



Paul Parks

Paul Parks was born May 7, 1923 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The family home had no running water, heat or electricity. As a child, he was not particularly strong, having struggled with malnutrition as an infant. He grew up in a proud family. His mother, Hazel, introduced him to politics early in his life and told him when he was old enough that it was his obligation to vote.

Dr. Parks became intrigued with engineering when he was eight years old. His parents, Hazel and Cleab Parks, sent all of their children to college and in 1941 he entered Purdue University, as one of only eight black men in engineering. He was drafted into the army and assigned to a combat engineering unit in his sophomore year of college. He was a first sergeant with the 365th Engineer Regiment of the First Army, and landed at Omaha Beach. He participated in several military campaigns across Western Europe, and after V-E Day was transferred to the South Pacific, where he took part in the liberation of the Philippines. He returned to Purdue University at the end of the war. His postwar career as an engineer took him to various parts of the United States, as well as to several countries abroad. He completed advanced graduate work and obtained a doctorate in engineering from Northeastern University in Boston.

Dr. Parks was a longtime activist in Boston's black community and served as Massachusetts State Secretary of Education and the first black Chairman of the Boston School Committee. As a leader of the Boston chapter of the NAACP, he advocated in the mid 1960's for desegregation, and then served as Vice President of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunities (METCO).

After leaving public office he continued to work to improve the quality of life for all people by developing affordable homes and serving on numerous boards and advisory committees. Dr. Parks was an active member of Twelfth Baptist Church and transitioned on July 31, 2009.