

DAY 3- TUESDAY

The Rosa Parks Museum at Troy University

Our third day begins with a visit to Troy University's Rosa Parks Museum, an active memorial to the life and lessons of civil rights icon Rosa Parks. Located in downtown Montgomery, Alabama at the site of her arrest, it is the world's only museum dedicated to Rosa Parks. The museum's mission is to honor her legacy by providing a platform for scholarly dialogue, civic engagement, and social activism for today's Civil Rights Movement. The Rosa Parks Museum actively upholds and interprets for the public benefit, education and enjoyment, materials related to the events and accomplishments of individuals associated with Montgomery Bus Boycott. The Museum includes a permanent exhibit, a time machine, temporary exhibit space, archives, classrooms, an auditorium, and a conference room.

Rosa Louise McCauley Parks (February 4, 1913 – October 24, 2005) was an activist the United States Congress called "the first lady of civil rights" and "the mother of the freedom movement." She organized and collaborated with civil rights leaders, including Edgar Nixon, president of the local chapter of the NAACP; and Martin Luther King, Jr., a new minister in town who gained national prominence in the civil rights movement.

On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Parks refused to obey bus driver James F. Blake's order to give up her seat in the colored section to a white passenger, after the white section was filled. Parks was not the first person to resist bus segregation. Others had taken similar steps, including Bayard Rustin in 1942, Irene Morgan in 1946, Lillie Mae Bradford in 1951, Sarah Louise Keys in 1952, and the members of the ultimately successful *Browder v. Gayle* 1956 lawsuit (Claudette Colvin, Aurelia Browder, Susie McDonald, and Mary Louise Smith) who were arrested in Montgomery for not giving up their bus seats months before Parks. NAACP organizers believed that Parks was the best candidate for seeing through a court challenge after her arrest for civil disobedience in violating Alabama segregation laws, although eventually her case became bogged down in the state courts while the *Browder v. Gayle* case succeeded.

Later in life, Parks wrote her autobiography and continued to insist that the struggle for justice was not over and there was more work to be done. In her final years, she suffered from dementia. Parks received national recognition, including the NAACP's 1979 Spingarn Medal, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Congressional Gold Medal, and a posthumous statue in the United States Capitol's National Statuary Hall. Upon her death in 2005, she was the first woman and third non-US government official to lie in honor at the Capitol Rotunda. Her birthday, February 4, and the day she was arrested, December 1, have both become Rosa Parks Day, commemorated in California and Missouri (February 4), and Ohio and Oregon (December 1).

<http://www.troy.edu/rosaparks/>

Southern Policy Law Center (SPLC) Civil Rights Memorial

Our next stop is the Civil Rights Memorial created by Vietnam Veterans Memorial designer Maya Lin. The Memorial is located across the street from the Southern Poverty Law Center's office building in Montgomery, Alabama, a city rich with civil rights history.

A circular black granite table records the names of the martyrs and chronicles the history of the movement in lines that radiate like the hands of a clock. Water emerges from the table's center and flows evenly across the top. On a curved black granite wall behind the table is engraved Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s well-known paraphrase of Amos 5:24 - We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Civil Rights Memorial invites visitors to touch the engraved names. As Lin envisioned, the Memorial plaza is "a contemplative area – a place to remember the Civil

Rights Movement, to honor those killed during the struggle, to appreciate how far the country has come in its quest for equality, and to consider how far it has to go."

The Memorial is just around the corner from the church where Dr. King served as pastor during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955-1956, and the Alabama Capitol steps where the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march ended in 1965. The Memorial is located on an open plaza accessible to visitors 24 hours a day, every day of the week.

The Civil Rights Memorial Center is adjacent to the Memorial. In addition to exhibits about Civil Rights Movement martyrs, the Memorial Center houses a 56-seat theater, a classroom for educational activities, and the Wall of Tolerance.

<https://www.splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial>

Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church

We continue on to the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church. Founded in 1877, Dexter was originally called the Second Colored Baptist Church. Congregants met in a hall that had been used as a slave trader's pen until 1885, when the first worship service was held in the basement of the current structure. On Thanksgiving Day in 1889, the first service was held in the sanctuary, and the church was renamed Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. The church began its activist tradition under the leadership of King's predecessor, Vernon Johns, whose militant words and boldness kindled the spirit of resistance for blacks at Dexter and throughout Montgomery.

King accepted the call to pastor Dexter while completing his doctoral studies at Boston University. In his acceptance speech, delivered on May 2, 1954, King admitted to his new congregation: "I have no pretense to being a great preacher or even a profound scholar. I certainly have no pretense to infallibility—that is reserved for the height of the divine rather than the depth of the human." He continued: "I come to you with only the claim of being a servant of Christ, and a feeling of dependence on his grace for my leadership. I come with a feeling that I have been called to preach and to lead God's people" (Papers 6:166). Shortly after accepting this position, he proposed a list of recommendations for the revitalization of the church, which were accepted without changes or revisions. King insisted that every church member become a registered voter and a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He also organized a social and political action committee, "for the purpose of keeping the congregation intelligently informed concerning the social, political, and economic situation" (Papers 2:290).

On December 2, 1955, King conducted a meeting in the basement of the Dexter Avenue Church, which resulted in the decision to launch the Montgomery bus boycott, and three days later the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was founded. As MIA president, King organized and helped direct the boycott from his office in the lower half of the sanctuary. He continued to serve as president of the MIA after the boycott, a commitment that, at times, compromised his efficacy as Dexter's pastor.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the congregation from 1954 to 1960 and played a leadership role in the Montgomery bus boycott. In November 1959, King resigned from Dexter and joined his father the following February as co-pastor at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church in order to more effectively lead the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), headquartered in that city. In his resignation to Dexter's congregation, King admitted that, "a multiplicity of new responsibilities poured in upon me in almost staggering torrents. So I ended up futilely attempting to be four or five men in one" (Papers 5:329).

In 1976, the city of Montgomery added the church, which was renamed the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Church in 1973, to a list of designated historic sites. It is now a National Historic Landmark.

<http://www.dexterkingmemorial.org/about/history/>

Dexter Parsonage Museum

The Dexter Parsonage Museum, historic home to twelve pastors of the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church from 1920-1992, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. It was restored in 2003 by the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Foundation, Inc., under the direction of church members, acting as an Authentication Committee.

Visitors to the Dexter Parsonage Museum will experience the actual residence where Dr. King and his young family lived between 1954 and 1960; an Interpretive Center, and the King-Johns Garden for Reflection. The nine-room clapboard Parsonage, built in 1912, has been restored to its appearance when Dr. King and his family lived there. Much of the furniture presently in the living room, dining room, bedroom and study was actually used by Dr. King.

The permanent exhibit in the Interpretive Center includes a timeline of photographs of the 12 Dexter pastors who lived in the Parsonage, a wall of Pastoral Wisdom (inspiring quotes from several pastors), unpublished photographs of Dr. King, Dexter members, civic/business leaders, and Montgomery ministers active in the bus boycott; and historical accounts on the bombing of the Parsonage and other significant events.

On January 31, 1956, following the successful Montgomery bus boycott, King's home was bombed by local segregationists. At the time, King was at a meeting, but his wife Coretta was at the parsonage with her ten-week-old daughter Yolanda Denice. After King had verified that both were unhurt, he addressed the angry crowd of African Americans outside. "Don't do anything panicky," he advised. "I did not start this boycott. I was asked by you to serve as your spokesman. I want it to be known the length and breadth of this land that if I am stopped, this movement will not stop."

In February 1957, when King was alone in the parsonage with Morehouse College friend Bob Williams, something disturbed King. He told Williams they should leave the parsonage immediately. Several hours later, after the two men had gone to Williams' house, a bomb exploded outside the parsonage, crushing the front part of a house and shattering the windows of three parked taxis, injuring the drivers. At the empty parsonage, 12 sticks of dynamite lay on the front porch. Only a few days after the bombing, police arrested seven white men. Two of them admitted to the crime, but despite their signed confessions, they were acquitted by a jury.

<http://www.dexterkingmemorial.org/tours/parsonage-museum/>

Alabama State Capitol

Finally, we visit the Alabama State Capitol. For 150 years the Alabama State Capitol has overlooked downtown Montgomery from its hilltop setting. This National Historic Landmark is a working museum of state history and politics.

The Confederacy began in the senate chamber when delegates from southern states voted to establish a new nation in February 1861. Jefferson Davis was sworn in as President of the Confederate States of America on Feb. 18, 1861. A brass star on the west portico marks the location where Jefferson Davis stood to be inaugurated as the first and only president of the Confederacy.

A little more than a century later in the spring of 1965 the Selma to Montgomery March for voting rights culminated near the capitol steps. Prominent protesters included Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Coretta Scott King, Ralph Bunche, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, John Lewis, James Baldwin, Harry Belafonte, and Joan Baez.

A delegation from the protestors attempted to see Governor George Wallace to give him a petition that asked for an end to racial discrimination in Alabama. The governor had sent word that he would see the delegation, but they were denied entry to the capitol grounds twice and told no one would be let through. State police surrounded the capitol and prevented the marcher's delegation entry to the grounds. Martin Luther King, Jr. then made one of his greatest speeches to an estimated 25,000 people at the base of the steps: "We are not about to turn around. We are on the move now. Yes, we are on the move and no wave of racism can stop us."

<http://ahc.alabama.gov/alabama-state-capitol.aspx>