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"A Life History of Being Rebellious"

The Radicalism of Rosa Parks

Jeanne Theoharis

> In all these years . . . it's strange . . . but maybe not . . . nobody asks . . . about my life . . . if I have children . . . why I moved to Detroit . . . what I think . . . about what we tried . . . to do. . . .
>
> Something needs to be said . . . about Rosa Parks . . . other than her feet . . . were tired. . . . Lots of people . . . on that bus . . . and many before . . . and since . . . had tired feet . . . lots of people . . . still do . . . they just don't know . . . where to plant them.
>
> Nikki Giovanni, "Harvest for Rosa Parks"[1]

On October 30, 2005, Rosa Parks became the first woman and second African American to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol. Forty thousand Americans—including President and Mrs. Bush—came to pay their respects. Thousands more packed her seven-hour funeral celebration at the Greater Grace Temple of Detroit and waited outside to see a horse-drawn carriage carry Mrs. Parks's coffin to the cemetery.[2] Yet what is commonly known—and much of what was widely eulogized—about Parks is a troubling distortion of what actually makes her fitting for such a national tribute. Remembered as "quiet," "humble," "soft-spoken," and "never angry," she was heralded by the *New York Times* as "the accidental matriarch of the civil rights movement."[3] Democratic presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama highlighted her "quiet" stance,[4] while Republican Senate majority leader Bill Frist proclaimed her "bold and principled

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refusal to give up her seat was not an intentional attempt to change a nation, but a singular act aimed at restoring the dignity of the individual." Indeed, most of the tributes focused squarely, and nearly exclusively, on December 1, 1955, when Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus. A lifetime of more than sixty years of political activism was reduced to a "singular act" on a long-ago winter day.

This process of iconicizing Rosa Parks was not simply a product of her funeral. Nor was the tendency to honor her outside of a lifetime of activism. In his Pulitzer Prize–winning biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., *Parting the Waters*, Taylor Branch lauded Parks as "one of those rare people of whom everyone agreed that she gave more than she got. Her character represented one of the isolated high blips on the graph of human nature, offsetting a dozen or so sociopaths."[5] Yet all Branch cared to include about Parks's political work in his near 1,000-page book was a mention of her position as secretary of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (but nothing about what she did with the chapter) and her 1955 visit to Highlander Folk School at the urging of white Montgomerian Virginia Durr. Indeed, the only sustained scholarly treatment of Parks is Douglas Brinkley's thoughtful but pocket-sized, unfootnoted biography, *Rosa Parks: A Life*.

The breadth of Parks's six decades of activism is thus largely unfamiliar. Politically active for two decades before the boycott, she moved to Detroit after the boycott and remained politically involved there for the next forty years. She stood up to white bullies as a teenager and deeply admired Malcolm X *and* Martin Luther King. Issues of criminal justice (and the treatment of black people within the legal system) were some of her most long-standing political concerns. Insisting on the right of self-defense, Parks recalled: "I could never think in terms of accepting physical abuse without some form of retaliation if possible." Parks had a fierce line of personal dignity and, according to fellow activist Virginia Durr, the "courage of a lion." When a white boy pushed her, a young Parks pushed back; as a forty-two-year-old political activist, when asked by James Blake to give up her seat on the bus, she refused. "I had been pushed as far I could be pushed." In other words, Parks practiced a strategic resistance that avoided white domination when possible. In the summer of 1955 (months before her bus stand), when other civil rights activists went to meet city officials to contest the disrespectful treatment and lack of hiring black drivers on Montgomery's buses, Parks refused. "I had decided I would not go anywhere . . . asking white folks for any favors."

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The overlooking of Parks's radicalism stems in part from the ways she was made into an icon during the movement. Working-class by economic position and middle-class in demeanor, she was an ideal person for a boycott to coalesce around. And, indeed, the boycott turned on a strategic image of Parks. Describing Parks as "not a disturbing factor," Martin Luther King Jr. had noted her character at the first mass meeting in Montgomery. "I'm happy it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks," King extolled, "for nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity, the height of her character."[6] Indeed, Parks's character made her the ideal test case that NAACP leader E. D. Nixon and other black activists in Montgomery had been looking for. "She was not the first," former Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) organizer Andrew Young explained, "but when she was thrown in jail it said to all of Montgomery that none of us is safe."[7]

Part of the contemporary construction of Parks—and the ways her radicalism has been obscured—thus flows from the strategic uses of her identity at the time.[8] As historians Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward explain:

> In order to reinforce Parks's image of unassailable respectability, movement leaders and the black press consistently downplayed—in fact, rarely mentioned—her involvement with the NAACP or Highlander. . . . Indeed, at Holt Street, Martin Luther King appeared concerned to distance Parks from her own history of political engagement. . . . Other published reports referred to her variously as "unassuming," "genteel" "attractive" "soft-spoken" "quiet" and "refined." . . . By emphasizing those aspects of Parks's life which conformed most closely to proper womanly behavior as defined by post-war society . . . boycott leaders, the black press, and the sympathetic sections of the white press which followed their lead, partially defused, or at least redefined, the full radicalism of Parks's defiance.[9]

The construction of Parks's respectability, which proved key to the success of the boycott and worked to deflect Cold War suspicions of this grassroots militancy, turned, in part, on obscuring her long-standing politics and larger radicalism. Parks's militancy was played down in service of the movement, but this image of her as a simple seamstress would later take on a life of its own.

Parks's militancy has also been overlooked, as Representative John Conyers explained, because of the "discongruity" of her radicalism: "She had

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a heavy progressive streak about her that was uncharacteristic for a neat, religious, demure, churchgoing lady."[10] In the popular imagination, black militants do not speak softly, dress conservatively, attend church regularly, get nervous, or work behind the scenes. There has been a corresponding tendency to miss the ways these "respectable" radical women were persecuted for their activism. Both Parks and her husband lost their jobs, developed health problems, had their rent raised, received persistent hate calls and mail at their home, and subsequently left Montgomery because of this persecution—yet to highlight these difficulties and the economic insecurity the family faced for the next decade disrupts the Parks fable, with its simple heroine and happy ending.

This misleading image of militancy stems from two problematic assumptions: the masculinization of militancy and the confusion of radicalism with a confrontational outward form. Fetishizing the package of radicalism (the clothes, the stance, the bold and angry presentation) renders radicalism as a performative, emotional act more than a considered political choice, and the people engaged in it a fringe element distinctly at odds with a respectable lady like Parks. The recent flowering of scholarship on Black Power and black radicalism has, in many cases, overlooked women's roles and maintained a near silence around older women's radical politics. With the glamour attached to youthful boldness, there has been an inclination to celebrate those women who can be cast as "revolutionary sweethearts," as political scientist Joy James has termed it.[11] Within this frame, there is the corresponding tendency to regard middle-aged women as staid and compromising, neither sexy nor dangerous—and therefore invisible in the cast of black militancy. Moreover, by ignoring people like Parks who often labored behind the scenes to promote widespread societal transformation, it provides little consideration of the work of radicalism and the ways people sustained this vision over decades. As James explains, the process of iconization has a corresponding depoliticizing effect. The public celebration and heroification of certain women activists help to obscure the actual political work they did.[12] Paradoxically, then, the more Parks was honored, the less her formidable political challenge to American justice and democracy was visible and taken seriously. To see the ways Parks embraced key aspects of Black Power politics (self-defense, demands for more black history in the curriculum, justice for black people within the criminal justice system) gives us another view not just of Parks herself but of the foundations of Black Power and black radicalism and the ways key activists saw its overlap with the civil rights movement.

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"I Didn't Want to Be Pushed": The Early Years of Rosa McCauley Parks

A considered look at Parks's life reveals a "life history of being rebellious," as she liked to explain it.[13] Born on February 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama, Rosa Louise McCauley was active in civil rights issues long before that fateful December day. Crediting her mother and grandfather for her political will, Parks described her mother's feistiness: "Instead of saying, 'Yes sir,' she was always saying 'No, you won't do this.'"[14] Parks was raised by her mother and grandparents; her father, an itinerant carpenter, left when she was two. Her grandfather was a staunch believer in self-defense and a supporter of Marcus Garvey. When Klan violence worsened, he sat out at night on the porch with his rifle. Growing up in a deeply segregated community, Parks picked cotton as a child. The school for black children operated on a shortened calendar to allow for this work. "I realized that we went to a different school than the white children," Parks recalled, "and that the school we went to was not as good as theirs."[15]

Rosa McCauley stood up for herself as a young person. One day, as she was coming home from school with some other children, a white boy on roller skates tried to push her off the sidewalk. Parks turned around and pushed him back. The boy's mother threatened Parks: "She said she could put me so far in jail that I never would get out again for pushing her children. So I told her that he had pushed me and that I didn't want to be pushed, seeing that I wasn't bothering him at all."[16] Another time, she threatened a white bully who was taunting her. "I picked up a brick and dared him to hit me. He thought better of the idea and went away."

Rosa McCauley was constrained by the family responsibilities and limited job options that many black women confronted in the 1930s. Because Montgomery did not provide high schools for black students, Parks attended the laboratory school at Alabama State but dropped out in the eleventh grade to care for her sick grandmother and went to work as a domestic. She met the politically active Raymond Parks in the spring of 1931, "the first real activist I ever met."[17] Getting married in December 1932, Rosa Parks joined with him in organizing on behalf of the nine young men who had wrongfully been convicted and sentenced to death in Scottsboro, Alabama. Raymond Parks began holding secret meetings at the Parks home to work on freeing the nine young men. Rosa sometimes attended—"the table was covered with guns," she recalled. She also went back to school and earned her high school degree in 1933.

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In 1943, after seeing a newspaper picture of a former classmate, Mrs. Johnnie Carr, at an NAACP function, Rosa Parks went to an NAACP meeting. The realization that there were other women working with the NAACP spurred her participation. She became the secretary of the Montgomery chapter and worked closely with E. D. Nixon, the local president. The chapter turned its attention to voter registration (only thirty-one black people were registered in Montgomery) and to the case of a young black serviceman in Georgia accused of rape by a white woman in Montgomery. The young man had no legal representative that dared pursue his case.

From 1943 to 1945, she also tried on numerous times to register to vote, finally succeeding in 1945. She was then forced to pay back poll taxes—$1.50 for each year she had been old enough to vote—a formidable amount of money for a working-class family. Parks met the NAACP's director of branches Ella Baker in March 1945 at an NAACP leadership conference in Atlanta. There, and at another NAACP conference in Jacksonville in 1946, Baker made a huge impression on Parks. "Beautiful in every way," Parks noted how "smart and funny and strong" Baker was. From then on, "whenever she came to Montgomery, she stayed with me. She was a true friend—a mentor."[18]

Beginning with Scottsboro—and lasting throughout her life—Parks focused on the mistreatment of African Americans under the law and organized to seek justice for black people within the criminal justice system. After a twenty-four-year-old black woman was gang-raped by six white men at gunpoint near Abbeville, Alabama, in 1944, Parks helped form the Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor. Using the networks built through the Scottsboro case, the committee reached out to labor unions, African American groups, and women's organizations to draw attention to the case and to pressure Governor Chancey Sparks to convene a special grand jury.[19] "We tried to help," Parks wrote, "but there wasn't much we could do."[20] The men were never indicted.

Parks also took interest in the case of Jeremiah Reeves, a sixteen-year-old black young man who was having an affair with a neighborhood white woman. When a neighbor discovered the couple, the white woman cried rape. The Montgomery NAACP worked for years to free Reeves. Parks personally corresponded with him and helped get his poetry published in the *Birmingham World*. But on March 28, 1958, Reeves was executed. "Sometimes it was very difficult to keep going," Parks admitted, "when all our work seemed to be in vain."[21] Parks became the secretary of the

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Alabama state branch of the NAACP and in 1948 gave a speech at the state convention on the mistreatment of African American women in the South. Traveling throughout the state, she sought to document instances of white-on-black violence, in the hopes of pursuing legal justice, and issued press releases on these cases to the *Montgomery Advertiser* and *Alabama Journal*. "Rosa will talk with you" became the understanding throughout Alabama's black communities.

Indeed, Rosa Parks had been politically active for more than two decades before the bus incident. Besides her role as secretary of the chapter where she did much of the behind-the-scenes work of the organization, she founded and led the NAACP Youth Council. She encouraged the young people of the branch to engage in a series of protests at the main library. An early precursor to the sit-in movement, these teenagers would go and ask for service, since the Montgomery library for blacks had a much more limited selection, but were consistently denied access. In 1948, when the Freedom Train had come to Montgomery, Parks had taken a group of black young people to visit the interracial monument. The integrated Freedom Train exhibit was highly controversial—blacks and whites viewing the exhibit could mingle freely—and resulted in numerous hate calls to Parks's home. In the summer of 1955, Parks attended the Highlander Folk School, an interracial organizer training school started by Myles Horton in Tennessee, on the suggestion of her white employer and fellow civil rights comrade Virginia Durr.[22]

Parks admired Highlander's founder Myles Horton's "wonderful sense of humor. [H]e could strip the white segregationists of their hardcore attitudes . . . and I found myself laughing when I hadn't been able to laugh in a long time."[23] The visit to Highlander was a transformative one. "I was 42 years old, and it was one of the few times in my life up to that point when I did not feel any hostility from white people. . . . I felt that I could express myself honestly without any repercussions or antagonistic attitudes from other people. . . . It was hard to leave."[24] Part of the discussion focused on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Eleanor Roosevelt participated in the workshop. Participants were encouraged to contextualize the problems facing their communities within a global movement for human rights but also come up with concrete steps to create change at home. Septima Clark remembered, "At the end of the workshops we always say, 'What do you plan to do back home?' Rosa answered that question by saying that Montgomery was the cradle of the Confederacy, that nothing would happen there because blacks wouldn't

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stick together. But she promised to work with those kids, and to tell them that they had the right to belong to the NAACP, . . . to do things like going through the Freedom Train."[25] Because Parks was afraid that white Montgomerians would retaliate since she had attended the workshop, Clark accompanied Parks to Atlanta and saw her onto the bus to Montgomery.[26]

Like Ella Baker, Clark had a profound effect on Parks. Parks described being "very much in awe of the presence of Septima Clark, because her life story makes the effort that I have made very minute. I only hope that there is a possible chance that some of her great courage and dignity and wisdom has rubbed off on me. . . . [I]n spite of the fact that she had to face so much opposition in her home state and lost her job . . . it didn't seem to shake her. While on the other hand, I was just the opposite. I was tense, and I was nervous and I was upset most of the time."[27] Interestingly, Parks casts her own work as "minute" compared with Clark's and felt "tense" compared with Clark's composed presence. Parks looked to Septima Clark and Ella Baker as mentors, as she sought to figure out how to be a woman activist when much of the visible leadership was men and how to continue the struggle despite the vitriol of white resistance and the glacial pace of change.

In spite of many years of political organizing, Parks still felt nervous, shy, and at times pessimistic about the potential for change. Historian Cynthia Stokes Brown describes Parks's feelings before the boycott, "All of the suffering and all of the struggling and the effort that we put forth just to be human beings sometimes seemed a little too much."[28] Thus in understanding Parks's long history of political activism, we need to be wary of romanticizing her ability to take a stand against white terror and intimidation on the bus, as if she were some civil rights version of Clark Kent ready for that December day to transform into a race superhero. Septima Clark recalls, "She was so shy when she came to Highlander, but she got enough courage to do that."[29] Indeed, the popular view of Parks as either accidental or angelic misses the years of gathering courage, fortitude, anger, and community that would enable her to refuse to give up her seat.

"I Had Been Pushed as Far as I Could Stand to Be Pushed": Rosa Parks on the Bus

By 1955, the Montgomery NAACP was looking for a test case against bus segregation. Two young women—fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin in March and eighteen-year-old Mary Louise Smith in October—were

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arrested for refusing to give up their seats. Parks helped raise money for Colvin's case and brought Colvin into the NAACP Youth Council. But ultimately neither Colvin nor Smith was deemed the kind of plaintiff that the NAACP wanted to back for a legal case. While worrying that the press would "have a field day" with a less than upstanding plaintiff, Parks grew frustrated with the lack of change: "I felt that all of our meetings, trying to negotiate, bring about petitions before the authorities, that is the city officials really hadn't done any good at all."[30] After the NAACP's decision that Colvin was not the proper plaintiff for a suit, a group of activists took a petition to the bus company and city officials asking for more courteous treatment and no visible signs of segregation on the bus. Parks refused: "I had decided I would not go anywhere with a piece of paper in my hand asking white folks for any favors."[31]

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a bus on her way home from work. She and three other black passengers were seated in a row toward the middle of the bus when a white man boarded the bus. There were no seats remaining in the white section; by the terms of Montgomery's segregation, all four passengers would have to get up so one white man could sit down. When the driver, James Blake, who had given Parks trouble before, ordered them to give up their seats, the others got up, but Parks refused.[32] Parks had not planned the protest, but, as she recalled, "I had been pushed as far as I could stand to be pushed."[33] Having done a great deal of organizing around the criminal justice system, Parks was well aware of the physical dangers a black woman faced in getting arrested. Yet, in an interview in 1956, she said that she "wasn't frightened at all."[34]

Like other bus drivers in Montgomery, Blake carried a gun. He ordered Parks to move, and when she would not, had her arrested. She was taken to jail, where she was allowed one phone call to her family and was fined fourteen dollars. Hearing that Parks had been arrested, community leaders—including E. D. Nixon, lawyers Fred Gray and Clifford Durr, and Women's Political Council president Jo Ann Robinson—sprang into action. Nixon saw in Parks the kind of plaintiff they had been looking for—middle-aged, religious, and well respected in the community for her political work. Indeed, while the stance she took on the bus was an independent and personal choice, what made it the catalyst for a movement was certainly not a singular act but years of organizing by Parks and others in Montgomery that made people ready for collective action.

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But that protest is often reduced to the unwitting action of a tired seamstress, unconnected to a broader quest for justice. Parks herself critiqued these popular mischaracterizations:

> I didn't tell anyone my feet were hurting. It was just popular, I suppose because they wanted to give some excuse other than the fact that I didn't want to be pushed around. . . . And I had been working for a long time—a number of years in fact—to be treated as a human being with dignity not only for myself, but all those who were being mistreated.[35]

Her decision on the bus was also a lonely one. "Getting arrested was one of the worst days of my life," Park explained. "There were other people on the bus whom I knew. But when I was arrested, not one of them came to my defense. I felt very much alone."[36] She contextualized her decision within her role as a political organizer: "An opportunity was being given to me to do what I had asked of others."[37] Parks saw herself as part of a movement and, as an organizer, felt she had a responsibility to act on behalf of this larger community. Indeed, her decision to act arose as much out of her frustration with the lack of change as from a belief that her particular action would change something.

Parks's commitment to advocating for the rights of black people in prison extended to her own jail experience. One of the women in her cell had been in jail for nearly two months. The woman, who had picked up a hatchet against her boyfriend after he struck her, had no money to post bail and no way to let her family know where she was. Parks smuggled out a piece of paper with the woman's brother's phone number. "The first thing I did the morning after I went to jail," Parks recalled, "was to call the number the woman in the cell with me had written down on that crumpled piece of paper."[38] A few days later, she saw the woman on the street, out of jail and looking much better.[39]

Released on bail, Parks wanted to run her regular Thursday evening NAACP Youth Council meeting. Nixon walked her to the meeting, hoping to convince her to be part of a legal case against bus segregation. Parks agreed.

The boycott was actually called by the Women's Political Council (WPC), a local group of black women formed to address racial inequities in the city. Indeed, the year before, the WPC's president, Jo Ann Robinson, a professor of English at Alabama State College, had sent a letter to the mayor demanding action on the buses or people would organize

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a citywide boycott.[40] After hearing from lawyer Fred Gray about Parks's arrest, Jo Ann Robinson called a meeting of the WPC's leadership and decided to take action. With the help of two students, Robinson stayed up all night making leaflets that called for a boycott the following Monday. The leaflet read: "Another Negro woman has been arrested. . . . If we do not do something to stop these arrests, they will continue. . . . We are therefore asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial." The WPC distributed more than 50,000 leaflets across town to let people know of the boycott. Thus, Parks's action sparked a movement because a number of people and organizations were already in place to run with it. As Parks herself later reiterated, "Four decades later I am still uncomfortable with the credit given to me for starting the bus boycott. Many people do not know the whole truth. . . . I was just one of many who fought for freedom."[41]

Meanwhile, E. D. Nixon began calling Montgomery's black ministers—including Ralph Abernathy and a new young minister in town, Martin Luther King Jr.—to convince them to support the boycott. Although King initially hesitated, worried about being new in town and having a young family, he agreed to meet with the other ministers and spoke about the action in church on Sunday. Parks also sought to keep a low profile. She never made a statement to the local newspaper, the *Montgomery Advertiser*, and on Monday, after her trial, she answered phones in Fred Gray's law office. "The people were calling to talk to me but I never told them who I was. . . . They didn't know my voice so I just took the messages."[42]

That Monday, nearly every black person in Montgomery stayed off the bus. That evening, 15,000 people gathered for a mass meeting at the Holt Street Baptist Church. They decided to continue the boycott indefinitely (originally it was intended to last one day) and formed a new organization called the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). Parks was recognized and introduced but not asked to speak, despite calls from the crowd for her to do so.[43] Years later, Parks recounted in an interview, "I do recall asking someone if I should say anything and someone saying, 'Why? You've said enough.'"[44] While Parks imagined that she might speak at the meeting, she was told that she had "said enough," even though she had said very little between her Thursday arrest and the Monday meeting. Similar to the treatment of other women in the movement, she was lauded as a hero but not imagined to have ideas that needed to be heard about her action or subsequent political strategy.

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Parks's gendered role as a mother figure of the movement thus emerged early on. Douglas Brinkley explained, "It helped, of course, that at forty-two years old Parks was also a natural maternal figure to the young ministers and lawyers who led the boycott: Gray was twenty-five, King was twenty-six, and Abernathy was twenty-nine."[45] Indeed, Parks's role as the mother of the movement seemed to preclude her from having a *public* decision-making role. Despite her behind-the-scenes work, the scores of appearances she would make on behalf of the boycott, and her extensive political experience, she was not granted a formal position in the MIA.

"It Is Fine to Be a Heroine but the Price Is High": Rosa Parks and the Bus Boycott

The city stood firm in its commitment to bus segregation. People continued to walk and carpool—and the harassment of boycotters continued. On February 21, Rosa Parks was indicted along with eighty-eight others, including King and Abernathy, for their role in organizing a car pool to help maintain the boycott. For the next year, Parks gave speeches on behalf of the NAACP and MIA, attended meetings, helped distribute clothes and food, and served as a dispatcher.[46]

Meanwhile, Parks's action had taken a significant toll on her family's economic stability. On January 7, 1956, Montgomery Fair, the department store where Parks worked as a seamstress, discharged Parks, allegedly because it was closing the tailor shop. She received two weeks' severance pay. A week later, her husband resigned his job; his employer, Maxwell Airforce Base, had prohibited any discussion of the boycott or even of Rosa Parks in the barbershop where Raymond Parks worked. Their landlord raised their rent ten dollars a month. Parks and her family were in a precarious economic state. Parks was doing a great deal of traveling and public speaking, but the money she earned was going to support the work of the NAACP and MIA. Virginia Durr wrote to Myles Horton on February 18, 1956, noting. "It is fine to be a heroine but the price is high." Horton subsequently wrote to Parks, telling her how "proud we were of your courageous role in the boycott."[47] He offered his sympathies regarding her economic situation: "Doing what's right is not always the easy thing to do."[48] Durr wrote Horton again. explaining, "You would be amazed at the number of pictures, interviews etc that she had taken and all of that takes up time, and then too all the meetings and then having to walk nearly everywhere she goes takes times too. . . . [M]ost people want to contribute

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to the Boycott itself rather than to an individual, but that particular individual is to my mind very important and I think she should certainly be helped."[49]

Parks's economic situation continued to be difficult. Virginia Durr raised $600 for the Parks family and, in November 1956, wrote to Horton again asking for Highlander's help in creating a voter registration campaign in Montgomery with a paid position for Parks. Horton refused to help develop and fund such a voter project in Montgomery, though he did offer Parks a position at Highlander, but because her mother said she did not want to "be nowhere I don't see nothing but white folks," she turned it down.[50]

Along with this economic hardship, the Parks home was receiving regular hate mail and death threats. Callers would repeatedly tell her, "You should be killed" and "Die, nigger. Die." This took a significant physical and emotional toll on her mother and husband, and Parks herself developed stomach ulcers.[51] Yet she continued to play an active role in coordinating the boycott. With the Supreme Court's ruling in *Browder v. Gayle*, the 381-day boycott ended. On December 20, 1956, the day the buses were desegregated in Montgomery, nearly all the media ignored Parks in favor of quotes from and pictures of King.[52] It was *Look* magazine that staged the photo of her sitting in the front seat looking out the window that would come to be iconic.

Receiving constant death threats and with few economic prospects in the city, the Parks family decided to leave Montgomery.[53] Part of the reason for the decision also came from the unfriendly reception Rosa was now receiving from certain members within Montgomery's civil rights community. According to Brinkley, "Suddenly, Parks found herself lauded as a near saint virtually everywhere she went in black communities, and before long some of her colleagues in Montgomery's civil rights movement began to grow jealous of the attention. . . . Much of the resentment sprang from male chauvinism [from many of the ministers and E. D. Nixon]."[54]

"The Northern Promised Land That Wasn't": Rosa Parks in Detroit

In August 1957, the Parks family, including Rosa's mother, moved to Detroit, where Rosa's brother Sylvester McCauley had lived since 1946. Rosa Parks had gone to Detroit the year before at the invitation of the National Negro Labor Council to speak to Local 600, where she had linked northern and southern struggles for civil rights.[55] Referring to the city as

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"the northern promised land that wasn't," Parks saw that racism in Detroit was "almost as widespread as Montgomery."[56] Still, the city offered them a chance to be near family and the opportunity to get away from the difficulties that Montgomery now presented. Ralph Abernathy, embarrassed by Rosa's decision to leave, apologized and asked her to stay. The MIA raised $800 as a going-away present, and the couple was honored at a service held at Saint Paul's AME Church.

Arriving in Detroit, the Parkses moved to a neighborhood "almost 100% Negro with the exception of about two families in the block where I live. In fact I suppose you'd call it just about the heart of the ghetto."[57] But the family still struggled economically, and both Rosa and Raymond experienced difficulty finding work. The civil rights community did not offer her any paid work. "I didn't get any work, but I went to a lot of meetings and sometimes when they would take up contributions, but that was never high."[58]

In Detroit, Rosa Parks was still considered "dangerous" and an outside agitator by many residents. In 1963, she joined Martin Luther King at the front of Detroit's Great March to Freedom. This march, held weeks before the March on Washington, drew thousands of Detroiters. There, Parks recalled, King "reminded everybody that segregation and discrimination were rampant in Michigan as well as Alabama." Parks also made these connections between southern and northern racism in some of her speeches.[59] Although she found more openness in race relations in Detroit, "there were problems here . . . especially in the school system. The schools would be overcrowded. The job situation wouldn't be none too good."[60]

The lack of recognition and remuneration that Parks was experiencing was a problem throughout the movement. At the 1963 March on Washington, no women were asked to speak. Criticized for the lack of women on the program, A. Philip Randolph included "A Tribute to Women" in which Parks—along with a number of other women activists such as Gloria Richardson, Diane Nash, Myrlie Evers, and Daisy Bates—were asked to stand up and be recognized. No woman got to speak. There is a tendency, given the iconic view of Parks, to believe that she was simply happy to stand on the dais that August day and did not notice the ways women were being relegated to a lesser role. But Parks did notice—and care—about how women were being marginalized. Parks criticized this sexism, telling fellow activist Daisy Bates at the March on Washington that she hoped for a "better day coming." And in her autobiography, Parks

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describes the march as "a great occasion, but women were not allowed to play much of a role."[61]

In 1964, Parks became interested in civil rights attorney John Conyers's long-shot campaign for Michigan's First Congressional District (renumbered in 1992 to become the Fourteenth District). She had met Conyers years earlier in Montgomery and became an active volunteer in his campaign for "Jobs, Justice, Peace." Thinking strategically, Parks convinced Martin Luther King, who did not want to involve himself in any political races, to make an exception and come to Detroit. According to Conyers, King's visit "quadrupled my visibility in the black community . . . .Therefore, if it wasn't for Rosa Parks, I never would have gotten elected."[62] Conyers won the primary contest of six Democrats by 128 votes.

On March 1, 1965, Parks was hired as a secretary for the newly elected congressman's Detroit office and worked there until she retired in 1988. Tellingly, after more than twenty years of dedicated political work, this was the first time Parks received a paid political position. Still, she would remain largely within a gender-acceptable role: greeting visitors, answering phones, handling constituent needs, and coordinating the office. Conyers recalled, "People called her a troublemaker," and the office and Parks herself received hate mail.[63] Still, Conyers was awed by Parks's electrifying presence in the office, explaining, "Can you imagine coming to work, and you have Rosa Parks sitting in your office?"[64] Parks also continued a busy activist schedule—making public appearances and speeches at scores of church programs, women's day events, and schools and often apologizing to Conyers for having to leave to fulfill these commitments. She served as an honorary member of SCLC and attended the events she could. She also was active in numerous local organizations like the Women's Public Affairs Committee (WPAC) and political campaigns in Detroit, as well as organizing efforts against the War in Vietnam.

In 1965, moved by the photos of marchers being beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Parks decided to return to Alabama to join the march herself. Yet during the march, many of the younger organizers did not know her, and because she was not given an official jacket, the police kept pulling her out and making her stand on the sidelines. A number of the whites in the crowd did recognize her, yelling, "You'll get yours, Rosa." Upon returning to Detroit, Parks was incensed by the murder of Viola Liuzzo, a white Detroiter who had attended the march and been killed by members of the Klan (including an FBI informant) as she drove marchers home. Parks saw Liuzzo's murder as further evidence of the need to put

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pressure on Johnson. "This was no time to be dormant," she declared in a testimonial dinner given by the WPAC.[65] The murder of Liuzzo spurred Parks to be even more active, particularly in the WPAC.

Not the meek and uninformed seamstress that she is portrayed as, Parks was a longtime believer in self-defense and a big supporter of Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams. In 1967 she told an interviewer, "I don't believe in gradualism or that whatever should be done for the better should take forever to do."[66] Parks had imbibed this tradition of self-defense from her grandfather. Indeed, while seeing the tactical advantages of nonviolence during the boycott—finding it "refreshing" and "more successful, I believe, than it would have been if violence had been used"—she found it "hard to say that she was completely converted to it." "As far back as I remember, I could never think in terms of accepting physical abuse without some form of retaliation if possible."[67] Parks was a voracious reader. According to Brinkley, "She read a number of newspapers and magazines daily—including the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Pittsburgh Courier*—to stay abreast of the civil rights battles being waged."[68] Parks kept an extensive clippings file, interested in stories related to African Americans (be they civil rights activists or entertainers, on school desegregation, unions, or the Nation of Islam) and in other pressing national issues such as the war in Vietnam and free speech at home.

Parks did not see a contradiction in her deep admiration for both Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Describing him as "a very brilliant man," Parks read all she could on Malcolm X's ministry and political program. "This strong-willed man reminded me somewhat of my grandfather. He was full of conviction and pride in his race . . . .The way he stood up and voiced himself showed that he was a man to be respected."[69] Parks's work in 1960s Detroit exemplified the continuities and connections between the civil rights and Black Power movements. She began making appearances at rallies sponsored by the all-black Freedom Now Party,[70] and in February 1965 received an award from the Afro-American Broadcasting Company, started by Milton and Richard Henry, who also helped found the Freedom Now Party and, later, the Republic of New Africa. Malcolm X gave the keynote speech (often referred to as "The Last Message" because it occurred a week before his assassination). Afterward, Parks got Malcolm X to sign her program.[71] Parks was in the mix of a vibrant and diverse radical community in the city. Brinkley explains, "By the turbulent mid-1960s, the gentle Christian woman had become a tough-minded, free-thinking feminist who had grown impatient with gradualist

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approaches."[72] She became involved in a number of education projects that sought to bring more black history and Afrocentric approaches into the curriculum.

On July 23, 1967, following a Detroit police raid of an after-hours bar, people refused to disperse. This sparked five days of rioting that left forty-three people dead (thirty at the hands of the police) and $45 million of property damage. Parks saw the 1967 riots as an outgrowth of the frustration people felt at the continuing inequities in a putatively liberal city such as Detroit. She did not cast her years of activism or her protest on the bus as utterly distinct from the actions of the rioters: "I would associate the activity of the burning and looting, and so on, with what I had done and would have done. . . . I guess for whatever reasons it came about, I felt that something had to be wrong with the system."[73] Parks grew more despairing after Martin Luther King's assassination. She went to Memphis to participate in the march that King was to have participated in, but after speaking for a few hours with a number of the striking sanitation workers, she was overcome by grief and accepted Harry Belafonte's invitation to ride on his plane to Atlanta for the funeral.

Continuing to work in coalition with activists throughout the country, she attended the Gary Convention convened by Amiri Baraka, Charles Diggs, and Richard Hatcher in March 1972 to help craft an independent black political agenda. Parks also campaigned vigorously for George McGovern in 1972 and she was invited to the sixtieth birthday of former American Community Party official James Jackson in 1974 in New York. Still, nearly twenty years after her bus stand, Parks was receiving hate mail. One 1972 letter from Indiana read, "Why didn't you stay down South? The North sure doesn't want you up here. You are the biggest woman troublemaker ever."[74]

Continuing her long-standing commitment to criminal justice issues, she was one of the founders of the Joanne Little Defense Committee in Detroit. Little was charged with murder when she defended herself against the sexual assault of her jailer Clarence Alligood. The mission statement of the Detroit organization affirmed the right of women to defend themselves against their sexual attackers.[75] Parks also campaigned vigorously on behalf of Gary Tyler, a sixteen-year-old black teenager who had been wrongfully convicted of killing a thirteen-year-old white boy. The youngest person ever given the death penalty, Tyler was riding a school bus when it was attacked by a white mob angry that schools were being desegregated in Louisiana. Police boarded the bus and pulled Tyler off for

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allegedly shooting a boy outside the bus, even though no gun was found on the bus. Parks gave the keynote address at a packed meeting in Detroit in June 1976 on behalf of Tyler and worked to see his conviction overturned. However, Tyler was never freed.

"I Understand That I Am a Symbol": Being Rosa Parks

> As time has gone by, people have made my place in the history of the civil-rights movement bigger and bigger. They call me the Mother of the Civil Rights Movement. . . . Interviewers still only want to talk about that one evening in 1955 when I refused to give up my seat on the bus. Organizations still want to give me awards for that one act more than thirty years ago. . . . I understand that I am a symbol.[76]

As the years went by, Parks became more and more of a symbol; with the honors increasing, people still "only want[ed] to talk about that one evening in 1955." In a 1978 interview, she explained that she was "somewhat resigned to whatever contribution I can make." Believing in the importance of young people carrying on the movement, she saw her public role as necessary to preserve the history of the struggle and help young people carry it forward but still wished she had more of a private life. She explained the difficulty her public persona caused for her:

> I always have to refer to something Dr. King once said. . . . He asked the question, "Why should I expect personal happiness when so much depends on any contribution that I can make?" But I find myself asking myself, "Why should I expect personal happiness, if people want to find out what, who I am or what I am or what I have done. . . . There are times when I feel I can hardly get up and go, and once I get there and see their [young people's] reaction, I feel somewhat rewarded.[77]

Over the course of her life, Parks seemed to derive her greatest political pleasures from working with young people. Seeing it as part of her contribution to advancing the struggle, Parks was willing to take up the role of "mother of the civil rights movement." Maintaining the history of the movement, she felt, was critical to carrying it on. And so she answered thousands of letters and attended hundreds of programs in her honor.[78] Yet in seeking to carry on the struggle, she often became trapped as a symbol of a movement long since over. "They equate me along with Harriet

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Tubman and Sojourner Truth and ask if I knew them."[79] In 1987, worried that adults had become "too complacent," Parks founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development. The purpose of the institute was to develop leadership among Detroit's young people, teach black history, and bring young people into the struggle for civil rights.

Then, in September 1994, Rosa Parks was mugged by a black man in her home.[80] Commentators and politicians used this tragic incident as evidence that the problems facing black people now came from the decline of values within the black community. "Things are not likely to get much worse," lamented liberal *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert.[81] Parks did not agree with this line of thinking. Indeed, she asked that "people not read too much into the attack" and prayed for the man "and the conditions that have made him this way."[82] To the end, Parks remained focused on changing the conditions that limited black people's ability to flourish.

Throughout the 1990s, Parks maintained her active commitment to social and racial justice. She protested Governor George W. Bush's use of the death penalty in Texas. And, on September 19, 2001, a week after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, she joined with Danny Glover, Harry Belafonte, Gloria Steinem, and other human rights leaders to speak out against a "military response" to terror and to call on the United States to act "cooperatively as part of a community of nations within the framework of international law."[83]

While she continued her work at the grassroots, the honors kept flowing in. In 1999, Parks received the nation's highest honor, a Congressional Gold Medal. Calling Parks's action and the resulting triumph of the movement "the quintessential story of the 20th Century . . . the story of the triumph of freedom," President Bill Clinton celebrated Parks as an American hero. Brinkley explained the irony of these tributes: "Now that Rosa Parks's body was too feeble to march and her voice had faded to a whisper, politicians lauded her as a patriotic icon. She had grown . . . safe to exalt."[84]

This would hold tenfold when Parks died. Politicians from both sides of the political aisle rushed to honor Parks, hoping perhaps that "a tired old woman" lying in the nation's Capitol would cover up the federal travesty of inaction around Hurricane Katrina two months earlier. "Everyone wanted to speak," explained her longtime friend federal circuit judge Damon Keith, who helped to coordinate the funeral service.[85] Casting her as a nonthreatening heroine of a movement that had run its course, the fable of Rosa Parks was useful to constructing a view of America as a society

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that had moved beyond race. Stripping Rosa Parks of her radicalism while celebrating her as the mother of the civil rights movement became part of a larger move to deradicalize the legacy of the movement itself.

While many of the eulogies sought to put Parks's protest firmly in the past, Parks herself had continued to insist on the persistent need for racial justice in the present.[86] Parks had kept on speaking her mind on the ways "racism is still alive"—reminding Americans "not [to] become comfortable with the gains we have made in the last forty years."[87] Indeed, she ended her autobiography observing, "In recent years there has been a resurgence of reactionary attitudes . . . the recent decisions of the Supreme Court that make it harder to prove a pattern of discrimination in employment and by the fact that the national government does not seem very interested in pursuing violations of civil rights. . . . Sometimes I do feel pretty sad about some of the events that have taken place recently. I try to keep hope alive anyway, but that's not always the easiest thing to do."[88]

NOTES

1. This excerpt from "Harvest" by Nikki Giovanni in *Those Who Ride with the Night Winds* (New York: William Morrow, 1983) is courtesy of and copyright to Giovanni.
2. In November 2006, in part due to the pressure it had been under to make an exception for a Parks stamp, the postal service changed its policy; now five years (rather than ten) after a person dies he or she can be memorialized on a stamp.
3. Michael Jonofsky, "Thousands Gather at the Capitol to Remember a Hero," *New York Times*, October 31, 2005.
4. Peter Slevin, "A Quiet Woman's Resonant Farewell," *Washington Post*, November 2, 2005, A3.
5. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 125.
6. Kevin Chappell, "Remembering Rosa Parks: The Life and Legacy of 'The Mother of the Civil Rights Movement,'" *Ebony*, January 2006, 126–132.
7. Malcolm R. West, "Rosa Parks: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement 1913–2005," *Jet*, November 14, 2005.
8. I am grateful to Brenna Greer for her insights on the construction of Parks's image. See also Brenna Wynn Greer, "'A Disturbing Factor': The Iconic Rosa Parks and Remaking of the Public Black Image" (paper presented at the Berkshires Conference on Women's History, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 2008).
9. Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, "'Dress Modestly, Neatly . . . as If You Were Going to Church': Respectability, Class and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement," in *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Peter Lin and Sharon Monteith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 72–73.
10. Ibid., 189.
11. Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 93–122.
12. Ibid., 120.

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13. Stewart Burns, *To the Mountaintop: Martin Luther King's Sacred Mission to Save America 1955–1968* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 18.

14. Rosa Parks, interview by Cynthia Stokes Brown, *Southern Exposure*, Spring 1981, 16.

15. Rosa Parks, *My Story* (New York: Dial Books, 1992), 34.

16. Ibid., 54.

17. Ibid., 68.

18. Douglas Brinkley, *Rosa Parks: A Life* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 68–69; Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 142–143.

19. Danielle McGuire, "It Was Like All of Us Had Been Raped," in *The Best American History Essays 2006* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 126–127; Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 70.

20. Parks, *My Story*, 97–98.

21. Ibid., 99.

22. Septima Poinsette Clark and Cynthia Stokes Brown, *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement* (Navarro, TX: Wild Trees Press, 1986), 32.

23. Parks, *My Story*, 124.

24. Ibid.

25. Clark and Stokes Brown, *Ready from Within,* 33-34.

26. Ibid., 33.

27. Ibid., 16–17.

28. Rosa Parks, interview by Cynthia Stokes Brown, *Ready from Within,* 17.

29. Clark and Stokes Brown, *Ready from Within,* 34.

30. Rosa Parks, *The Black Women Oral History Project*, vol. 8 (subsequently referred to as *BWOHP*) (Westport: Meckler, 1991), 253.

31. Parks, *My Story*, 129.

32. In 1943, Parks had her first run-in with Blake. Parks had boarded the front of the bus, and Blake insisted that Parks, who had paid her fare, exit and reboard through the back door. When Parks did not move, Blake grabbed her sleeve to attempt to push her off the bus. She purposefully dropped her purse and sat down in a seat in the whites-only section to pick it up. Blake seemed poised to hit her. She told him, "I will get off. . . . You better not hit me." She exited the bus and did not reboard; for the next twelve years, she avoided Blake's bus (Parks, *My Story*, 91–92)

33. Sidney Rogers interview with Rosa Parks, in *Daybreak of Freedom*, ed. Stewart Burns (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 83.

34. Ibid., 84.

35. Interview of Rosa Parks by John H. Britton for the Civil Rights Documentation Project (subsequently referred to as CRDP) (September 28, 1967), 6.

36. Rosa Parks with Gregory J. Reed, *Quiet Strength*: *The Faith, the Hope, and the Heart of a Woman Who Changed a Nation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 24.

37. Ibid., 22.

38. Parks, *My Story*, 145.

39. Ibid.

40. While the president of the college initially stood behind Robinson's organizing of the boycott, political pressures led Robinson to resign her position in 1960. Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 16.

41. Parks, *Quiet Strength*, 27.

42. Rosa Parks, Steven Millner interview, in *The Walking City: The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955–1956* (New York: Carlson, 1989), 562–563.

43. Brinkley bizarrely and somewhat contradictorily argues, "Although some cried out for Parks to speak, it would have been wrong to break the spell of King's magnificent oration.

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Furthermore, King and the others on the platform noticed her reluctance and assured Parks that she had done enough and said enough already if she didn't want to speak" (*Rosa Parks*, 140).

44. Parks, Millner interview, 563.

45. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 142–143.

46. Parks corresponded with a number of people during this period, trying to get support for the boycott. One letter from Diane Shapiro, whom Parks had met at Highlander, reads, "I can't tell you how pleased I was to receive your letter. Of course we all knew about the bus strike but none of us associated it with you." Rosa Parks Papers, 1955–1976, on file at the Walter Reuther Library of the Wayne State University (hereafter referred to as Rosa Parks Papers), box 1, folder 1–5.

47. *Daybreak of Freedom*, 155.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Parks, *My Story*, 178.

51. According to Cynthia Stokes Brown, "Raymond Parks, reduced to answering death threats on the telephone, began drinking heavily and chain-smoking to cope with his depression" (Kohl, *She Would Not Be Moved: How We Tell the Story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott*, (New York: Norton, 2005, 120).

52. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 170.

53. Violence had continued in Montgomery even after the integration of the buses, with snipers firing into the buses, along with the bombing of four black churches and a taxi company. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 171.

54. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 175. Indeed, throughout the boycott, Parks eschewed the fame that had been thrust upon her and, according to Brinkley, "mastered the art of self-deprecation as a survival mechanism" (156).

55. Beth T. Bates, "'Double V for Victory' Mobilizes Black Detroit, 1941–1946," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980*, ed. Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 33.

56. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 67.

57. Parks, CRDP, 28.

58. Parks, BWOHP, 256.

59. See her notes on her speech to the Alabama club found in her papers. Rosa Parks Papers box 1, folder 1–5.

60. Parks, Millner interview, 565.

61. Parks, *My Story*, 186.

62. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 187.

63. Ibid., 189.

64. Kevin Chappell, "Remembering Rosa Parks."

65. Ibid., 202. The WPAC had also arranged a testimonial dinner for Parks in April 1965, with the proceeds going to Parks herself. Calling Parks "a woman of bold and audacious courage," its minutes explained the decision: "She has received many many plaques and awards of merits, etc. from citizens all over the country, but as meritorious as they are, they do no compensate for Mrs. Parks having to move away from her home, for fear of loss of life, and neither do they compensate for the great financial loss of adequate income. WPAC members felt that to honor Rosa Parks in a very material way, would in some measure, say thanks, for spearheading our nation-wide push for freedom." See Rosa Parks Papers, box 4.

66. Parks, CRDP, 33.

67. Ibid., 19.

68. Ibid., 158.

69. Parks, *Quiet Strength*, 51.

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70. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 202.

71. I am grateful to Stephen Ward for helping me put these events together. See also Rosa L. Parks papers, box 2; Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 191–193.

72. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 191.

73. Parks, BWOHP, 256.

74. Letter found in Rosa Parks Papers.

75. Rosa Parks Papers, box 3, folder 3.

76. Parks, *My Story*, 207.

77. Parks, BWOHP, 258–259.

78. Later in her life, she also got to see how she was being interpreted. For instance, Parks attended a play performed at Western High School in Detroit called *In White America*, where a young woman performed the role of Parks. In the program's cast list, Parks circled the girl's name and wrote, "Rosa Parks excellent and sensitive acting." Rosa Parks Papers.

79. E. R. Shipp, "Rosa Parks, 92, Founding Symbol of Civil Rights Movement, Dies," *New York Times*, October 25, 2005.

80. According to the initial media coverage, the twenty-eight-year-old man did not know who Parks was; after a few days, however, the media started to portray it as if he did.

81. Bob Herbert, "Mrs. Parks's Request," *New York Times*, September 4, 1994.

82. Parks, *Quiet Strength*, 37.

83. "Diverse Coalition of Americans Speak Out against War as Solution to Terrorism," press release, September 19, 2001.

84. Brinkley, *Rosa Parks*, 226.

85. Interview with Sixth Circuit judge Damon Keith in his chambers. June 14, 2007.

86. Parks worked hard to see a national holiday for Martin Luther King and was critical of the ways King was being stripped of his politics and turned into a dreamer. "He was more than a dreamer. He was an activist who believed in acting as well as speaking out against oppression." Shipp, "Rosa Parks, 92, Founding Symbol of Civil Rights Movement, Dies."

87. Parks, *Quiet Strength*, 87.

88. Parks, *My Story*, 209.

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