

ROSA PARKS 1913-2005

# Nation bids farewell to unassuming hero

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walkers, in strollers or cradled in arms, it was the significance of her life that drew people to say a final goodbye.

"Her legacy will move on throughout generations," says LeAnna Pointer, 17, an alumnus of the Pathway to Freedom Program under the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development in Montgomery. "What I can do to contribute to that legacy is get good grades and write a book about this part of my life."

Joma Gilbert, 29, drove to D.C. from Baltimore because he said it was important to recognize why he is now so free to excel. "I felt it was my responsibility to represent my generation in showing respect to Mrs. Parks and those who have gone before her."

Youth was a passion for Parks, who died on Oct. 24 at the age of 92.

Marian Wright Edelman, president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund, brought her 4-year-old granddaughter to the U. S. Capitol to commemorate her legacy. "I want her to always remember what one Black woman did to change the nation and change the world and one person and one woman can make an enormous difference. I mean, who could ever dream such a thing."

Thurongs passed by the casket in Montgomery and in Washington D. C. to see her dressed in her beloved White deaconess uniform of St. Paul's. The black and white bonnet was tied in a fluffy bow at the side of her neck. Her braided hair covered her ears. Her hands were covered with white lace, decorated with tiny pearls and diamonds.

"Her hair was so long, she could sit on it," says Monica Morgan, who served as Parks' personal photographer for nearly 15 years. "The most phenomenal thing about her was that she was the same behind the scenes as she was in front of the camera — always kind, gentle, positive and humble."

Morgan says her most memorable moment was when Parks autographed "Quiet Strength," her autobiography, and wrote, "To a dear friend and a great photographer. Being a dear friend meant more than anything in the world," Morgan says.

Many were struck by her radiance and strength.

"I gasped," says actress Cicely Tyson in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "I gasped because what I saw buried in her face was the same thing that made me realize, 'This is what that woman had that allowed her to sit in that seat and not move. Even in death, she had it. I tell you, it was so startling to me, I will never ever get over that first moment.'"

Civil rights icon Joseph Lowery agreed, "Only God could take a whisper of such a gentle woman and turn it into a global revolution."

Those who knew her and those who didn't expressed similar sentiments. "This is a moment, I think, for all of us who knew Rosa Parks and loved her, for all of her friends and her family," says U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.). "But it's also an enormously important moment for the whole movement that has struggled to knock down the walls of bigotry and hatred in our society."

U.S. Rep. Carolyn

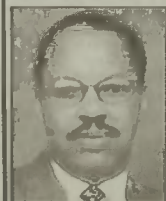
Kilpatrick (D-Mich.) said the death of Parks causes her to recommit to her work for justice.

"It reminds me of how important it is that we continue Mrs. Park's work, being self-respecting of one another, building strong families, taking care of God's children, showing carriage and speak-

ing out against injustices, building a just society so children will have an opportunity. That's what she dedicated her life to," Kilpatrick said.

Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, says Parks' legacy goes beyond America, but to "world events."

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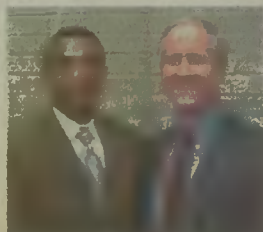
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