



Mrs. Rosa Parks

Thoughts on Courage for the Campaign of 2010

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Where is your *Passion*?

Where is your *Courage*?

Where is your *Outrage* at irrational prejudice and government-sanctioned discrimination?

Here in the State of Utah, we have *NO* second-class citizens.

Rosa Louise McCauley Parks did not wake up on the morning of Dec. 1, 1955, and say to herself, “Before this day is over, I will become a role model for future generations and an international symbol of resistance to prejudice and discrimination in a racially segregated community.” She just went to work as usual. The rest is, as we say, history.

We believe that all women and men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Mrs. Parks lived in a time and place where the politically powerful majority paid lip service to the principles of fairness and equality on which our constitutional republic was founded.

We have a similar situation in the State of Utah today. Many details obviously are different, but the irrational prejudice and government-sanctioned discrimination of a two-class society are *exactly the same*.

Here is the situation in Utah in 2010. “Mrs. Parks, symbolically representing all of Utah’s second-class citizens, the public bus service is for first-class citizens only. Not only are you prohibited from riding the bus, you are not allowed to use any ‘substantially equivalent’ form of public transportation. This discriminatory law is a part of our state constitution,* so don’t bother to ask your state legislators for redress of your grievances,”

* Article I, Section 29 (a.k.a. Utah Constitutional Amendment 3)

except of course that we aren't talking about public transportation—we are talking about a collection of purely secular benefits, protections, and responsibilities granted by our government to a law-abiding, tax-paying adult and the person she or he loves.

We are talking about marriage equality.

The common English-language word 'marriage' means different things to different people. Some people think about marriage from a deeply religious point of view. Other people do not.

We use the word 'vegetable' as the collective term for delicious, healthful food like carrots, celery, and broccoli.

We use the word 'pet' as the collective term for dogs, cats, and similar companion animals.

In the context of our laws and government, the word 'marriage' is the collective term for a set of secular benefits, protections, and responsibilities.

Do individuals go to a religious leader to obtain a driver's license? No, they go to a government office. A driver's license is a completely secular benefit of citizenship.

Do individuals go to a religious leader to obtain a marriage certificate? No, they go to a government office. A government-issued marriage certificate is a completely secular benefit of citizenship.

Individuals are welcome to their personal beliefs about religious ceremonies, the historical significance of the marriage contract, the religious aspects of a marriage relationship, etc. Nevertheless, in the context of our secular laws and modern, secular government, the benefits, protections, and responsibilities of marriage are absolutely independent of any specific religious belief. In fact, the protections of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article I, Section 4, of the Utah State Constitution prohibit our government from favoring one religion (or one religious point of view) over another.

Religious couples do not get more hospital visits than their non-religious counterparts. Individuals married in a religious ceremony do not get more tax exemptions than their similarly-situated counterparts who were married in a civil ceremony by a civic leader. The *secular* benefits, protections, and responsibilities of a government-issued marriage certificate given to a deeply religious individual are *exactly the same* as those given to an individual with no particular religious belief.

Some religious individuals are deeply distressed at the idea that their special word might be used on a secular, government-issued piece of paper given to a same-gender couple. Instead of changing the word,

members of the anti-equality faction have created a two-class society: A first-class citizen can fill out a short form, pay a small fee, participate in a brief ceremony (religious or non-religious as may be her or his preference), and receive a government-issued piece of paper that instantly provides financial benefits and emotional support to the person she or he loves.

What do second-class citizens get? Contempt and threats of legislative retaliation from their elected leaders.

Using a completely illogical, circular argument, some individuals object to giving a 'marriage' certificate to a same-gender couple, saying that the relationship between individuals of the same gender isn't a 'marriage.' Personally, I do not care what words are used on the government-issued certificate, so long as all the certificates are exactly the same. We do not have separate drinking fountains based on sexual preference. Similarly, we must not have separate government-issued certificates. "Separate but equal" is never equal.

Where is your *Passion*?

Marriage equality is not a "gay and lesbian" issue. Marriage equality is an "unalienable Right [to] Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" issue.

In a televised speech on June 11, 1963, President John F. Kennedy said,

“This Nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds. It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal, and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened. . . .

“The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated.”

Where is your *Courage*?

In 1955, courageous individuals, regardless of skin color, joined Mrs. Parks and her peers to protest the inequality of racial segregation. Welcome to the Twenty-First Century. Similar forms of irrational prejudice and government-sanctioned discrimination can be found in Utah today. Do you have the courage to stand up for liberty and full secular equality for all law-abiding, tax-paying adult citizens? Do you have the courage to tell your neighbor, “My point of view might not be popular, but here in Utah we have *NO* second-class citizens”?

Where is your *Outrage* that the Utah State Constitution creates a two-class society? First-class citizens can enjoy the benefits and protections we

currently associate with the common English-language word 'marriage.'
Second-class citizens get nothing.

Mrs. Parks said,

"I would like to be known as a person who is concerned about
freedom and equality and justice and prosperity for all people."

In the campaign of 2010, will you have the courage to say the same?