

Still Making History Rosa Parks

Written by Robert ID2056

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Civil rights activist Rosa Parks who was most recently at the heart of a lawsuit involving the hip-hop rap group Outkast, and who is best known for her refusal to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in 1955, will once again make history.

The Senate and The House approved a resolution allowing Rosa Parks remains to lie in honor in the Rotunda on Sunday and Monday "so that the citizens of the United States may pay their last respects to this great American."

Rosa Parks' body is scheduled to arrive at the Capitol at 5:30 p.m. EST on Sunday. The public viewing Sunday, from 6:30 p.m. to midnight, will include singing, a wreath-laying and prayers. Viewing will continue Monday from 7 to 10 a.m. The White House said President Bush would go to the Rotunda to pay his respects.

After leaving Washington, Parks' body will go to the Wright African-American Museum in Detroit for viewing Tuesday. Her funeral will be Wednesday in Greater Grace Temple, Detroit.

In most cases, only presidents, members of Congress and military commanders have been permitted to lie in the Rotunda.

Parks would be the first woman and second black American to receive the accolade. Jacob J. Chestnut, one of two Capitol police officers fatally shot in 1998, was the first African American to lie in honor, said Senate historian Richard Baker.

Civil rights legend Rosa Parks, whose refusal to give up her seat on the bus to a white man in 1955 sparked the historic Montgomery bus boycott and the larger civil rights movement, died Monday. She was 92.

"It's been said, but it is well worth repeating, that by sitting down, Rosa Parks gave the country the courage to stand up," said Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the nation's oldest and largest civil rights coalition.

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Parks, a seamstress active in her local Montgomery, Alabama NAACP chapter, was riding the bus home on December 1, 1955 when a white man demanded her seat. At the time, Jim Crow laws throughout the South reserved the first four rows of seats for whites, leaving the last 10 for blacks..

Parks refused, was jailed, and fined \$14. Her arrest triggered the Montgomery bus boycott organized by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which lasted 381 days.

"At the time I was arrested I had no idea it would turn into this," Mrs. Parks said 30 years later, as reported by the Associated Press. "It was just a day like any other day. The only thing that made it significant was that the masses of the people joined in."

Rosa Parks, who herself had attempted to register to vote three times before she was finally successfully registered in 1933, is credited with launching the civil rights movement that eventually led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in history.

Rep. John Lewis, D. Ga., said, "If it hadn't been for Rosa Parks, I don't know where I would be. It inspired me to get involved in the civil rights movement."

After her refusal and arrest, Parks had trouble finding work in Alabama. She and her husband moved to Detroit, Michigan in 1957, where she worked in Rep. John Conyers' office until retiring in 1988.

In addition to her work with Conyers, she and her husband Raymond created the Rosa and Raymond Institute for Self Development, which was devoted to encouraging leadership and interest in the struggle for civil rights in Detroit young people.

Rosa Parks' autobiography, "Rosa Parks: My Story," was published in 1992. Her numerous awards and honors included the Presidential Medal of Honor in 1996 and the Congressional

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Gold Medal in 1999.

"Rosa was a true giant of the civil rights movement," Rep. Conyers said. "There are very few people who can say their actions and conduct changed the face of the nation. Rosa Parks is one of those individuals."

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