

# A New Movement for Justice

On December 1, I attended a bill signing to place a statue of Rosa Parks in Statuary Hall on Capitol Hill. This private White House ceremony hosted about 50 attendees, including Jesse Jackson Sr., Sen. John Kerry, Al Sharpton and NAACP President Bruce S. Gordon. I was like a kid in a candy store. I never thought Rosa Parks, the mother of the civil rights movement, would receive such an honor.

Further, I marveled at what the U.S. had achieved socially in the 50 years since Parks had refused to give her bus seat to a white man. Her arrest sparked a yearlong bus boycott that forced the end of racial segregation on public buses.

In the signing ceremony, President Bush credited Parks for "setting in motion a national movement for equality and freedom." Eventually, he went on to say, the civil rights movement persuaded Congress to pass legislation that addressed voting rights and school segregation.

Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and thousands of others had changed history, yet their work is not finished. I wondered: Who will take up their mantles? What will the new civil rights movement look like?

The civil rights movement was a biblical justice movement that changed the fabric of U.S. race relations. Some view affirmative action as the hallmark of civil rights accomplishment, but I believe it has delivered more press than results.

Before I elaborate, let me explain my background. I attended Harvard Business School and received a full first-year scholarship. I attribute that breakthrough to hard work and affirmative action. Before then, few blacks were entering America's Ivy League institutions. For this reason, I am partial to the concept of affirmative action. But the way it has been implemented has not improved the earning power of the average African-American.

Noted African-American scholar Thomas Sowell, Ph.D., author of *Affirmative Action Around the World*, has noted that quota-based programs have not worked anywhere in the world. From India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nigeria to the United States there has not been a true success story. In fact, the most amazing statistic concerning black poverty is that African-Americans accomplished more before the current brand of affirmative action was instituted in the decade of the 1970s.

From 1940 to 1947, some 87 percent of black families earned incomes below the poverty line. By 1960, roughly 47 percent of black families lived below the poverty line. Between 1960 and 1970, the poverty level of blacks declined to just 30 percent. Yet after affirmative action was instituted, the 1970s yielded only one more percentage point of poverty reduction among black families.

What does all this mean? We need a new civil rights movement that truly levels the playing field for all Americans. We need informed and inspired Christian laypeople such as Rosa Parks to team with anointed leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. to give strategic guidance in a unified effort to create greater social justice for blacks. African-Americans must share both King's dream and the American dream equally. This is a valid social goal for the entire body of Christ.

For the dream to live several milestones must be reached. First, black entrepreneurs and business moguls are needed to lead an aggressive development of a stable black middle and upper class. Second, we need to close the academic achievement gap between black and white students. Third, we must stop black abortions and the genocidal spread of HIV/AIDS in black neighborhoods. I will resist the temptation to go on and on.

We need scores of effective black and white leaders to declare, "I want to wear the justice mantle of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr." If this occurs, I believe heaven will smile.

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