

“What gives you motivation?” is a question I’ve been asked many times. Some people say it is the want for something; a good grade, a paycheck, or free time. These motivations are great, but I never really related to them. I know I’m a determined person, but I couldn’t pinpoint my exact driving factor. It was only after this self-reflection that I realized that my motivation isn’t the want for something, but the obligation to be something: a leader. I’m motivated because leaders like Rosa Parks fought for me to have the opportunities that I do, which gives me the responsibility of motivating my peers to be the best leaders they can be.

The best way we can continue to redress our society is through collaboration, receptiveness, and accountability. In the different spaces I’ve been in, race and oppression has understandably been a tough subject to talk about sometimes. However, we cannot hush talking about injustice and expect progression. In order for us to continue moving forward, the spaces in our community need to be diverse and ready to learn. This way people can hear new perspectives, gain understanding, and achieve enlightenment over ignorance.

In fact, it starts from within the black community. If we want to collaborate with others to have these discussions, we need to become advocates ourselves. I encourage myself and others to transition from being just an ally to being an advocate, that means we speak up for ourselves and others when facing racial adversity. That’s easier said than done and sometimes you’re advocating alone. But in these moments we must remember those who came before us who might have been speaking -or sitting alone, but were doing the right thing for the benefit of an entire group of people. When we remain advocates alone we are more resilient together!

The bravery of Rosa Parks is something that inspires me in my personal life. A few weeks ago I became class president, my main goal being to connect with the students at my school who feel unheard. I want every student to have what they need to succeed and achieve a

school culture of equity. A quote from Rosa Parks sticks with me: “Memories of our lives, of our works and our deeds will continue in others.” I look back on this whenever I need reminding of the leader I want to be. It reminds me to set a good example for my peers. Accordingly, Rosa Parks and other past leaders' demonstration of leadership is a framework for the next generation of change-makers.

Rosa Parks helped fight racial injustice and inspired an entire nation. We must carry this gratitude for our past champions in our daily lives, and continue to honor them with our actions and the way we interact with our community. Remember, the work isn't done yet and it's our job to carry on Rosa Parks' legacy by being advocates and using this momentum to educate and inspire others. Although Rosa Parks is no longer with us, I know that when I am a resilient leader that encourages advocacy and collaboration, I am helping motivate people like Rosa Parks' leadership motivated me.