



ROSA PARKS

TIRED OF GIVING IN

Texte original : Sam Pinnell
Mise en scène : Lucille O'Flanagan



Réservations resa@theatre-en-anglais.fr +33(0)6 48 08 11 19
Informations, tournées, textes, dossiers pédagogiques
<http://theatre.anglais.free.fr>

Théâtre
en ANGLAIS

TIRED OF GIVING IN - THE ROSA PARKS STORY

By Sam Pinnell

From an idea by Lucille O'Flanagan

DRAFT EIGHT 24 May 2024

CAST (2MALE, 2FEMALE) *White characters are played by putting on generic masks.*

F1: Rosa Parks

F2: Actor 1, Passenger 1, Leona, Woman, Cornella Reeves, Claudette Colvin, Georgia Gilmore, Jo Ann Robinson, Old man, Blues Singer, ensemble

M1: Actor 2, Bus driver James F Blake, Customer, E D Nixon, White Man, Caller 1, Barman, ensemble

M2: Actor 3, Passenger 2, Dr Martin Luther King Jnr, Raymond Parks, Policeman, ensemble

MUSIC

'I Sing For Me' (Rosa's theme)

"I don't know if my Boo's coming home"

"Boo come on home!"

"My Baby Boo"

'A Gospel' (working title)

Elisa Le Cam (words and music)

Film 1 – Poster 5 minutes

Film 2 – caption: “NOVEMBER 1943. MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA” background waiting for a bus & instrumental “I SING FOR ME” (5 mins)

THE FOUR CAST MEMBERS STAND IN A LINE FACING THE AUDIENCE. EACH WITH A SIMPLE WOODEN CHAIR BESIDE THEM. ROSA STEPS FORWARD

ROSA (to the audience)

You know, back when I was working in a department store; before anyone had ever heard of me and I was just plain old Mrs Parks, I always knew that the bus segregation laws made people more angry than almost anything else.

ACTOR 1 (to the audience)

Black people made up most of the passengers, yet we were treated the worst.

ACTOR 2 (to the audience)

The white bus drivers made us step in the front door to pay the fare, then get off and go round to the back door and get on there, where the section for black folks was.

ACTOR 3 (to the audience)

Often before you got round to the back the bus would drive off without you!

ROSA (to the audience)

On this particular day everything was just the same as usual.

THE ACTOR PLAYING BLAKE PUTS ON A MASK

Film 3 – Bus arriving + sounds of bus

GEORGIA GILMORE (to the audience)

There were 36 seats on a Montgomery Bus. The first ten were reserved for whites. The ten seats at the back were for black people. Once the black seats were filled, we had to stand. Even if the white seats were empty. The drivers were pretty frightening, and some of them carried guns.

ROSA (to the audience)

The driver on this day was a mean one. I could see that right away. The bus was packed full at the back with black folks, but the front seats were all empty. I got on at the front. I paid my fare, and I moved down towards the back.

Film 4 – Bus int.

BLAKE

Hey!

ROSA

What? I'm standing in the right section. With my own folk.

BLAKE

Get off the bus, you know the rules. Your kind gets on through the back door

ROSA

I'm already on the bus Sir. And I don't see the point in getting off again.

BLAKE

If you won't go through the back door then you need to get off my bus. (shouts) Get off my bus!

GEORGA GILMORE

Just go round and get in the back lady! You're holding us all up.

BARNEY

Yeah, we all need to get home.

BLAKE

You get off my bus or I'm getting the police.

ROSA (to the audience)

I looked up at that mean old driver. And I heard the angry voices of the other passengers. And do you know what I did? What would you have done? I thought long and hard and then..... I got off the damn bus!

Film 5 – Bus drives off

ROSA (continues / ... to the audience)

And that bus drove away without me. I hoped I would never see that driver again. And I didn't. Not for twelve more years anyway. But I'm getting ahead of myself. There's a lot to tell you before we meet bus driver Mr James F Blake again.

I should tell you that by the time I was thrown off the bus I was already a married woman. **Mrs** Rosa Parks. The man who gave me my new last name was the same man who introduced me to the fight for Civil Rights. Mr Raymond Parks. We first met when I was only 18, and he was working in a barber shop.

Film 6 – barbers shop 1931+music” I don’t know if my Boo’s coming home” as the scene changes

AN ACTOR MOVES A CHAIR TO SUGGEST FACING AN IMAGINARY MIRROR. PARKS STANDS BEHIND HIM AND SNIPS SCISSORS AS IF CUTTING HAIR. OLD MAN ENTERS, SITS, PARKS GIVES HIM THE PAPER TO READ.

PARKS

I tell you, every black person in this country should be helping to raise money for The Scottsboro boys.

CUSTOMER

Oh Parks, I’ve come in here for a haircut. I don’t need you asking for my hard-earned money for another one of your lost causes. Those boys have got no chance. They’ve been found guilty and that’s the end of it.

PARKS

It’s my belief that we can change things. If we make enough trouble.

CUSTOMER

Well, you can leave me out of your trouble Raymond Parks.

PARKS

I’m not asking you to stand shoulder to shoulder with us. But every dollar helps us to get a proper lawyer for those young boys. For the appeal.

CUSTOMER

It’s a sad story alright.

PARKS SHAKES OUT THE TOWEL FROM THE CUSTOMERS SHOULDERS

PARKS

Well, there you go Sir. You think about what I said.

CUSTOMER

Oh, good Lord. Look take your extra dollar. Here. And I only hope it does the trick.

THE CUSTOMER PRESSES A FEW DOLLARS INTO PARKS' HAND

PARKS

Why thank you Sir. It's people like you who are going to make the difference. One good dollar at a time. Good day now.

PARKS SHOWS THE CUSTOMER OUT AND BUMPS INTO ROSA RUSHING BY OUTSIDE

PARKS

Excuse me Miss.

ROSA

Oh no Sir, excuse me. I was just looking for a little shelter from the rain.

PARKS

Well, step inside the barbershop for a moment.

CUSTOMER (walking away)

Watch out Miss. He'll be bending your ear about those Scottsboro Boys if you give him a chance!

PARKS USHERS ROSA INTO THE BARBER SHOP, AND HANDS HER A TOWEL

ROSA (as she rubs her hair)

The Scottsboro Boys?

PARKS

You not been following the case in the papers?

ROSA

I have heard people talking about them. They're the boys who were arrested for fighting?

PARKS

Yes. Although that's not the half of it. Take a seat. Have a pamphlet.

PARKS PRESSES A PAMPHLET INTO ROSA'S HAND.

ROSA

You're raising money for these boys?

PARKS

Yes, we need to get them a good lawyer. The youngest is only 14. Just a boy. They were all catching a free ride on the same freight train to Alabama.

Film 7 – people riding the freight trains vintage footage (& banjo "I SING FOR ME")

ROSA

I heard people are hopping a ride on those trains all over the South, just looking for work.

PARKS

At some point a group of whites started some trouble. The blacks fought back and threw the white boys off the train. But next time the train stopped a white mob was waiting and they forced the black youths off the train. The police came, but instead of breaking up the mob they put handcuffs on the black boys and took them straight to jail in Scottsboro, Alabama.

ROSA

And that's why they call them the Scottsboro Boys! I never knew that before.

PARKS

Well, the very next day the police lined up the boys in front of two white women: Ruby Bates and Victoria Price. Ruby Bates picked out six of the boys and said they had assaulted her. The police decided, well then, that must mean that the other three assaulted Victoria.

OLD DUDE

Although she had not picked them out.

Film 8 – Line up in jail

PARKS

The Scottsboro boys went to trial in April. They were allowed to meet with a lawyer for just half an hour.

OLD DUDE

Says here the judge sentenced all but the youngest boy to die in the electric chair.

Film 9 – Barbers shop “I don’t know if my Boo’s coming home” music comes in after 30 seconds

ROSA

Oh, my Lord, that’s outrageous!

PARKS

It is. So, we’re raising money for a proper lawyer so those boys can go to appeal and finally get a fair trial.

ROSA

That’s a good cause indeed.....I’m sorry, I haven’t even asked your name.

PARKS

I’m Raymond Parks miss. But everyone just calls me Parks.

OLD DUDE LEAVES, PARKS WAVES THAT HE MAY TAKE THE PAPER WITH HIM.

ROSA

Parks. I like that.

PARKS

And can I be so bold as to ask your name Miss?

ROSA

I’m Rosa McCauley.

PARKS

Rosa. That’s a lovely name.

ROSA

I have to be getting home now Parks. But thank you for your hospitality. And the pamphlet.

ROSA RISES TO LEAVE AND PARKS WALKS HER TO THE DOOR. THERE IS AN AWKWARD PAUSE BETWEEN THEM

PARKS

Well goodbye Rosa.

ROSA

Goodbye Parks.

Film 10 – 10 seconds DBO then Rosa's mother's kitchen (Scene change over DBO)

ROSA AND HER MOTHER LEONA FOLD LAUNDRY TOGETHER. ROSA HAS THE PAMPHLET IN HER POCKET

ROSA

.....and the youngest boy is only 14 momma. And there they all are on death row. It isn't right

LEONA

This sort of thing is dangerous. It could get you in a lot of trouble. This Parks should know better than to get a young girl mixed up in it.

ROSA

I'm not going to get mixed up in anything.

LEONA

It's not for young girls like you to be fighting for civil rights. Now come on, put this laundry away for me and let's get some supper on the stove.

ROSA (to the audience)

So, I decided to take momma's advice and try to forget all about Parks. Parks however had other ideas.

ROSA PICKS UP A PILE OF MENDING AND BEGINS TO SEW. PASSAGE OF TIME.

LEONA

Rosa! That Mr Parks is at the door again.

ROSA (whispering)

Oh no momma. Can't you tell him I'm not here?

LEONA

This poor man has driven out here three times now to call on you. You don't want to see him then you should tell him yourself. It's the least you can do. I raised you to be kind Rosa.

PARKS

Well hello Rosa. Third time lucky. I've finally caught you at home.

ROSA

Yes, it's nice to see you again Parks.

PARKS

Can I ask you to take a little drive with me? If you want to, of course.

ROSA (to the audience)

And I was sure I was going to say a polite no thank you. But then out of my mouth came: (she turns to PARKS) Yes please, I would like that very much. And that's how I started stepping out with Mr Raymond Parks! He was fine company and a proud member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and I loved to hear about all the work they were doing. And then one day Parks turned to me and said:

PARKS

I really think we ought to get married.

ROSA (to the audience)

And I found that I agreed with him. So, the next thing I knew I was a married woman at the age of 19.

Film 11 – wedding & SONG PLAYS “You are a Masterpiece” becomes– Rosa’s house

ROSA (to the audience)

We went to live on the east side of town on South Jackson Street. I was so happy with Parks, but I never stopped worrying about him.

PARKS

I'm going out tonight, Rosa.

ROSA

Another night meeting. Why are they always so late?

A MAN STANDS IN THE SHADOWS, WAITING FOR PARKS

PARKS

We have to be careful, it's so much safer to meet when everyone is asleep and there's less chance of people seeing us.

ROSA

Can I come with you?

PARKS

No, it's too dangerous, if there's trouble then we'll all have to run for it. And you can't run as fast as me.

ROSA

I've heard the other wives saying that all those men carry guns. Is that true?

PARKS

Only for self-defence Rosa, just in case.

A MAN "BOB"

Let's roll!

ROSA

Every time you go to one of these meetings, I think you're not going to come back.

MAN LEAVES NONCHALANTLY

ROSA

But I understand. You go. But I won't rest until you're back in this house.

PARKS kisses ROSA and leaves.

PARKS

Good night, Rosa.

Film 12 – speakeasy with "I don't know if my Boo's coming home" sung live (1932)

ROSA (to the audience)

I guess I'm making it sound like these were terrible times. And in some ways, they were. But remember that I was young, and I loved my husband and although there was terrible injustice in the world there was also music, and dancing and laughter.

ACTORS SET UP A BLUES CLUB.

BARMAN STANDS UPSTAGE WIPING A GLASS

ROSA

And sometimes we even got some good news.

PARKS (coming to join Rosa at the table)

Rosa! The Scottsboro boy's appeal. They're taking those boys off death row!

ROSA

Are they going free?

PARKS

Well charges are dropped on four of them.

ROSA

And the others?

PARKS

They've been sentenced but at least they're not facing the death penalty anymore.

BARMAN (to the audience)

Now I know that this must all seem very strange to you people. How we lived in fear and how hard it was for black folks to get justice. I sure hope that things are different now. But back then we were denied all sorts of basic rights that the white folks took for granted.

ROSA (to audience)

I'll give you an example. Parks wanted me to register to vote. But it was not that easy.

Film 13 – town hall + voice overs (1943) (burst of scene change music 20 secs)

WOMAN WEARS A WHITE FACE MASK

WOMAN

Next.

ROSA

I'm here to register to vote.

WOMAN

No. I don't think so.

ROSA

I was told that African Americans could register to vote here from 10am till 12 noon today.

WOMAN

I don't believe you qualify. Please step aside and let me deal with the next person in line.

ROSA

Can you tell me please how I can qualify to register?

WOMAN

It's perfectly simple. You need to own property. Do you own any property?

ROSA

No. I do not.

WOMAN

Well, that's that then.

ROSA

I believe that even without owning property that I am entitled to register to vote. I'm told that there is a written test I can take.

WOMAN (disdainfully passing ROSA a test paper)

Here. There are some tables in the room next door. Answer the questions on the test and bring it back to me when you're done.

ROSA

And then will I be registered to vote?

WOMAN

If you pass. *IF* you pass, then you will receive your voter registration in the mail.

ROSA (as she takes the test paper)

Thank you, mam.

WOMAN

Yeah, good luck lady. Though if you ask me, you're wasting your time.

ROSA (in spotlight, to the audience)

Well. When I sat down and looked at the test paper, I could see right away that it wasn't fair. It was supposed to be a test of whether you could read and write, but they had put in these very complicated questions about the constitution and all kinds of things. Lucky white folks didn't have to pass this test or there would be no registered voters in the whole state of Alabama! But I did my best and I went home to wait for my certificate in the mail. But no certificate ever came. So, I went back to the office.

Film 14 – inside office 6 months later + burst scene change music 20 seconds

WOMAN

Next.

ROSA

Good afternoon.

WOMAN

Yes?

ROSA

You don't remember me?

WOMAN (stares at her)

No. Any reason why I should?

ROSA

I came in a few months back to take my voter registration test, you said I'd get a certificate in the mail. But I never did.

WOMAN

I said you'd get a certificate in the mail *IF* you passed.

ROSA

So, I didn't pass?

WOMAN

You didn't get a certificate, you didn't pass.

ROSA

Can I check the answers?

WOMAN

No.

ROSA

Can you check for me?

WOMAN

No. Now move along.

ROSA

I'd like to take the test again please.

WOMAN

Really? It likely won't make any difference. You know that don't you?

ROSA

All the same, I believe it is my right to take the test again.

WOMAN

Here you are. If you don't have anything better to do, then, please be my guest.

ROSA TAKES THE PAPER

ROSA (to the audience)

So, I took that test for the second time. And handed my paper in at the desk.

ROSA

Here you are. I took a little longer over the test this time.

WOMAN

Yeah, so?

ROSA

And I copied out all my answers. I have them right here. So, if I don't pass this time then I'll be able to check, won't I? See if your marking has been done fair and square.

WOMAN

You wrote it all out twice?

ROSA

I did. So good day to you mam. And I look forward to receiving my certificate in the mail.

ROSA FOLDS UP HER COPY OF THE TEST PAPER AND LEAVES

Film 15 – Rosa's House (1943) scene change music 20 seconds

ROSA (to the audience)

And that is how I became a registered voter in the state of Alabama!

PARKS

It was one of the NAACP's big campaigns to get black voters registered so I was delighted.

ROSA

Parks! Look here in the paper, that's Johnnie Carr. I was at school with her. And here she is doing some work for the NAACP. I might pay a call on her.

PARKS

Oh Rosa, don't go running downtown to the NAACP. It's bad enough one of us risking our neck. The stuff we do..... that isn't women's work.

ROSA

Well, it's good enough for Johnnie it seems. I'll just stop by. Catch up on old times.

PARKS

Well, if you put it that way I guess I can't say anything about it. But you be careful Rosa.

Film 16- NAACPMONTGOMERY BRANCH – road outside to inside

MAN (NIXON)

Hello mam. Are you here for the annual election of officers?

ROSA

Well no. I was just stopping by to see if my friend Miss Johnnie Carr was in the office today.

MAN (NIXON) (looking out into the audience for Johnnie Carr)

I'm afraid she's not. But we're about to start the meeting. If you pay your membership dues, you can go right on in.

ROSA

Oh no. I was just.... well.....well yes, I think I will then.

ROSA PAYS OVER A FEW DOLLARS AND GOES IN TO THE MEETING. CAST ON CHAIRS.

Film 17 - NAACPMONTGOMERY BRANCH – int

E.D. NIXON

Ah come in. Come in. Who have we here?

ROSA

I'm Mrs Rosa Parks.

E.D. NIXON

Raymond Parks' wife?

ROSA

Indeed.

E.D. NIXON

I am Mr E.D. Nixon, the President of the Association.

ROSA

Pleased to meet you Mr Nixon.

E.D. NIXON

Welcome Mrs Parks, welcome indeed. And not a moment too soon for we need a secretary to take the minutes of the meeting,

ROSA

Oh, no, I couldn't. It's my first meeting; I'll just sit quietly and listen.

E.D. NIXON

Why that's perfect. What else would a good secretary do? I nominate Mrs Rosa Parks to be the new secretary of the Alabama Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. All those in favour say aye.

ALL THE MEN RAISE THEIR HANDS

MEN

Aye.

E.D. NIXON

Excellent. I must tell you that the position comes with no pay. We are all volunteers here Mrs Parks.

ROSA

Call me Rosa please.

E.D. NIXON

Very well Rosa it is, now take up your pencil and let us begin. Item number one....

ROSA (to the audience)

Well before I knew it, I was working hard for Mr Nixon every moment I could spare. He was a brave and dignified man. Carried himself straight as an arrow. But I must tell you he was also a shocking male chauvinist.

E.D. NIXON

I always say, women don't need to be nowhere but the kitchen

ROSA

Well, what about me? If I was at home in the kitchen who'd be typing your letters? Organising your lectures? Answering your mail? Perhaps I'd better quit Mr Nixon? See if you can find a good *man* to come in here and run this office for no pay.

E.D. NIXON

No Rosa you can't quit. I need a secretary. And it's plain to see that you are the best there is.

ROSA (to the audience)

And so, I stayed. At first, I was in the office sending out press releases, and answering the phones. But I took on more and more responsibility. One of my main duties became to keep a record of cases of discrimination or acts of violence against black people. Some of the cases we dealt with were very upsetting.

Film 18 – NAACP office fading (+ knock on the door) 1951& scene change music spare (version 2) "I SING FOR ME"

ROSA

Hello, how can we help you today?

CORNELLA

I'm Cornella. Cornella Reeves. I'm in trouble and I don't know where else to turn (she cries) Can you help me? There's no one else who will even listen to me.

ROSA

We will listen.

CORNELLA

I'm here to beg for help for my son. My eldest Jeremiah. He ain't nothing but a kid, still in high school.

ROSA

How old exactly?

CORNELLA

He's sixteen. Just sixteen.

ROSA

What has happened to him Cornella?

CORNELLA

He's been arrested mam. The police came to the high school and took him away.

ROSA (writing busily)

On what charge?

CORNELLA

Rape. (she covers her face with her hands)

ROSA

I see. And I'm afraid I have to ask... is there any possibility that he could have done this?

CORNELLA (gathers herself and speaks with dignity)

There is none. A finer boy you never met.

ROSA

And who has accused him?

CORNELLA

A white lady. He's been working as a grocery delivery boy, after school. And I don't deny that he's been mixed up with this woman. They've been carrying on for months now, but she never made no complaint about Jeremiah till one of her neighbours saw them through the window getting undressed.

ROSA

And this neighbour reported her to the police for having relations with a black man?

CORNELLA

Yes, that's right. As soon as she realised that she was found out and that there would be trouble she told those policemen that Jeremiah forced himself on her.

ROSA

She lied to the police to protect herself.

CORNELLA

Yes mam she did. And now they've got Jeremiah in prison, and I don't know what to do.

ROSA

We'll do our best mam. We can try to get him a decent lawyer at least.

CORNELLA

I suppose this sort of thing is nothing to you. It happens all the time. But this is my son.

ROSA

Cornella, every black person wrongly imprisoned is a terrible thing. No matter how many times I hear stories like this my heart hurts just the same.

CORNELLA TAKES ROSA'S HANDS

CORNELLA

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Film 19 – electric chair image fading in**ROSA (to the audience)**

Cornella was right to be worried about her son. The police hadn't just arrested him. They had strapped him into the electric chair and told him they would electrocute him if he didn't confess. So of course he did confess. The all-white jury sentenced Jeremiah to die in the electric chair. Mr Nixon led the campaign to force a re-trial.

SPOTLIGHT UP ON NIXON AND CORNELLA

E.D. NIXON

And we won him a re-trial! We got that boy a national lawyer and the Supreme Court ruled that the jury should have heard that Jeremiah was tortured

CORNELLA

So, what happens now Mr Nixon? Does my boy Jeremiah come home?

E.D. NIXON

I'm afraid not. The state of Alabama is putting Jeremiah through a second trial.

CORNELLA LEAVES

E.D. NIXON (calling out to her as she leaves)

But this time Rosa, the jury will hear the evidence of torture. We will do everything we can. We will not stop fighting for justice. Even if it takes us years.

Film 20 – 1955 10 seconds of black / news footage from wartime to drive-ins ending with 4 white dudes playing rock n’ roll “Hey Boo, come home!” – 2 minutes.

ROSA

Now you might remember that I was put off the bus back in 1943. Well by the start of 1955 things with the bus company were no better and Mr Nixon had decided that we had to do something.

Film 21 – NAACP with short burst of scene change music

E.D. NIXON

We need to file suit against the bus company, and to do this we need a strong case. And a strong case will need a strong plaintiff.

ROSA

The best plaintiff would be a woman, I think.

E.D. NIXON

You think so?

ROSA

Sure, a woman will get more public sympathy than a man.

E.D. NIXON

Yes, you may be right. But it would have to be a woman of good character. Someone with a good reputation who has never done anything wrong except refuse to give up her seat to a white person.

ROSA (to the audience)

We were still working out how to find such a person when we got news that someone had jumped the gun. A young lady called Claudette Colvin.

Film 22 – bus int. (still 1955) 10 seconds lots of noise (scenes split stage – office / bus)

CLAUDETTE IS SEATED, A WHITE MAN (FACE MASK) STANDS OVER HER

WHITE MAN

You shouldn’t be sitting here.

CLAUDETTE

I paid my dime. I guess my dime is the same as yours Sir. And I was here first.

WHITE MAN

Do you want me to ask the driver to get the police?

CLAUDETTE

I don't want that. But I'm not giving up my seat Mister.

WHITE MAN

Who do you think you are? You're nothing but a schoolgirl.

CLAUDETTE

And do you know what we learned in school today? We learned about the constitution. And the constitution says it's the same rules for black folks and white.

WHITE MAN

Well young lady I think you're in for a tough lesson on your constitutional rights. Here are the police.

A POLICEMAN APPROACHES CLAUDETTE

POLICEMAN

Stand up please.

CLAUDETTE

I will not. You're going to have to drag me off this bus.

POLICEMAN

Put out your hands.

CLAUDETTE DOES NOT MOVE

POLICEMAN

I said put out your hands!

CLAUDETTE HOLDS OUT HER HANDS, THE POLICEMAN HANDCUFFS HER. HER SCHOOL BOOKS FALL TO THE FLOOR AS SHE IS DRAGGED FROM THE BUS

CLAUDETTE

My books!

POLICEMAN

Too late to be worrying about your schoolbooks now. I'll teach you a proper lesson. You're going to jail.

HE MARCHES CLAUDETTE AWAY

ROSA (to the audience)

Claudette seemed like a charming young girl. And a good student. So, we met with her to see if she could be our test case to challenge the bus segregation.

Film 23 – NAACP office -5 second burst of scene change music then quiet office sounds

E.D. NIXON

Welcome, welcome Claudette. And how are you?

CLAUDETTE

I'm fine Mr Nixon.

E.D. NIXON

You weren't hurt at the police station?

CLAUDETTE

I wasn't hurt. But I'll tell the truth Sir I was very much afraid.

ROSA

Have they charged you?

CLAUDETTE

They have.

E.D. NIXON

What are the charges?

CLAUDETTE

Violating segregation laws, disturbing the peace and assaulting a police officer.

E.D. NIXON

But you made bail. So at least you weren't in prison long.

CLAUDETTE

And I'm grateful for it Sir. I don't mind telling you, when that cell door banged shut and I heard the big old key turn in the lock I was very much afraid. I got down on my knees and I prayed.

E.D. NIXON

Has Rosa told you that we are looking for someone to be our test case to fight the bus segregation?

CLAUDETTE

She mentioned it.

E.D. NIXON

Would you be interested Claudette? There would be a lot of scrutiny on you. And we'd need you to speak at meetings and such.

CLAUDETTE

Well I guess I could. I mean for a time anyway. The baby's not due for a little while yet.

ROSA

I didn't know you were pregnant Claudette.

E.D. NIXON

And you are not married?

CLAUDETTE

No Sir. I'm not.

E.D. NIXON (getting to his feet)

Ah. Then I am afraid we have wasted your time, Miss Colvin. We cannot go forward with you as our test case.

ROSA

Are you sure Mr. Nixon? Claudette is a good girl.

E.D. NIXON

No, it's quite impossible. A young girl, having a child out of wedlock? The white press would have a field day. They would pour down disapproval upon her.

CLAUDETTE

Feels like you're giving me some disapproval of your own Mr. Nixon.

E.D. NIXON

I'm sorry Claudette. I truly am. But for us to have any chance of winning we'll need someone who is above reproach.

CLAUDETTE

Someone perfect. In every possible way. Right up until she's arrested for refusing to give up her seat on the bus!

E.D. NIXON

I'm afraid so. Thank you for coming Claudette. Rosa, will you show Miss Colvin out please.

ROSA (to Claudette)

Don't pay him any mind. And don't worry. We'll find someone else. We'll win in the end.

E.D. NIXON (stays on stage, freezes in motion)

Goodbye Ms Colvin. Goodbye Rosa.

Film 24 – music cue and film: segregation song.

PARKS ENTERS, MOVEMENT SEQUENCE OVER FIRST PART OF SONG, AS TOP OF SHOW.

During first two verses live (to recorded backing) "I SING FOR YOU".

NIXON exits. Music continues through the scene

CLAUDETTE

Rosa. Before I go can I ask you something?

ROSA

Of course.

CLAUDETTE

Are you still working on the Jeremiah Reeves case? Is there any news?

ROSA

Did you know Jeremiah?

CLAUDETTE

He went to my school. I saw the police cars come to take him away. I know he's on death row. I think it was him who inspired me to take a stand and refuse to give up my seat on the bus. Does that make sense?

ROSA

Of course, it does. It's all one thing and the same. It's all injustice. And we're doing everything we can for Jeremiah.

CLAUDETTE

Can you win? Can you get him home for his momma?

ROSA

I don't know Claudette. But I promise you this, we will keep fighting.

CLAUDETTE

Thank you, Mrs Parks. Goodnight.

SONG "I SING FOR ME": PARKS, ROSA, CLAUDETTE SING ALONG WITH IT AS IF IT IS A PROTEST SONG, ENCOURAGING THE AUDIENCE TO JOIN IN.

ROSA

Goodnight, Claudette. You take care now.

Film 25 – 1 minute + DBO for à Capella 3rd verse in harmony I SING FOR ME then bus int. (Still 1955)

ROSA (to the audience)

I thought about Claudette a lot that year. But I wasn't thinking about her on the 1st of December when I boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus. My head was full of all kinds of things. And it was only when I had paid my fare that I looked up and recognised that mean old driver from all those years ago. Mr James F Blake. The man who put me off his bus and left me standing in the rain. I took a seat at the front of the black section.

ROSA SITS DOWN

ROSA (continues / ... to the audience)

At first, I was just looking out of the window but then as we got to the Empire Theatre stop some more white people got on and filled up all the white seats. And one man was left standing.

BLAKE

Let him have those seats.

ROSA (to the audience)

I didn't get up.

BLAKE

You heard me. Let him have that seat.

ROSA (to the audience)

People always say that I didn't get up because I was tired. But that isn't true. I was not tired. And I was not old either. Although some people have an image of me being old. I was 42. No. The only tired I was, was tired of giving in.

BLAKE

Right. If you don't move, I'm going to have you arrested.

ROSA

Well Sir, I suppose you may do that.

ROSA (to the audience)

And as I sat there waiting for the police, I thought about my grandfather who always kept a gun right by his fireplace in case we were attacked. And I thought of poor Jeremiah Reeves, just a kid on death row. And the Scottsboro boys. And it seemed to me that the more we gave in, the more the white folks pushed us around. I had plenty of time. I could have got off the bus. But I didn't. I stayed and waited for the police.

POLICEMAN (WHITE 2-D MASK) APPROACHES ROSA

POLICEMAN

Right, what's this nonsense? You're coming with me.

ROSA

Why do you push us around?

POLICEMAN

I don't know, but the law is the law and you're under arrest.

ROSA (to the audience)

They didn't even handcuff me. They must have seen that I'd go quietly. They always say: stand up for your rights, don't they? But when my time came, I sat down!

POLICEMAN (takes Rosa's arm)

Wipe that smile off your face lady. You're coming with me. Show's over folks.

ROSA (to the audience)

At the police station they fingerprinted me and took my photo.

Film 26 – Rosa's mug shot this film with banjo (harmonica) version of "MY BOOS COMING HOME" instrumental behind it for the whole film, low level but present

ROSA (to the audience)

They put me in a jail cell. Just like they did with Claudette. They finally let me make a phone call and I called Parks of course. And he came straight down, with Mr Nixon who paid my bail. And they got me out of there.

Film 27 – Rosa's house + short sting of I SING FOR ME

PARKS

Did they hurt you? Did the police beat you, Rosa? Whatever possessed you to go and get yourself arrested?

ROSA

I'm fine. I was only in jail for two hours Parks.

PARKS

Two hours too long! Mr Nixon, what can we do about this?

E.D. NIXON

The trial is a formality of course. Rosa will be found guilty and made to pay a fine.

ROSA

I tell you this. Whatever happens I am never getting on a segregated bus again. I would rather walk to work and back every day. Even in the rain.

E.D. NIXON

Oh, good Lord! Why did I not see it straight away? I have the perfect plaintiff! You Rosa, you shall be our test case to fight the bus company.

ROSA

Me?

E.D. NIXON

A woman of good character, happily married, honest, employed. A person of integrity. The press won't be able to dig up any dirt on Mrs Rosa Parks.

PARKS

She is all those things. But let me remind you she is also my wife.

NIXON

Rosa? What do you say? It's up to you. But I don't see how we'll ever get a better chance. The white people can't point to you and say there's anything you ever did to deserve such treatment except being born black.

PARKS

You be mindful Rosa. This is a big decision.

ROSA

I'll do it!

PARKS (to the audience)

After Rosa made that decision things moved very fast. By midnight Mrs Jo Ann Robinson, who was one of the leading activists in Montgomery, had got her students together at Montgomery State and they had run off 35,000 handbills calling for all black people to stay home on Monday and refuse to ride the buses.

Film 28 – the handbill for 30 seconds – Holy Baptist Church with a Capella gospel music – church ext. (rain)

JO ANN ROBINSON READS ALOUD THE TEXT. THE CAST HAND OUT THE HANDBILLS TO THE AUDIENCE

JO-ANN

Don't ride the bus to work, to town, to school, or any place on Monday, December 5th.

E.D. NIXON

Another black woman has been arrested and put in jail because she refused to give up her seat. Don't ride the buses anywhere on Monday. Take a cab, or share a ride, or walk.

JO ANN

If it rains, we'll just get wet.

E.D. NIXON

Come to a mass meeting Monday at 7pm at the Holt Street Baptist Church

ROSA (to the audience)

I didn't go to work on Monday of course. I went downtown for my trial. Mr Nixon was right there on the front steps when I arrived.

Film 29 town hall ext for trial. Sounds of crowd of people. After 25 seconds an empty bus goes by.

E.D. NIXON

Rosa! Over here.

ROSA

Oh my. I didn't know there would be a crowd outside! Do I look alright?

ROSA GESTURES TO HER OUTFIT: A DRESS WITH WHITE COLLAR AND CUFFS. AND A CHARCOAL GREY COAT, WITH WHITE GLOVES.

E.D. NIXON

You look perfect Rosa. Where's Parks?

PARKS (arriving, breathless)

I'm right here. I was parking the car and then they wouldn't let me through. Until I said I was Mr Rosa Parks!

ROSA

Oh, Parks I'm sorry.

PARKS

Don't worry Rosa, my pride can take a back seat today.

E.D. NIXON

Very well said Parks. Now shall we go in and face the trial? Are you ready Rosa?

ROSA

I am. Thank you Sir. I know what I have to do.

E.D. NIXON

Come along then.

ROSA (to the audience)

We knew I would be found guilty.

E.D. NIXON

The whole point of you being a test case was to allow you to be found guilty and then appeal to a higher court. Because only in the higher court could the segregation laws be challenged.

ROSA

I was fined ten dollars plus four dollars costs.

E.D. NIXON

But by the time the trial was over something even more important had happened. As we came out into the streets it was clear to see. The buses were empty! The black people had all stayed home. We were pretty nervous to see what was going to happen at the meeting at The Holt Street Baptist Church that evening.

(Later that evening)

E.D. NIXON

Welcome, welcome everyone, to this most important meeting. Today has been such an inspiring day. The time for change is now. I am done with waiting. So, Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you the president of the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association, the Reverend Martin Luther King Junior.

Film 30 – Holy Baptist Church outside (+ applause) ending on church still

DR KING

Injustice can only go on for so long. There comes a time when the people have had enough. Enough of being mistreated, enough of being segregated and humiliated. Perhaps our white brothers think because we have not cried out that we do not feel

the pain that they inflict on us. But we do feel it. Our suffering is real. And now I want us all to join together to cry out for freedom and justice. Our great American democracy says that we have the right to protest. So let us protest with dignity and with Christian love.

Film 31 – church still (+ applause)

DR KING (to Rosa)

Step on up and say something Mrs Parks. You're the one who started all this.

ROSA

You want me to speak? I don't know what to say. I don't want to speak in front of all these people.

E.D. NIXON

Don't worry. You have done enough; you don't have to speak. There are plenty of people here to speak.

DR KING

Here are the demands we make of the bus company: One. Courteous treatment on the buses. Two. First come first served seating. And three. Hiring of black drivers for black bus routes. Stand up if you want to continue the boycott until our demands are met.

Film 32 – church still (+ applause)

E.D. NIXON

And that is how the Montgomery bus boycott properly began. The people decided that one day of protest was not enough. No black person would ride the bus until we could ride as equals with the whites.

ROSA

It was all very exciting at the meeting, but there were difficult times ahead. Parks lost his job.

E.D. NIXON

I'm sorry Rosa. I know that those times were hard for you and Parks.

ROSA

And for plenty of other folks' too. That we were all able to keep going was thanks to women like Georgia Gilmore.

Film 34 – Montgomery Improvement Association 1956 & scene change music

GEORGIA

Mrs Rosa Parks?

ROSA

Yes, that's me.

GEORGIA (she dabs herself with a handkerchief against the heat)

It's an honour to meet you Mrs Parks. I'm Georgia Gilmore.

ROSA

Pleased to meet you, Georgia. Have you come to volunteer for the Montgomery Improvement Association?

GEORGIA

No mam. Better than that. I've come to donate some money to the cause.

GEORGIA HANDS OVER A BROWN PAPER BAG

ROSA

Good Lord. This is a lot of money! We can do a great deal to help folks with this.

GEORGIA

I'm pleased to hear it. Because I reckon, I can raise that money each week for you. To help out those families who need it during the boycott.

ROSA

But who has given you this money?

GEORGIA

We call ourselves "The Club from Nowhere".

ROSA

Well, that's an extraordinary name.

GEORGIA (laughing)

Anyone asks me "where does this money come from?" I say – it comes from nowhere. We're just some ladies from Montgomery doing what we can to help. We bake pies and cakes and cookies, and we sell them door-to-door.

ROSA

That is so kind of you and your volunteers.

GEORGIA

We all want to help. We might not be able to do much, but we can cook! And not just cakes. Sweet potato pies, fried fish, pork chops and stewed greens. We do 'em all.

ROSA

Well, if you are raising this much money that food must be quite delicious.

GEORGIA

Second to none Mrs Parks. You can depend on it.

ROSA

Well thank you again for the donation.

GEORGIA

I'll see you next week Mrs Parks.

ROSA

I look forward to it.

GEORGIA STARTS TO LEAVE

ROSA

Oh, and Georgia?

GEORGIA

Yes Mrs Parks.

ROSA

Next time, can you bring me one of those sweet potato pies?

GEORGIA

I surely will mam.

ROSA (to the audience)

And Georgia was not the only person who was determined to support the bus boycott. At the MIA offices Jo Ann and I were delighted to find that parcels were coming in from all over the country.

JO ANN

Look at all these donations Rosa. People have been so kind and given so much. But do you know that the police have started arresting cab drivers for not charging black folks the full fare?

Film 35 – images of bus boycott – walking dusty roads - MIA

ROSA

Can they do that?

JO ANN

Seems like they can. But they won't win! I've got a car. Let's see if they are going to start arresting people for giving folks free lifts in their cars

ROSA

And we can get the churches to buy some cars and find some volunteers to drive them

JO-ANN

Good thinking Rosa. You and I can organise one hell of a protest, eh?

ROSA (to the audience)

We had plenty of volunteers and soon we were transporting 30,000 people a day. As the boycott went on the buses were losing more and more money and white people were getting more and more angry.

Film 36 – Silhouette of a man on the phone (v/o) – Rosa's house

CALLER ONE (ON SCREEN) Voice over:

You're the cause of this. You're gonna get yourself killed. You watch yourself Rosa Parks!

JO ANN

You're getting death threats?!

ROSA

We had to board up the house. Dr King's house has been bombed; Mr Nixon's house has been bombed.

JO ANN

This protest is national news now. And Mr Nixon has made you the face of it. Even more than Dr King and his association. The story they like is your story.

E.D. NIXON (to the audience)

Well with all this help we kept that bus boycott running for nearly a year. And we could have gone on for another year if you ask me but then the most unexpected thing happened. On the 13th of November 1956 the US Supreme Court declared segregation on the buses unconstitutional.

DR KING (to the audience)

The written order from the US Supreme Court arrived on December 20. The Montgomery Improvement Association had won a great victory.

ROSA (to the audience)

And the very next day Dr Martin Luther King rode the bus. I didn't want to go but some reporters came to the house and drove me downtown so they could take pictures of me getting on and off the bus.

Film 37 – bus int. with white driver – 30 seconds – add photographers flashes as instrumental music “I SING FOR ME” fades up till end.

ROSA IN THE SPOTLIGHT, LOOKS AT THE BUS

ROSA (to the audience)

And who was the driver of one of the first buses I got on?

THE DRIVER HAS HIS BACK TO ROSA. HER TURNS AROUND AND WE SEE THAT IT'S BLAKE

ROSA (to the audience)

Mr James F Blake! I never said a word to him. And he never spoke to me. Even though I know he recognised me. I sat right in the front. In what used to be the white section. And those reporters just took my picture over and over again.

ROSA SITS ON THE BUS, WITH HER BAG ON HER LAP

E.D. NIXON (to the audience)

Sitting there on the bus that day it was hard not to think again about all the injustice that had brought us here.

JO ANN

Poor Jeremiah was still on death row, and although we had won this fight there was still plenty more to fight for.

DR KING GETS ON THE BUS AND SITS WITH ROSA

DR KING

As time went on, we began to hear of bus boycotts all over the south. The Direct-action civil rights movement had begun.

ROSA

And I guess I was proud of my own small part in it. Just one woman who refused to give up her seat. Just one woman who had had enough of being treated as a second-class citizen. Just one woman who was tired of giving in.

THE CAST LINE UP, THEY DROP TO ONE KNEE AND LOOK OUT

Film 38 – captions: fade sung version of “GOSPEL”

CAPTION ONE

Within a year after the bus boycott, 42 other movements were organised in the South to combat racial segregation.

CAPTION TWO

Despite the efforts of Rosa and Dr King, Jeremiah Reeves was executed in the electric chair in 1958. He was 22 years old.

CAPTION THREE

Dr Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis Tennessee. He was 39.

CAPTION FIVE

Claudette Colvin is retired and lives in New York City. She is **85** years old.

CAPTION SIX

Rosa Parks is remembered to this day as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement. She passed away in 2005 at the age of 92.

Questions & Answers session with the public including the people repeating some text.

“We call ourselves the club from nowhere!”

“You Rosa, you shall be our test case to fight the bus company.”

“Injustice can only go on for so long”

“Just one woman, who was tired of giving in”

Film 39 – a short homage to the music backing recorded, sung live ‘My Baby Boo’ (words on screen).

MY BABY BOO

**I DON'T KNOW IF MY BOOS COMING HOME
I DON'T KNOW IF MY BOOS COMING HOME**

**He's always in trouble, not my choice
Boy aint got the muscle, so hear my voice
He's always out there, pushing me down
So we'll keep...singing louder**

(spoken) “and there’s nothing you can do about it”

I DON'T KNOW IF MY BOOS COMING HOME
I DON'T KNOW IF MY BOOS COMING HOME

He’s always in trouble, not my choice
Boy aint got the muscle, so hear my voice
He’s always out there, pushing me down
So we’ll keep...singing louder “

(spoken) “and there’s nothing you can do about it”

I DON'T KNOW IF MY BOOS COMING HOME
I DON'T KNOW IF MY BOOS COMING HOME
If my boos coming home
If my boos coming home
If my boos ... coming ... home.

END.

<http://theatre.anglais.free.fr>