



Rosa Parks

February 4, 1913 - October 24, 2005

Excerpts of article By Elaine WooLos Angeles Times Staff WriterOctober 25, 2005Rosa Parks, the Alabama seamstress whose simple act of defiance on a segregated Montgomery bus in 1955 stirred the nonviolent protests of the modern civil rights movement and catapulted an unknown minister named Martin Luther King Jr. to international prominence, died Monday of natural causes at her home in Detroit. She was 92.Often called the mother of the movement that led to the dismantling of institutionalized segregation in the South, Parks became a symbol of human dignity when she was jailed for refusing to relinquish her bus seat to a white man when she rode home from work on the evening of Dec. 1, 1955.Her arrest for violating Alabama's bus segregation laws galvanized Montgomery's blacks, who boycotted the city's buses for 381 days until the U.S. Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional.Memorialized in poetry, dance and song, Parks was, by most accounts, both simpler and more complex than the mythology that grew around her.She was born Feb. 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Ala., to Leona Edwards, a teacher, and James McCauley, a carpenter and builder. Her parents split up when she was 5, prompting her mother to move Rosa and her younger brother Sylvester to live with family in Pine Level, a small town near Montgomery.The earliest hint of the fortitude that would bolt her to a bus seat years later may have come when she was 10. On the road near home, she had encountered a white boy named Franklin, who uttered some offensive words and threatened to hit her. Young Rosa picked up a brick and dared him

to strike. Franklin, she recalled, "thought better of the idea and went away." Her grandmother was horrified by Rosa's behavior. You'll be lynched before you turn 20 if you keep standing up to whites, she scolded. Parks once speculated that the urge to stand up to oppressors may have come from protecting her little brother from bullies. Whatever the cause, "I do know," she wrote, "that I had a very strong sense of what was fair." Her mother was her only teacher until she was 11, when she was sent to the Montgomery Industrial School. Founded and staffed by whites to educate black children, the school was burned down twice by arsonists and the faculty was ostracized by the white community. Parks took academic classes there, as well as some vocational training. But she said the most important lesson she learned "was that I was a person with dignity and self-respect, and I should not set my sights lower than anybody else just because I was black." She went to high school at a laboratory school run by the Alabama State Teachers College for Negroes, but was forced to drop out to care for her grandmother and later for her mother. She went back to school for her degree in 1933, after she married Raymond Parks, a Montgomery barber. Raymond Parks was also an activist in the local NAACP and helped raise money to defend the nine black men accused in the Scottsboro rape case, one of the most sensational racial trials of the Depression era. He was the first man aside from her grandfather with whom Parks could discuss racial conditions, and it impressed her that he was not afraid of whites. After her marriage, Parks held a succession of jobs, from domestic worker to hospital aide. To get to work, she rode the bus, as the majority of blacks did. But black bus passengers had to follow certain rules. The first 10 seats were reserved for whites, even if no whites got on the bus. Blacks had to sit in the back rows or, if those were filled, stand. If the white section filled up, some drivers ordered blacks to give up their seats. Bus drivers determined the rules. Some drivers made black passengers board through the front door to pay their fare, then reenter through the back door to find a seat. If they were unlucky, the bus would take off before they had a chance to get back on. One day in 1943, Parks boarded a bus to register to

vote. But the back of the bus was standing room only. Instead of stepping off to go to the back door after paying her fare in front, Parks walked down the aisle. The driver, James Blake, demanded that she disembark and re-board at the rear of the bus. Parks got off and waited for the next bus. She swore to herself never to ride with that driver again. But on a winter evening 12 years later, after a long day at work, Parks got on a bus to go home, forgetting to check who was behind the wheel. She was by then an active member of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People and a recent graduate of Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, a training ground for civil rights workers where whites served her meals and studied side by side with her as her equal. When she got off work on that December evening, she was preoccupied with final arrangements for an upcoming NAACP workshop. She paid her fare before she noticed that the driver was Blake. She saw an empty seat in the middle of the bus — "no man's land" — and took it. At the next stop, the white section filled up and one white passenger was left standing. Blake told Parks and the three other blacks in the front rows of the black section, "Let me have those front seats." They all balked, at first. Then, after Blake ordered them up again, three complied. Parks refused to budge. The only words she spoke were "no" when he asked her if she was going to stand up, and "You may do that" when he said he would have her arrested. The police were summoned, and she was taken away in a squad car. Several hours after her arrest she was bailed out of jail by NAACP activist E.D. Nixon, civil rights lawyer Clifford Durr and his activist wife, Virginia. That night they all gathered at Parks' home. Nixon asked if she would be willing to be the plaintiff in a test case against the bus segregation law. Although her husband feared that lending her name to the cause would get her killed, she said yes. She had plenty of opportunity for forethought, but Parks said she never intended to get arrested. Nor did she refuse to give up her seat because she was tired, as many in her legion of admirers told the story. She was not any more weary that day than usual. "No," she said, "the only tired I was, was tired of giving in."

The little girl of 10 who refused to take guff from a white boy had grown into a 42-year-old woman who couldn't see why she should stand up so a white person could sit down. Years later, that December day when Parks said "no" would be remembered by "Soul on Ice" author Eldridge Cleaver as the moment when "a gear in the machinery shifted," changing race relations in America. On Dec. 5, she was found guilty of violating the state segregation law and was fined \$10 plus a \$4 court fee, which Nixon paid. Civil rights activists and a group of black women laid plans to launch a bus boycott. King, the 26-year-old minister of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and a newcomer to Montgomery, was chosen to run the boycott. He and the other black leaders were full of trepidation about the planned action. But for blacks, it was a hopeful time: Just the year before, in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned school segregation in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The Montgomery boycott succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of its planners: What was planned as a one-day action stretched to a year and two weeks. The boycott nearly bankrupted Montgomery's public transit system, which depended on black riders for as much as two-thirds of its revenue. It also sorely tested the ingenuity and tenacity of black Montgomery residents, few of whom owned cars. Those who did own them were pressed into service to power an elaborate, ad-hoc system of carpooling and private cabs; Parks, who had lost her seamstress job, served as a dispatcher. Over the next year, boycotters endured firebombings, hate calls, police harassment and trials for conspiracy. They convened weekly in churches for mass meetings where old hymns were turned into freedom songs. Parks received death threats. She was "labeled 'nigger traitor' by half of the Democrats in the U.S. Senate from south of the Mason-Dixon line," historian Douglas Brinkley wrote in his recent biography, "Rosa Parks." On Nov. 13, 1956, segregation on buses in Montgomery was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. The boycott ended a week later in that city, but sprang anew in Birmingham and other cities in the South. Years of tumult over equality for blacks had just begun. Shootings of blacks boarding buses and bombings of black churches

greeted the court decision. Parks' husband was driven to what biographer Brinkley called "near-suicidal despair" by the death threats targeting them. In 1957, Parks reluctantly left Montgomery and moved with Raymond to Detroit, where she had family. She continued to participate in the movement, marching at Selma, Ala., and in the 1963 March on Washington. Eventually, she found a job as a receptionist and case worker in the Detroit office of Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.). She retired in 1988 after 14 years. The death of Parks, who had been suffering from dementia, was announced by Conyers' office. Raymond Parks died in 1977. They had no children but are survived by 13 nieces and nephews. In 1987, Parks founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute to help black children excel and improve their sense of self-worth. Decades after her revolt on the Montgomery bus, her name was invoked by revolutionaries across the globe, including Vaclav Havel of the former Czech republic and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. When a lone Chinese student faced down an army tank in Tiananmen Square in 1989, Mandela characterized it as "a Rosa Parks moment." In her 80s, she amassed honors — including a lifetime achievement award from the American Public Transit Assn. and the International Freedom Conductor Award from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. In 1996, President Clinton bestowed the Medal of Freedom, and in 1999, Congress awarded her the Congressional Gold Medal. In recognition of her contribution to humanity, she also was blessed by Pope John Paul. In 2000, a library and museum were dedicated in her name on the very spot in Montgomery where she was arrested five decades earlier. Missouri also named a portion of Interstate 55 south of St. Louis the Rosa Parks Highway — the same stretch of highway sponsored by the Ku Klux Klan. "There is something divine about her," the Rev. Jesse Jackson once said. Henry Louis Gates Jr., the prominent black scholar, called her "the Harriet Tubman of our time." But Parks never thought herself a saint. In a 1995 interview with the Washington Post, she said she was "just a person who wanted to be seated on the bus...." "I want everyone to remember me as a person who wanted to be free." Copyright © 2005, The

Los Angeles Times

Tribute Wall



“ *Rosa Parks*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *To family, friends & admirers of Ms. Parks, my deepest sympathy. Fortunately Almighty God will stay true to His word at Isaiah 25:8 and will eradicate death & tears of sorrow forever. We find comfort in God's Holy Bible thru scriptures such as Rev. 21:3, 4. May you continue to find comfort in God's promises.##imported-begin##Mrs. Lewis##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ *Mother Parks..Let the work you've done speak for you. Till We Meet Again.##imported-begin##Brenda Sasser##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ *We truly bless the Lord for what he has done in the life of Mrs. Rosa Parks. The Bible says that Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can not heal... To the family we are praying that the Lord Bless and keep you in his care. Rev. Brandi Foyles Min.Malcolm Grimes & the entire Renewed Covenant Life Ministry S. Fletcher, Overseer##imported-begin##Rev. Brandi Foyles##imported-end##*

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ i really admire ms. rosa parks.she paved the way for african americans like myself .##imported-begin##crystal evans##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ You will forever be remembered in our hearts. You will always be my hero.##imported-begin##Rhonda Wilson##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ thanks rosa parks,##imported-begin##sylvia##imported-end##

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“ God bless the Parks family. "Thank you, Ms. Rosa Parks"##imported-begin##Lionel Turner##imported-end##

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“ Ms.Parks, thank you for everything you have done to help change the world...you will be missed, but always in our hearts and prayers...the heavens have rec'd another angel##imported-begin##Saundra & Family##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Thank You Rosa, not only for my name but for the great sacrifice you withstood that will benefit mankind from now on. You are my heroine.##imported-begin##Rosa Blake##imported-end##

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“ May God Bless you Mother Parks. Because of you, I am a much stronger black woman today than I ever anticipated. What a spectacular role model for us all! I hope I always remember to boldly stare in the face of adversity and never fear the repercussions, when I know what's right. Giving all Glory to God. Thank you so much for this saint.##imported-begin##Michele##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Rosa Parks was a loving and kind woman. Rosa Parks was brave. Rosa Parks will be missed by everyone including me.##imported-begin##Tyryn Pearson Cecil Elem.##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ I know that your hearts are broken.I feel the same way.Rosa Parks was a nice woman that made changes for us today.##imported-begin##Trana Ford Cecil Elem.##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ I am sorry for Rosa Parks death of age 92.Rosa lived a long productive life.I would like to thank Mrs.Rosa Parks for working so hard for our country to have freedom.Rosa Parks will always be remembered.##imported-begin##Ta'shaz Garris Cecil Elem.##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ I am very sorry that Rosa Parks died so soon but time has come for her to go.All I can say is she is in a better place now.I really do know how it feels to lose someone you love.##imported-begin##Capresha Pitts Cecil Elem##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Rosa Parks was important to the world and I know she was important to you. Rosa Parks was the bravest woman ever. I hope this letter makes you feel better.##imported-begin##DeAirra Coleman Cecil##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To the family of Rosa Parks: Mrs. Parks was a great civil rights leader. She fought for her rights and now we can have peace, thank you Rosa Parks. I will always remember her and I share your loss.##imported-begin##Shakira Cason Cecil Elementary School##imported-end##

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“ My sincere condolences to the family of Mrs. Parks. I truly admire the courage and strength Mrs. Parks demonstrated. However, may you all be comforted by the inspired words in the holy scriptures, particularly at Act 24:15 which expresses a resurrection hope. May you all find comfort and encouragement from these words.##imported-begin##V Adams##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Dear Park's Family, I'm sorry for your loss. I know how it feels to lose a loved one and a very good person in your family. But she'll always be in your heart. Cheer Up, be of Good Courage.##imported-begin##Destini Henry -Cecil Elem. School##imported-end##

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“ Dear Rosa Parks family Rosa Parks was a very loving person. She fought for her rights she also had faith in herself and God. She was a special person that is going to be missed by everyone.##imported-begin##Meona Sims-5th grader Cecil Elementary##imported-end##

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“ To the Park's family Words can't express our feelings for the loss of your loved One. She will be missed by everyone.##imported-begin##Shannon Stokes-Graham & Students##imported-end##

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“ Thank you Mother Parks! Your legacy is an inspiration for millions of Americans. God Bless You!###imported-begin##Nathaniel Peacock###imported-end##

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“ To the family of Ms Parks, I offer my sincere sympathy. Ms. Parks was truly a source of encouragement to many and a source of love and support for you her family. May you find comfort now and in the days to come from, "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation." 2 Corinthians 1:3,4.###imported-begin##Gwen Winston###imported-end##

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“ thanks for changing the world so that we can live in equality###imported-begin##Geordan###imported-end##

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“ I wish to express deep sympathy to the family, friends, & colleagues of Ms. Parks, who has fallen asleep in death. Though the night is well along, morning will soon be here, as Jesus has made a promise for all those in the memorial tombs. Read this scripture, rejoice in this hope, & look forward to the morning with confidence!###imported-begin##Debbie Spann###imported-end##

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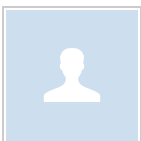
“ To the family and friends of Ms. Parks: Please accept my sincere condolences for your loss. Ms. Parks was truly a woman of courage. Also her love and determination was outstanding. We all admire people of her caliber. We also miss such ones when they fall asleep in death. "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life." John 5:28,29 What a beautiful time that will be to reunite with our loved ones again! The Bible promises that this will occur in paradise. There will be no more death, sickness, injustice or sorrow on earth. (Revelation 21:3-5, Matthew 5:5, Luke 23:43 and Acts 10:34,35) May you receive much solace and strength from these loving promises from the Bible.##imported-begin##Sharon Hill##imported-end##

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“ YOUR KINDNESS TO ALL PEOPLE WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY THANK YOU FOR BEING A VERY BRAVE WOMAN GOD LOVES YOU AND SO DO I MARY PATTERSON##imported-begin##Mary##imported-end##

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“ thank you mother parks for sitting and standing up for the rights of your people .rest in peace mother parks sleep well for you are in the arms of the lord. I hope you are up there helping all people do right by one nother. with love kime##imported-begin##kime##imported-end##

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“ Reverend Willie Banks, in Portland Oregon, and myself are puching Portland city officials to rename 'Portland Blvd' to 'Rosa Parks Way'. This street will intersect with 'Martin Luther King Blvd' it will be a great tribute to civil rights. A statues will be built to honor Rosa Parks. Please feel free to send any comments and any donations to 8441 ne sumner street, Portland, Oregon 97220##imported-begin##David Meier##imported-end##

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“ TO THE FAMILY OF ROSA PARKS I ASK THAT GOD KEPT YOU STRONG IN THE TIME OF LOSS.##imported-begin##JOMAR WRIGHT##imported-end##

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“ How Thankful we should be that God does not go by the color of our skin to determine wether we're suitable for a ressurection.-Acts 10:34,35. ALL those in the memorial tombs shall hear his voice and come out.-John 5:28,29. Praise JAH.-With Love##imported-begin##A. James##imported-end##

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“ Yesterday it happened in Portland, Oregon. Reverend Willie Banks and myself have made our dream come true. Portland city officials officially renamed 'Portland Blvd' to 'Rosa Parks Way'. This street intersects with 'Martin Luther King Blvd' and now Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King have reunited once more.##imported-begin##David Meier##imported-end##

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“ My deepest sympathy during your time of sorrow but know that the God of comfort is with you all during this time of tribulation. (2Corinthian 1:3-4) Due to the many unforeseen occurrences that brings tragedy to our lives Jehovah God promises one day soon Death will be no more (Rev 21:3-4) and his son have been given the authority to bring all those in the memorial tombs back to life. John 5:28-29 Just think there will come a time not only will death be no more but Jehovah promises that no one will have to say I'm sick according to Isaiah 33:24. I feel the need to express these words of hope because so many of us today treasure the gift of life and we do all we can to maintain it to hold on to it. That is why it hurts so badly when our loved ones die. With so many of us desiring life today no matter how good or bad it is we still want life here on earth. No one looks forward to that time of death. That is why I am under obligation by the spirit and love of God to share that hope that is in our near future that the righteous shall inherit the earth and reside upon it forever according to Psalms 37: 29 along with the above stated promises on a paradise and peaceful earth. We all can hold true to this everlasting promise because Isaiah 55:11 states all the words Jehovah have spoken WILL NOT RETURN WITHOUT RESULTS. What a wonderful prospect for our future especially enlight of the fact that Hebrews 6:18 States of God, it is IMPOSSIBLE for him to lie.##imported-begin##Carter##imported-end##

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