

Hillary Clinton's Stunning Omission at a Civil Rights Event

Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton on Tuesday spoke about civil rights in Alabama to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Montgomery bus boycott, but what she didn't mention was nearly as significant: the Black Lives Matter movement.

The former secretary of state spoke about both the civil rights struggles of the past, including the 1955 refusal by Rosa Parks to give up her bus seat to a white passenger, and Clinton's own proposals for the future, including background checks for gun purchasers, strengthening voting rights laws and reducing incarceration rates.

But Clinton did not refer to the Black Lives Matter movement, which began last year as a decentralized response to police shootings in minority communities.

Clinton has spoken about the group before, with hecklers occasionally showing up to her events, and even met with representatives of Black Lives Matter earlier this year. But her omission of the protest group on Tuesday underscored the difficulties for many candidates in reaching out to African-American voters in the November 2016 contest, at a time when protests are roiling communities nationwide.

The Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in Montgomery was packed full on Tuesday – enough so that audience members were asked to sit a little closer together to fit more people before the program, which marked the importance of lawyers to the civil rights movement.

The crowd included many African-Americans and appeared to skew somewhat older. Clearly, though, the church was chock full of Clinton fans. When Fred Gray, the attorney for Rosa Parks, referred to her as the country's next president, cheering

supporters gave a beaming Clinton a standing ovation. Nor was Gray the only speaker to refer to Clinton as a future commander-in-chief, with several others following suit.

Mary Hunter, 75, of Pike Road, Alabama, stood up and raised her hands up when Clinton first took the stage, rising to her feet several times as the presidential hopeful addressed the crowd.

Hunter's a fan of Clinton's – but maybe not so much of Black Lives Matter. Instead, said Hunter, "in Jesus Christ there is no color."

Hunter, who added that she also marched from Selma to Montgomery during the civil rights era, said she taught her children to obey authority figures. "We need our police for protection," she added.

Shirley Franklin Johnson, 68, of the Barbour County Board of Education, was somewhat more sympathetic to Black Lives Matter protestors.

While the group was demanding the Chicago police officer who killed black teenager Laquan McDonald be arrested, she said, she supported their cause.

But Johnson said that after Jason Van Dyke, the officer who shot McDonald, was charged with murder last month, she didn't feel the same connection.

"I was for it while they were marching for him to be arrested," she said. "But after he was arrested, what sense does that make?" {eo}

©2015 Thomson Reuters. All Rights Reserved.