
Rosa Parks's Fight for Women Rights and Social Justice

At every step of her long journey for justice, Rosa Parks faced great discrimination. Though she is known primarily for being an activist in the Civil Rights movement,

When Rosa Parks became involved in the NAACP, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, various men tried to impede her participation. Her own husband, Raymond Parks, firmly discouraged her from even joining the organization out of “fear for her safety”, despite his own participation in the society. This event provides insight on the disparity between men and women’s access to activism, even within otherwise accepting communities.

Once joining the NAACP, Parks found that she was only one of two women who attended the meetings. Furthermore, Parks recalls Mr. Nixon, the president of the organization, saying simply, “Women don’t need to be nowhere but in the kitchen.” (Parks, p.82) This blatant display of sexism within the organization is just one example of the oppression that Parks was subject to for her gender identity. Additionally, to hear that coming from the president of the association is an ugly reflection of the sexist society at that time.

Later on in her autobiography, Rosa Parks describes the treatment of women in social movements with her retelling of the Civil Rights marches on Washington and Montgomery. At the Washington march, Parks notes how female activists were “not allowed to play much of a role” and how the march was segregated by gender. (Parks, p.165) Even at an event focused on the racial social equality, gender inequality was in full display.

Later, at the Montgomery march, Rosa Parks is pushed aside by younger activists who did not know who she was. Unfortunately, even when she is recognized, it is only for a picture with some important leaders. Despite being such an influential figure on the Bus Boycott and the Civil Rights Movement at large, Parks was denied any sort of voice during many of these associated events. This problematic use of Parks as merely an image or symbol of the social movement, and not as a leader to listen to, can largely be contributed to her gender identity. If Parks had been a man who sparked the Bus Boycott while also working closely with the leader of the NAACP, would Parks have gotten more recognition? Though there is no definitive answer to that question, it is undeniable that Parks’ gender influenced much of the way she was treated along her career as an activist.

Though her bold actions and beliefs secured her legacy, Rosa Parks was robbed of her voice many times in her career due to cases of misogyny. By experiencing the oppression society

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bears against both black people and women, Parks learned how discrimination operates on numerous levels. However, just as different groups of people are oppressed in society, those oppressed persons organize together. Rosa Parks may be just one of those people who chose to fight back against the inequality she saw, but the legacy she left is proof of the incredible work she did.

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