



U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

## 2005 NEWS RELEASES, PRESS ADVISORIES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

### U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS MOURNS PASSING OF ROSA PARKS

#### *The Mother of the Civil Rights Movement Passes*

**Washington, DC** – The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights expressed its appreciation for the life and contributions of Rosa Parks, whose refusal in 1955 to give over her seat to a white passenger on a bus in Alabama set in motion events that which inaugurated a new phase in the civil rights movement. Yesterday, Ms. Parks died of natural causes in her home at age 92.

The arrest that followed Ms. Parks' civil disobedience unified blacks to stage and prevail in a 381-day boycott of the Montgomery bus system. Similar actions in other districts had been successful, but the Parks incident gained attention owing in part to a young minister, Martin Luther King Jr., who led the boycott and soon rose to national renown. A U.S. Supreme Court decision followed, which ordered the bus system desegregated.

Gerald A. Reynolds, Chairman of the Commission said: "Rosa Parks was an inspiration to all of us. Her courage helped to bring about the civil rights legislation that has transformed the lives of millions of men and women life in this country . for generations to come."

At the time of her historic actions, Ms. Parker was a 42-year-old seamstress. In 1958, she worked as a hostess at an inn for Hampton Institute in Virginia. She became a staff assistant to U.S. House of Representatives member John Conyers in 1965. Parks founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Improvement in 1987. During her life, Ms. Parks came to be referenced as the "mother" of the civil rights movement. She received the Medal of Honor from the U.S. Government, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award.

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