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**"The northern promised land that wasn't: Rosa Parks and the Black Freedom Struggle in Detroit"**

**by Jeanne Theoharis**

Thesis: "Racial inequality was a national plague, not simply a southern malady."

Parks moved to Detroit in August of 1957- unable to find work, persistent death threats

        Remained politically active for half-century

        Model of racial landscape of post-war America and national civil rights struggle

Coming to Detroit

        Racism "almost as widespread as Montgomery"

        Segregated Detroit- neighborhood 100% Negro, but "visible symbol" gone

        Detroit black population 2X between 1940 and 1950

        "Trifecta" state bureaucracy, aggressive policing, white vigilantism kept black

                families in crowded neighborhood - loans, highways, municipal services

                for whites,   schools segregated, unequal, lack of city services- fire and trash

Open Housing Struggle

        banks, realtors, white hostility, violence = crowded conditions and protests

        BS of "colorblind" Detroit

    **Detroit's Great March to Freedom**- June 23, 1963 200,000 Detroiters nearly all

                black march - King and Parks lead Use *Faith in the City by Angela Dillard page 268*

Rosa Parks at Work

        No work- husband barber, she did piecework

        Volunteered for candidate John Conyers- Campaign for "jobs, justice and peace"

        King speaks and Conyers wins-

        Parks hired to work in Conyers Detroit office - daily constituent work

        Community concerns and activism-

        public housing- most important social issue- black density 2X that of whites

                Black neighborhoods compromised by urban renewal and highway

                 construction - 43,096 people displaced - 70% black

Uprising of 1967 - Use Sidney Fine's *Violence in the Model City*  for background

        Lack of black police officers, City 35% black 217 black officers, 1 inspector

        Raid of an after-hours bar celebrating return of Vietnam soldiers

        43 dead, 412 buildings burned, $45 million in damage

        Cause- racial injustice + mask of Northern innocence + white resistance= RIOTS

        Parks thought it caused by history of white resistance to civil rights demands.

        Conyers calls it a police riot.  3 young men (unarmed) killed by police

                No sanctions, no investigation, no independent hearing

        Parks resolved to promote economic and political empowerment

Making Trouble

        Spring of 1968- Grosse Pointe- MLK speech disrupted by whites.  Stressed

        national nature of America's race problem

        **GREAT QUOTE from MLK in 1960!!!**

                "The racial issue that we confront in America is not a sectional but a national problem. . . . There is a pressing need fro a liberalism in the North that is truly liberal, that

firmly believes in integration in its own community as well as in the Deep South."

A False Dichotomy!  The myth of Southern Exceptionalism when it comes to race!!

Investigate Dr. King's visit to Phoenix in 1964!!!!!