From Rosa Parks

23 August 1957
Detroit, Mich.

Suffering harassment and unable to find steady work in Montgomery, Parks and her family joined her brother Sylvester in Detroit in the summer of 1957. Shortly before her departure, the MIA's executive board declared 5 August "Rosa Parks Day" and asked Montgomery churches to contribute a special offering in honor of the woman "whose dignified and Christian stand on segregation... gave the spark that lit the light of freedom in the deep south." A gift of approximately eight hundred dollars was presented to Parks at an evening celebration held at Mt. Zion AME Zion Church. On 8 August Parks appeared during a rally at Holt Street Baptist Church that culminated the third meeting of SCLC. In the following letter Parks thanks King for the warm send-off.

Dear Rev. King:

This note to you, the M.I.A. Executive Board and our many dear friends, is to say many, many thanks to all of you for the kindness and generosity shown us before our departure from Montgomery. I have no words of expression of gratitude for what has been done to help us. It will always be among my most cherished memories.

Though I was sorry to leave at this time, perhaps it was best. Mother is happy to be near her son and grandchildren. My husband is feeling fine and working. He likes here and is improving in every way.

I miss all of you so much and would like to hear some news of how things are going there now. I earnestly hope and pray that progress will continue in our struggle for freedom and justice for all.

May God ever bless and keep you, and thanks again and again.

Sincerely yours,
[signed] Rosa Parks.

P.S. I am sorry that I could not hear you when you spoke here recently. Hope to see you at Highlander. R. P. 4

ALS. DABCC.

1. A 16 November article in the Pittsburgh Courier suggested that the MIA and Montgomery's black community had slighted Parks following the boycott (Trezvant W. Anderson, "How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes?"). The MIA Newsletter of 18 November rebutted the Courier's account: "Mrs. Parks was not 'asked,' but 'begged' by Dr. King to accept a job from the MIA office. She refused on the grounds that she was away from the city on speaking engagements too often."

2. Mose Pleasure to Pastor and members, 3 August 1957.


4. Parks refers to King's 18 August visit to Detroit's Central Methodist Church, where he delivered "Paul's Letter to the American Christians." King and Parks attended the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Highlander Folk School on 2 September (see King, "A Look to the Future," pp. 269–276 in this volume).