



**“Rosa sat  
so that  
Martin could walk;  
Martin walked  
so that  
Obama could run;  
Obama ran  
so that  
Our children could fly.”**

On August 28th, 2008, Barack Hussein Obama, a Biracial junior Senator from Illinois accepted the Democratic Party’s nomination for President of the United States. This event coincided with the 45 year anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s historical and inspirational **“I Have a Dream”** speech at the Lincoln Memorial. The intent of this exhibit is to highlight the journey of African Americans in the United States from the turbulent Civil Rights Movement until today and to celebrate the achievement of President Barack Obama, the first man of African descent to become President.

The phrase **“Rosa sat so Martin could march; Martin marched so Obama could run; Obama ran so our children could fly.”** began as a simple email sent by a 19-year old single mother from McKeesport, PA to the Democratic Party Chairman for Pittsburgh’s 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward (Khari Mosley). The phrase was quoted by Khari Mosley in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette on November 2, 2008 and was soon being forwarded all over our country through emails.

This quote seemed to encapsulate the spirit of the African American experience. It recognized the importance of those that came before us, showing tribute and appreciation for their experiences, and provides us with the hope that will move us forward to the next marker of progress in America.

### **Rosa sat ...**



On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a black woman working as a seamstress, after a tiring day at work, refused to give up her seat on the bus when a white man demanded it. When the driver ordered Parks from her seat, **Rosa sat** until the bus driver called the police. She was taken to the police station, booked, fingerprinted, and arrested. This incident spurred Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to plan a boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama public transportation system four days later – a monumental event leading to his emergence

as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement that would soon follow.

### Martin marched ...

On December 4, 1955, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the blacks in Montgomery, Alabama in a boycott of the public transportation system of the city. The year-long boycott was only the beginning of King's peaceful movement to obtain civil rights for blacks. Martin continued to **march** and was arrested over 30 times for his participation in civil rights activities; but he never gave up his dream of one day seeing all blacks enjoying the same rights as whites in our country.



### Obama ran ...



In 1996, Barack Obama **ran** for the Illinois State Senate; he served as an Illinois state senator for eight years. In 2003, he **ran** for U.S. Senator for the state of Illinois; he became the third African American since Reconstruction to be elected to the U.S. Senate. On February 10, 2007, the junior U.S. Senator from Illinois announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States. He **ran** in this race for over a year before becoming the first African American to be elected President of the United States on November 4, 2008.

On January 20, 2009 Barack Obama realized the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King when he was inaugurated as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

### So our children can fly ...

For those of us who never thought that we could tell our children that they can be whatever they want to be, we know this is no longer the case. We can no longer be afraid to urge them to set their sights high, to soar, to **fly**.



**Thank you, Rosa. Thank you, Martin. Thank you, Barack.**

This exhibit was created through the collaboration of Natalie Walker (right), Director of the Martin Luther King Program and Beverly Hamilton (left), formerly of the Office of Social Equity to celebrate both MLK Day and Black History Month at Shippensburg University.



## Rosa sat ...

**Rosa Parks** (Feb 4, 1912 – Oct 24, 2005), a seamstress at the Montgomery Fair department store in 1955, did an unthinkable thing by refusing to move from her seat in order to accommodate a white passenger on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Her defiant gesture had actually broken a law, one of the many bits of Jim Crow legislation that assured second-class citizenship for blacks. The Jim Crow rules for the public bus systems in Montgomery almost defy belief today. Black customers had to enter the bus at the front door, pay the fare, exit the front door and climb aboard again at the rear door. Even though the majority of bus passengers were black, the front four rows of seats were always reserved for white customers. Behind these seats was a middle section that blacks could use only if there was no white demand. However, if so much as one white customer needed a seat in this “no-man’s land,” all the blacks in that section had to move.

That day, December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks had had a particularly tiring day. She had spent the day pressing numerous pairs of pants and her back and shoulders ached terribly – she was 49 at the time. She deliberately let one full bus pass in order to find a seat on the next one. The seat she eventually found was in the middle section of the bus, because the back was filled. A few stops further down the line, a white man got on and demanded a seat. The driver ordered Parks and three other black customers to move. The other riders did as they were told, but Parks quietly refused to give up her place. The driver threatened to call the police. Parks said: “Go ahead and call them.” Rosa **sat** until the police arrived.

Parks was driven to the police station, booked, fingerprinted, and jailed. Word of Parks’ arrest spread quickly through Montgomery’s black community, and several influential black leaders decided the time was ripe to try a boycott of the public transportation system. One of these leaders was the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King used the mimeograph machine at his Baptist church to make 7,000 copies of a leaflet advertising the boycott. The message was plain: “Don’t ride the bus to work, to town, to school, or any place on Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. If you work, take a cab, or share a ride, or **walk**.” This boycott, this monumental event – watched by the world—triggered the modern-day Black Freedom Movement and the emergence of Dr. Martin Luther King at the forefront.

## **Martin marched ...**

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** (Jan 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968) was a pivotal figure of the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King's leadership in the movement began as President of the Montgomery (Alabama) Improvement Association, the organization credited for the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott from 1955 to 1956.

The movements and **marches** throughout his young life brought significant changes to our country. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, for example, went to Congress as a result of the Selma to Alabama Montgomery **march**. Dr. King was arrested thirty times for his participation in civil rights activities. He was shot and died in Memphis, Tennessee where he had gone to lead sanitation workers in a **march** to protest against low wages and intolerable conditions.

Though Dr. King's voice was stilled on April 4, 1968, his historical "**I have a Dream**" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. in August of 1963 continued to live on, inspire and challenge others. His dream was never brighter than on January 20, 2009 when our nation saw the first person of African American descent inaugurated as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of our nation.

## Obama ran ...

**Barack Obama** (August 1, 1961 - ) raised by a single, white mother and white grandparents, son of an African, absent father, through loans put himself through undergraduate school. Rather than choosing lucrative job offers after graduating from college, Barack chose working for community churches, organizing a successful voter registration and helping folks devastated by the closing of local steel mills. He began to realize more and more that to truly improve the lives of people in Chicago and in other communities; it would take not just a change at the local level, but a change in our country's laws and in our politics.

Barack Obama went on to earn his law degree from Harvard in 1991 where he became the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review. Upon graduating from law school, he joined a small law firm, taught Constitutional Law and remained an active advocate for change within the community. His advocacy work led him to run for the Illinois State Senate where he served for eight years. In 2004, he became the third African American since Reconstruction to be elected to the U.S. Senate.

On February 10, 2007, Barack Obama, the junior U.S. Senator from Illinois announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States. Few thought he had a chance but as the crowds grew as he made his way across the United States and his message of hope and change with all its eloquence sounded a cord within the hearts and minds of people to whom he spoke, suddenly afraid even to believe it was possible, folks began saying to each other, "Is it possible; can it be? Does he really have a chance?"

On August 27, 2008, he became the nominee of the Democratic Party for the 2008 Presidential election – exactly 45 years to the day from the March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King's historical "I Have a Dream" speech.

On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama became the first African American to be elected President of the United States, sparking many celebrations in the United States and abroad.

On January 20, 2009, Barack Obama became the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and the leader of the Western world.