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[Keith Hamm](#)

A rich and unsung legacy comes to light in ‘The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks’

When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat for white passengers, her act of defiance sparked a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama and fueled the growing civil rights movement. But her legacy did not start and stop on that rush hour commute in 1955.

As a young girl, Parks joined her grandfather on the front porch to guard the family home against marching Klansmen. In the early 1940s, she joined the League of Women Voters and the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP. In 1944, she co-founded the Committee for Equal Justice for the Rights of Mrs. Recy Taylor to help Black women recover from interracial violence and rape. In the 1960s, she supported the Black Power movement. Above and beyond that fateful bus ride, the list goes on.

An award-winning 2022 documentary is now helping to reshape the narrative of Parks’ legacy. UC Santa Barbara’s Carsey-Wolf Center will screen “The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks” from 7–9:15 p.m., Thursday, May 11, in the Pollock Theater, followed by a discussion between the film’s co-director, Yoruba Richen, and Mireille Miller-Young, a UCSB associate professor of feminist studies. The event is free and open to the public; [reserve tickets are recommended](#).

The event will be the first screening since the film won a Peabody Award in the documentary category “for giving viewers a complex account of this courageous American and her marvelous American story of Black resistance and movement for social and racial justice,” according to the Peabody site.

“The narrow narrative of her doing something on that one day really has to be dismissed, and that’s what we set out to do in this film,” Richen said recently. Richen and co-director Johanna Hamilton were originally inspired by Jeanne Theoharis’ 2013 book of the same name, the first full-length biography about Parks.

While reading the book, “I was amazed about all that I didn’t know,” Richen said. “I love stories that reshape the narrative. That’s why I got into this work to begin with.”

“The film provides depth to one of the most significant actors in the civil rights movement who was, unfortunately, due to being a Black woman, sidelined and silenced among the overwhelmingly male leadership,” Miller-Young said. “Using rare footage and archives from over decades of her life, Richen and Hamilton allow Rosa Parks to speak for herself, and the power of Parks’s voice is incomparable.”

Featured on the [CWC Docs series](#), the film is also part of the center’s Black Hollywood focus curated by Miller-Young. The programming centers the stories of Black creators and technicians with academic research to address a range of issues in the entertainment industry, from labor practices and diversity to race and gender identity.

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