, in Alabama, many poor white voters as well. Under the white-established Jim Crow law, which was passed once the Democrats had reclaimed the power of the southern legislatures, racial segregation was enforced in public facilities and retail stores in the South, including public transportation (Hanson, 2011). Public Transportation companies had begun to enforce seating policies with distinct sections for blacks and whites. Since black

education was always underfunded school bus transportation was unobtainable in any form for black schoolchildren in the South. Parks recalled going and would watch the white students bused to school while she and other black students walked alongside the road. For Parks, it was just a way of life, but she also realized that there was indeed a separation of black and white in the world she was in (The Henry Ford, 2018). Parks' autobiography had described her early recollections of compassion from white strangers, but she could not discount the racism that came from those same people. Parks had recalled a time when the Ku Klux Klan had paraded down the street in front of their home; Parks could remember watching her grandfather safeguarding the home from the front door with a shotgun (Harrington, 1995). Twice arsonists burned the Montgomery Industrial School, founded and staffed by white northerners for black children. The white community ostracized its faculty. Parks physically fought at times since the white children bullied her where she lived. Rosa Parks later said: "As far back as I remember, I could never think regarding accepting physical abuse without some form of retaliation if possible" (Theoharis, 2015).

Early activism

Rosa met a barber from Montgomery by the name of Raymond Parks and in 1932 they married. He was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who was involved at the time was gathering money for the Scottsboro Boys defense. The boys were Haywood Patterson (age 18), Clarence Norris (age 19), Charlie Weems (age 19); brothers Andy Wright (age 19) and Roy Wright (age 12), Olin Montgomery (age 17), Ozie Powell (age 16), Willie Roberson (age 16), and Eugene Williams (age 13), a group of black men and boys accused of raping two white women. During this time Rosa took on several jobs, varying from domestic worker to hospital aide. With her husband's support, she completed high school 1933 (Crewe & Walsh, 2003, pp. 14-23; Whitaker, 2011, p. 690).

Rosa Parks joined the NAACP in Montgomery becoming part the Civil Rights Movement in 1943. That same year she was later elected to become a secretary of the NAACP and continued until 1957. Parks would work for NAACP leader Edgar Nixon, though he felt, "Women don't need to be nowhere but in the kitchen." Parks had asked, "Well, what about me?" he replied: "I need a secretary and you are a good one" (Olson, 2001). In 1944, Parks and other civil rights activist organized the "Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor. Taylor was a woman that was gang raped in Abbeville, Alabama. Parks was one of the investigators in the case, Mrs. Taylor. The Chicago Defender would later dub it the "the strongest campaign for equal justice to be seen in a decade" (McGuire, 2012). Parks was known to attend a meeting that was conducted by the Communist Party though she was not a member. The same party that brought forth the infamous Scottsboro case (NPR, 2010).

In 1944, Parks worked for Clifford and Virginia Durr as a housekeeper and seamstress. The Durrs were a white couple that lived on Maxwell Air Force Base, in Montgomery, Alabama, which did not permit segregation since it was federal land. During that period she would ride the segregated trolley to and during her employment there. Parks' biographer had noted her saying, "You might just say Maxwell opened my eyes up." Parks found that the Durrs were politically liberal and were that way allowed them to not only become friends with Parks but also sponsor Parks in the summer of 1955 to attend the Highlander Folk School. This school was an education center for activism in workers rights and racial equality, which was located in Monteagle, Tennessee (Theoharis, 2013). Despite having to deal with Jim Crow laws and discrimination by the registrars which made her register three times in which by the third time she succeeded being entered into the school (Whitaker, 2011, p. 690). In August of 1955, Emmett Till a black teenager was violently murdered after allegedly flirting with a young white woman while visiting kinfolks

in Mississippi (Department of Justice, 2004). Four days before she would take her stance on the bus on November 27, 1955, Parks attended a mass meeting at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, about the murders of activists George W. Lee and Lamar Smith. This meeting was featuring the speaker T.R.M. Howard, a civil right leader from Council of Negro Leadership in Mississippi who would speak on such matters (Beito & Beito, 2009, pp. 138-139). During this meeting, Howard also brought news of the recent exoneration of the two men who had slaughtered Emmitt Till. Parks was genuinely distraught and mad by the news since the Till's case had received a lot more attention than any of the cases she and the Montgomery NAACP had worked on— yet, the two men were free (Theoharis & The Center for the Humanities, Graduate Center, CUNY, 2018).

The Rules of the Montgomery Bus Segregation

In 1900, after Charlotte L. Brown and Elizabeth Jennings Graham both fought for their rights to ride streetcars in New York City and San Francisco with lawsuits that were both won and ended segregation in those cities. Montgomery did not want to lose their grip in their cities like those of the north or west, and so Montgomery approved a city decree to segregate bus passengers by race. Conductors were authorized to allocate seats to achieve that goal. Based on the law, no passenger would be obliged to move or offer their seat and have to stand if the bus was full and no other seats were obtainable. With time and stretching the ordinance a bit, Montgomery bus drivers implemented the custom of compelling black riders to move when there were no white-only seats left (USNARA, Bicentennial Committee, 1989). Within each bus, the first four rows of seats on each Montgomery bus were earmarked for whites. The buses had "colored" sections for black people usually in the back of the bus, though more than 75% of their ridership was black. The sections were not set but were determined by the location of a Mobile sign. Black people could in

the middle section of the bus until the front section was filled with whites, but if more whites boarded the bus, blacks were required to move from those seats to allow whites to be seated and those blacks would have to move to the rear of the bus. Also, blacks could not sit across from whites in the same aisle. If blacks were not happy going to the rear of the bus and standing and waiting for a seat, they could leave the bus. One disturbing bit of getting on the bus was that if there were white people already sitting in the front of the bus the black person would have to board the bus pay their fare through the front door. Once that was done then that person would have to get off the bus and then enter the bus through the rear door (Garrow, 2004, p. 13). For years, the black community had criticized that the situation that blacks had to put up with was unfair. Parks stated, "My resisting being mistreated on the bus did not begin with that particular arrest. I did much walking in Montgomery" (Shipp, 2005). In 1943, Parks boarded a bus and paid the fare and moved to a seat that she felt the need to sit at. The bus driver James F. Blake mentioned to Parks that she must follow the rules and enter through the back of the bus. Parks exited the vehicle, and Blake drove off (The Guardian, 2002). Parks waited at the stop for the next bus and vowed never to ride with Blake again (Woo, 2004). Rosa Parks would find out later on that it would not be the last time she saw Mr. Blake.

Her Refusal to Move

"People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in" (Parks & Haskins, 1992, p. 116).

The Cleveland Avenue bus arrived at 6 p.m. on December 1, 1955, in the downtown section of Montgomery. It was a General Motors Old Look bus from the Montgomery City Lines

(Plachno, 2002). Parks paid her fare and sat in the first empty seat in the first row of seats that were reserved for blacks in the "colored" section. Close to the middle of the bus; her row was right behind the ten seats earmarked for white passengers. Originally, she did not realize that the bus driver was the same man, James F. Blake, who had left her standing at a bus stop in the rain in 1943. The white section of seats was getting filled as the bus went along its route. Once the bus arrived in front of the Empire theatre, several white passengers boarded. The bus driver observed that there were two to three white passengers still standing when the bus had filled. Blake got up and moved the colored section sign back, behind Parks and demanded that she and three other people move to the back of the bus in the "colored" section. Parks could recall years later about that day in stating, "When that white driver stepped back toward us, when he waved his hand and ordered us up and out of our seats, I felt a determination cover my body like a quilt on a winter night" (Williams & Greenhaw, 2006). According to Parks' statement, Blake said, "Y'all better make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats" (Neary, 1992). Three of the passengers complied with the request from Blake. Parks said, "The driver wanted us to stand up, the four of us. We didn't move at the beginning, but he says, 'Let me have these seats.' And the other three people moved, but I didn't" (CNN.com, 2005). There was a black man sitting next to her, and he eventually gave up his seat (National Public Radio, 2005). Parks had moved but to a window seat in the same section and did not think about moving toward the redesignated colored section (National Public Radio, 2005). Parks later said about her thoughts of going to the back of the bus she stated, "I thought of Emmett Till, and I just couldn't go back" (Houck & Grindy, 2008). Blake asked, "Why don't you stand up?" Parks responded, "I don't think I should have to stand up." And he said, 'Well if you don't stand up, I'm going to have to call the police and have you arrested.' And I said, 'You may do that' (Williams, 2002). In 1956 during an interview in West Oakland with

Sydney Rogers, months after her arrest Parks said she was sure, "I would have to know for once and for all what rights I had as a human being and a citizen (Marsh, 2008, p. 21).

Parks was arrested by a police officer upon arrival for refusing to give up her seat. Parks asked the officer, "Why do you push us around?" She recalls him saying, "I don't know, but the law's the law, and you're under arrest" (Academy of Achievement, 1995). Parks later recalls, "I only knew that, as I was being arrested, that it was the very last time that I would ever ride in humiliation of this kind" (CNN.com, 2005). Parks was arraigned on for violation of Chapter 6, Section 11 segregation law of the Montgomery City code. Though officially she did not take a white-only seat; she had been in a colored section the whole time (Hughes, 1991, p. 27; Hawken, 2007, p. 79). The president of the Montgomery, Alabama chapter of the NAACP Edgar Nixon and Parks friend Clifford Durr bailed her out of jail that same evening (Phibbs, 2009, p. 15; Burns, 1997, p. 9).

The Boycott

The first group to formally endorse the Montgomery Bus Boycott was the Women's Political Council (WPC). It began that on Sunday, December 4, 1955, strategies for the Montgomery Bus Boycott were to be broadcasted at plenty of the black churches in the area, and a front-page article in the Montgomery Adviser would be made, which assisted in spreading the announcement. At one of the churches, a rally was held that same night. All of those in attendance decided unanimously to resume the boycott until they were treated with the level of civility that would be accepted, pending black drivers were hired, and until seating in the middle of the bus was conducted on a first-come basis. Upon the next day, Parks would be tried on the charges of disorderly conduct and violating a local regulation. The trial lasted 30 minutes with Parks

appealing her case, on the legality of racial segregation. Though she was initially found guilty and fined $10, plus $4 for cost fees (CNN.com, 2005).

On December 5, 1955, Rosa Parks' trial began and that same day over 35,00 leaflets was handed out by the WPC, in which the leaflet read: 'We are ... asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial ... You can afford to stay out of school for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups don't ride the bus at all on Monday. Please stay off the buses Monday' (Theoharis, 2011). It was historic by many measures, for it had rained that day, but despite that over 40,000 black commuters walked, some rode in carpools, and others rode in black-operated taxis that cost as much as the bus which was just 10 cents. Later that evening after the successful boycott a group of people, less than 20 gathered at the Mt. Zion AME Zion Church to discuss other boycott strategies. During that time Parks was announced, but not asked to speak, notwithstanding standing applause and calls from the gathering of people for her to speak; Parks asked if there was anything she should say, the reply was, "Why, you've said enough" (Theoharis, 2011). The group had decided that a new association be required to lead the boycott effort if it were to resume. Rev. Ralph Abernathy recommended the name "Montgomery Improvement Association" (MIA) (King, 1991, p. 432). The name "Montgomery Improvement Association" was adopted, and the MIA was formed. Its membership nominated as their president Martin Luther King, Jr., a virtual newcomer to Montgomery, who was a fresh and mainly unknown minister from the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church (Shipp, 2005).

On a Monday night, fifty leaders from the African-American community assembled to converse on actions to take in response to Parks' arrest. Edgar Nixon, the president of the NAACP, said, "My God, look what segregation has put in my hands" (Parks & Haskins, 1992). Parks was well thought out to be the model plaintiff for a test case against city and state segregation laws, as

she was seen as a dependable, mature woman, in good standing. It is one of the main reasons that Claudette Colvin was not given the knob to be the forefront of segregation. Parks was married and employed, was viewed as having a quiet and honorable manner, and was politically knowledgeable. Dr. King said that Parks was considered as "one of the finest citizens of Montgomery—not one of the finest Negro citizens, but one of the finest citizens of Montgomery" (Shipp, 2005).

Parks' court case was being decelerated in the appeals courts of Alabama, on its way to a Federal appeal and that progression could have taken years (CarolinaK12.org, n.d.). Keeping organized a boycott for that span of time would have provided great pressure to the boycott to move forward. To its end, the black residents of Montgomery unrelenting kept the boycott going for 381 days. Lots of public buses stood idle for months, harshly harming the bus transit company's finances until the city reversed its law requiring segregation on public buses after the US Supreme Court ruling in Browder v. Gayle that found segregation to be unconstitutional. Parks was not involved as a complainant in the Browder resolution for the attorney Fred Gray determined that the courts would sense that they were trying to skirt Parks prosecution charges which were running their way through the Alabama state court system (Stanford University, 1956). Parks played a significant part in the growing international awareness of the dilemma that African Americans had faced, and the civil rights struggle. King penned in his 1958 manuscript Stride Toward Freedom that Parks' arrest was the stimulus rather than the reason for the protest: 'The cause lay deep in the record of similar injustices.' He wrote, 'Actually, no one can understand the action of Mrs. Parks unless he realizes that eventually, the cup of endurance runs over, and the human personality cries out, "I can take it no longer" (King, 1991, p. 424-437).

Until this point, Rosa Parks had done a lot for the African-American community, but her life was not over yet for she would go through highs and lows. Those she helped to be brought to prominence, those she associated herself with, and those that eventually thanked her. Throughout all of it, she still managed to do what she could for those in need in her fight as an activist.

The 1960s

Following her arrest, Parks became an icon of the Civil Rights Movement, but experienced difficulties as a result. Due to the monetary sanctions that were used against activists, she lost her employment at the department store. Her husband left his job after his boss prohibited him from talking about his wife or the legal case. Parks toured and spoke considerably about the issues. In 1957, Raymond and Rosa Parks departed Montgomery, Alabama for Hampton, Virginia; mainly for she was unable to find employment. She also disagreed with King and other leaders of Montgomery's full civil rights movement about how to continue and was frequently getting death threats (Theoharis, 2013). In Hampton, she found employment as a hostess at the Hampton Institute, a historically black college. During that year, at the insistence of her brother and sister-in-law in Detroit, Sylvester and Daisy McCauley, had Rosa and Raymond Parks and her mother move north to unite with them. The City of Detroit tried to promote an open-minded standing, but Parks faced many signs of discrimination towards African-Americans. Schools were mostly segregated, and amenities in black neighborhoods inferior. Parks in a 1964 interview stated, "I don't feel a great deal of difference here... Housing segregation is just as bad, and it seems more noticeable in the larger cities." Parks was always in the struggle to help get open and fair housing. Parks would even offer her assistance in the first campaign for Congress by John Conyers. She convinced Martin Luther King (who was reluctant to endorse local candidates) to appear with Conyers, thus increasing the rookie candidate's profile (Theoharis, 2012 pp. 23-27). Once Conyers was elected,

he hired her as an administrator for his congressional office in Detroit. Parks would be in the same position until her retirement in 1988 (Shipp, 2005). Responsible for much of the day-to-day constituent work for Conyers, Parks often concentrated on socio-economic matters involving welfare, education, job discrimination, and affordable housing. Parks visited schools, hospitals, senior citizen facilities, and other public meetings and kept Conyers grounded with community affairs and activism (Shipp, 2005).

Parks got in plenty of the activism that took place around the country during the mid-1960s; she would travel to the Selma-to-Montgomery Marches, and then go to the Freedom Now Party, and then to partake in activism with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. Parks had also supported Malcolm X, whom she considered as her hero (Theoharis 2013; 2017). Similar to many Detroit blacks, Parks continued to be most troubled about the housing matters. Parks lived in a neighborhood, Virginia Park, which had coexisted with highway construction and urban revitalization. Through 1962, with policies in place for over 10,000 structures in Detroit had been destroyed. With the destruction of the structures over 43,096 people, over 70 percent of them African-American were displaced. Parks had lived only a mile from where the Detroit riots took place in 1967, and she would ponder on the housing discrimination issue that took place in the city which was a significant factor in provoking the riot (Theoharis, 2012, pp. 23-27). In the aftershock of the riots, Parks had gotten involved with the members of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the Republic of New Afrika in bringing knowledge of the police brutality against citizens that took place during the conflict. Parks later became the "people's tribunal" for she would begin investigating the murder of three young men on August 30, 1967, by police during the uprising. It would later be known as the Algiers Motel incident (Theoharis, 2018). Parks was also involved in the Black Power Movement, by appearing at the Philadelphia Black Power conference,

and the Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. Parks would also support and visit the Black Panther school in Oakland (Clarion Staff, 2013; Spratling, 2013).

The 1970s

Parks had planned movements for the independence of political prisoners in the United States, especially cases concerning issues of self-defense. She assisted in creating the Detroit chapter of the Joann Little Defense Committee and also worked in the backing of the cause of the Wilmington 10, the RNA-11, and Gary Tyler (Theoharis, 2018). Succeeding a national uproar around her case, Little prospered in her argument that she used lethal force to battle against sexual assault and was exonerated (Gore, Theoharis, & Woodard, 2009, pp. 131-132). Gary Tyler was ultimately freed in April 2016 after 41 years in prison (The Associated Press, 2016). The 1970s were a period of hurt for Parks in her personal life. Her family was overwhelmed with illness; she and her husband had experienced stomach ulcers for years and both needed hospitalization. Despite her fame and continuous speaking engagements, Parks was not a prosperous woman. She contributed most of the money from speaking to civil rights causes and existed on her staff salary and her husband's annuity. Medical bills and time missed from work produced a financial burden that necessitated her to receive aid from church groups and followers. Rosa Park's husband, Raymond Parks had died of throat cancer on August 19, 1977, and her brother, died of cancer that November. Her troubles caused her to become detached from the civil rights movement. She found out from reading the daily of the death of Fannie Lou Hamer, once a close friend. Parks herself suffered two broken bones in an accidental fall on an icy sidewalk, an injury that produced significant and frequent pain. She decided to move in with her mother into a residence for senior citizens. There she nurtured her mother, Leona. Helping her through the final stages of cancer and geriatric dementia until she died in 1979 at the age of 92 (Theoharis, 2013).

The 1980s

In 1980, Parks, widowed and deprived of immediate family, rededicated herself to civil rights and educational organizations. She co-founded the Rosa L. Parks Scholarship Foundation for college-bound high school seniors, to which she contributed most of her lecturer fees. In February 1987 she co-established, with Elaine Eason Steele, the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development, an institution that runs the "Pathways to Freedom" bus tours, which familiarize young people to the importance of the civil rights and Underground Railroad sites throughout the nation. Parks was also a member of the Board of Advocates of Planned Parenthood. Nevertheless with her health in decline, as she made her way into her seventies, Parks was unrelenting into making as many appearances as she could and dedicated a substantial amount of drive to these causes (Theoharis, 2013).

The 1990s

In 1992, Parks made available through publication Rosa Parks: My Story, an autobiography intended for younger readers, which describes her life leading to her choice to keep her seat on the bus (Parks & Haskins, 1992). Several years later, she penned Quiet Strength (1995), her biography, which centers on her faith. At the age of 81 Parks was robbed and beaten in her home in central Detroit on August 30, 1994. The attacker, Joseph Skipper, broke down the door but stated he had chased away an invader. He demanded compensation, and when Parks paid him, he commanded more. Parks declined, and he struck her. Wounded and traumatized, Parks called an acquaintance, who called the police. A community manhunt led to Skipper's apprehension and related beating. Parks was treated at Detroit Receiving Hospital for facial wounds and puffiness to the right side of her face. Parks said about the assault that she endured by a Black man, "Many gains have been made ... But as you can see, at this time we still have a long way to go." Skipper was punished

serving 8 to 15 years and was relocated to a prison in another state for his well-being (The New York Times, 1994; Theoharis, 2013; Associated Press, 1994). Suffering apprehension upon returning to her small central Detroit house after the affliction, Parks relocated to Riverfront Towers, a secure high-rise residential building. Learning of Parks' move, Little Caesar's owner Mike Ilitch proposed to cover her housing expenditures for as long as needed (Botta, 2014).

In 1994, the Ku Klux Klan applied for a petition to supply support for a slice of United States Interstate 55 in St. Louis County and Jefferson County, Missouri, near St. Louis. It was for cleaning (which would permit them to have signs expressing that this section of highway was maintained by the group). While the state could not reject the KKK's support, the Missouri legislature decided to vote and name the highway section the "Rosa Parks Highway." When questioned how she felt about this nobility, she is stated to have remarked, "It is always nice to be thought of" (Rosenthal, 2003; Fact Check, 2012). In 1999 Parks had a cameo appearance in the television series Touched by an Angel (Masius, 1999). It was the last time her presence was on film; Parks began to suffer from health difficulties due to old age.

The 2000s

In 2002 Parks received an eviction notification from her landlord about her $1,800 per month apartment for non-payment of rent. Parks was unable of handling her fiscal matters for by this time due to age-related physical and cerebral decline. Her rent was paid from a collection obtained by members and community from the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit. When her rent turns out to be delinquent further, and her looming eviction was highly exposed in 2004, officials of the proprietorship declared that they had pardoned the back rent. It would permit Parks, by then age 91 and in tremendously poor health, to live rent-free in the building for the rest of her life (Associated Press, 2004). Elaine Steele, manager of the not-for-profit Rosa and

Raymond Parks Institute, told the local newspaper that Parks got proper care, and those eviction notifications were sent in error in 2002. Her heritors and various interest organizations claimed at the time that her financial affairs had been bungled.

Upon Death, but Not Forgotten

Rosa Parks had died of natural causes on Monday, October 24, 2005, at the age of 92. Rosa and Raymond Parks never had children, and she is survived by her only sibling. City officials in Montgomery and Detroit proclaimed on October 27, 2005, that the front seats of the city buses would have black ribbons laced in nobility to Rosa Parks until her burial. Parks' coffin was flown from Detroit to Montgomery and was taken by horse-drawn hearse to the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, where she lay in tranquility by the altar on October 29, 2005, outfitted in the uniform of a church deaconess. A commemorative service was held there the following morning. United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke and would say, that if it had not been for Parks, she would probably have never become the Secretary of State. At nightfall, the casket was prepared and flown to Washington, D.C. upon arriving a bus that was similar to the one that started was driven through the streets of Washington, D.C. Upon arrival to the rotunda of the U.S. Capital, she would lie in nobility for her service to all that she has done. Since the formation of the tradition in 1852, thirty persons have been bestowed the honor, and Rosa Parks became the 31st person to have that honor. She would be the first American who had never been a U.S. government official, and the second civilian (after the French planner Pierre L'Enfant) to be honored in this way. Rosa Parks was the first woman and the second African-American to lie in honor in the Capitol (Architect of the Capitol, 2009; 2012). Over 50,000 people observed the casket there, and the event that was broadcasted on television October 31, 2005. A farewell service was held that afternoon at Metropolitan AME Church in Washington, DC

(Wilgoren & Labbe, 2005). Rosa Parks' body and the casket was returned to Detroit, for two days. Parks lay in peacefulness at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. The funeral service was seven hours long and was held on November 2, 2005, at the Greater Grace Temple Church in Detroit. Following the service, the honor guard from the Michigan National Guard laid the U.S. flag over the casket that Rosa Parks laid in and then it was carried to a horse-drawn hearse, which carried it, in daylight, to the cemetery. As the hearse passed the thousands of people who were viewing the motorcade, many applauded, praised loudly and freed white balloons in honor of Rosa Parks. Parks is buried between her husband and mother at Detroit's Woodlawn Cemetery in the chapel's mausoleum. The chapel was rechristened the Rosa L. Parks Freedom Chapel in her honor (Esparza, 2005). Parks had earlier arranged and placed a gravestone on the designated location with the engraving "Rosa L. Parks, wife, 1913–." In 2016 Rosa's Detroit house was disassembled, relocated to Berlin, and restored (McGrane, 2017, p. A7).

Legacy and Honors

1976

- Detroit renamed 12th Street "Rosa Parks Boulevard,"

1979

- The NAACP awarded Parks the Spingarn Medal, its highest honor,

1980

- She received the Martin Luther King Jr. Award.

1983

- She was inducted into Michigan Women's Hall of Fame for her achievements in civil rights.

1984

- She received a Candace Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women.

1992

- She received the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award along with Dr. Benjamin Spock and others at the Kennedy Library and Museum in Boston, Massachusetts.

1994

- She received an honorary doctorate from Soka University in Tokyo, Japan.

1995

- She received the Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate Award in Williamsburg, Virginia.

1996

- She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor given by the US executive branch.

1998

- She was the first to receive the International Freedom Conductor Award given by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

1999

- She received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award given by the US legislative branch, the medal bears the legend "Mother of the Modern Day Civil Rights Movement,"
- She receives the Windsor–Detroit International Freedom Festival Freedom Award.

2000

- Her home state awarded her the Alabama Academy of Honor.
- She receives the first Governor's Medal of Honor for Extraordinary Courage.
- She was awarded two dozen honorary doctorates from universities worldwide
- She is made an honorary member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority.
- The Rosa Parks Library and Museum on the campus of Troy University in Montgomery was dedicated to her.

2005

- The American Public Transportation Association declared December 1, 2005, the 50th anniversary of her arrest, to be a "National Transit Tribute to Rosa Parks Day."
- On that anniversary, President George W. Bush signed Pub. L. 109–116, directing that a statue of Parks be placed in the United States Capitol's National Statuary Hall.

2013

- Parks became the first African-American woman on February 27 to have her image depicted in National Statuary Hall. The monument, crafted by sculptor Eugene Daub, is a part of the Capitol Art Collection amongst nine other women featured in the National Statuary Hall Collection (Fama, 2013).

Thoughts

Four women out of many, Charlotte L. Brown, Elizabeth Jennings Graham, Claudette Colvin, and Rosa Parks did something that shaped the way things are today as far as the struggle and the continued fight goes. Each one of these ladies fought segregation head on and won. For each of them this was not an easy fight, but one that they felt they had to take and though Rosa Parks may be the most celebrated person of the four, the contributions made by the other women cannot be dismissed. Today we still have folks around this country that feel the need to have their section only to the front of the bus. We as people of color still walk to the back of the bus like it is where we belong. It is unfortunate that the color of your skin determines how you are treated, whether yesterday, today or tomorrow, we still fight for we cannot take it anymore. It is by no

means a struggle that people of color will live by on their own. Many people of color still feel the same strife that has been placed upon Negroes, Blacks, African-American, and any other name that they are called. The struggle is always hard, but the voice must be heard. No matter what is said, there is one thing though that is interesting and most people have to ask, "What have you learned from those that you have called so many different names throughout the decades that has made your life either more interesting, educational, or even thought-provoking?" Was it the ability to stand up for your rights and protest? Was it that certain part of history the caught your interest or the things that were made that has made your life better than it was before? Alternatively, can it be that at the end of the day except for the color of one's skin we are just all human beings with different tastes, ideas, and cultures that we all like to experience, enjoy, and learn? While others would rather spend their time despising what is already here, "A melting-pot of people."

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