

PRESS RELEASE

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SMITHSONIAN TRAVELING EXHIBITION EXPLORES HISTORY AND LEGACY OF THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

Birmingham, Alabama--The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, in collaboration with the Troy University Rosa Parks Library and Museum, presents an American story of bravery, honor and idealism. The exhibition, “381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story,” commemorates the events of 1955 that became the genesis of the modern Civil Rights Movement. The exhibit will open at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) on Saturday, January 30, 2010. “381 Days” will remain on view through April 11, 2010. It is made possible through the generous support of AARP.

“Rosa Parks’ extraordinary act was a profound turning point in the Civil Rights Movement,” stated Anna Cohn, director of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). “We are extremely proud to share this American story of 50,000 courageous people who forced a segregated bus system to open its doors to equality.”

The boycott was initially a one-day protest to mark Parks’ December 5 court appearance and to register the weariness of those who endured daily assaults to their humanity. African Americans who rode Montgomery’s buses were considered second class, defenseless against humiliation and undeserving of basic respect from drivers and white passengers.

After Parks’ arrest, professors, doctors, lawyers and preachers stood alongside students, domestic workers and blue-collar laborers and refused to board the buses. A volunteer-based transportation system was developed and effectively shut down the public transit system. The boycott, which lasted 381 days, evolved into a strategic act of faith and determination that galvanized a people who refused to give up hope.

“AARP is pleased to underwrite ‘381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story,’” said Dr. Percil Stanford, AARP's Chief Diversity Officer. “As an advocacy organization for social change, we hope that our participation in this exhibit will serve as a reminder that activism is an American tradition—one that many of our members who lived through this era experienced, and one that we want to pass down to future generations.”

Photographs, quotes and historical text are combined in a multidimensional collage to convey the dynamism of the Civil Rights Movement. Visitors immerse themselves in the language, imagery and emotional response to the nation’s growing awareness that its founding tenet “all men are created equal” could possibly apply to the entire population. “381 Days” documents a key victory for the use of non-violent action to empower social and political change that influenced subsequent, powerful events such as the Woolworth lunch counter sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina, the Freedom Rides, the Birmingham demonstrations and the eventual passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people over the age of 50 have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. The organization produces *AARP The Magazine*; *AARP Bulletin*; *AARP Segunda Juventud*; *NRTA Live & Learn*; and a Web site, www.aarp.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors.

Situated on the historic site of Rosa Parks’ arrest, the Rosa Parks Library and Museum was built in tribute to both Parks and the Civil Rights Movement in Montgomery. This state-of-the-art museum is committed to educating audiences about the boycott’s momentous turning point in our country’s history and its continued effect on society. Visit the museum online at <http://montgomery.troy.edu/museum>.

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 50 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit www.sites.si.edu.

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Foot Soldiers for Democracy

Program Series

in conjunction with the exhibition

381 DAYS

The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story

January 30-April 11, 2010

Saturday, January 30, 2010 **10:00 a.m.**

381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story exhibition opens and runs through April 11, 2010--Odessa Woolfolk Gallery

Thursdays, February 4 - April 8, 2010 **10:00 a.m.**

Heritage Alive! Literacy Programs for Grades K-3--registration required--Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room

Saturday, February 13, 2010 **9:00 a.m.**

381 Days Teacher Workshop presented by Georgette Norman, Executive Director of the Rosa Parks Library and Museum--Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room

Thursday, February 18, 2010 **6:00 p.m.**

Black History Month Program: The 55th Anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott with Georgette Norman, Executive Director of the Rosa Parks Library and Museum--Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room

Friday, February 19, 2010 **2:00 p.m.**

Oral History Project Symposium: "Foot Soldiers for Democracy: The Men, Women and Children of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement"--celebrating BCRI's second book publication from its Oral History Collection--Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room

Thursday, March 4, 2010 **12:00 p.m.**

Brown Bag Lunch Program: Birmingham Connections to the Montgomery Bus Boycott--featuring Jeff Drew--Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room

Thursday, March 18, 2010 **6:00 p.m.**

Women's History Program: The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It--Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room

Thursday, April 8, 2010 **6:00 p.m.**

Remembering Dr. King featuring Rev. Samuel "Billy" Kyles, an eyewitness to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.--Rev. Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room

Thanks to the support of our generous sponsors, BCRI will provide a limited number of free buses for field trips. To reserve transportation, please call Yvette Chatman at (205) 328-9696, ext. 228. To schedule a program for your school or organization, please contact James Jones (205) 328-9696, ext. 246.

**The Smithsonian Community Grant Program,
funded by MetLife Foundation,**
is a proud sponsor of these public programs.

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