

Rosa Parks

Monday a federal judge ordered lawyers for the civil rights icon Rosa Parks to release records about her mental state that may determine whether she approved of lawsuits over a hip-hop song that uses her name.

U.S. District Court Judge George Steeh ruled that some information about the 91-year-old Parks' health - especially her dementia - should not be shielded by a protective order. The order has kept the bulk of Parks' medical records private.

Former Detroit mayor Dennis Archer, the lawyer who was appointed guardian of Parks' interests, argued against releasing the information.

"I took the position that the medical history was private and not worthy of being exposed to the public," he said.

The Detroit Free Press had argued that making the information public would help determine whether a 1999 lawsuit against record company BMG and the rap/hip-hop duo OutKast on her behalf was filed in good faith.

The lawsuit alleged defamation and trademark infringement because Parks' name was used without her permission in the song title "Rosa Parks." The chorus is: "Ah-ha, hush that fuss. Everybody move to the back of the bus."

A judge dismissed OutKast from the suit and Parks' lawyers filed a second suit in August, naming BMG and two of its units, Arista and LaFace Records.

After the lawsuit was filed, some of Parks' relatives began questioning Parks' well-being, her caretakers and the lawyer who filed the suit. Steeh appointed Archer to be the guardian of her affairs.

Parks was 42 years old in 1955 when she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Ala., bus, triggering a historic 381-day bus boycott organized by a young Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Rosa Parks Case Gets 'Orders

Written by Robert ID692

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