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October 26, 2005 **Her legacy is a lesson in civil rights At school, Parks is more than a memory Lancaster: Years after defeat of segregation, district honored hero with school name**

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Article Text: LANCASTER - Roosevelt Nichols' struggle four years ago was modest compared with what [Rosa Parks](#) endured. But his campaign to name a Lancaster school for the prominent [civil rights activist](#) was a significant step for this southern Dallas County suburb." She sat down so a lot of people could stand up," Mr. Nichols said Tuesday. Mrs. Parks, 92, died of natural causes Monday at her Detroit home. But Mr. Nichols' grandchildren and coming generations of students at Rosa Parks/Millbrook Elementary School will continue to learn from her legacy. Dominique McGregor, a first-grader at Rosa Parks/Millbrook, conjured up a vivid picture Tuesday of what it must have been like for Mrs. Parks' husband after she refused to relinquish her bus seat to a white man. She was released from jail a few hours after her arrest in Montgomery, Ala., on Dec. 1, 1955. But it probably seemed like an eternity, 6-year-old Dominique imagined." He [[Raymond Parks](#)] must have been worried all night. He couldn't sleep, couldn't eat. He was crying, he missed her so much, "he said." But he stood up for her, to protect her. And white people and black people became friends." Mari Ferguson, 8, wrote with her classmates to Mrs. Parks last year and received a "sweet letter" in response." She fought for us," she said. "Now we can go to school together, ride the bus together. But I think it was hard for her." LaKyia White, 9, said she has studied Mrs. Parks' brave stand at home and at school." She didn't want to go to jail. But she went through with it because she wanted to change the law," she said. Parks' defiance ignited the [civil rights movement](#) that is still being felt in Lancaster today. Alice Powell, who teaches pre-kindergarten students at Rosa Parks/Millbrook, was one of the first blacks in 1965 to attend Lancaster High School. She grew up in the all-black neighborhood of Rocky Crest. The community was close-knit, but the elementary school was underfunded, and high school students had to be bused to black schools in other towns." It was overwhelming! In at first," she said of that first year of integration. "But it was a good feeling that we were able to join the white children, that we were treated equally." She never could have done what Rosa Parks did, Ms. Powell said. "She had courage. When we were growing up, if they said we couldn't do it, we didn't," she said. Ms. Powell still savors the first time she walked through the front door of the local diner to get a hamburger, instead of through the back door reserved for blacks - "Wow!" Few blacks lived in [Lancaster](#) in the mid-'60s. Three decades later, when Mr. Nichols started pushing for a [Rosa Parks school](#), Lancaster had changed. The classrooms were predominantly black, but most of the teachers and administrators were white, said Mr. Nichols, 51. "There was nothing in the [city of Lancaster](#) named to honor any African-American person, not a street, not anything," he said. "Young people, they needed pride and dignity, something to stand up and fight for." Mr. Nichols, who owns a security company, said he received Mrs. Parks' blessing

for the project when they met briefly at a Detroit [civil rights museum](#). But some in Lancaster opposed the change. Teri Wilson, Millbrook's principal at the time, said she supported Mr. Nichols' effort to honor Mrs. Parks. "Her contributions are massive," she said. In a compromise, the school retained part of its old name and became Rosa Parks/Millbrook. But school board members said they couldn't afford to update the building sign, so Mr. Nichols raised the \$3,500 to pay for new lettering. He also asked the city to change its sign near the school's playground, but his request was denied, Mr. Nichols said." We weren't opposed to what he was doing," said current school board president Nannette Vick. "At the time, we were having some financial difficulties." As for Mr. Nichols, the seamstress with the weary feet taught him something long ago: "If you wan! It to be something, you make a stand." E-mail [gkovach@dal! lasnews. Com](mailto:gkovach@dal!lasnews.com)

Caption:
PHOTO(S): (1-2 NATHAN HUNSINGER/Staff Photographer) 1. Ginnie Dawson, 4, leaves school near a portrait of the [civil rights](#) icon at Rosa Parks/Millbrook Elementary.2. Alice Powell, an assistant pre-kindergarten teacher at Rosa Parks/Millbrook Elementary, grew up amid segregation and was one of the first blacks to attend Lancaster High School. "She had courage," she said of Mrs. Parks. Copyright 2005 [The Dallas Morning News](#)
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