

[Contact Me](#) | [Website](#) | [Biography](#) | [Past Columns](#)

Character of Courage

Celebrating the Life of Rosa Parks

With the recent death of Rosa Parks, the nation suffered the loss of a 92-year-old symbol of inspiration, courage and freedom. Mrs. Parks died of natural causes in her home in Detroit, Michigan this past Monday. She will be remembered forever as the mother of the civil rights movement, and in mourning her death, we are celebrating her life. The calm bravery she displayed on that bus in Montgomery, Ala., when she refused to give up her seat, jumpstarted the desegregation movement. Still today, 50 years later, her name is synonymous with the beginning of racial equality.



Rosa Parks riding a bus in Montgomery, Ala., in December 1956, following the Supreme Court outlawing segregation on public transit systems.

Rosa Parks took a stand for freedom by sitting down that winter day in 1955. The common story holds that she was tired from a hard day's work, but in reality she was just tired of giving in to laws that reinforced the notion that African Americans were not to be treated as human beings. Her defiance earned her handcuffs, a guilty verdict for violating the segregation laws, a \$10 fine, and \$4 in court fees. But it won the country something intangible, something powerful—a significant step toward racial equality.

Tens of thousands of African Americans in Montgomery took Mrs. Parks' plight to heart and under the direction of then unknown Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., they boycotted the buses for more than a year. The boycott nearly caused the city's public transit system to go bankrupt. Their collective efforts captivated the country and spurred the Supreme Court to overturn the Jim Crow law that enforced their second-class status. Eventually, the curtain fell on legalized segregation in the United States.

When Mrs. Parks made the simple decision to defy the unjust confines of segregation—and to do so in a nonviolent way—she was the transitional character for a freedom-driven revolution. Until the very last years of her life, she made appearances at special events across the country, but never demanded to be in the spotlight of the national stage.

After her death, a black and purple shroud was draped over the bus believed to be the one on which

Parks committed her historic act. The vehicle is on display at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, beside a large picture of Parks. Here in Missouri, Governor Matt Blunt ordered all flags at state facilities to be flown at half-staff to honor her memory.

Rosa Parks had borne the torch for racial equality better than anyone could have planned, and her steadfast courage has silently served as a reminder to us all that one person with courage can make a difference and that we can fight the good fight.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com> and <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

Senator Jason Crowell proudly represents the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry and Scott counties in the Missouri Senate.