Women were detrimental to the success of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, but have mostly received only scant attention. Some of them will be introduced on this handout. Many others (including white women who fought for civil rights) will unfortunately have to be left out.

**Rosa Louise McCauley Parks** "The mother of the freedom movement"¹ *1913 † 2005

**1913** Born in Tuskegee, AL, to James (carpenter) and Leona (teacher) McCauley

**1925** Attends Montgomery Industrial School for Girls, Booker T. Washington High School and the laboratory school at Alabama State Teachers College for Negroes → drops out after 10th grade for family reasons (went back to school for her high school degree in 1933)

**1926** Joins the African Methodist Episcopal Church which would remain an important part of her life

**1932** Marries Raymond Parks, a Montgomery barber

**1944** Starts to work at integrated Maxwell Field Air Base

**1943** Joins NAACP² becoming secretary (in 1949 Youth Group Advisor), and the Montgomery Voters League

**1955** Attends workshops at Highlander Folk School (HFS) in Monteagle, Tennessee

**1955** Is placed in police custody after having refused give up her seat to a white man in a bus. This set in motion the Montgomery Bus Boycott, propelling young Martin Luther King Jr. to national fame

**1956** Looses her job and receives death threats → moves to Detroit with her husband in 1957

**1965** Staff assistant in the Detroit office of U.S. Representative John Ceyers; retires in 1988

**1977** Founds the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development (still active today)

**2005** After her death at 92 her casket is placed at the U.S. Capitols’s rotunda for 2 days; flags flown half-staff

**Selected Awards and Honors:** Martin Luther King Jr. Award (1980); Presidential Medal of Freedom (1996); Congressional Gold Medal (1999); Rosa Parks Library and Museum (2000); Statue at National Statuary Hall (2005)

**Jo Ann Gibson Robinson** *1912 † 1992

**1912** Robinson is born as the youngest of twelve children in Culloden, GA

**1934** Graduates from Fort Valley State College to become a teacher, marries Wilbur Robinson

**1949** Receives an M.A. in English from Atlanta University and works on a doctoral program

**1949** Moves to Montgomery, AL to work at English Department of Alabama State College

**1950** Joins Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and the Women’s Political Council (WPC; founded in 1946 by Mary Fair Burks) becoming its president in 1951

**1955** Initiates and sustains the Montgomery Bus Boycott with the WPC

**1960** Resigns from teaching post at Alabama State College, moves to Louisiana to teach

**1961** Moves to Los Angeles to teach at public schools; retires in 1976

**1992** Dies at 79; has been involved in several women’s organizations in her later years

**Septima Poinsette Clark** *1898 † 1987

**1908** Born to Peter (born a slave) and Victoria (raised in Haiti) Poinsette in Charleston, SC

**1916** Graduates from Avery Institute in Charleston, takes state examination for teachers

**1919** Becomes teacher at Avery Institute, joins the NAACP

**1920** Marries Nerie Clark (sailor), move to Dayton, OH with their two children (one dies)

**1925** Nerie dies, Clark moves to Columbia, SC where she remains until 1947

**1935** Sends her son to live with his grandparents for financial reasons

**1937** Enrolls at Atlanta University (taking a class by W.E.B. Du Bois) and Columbia University

**1942** Receives a B.A. from Benedict College and an M.A. from Hampton Institute (1945)

**1947** Works with Charleston’s YWCA⁶, attends workshops at HFS, serves as membership chair of NAACP

**1956** Fired as teacher due to affiliation with civil rights → recruited as director of workshops at HFS

**1961** Becomes the SCLC’s⁷ Director of Education and Training (recruited by Martin Luther King Jr.)

**1971** Leaves SCLC but remains active in civil rights

**1975** Elected member of the Charleston School Board (that had fired her in 1956)

**1979** Awarded the Living Legacy Award by Jimmy Carter

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² National Association for the Advancement of Colored People


⁵ http://talesfromthelaboratory.typepad.com/.a/6a00d341c62a953ef013352000a97d8800wi (accessed September 1, 2011).

⁶ Young Women’s Christian Association

⁷ Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Ella Josephine Baker  “My theory is, strong people don’t need strong leaders.” *1903 † 1986

1903  Born in Norfolk, VA, to Georgianna (teacher & church worker) and Blake (waiter) Baker
1927  Graduates from Shaw University in Raleigh, NC; moves to New York City to work for NAACP’s newspaper The Crisis and the Negro National News
1930  Helps form Young Negroes Cooperative League, becomes National Director
1935  Director of the Works Progress Administration’s Consumer Education Project (New Deal Program)
1938  Field organizer with NAACP, travels all over the South organizing new chapters
1942  Assistant Field Secretary and National Director of Branches (1943) of the NAACP
1946  Resigns as National Director of Branches, becomes councilor of youth program and president of New York branch of NAACP, works with National Urban League (NUL)
1954  Founds In Friendship with Bayard Rustin and Stanley Levison
1958  Helps to found the SCLC, becomes Interim Executive Director, creates and edits its newsletter THE CRUSADE
1960  Organizes the SCLC’s ‘Crusade for Citizenship’
1962  Helps to found SNCC, leaves SCLC to work for SNCC
1966  Works with Southern Conference Education Fund until 1967
1986  Until her death she remained an activist, e.g. fighting for Angela Davis and against Apartheid

Afro-German activism started off in the 1980s with the so-called Neue Schwarze Bewegung (New Black Movement). Local initiatives were founded under the name of Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (Initiative Black Germans; www.isdonline.de) to make Afro-Germans more visible and protest against Germany’s latent racism. As a result of working on a book (Farbe Bekennen, see bibliography) about Afro-German women, the association ADEFRA (Afrodeutsche Frauen/Afro-German Women; www.adefra.de) was founded in 1986 with the help of African-American activist Audre Lorde.

Selected Bibliography


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10 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee