

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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Commission Recognizes the Contributions of Coretta Scott King *The Wife of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Passes*

WASHINGTON DC –The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights remembered the life and work of Coretta Scott King, widow of slain civil rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who died on January 31 while a patient at Hospital Santa Monica in Rosarito Beach, Mexico.

Following her marriage to Dr. King on June 18, 1953, and despite devoting the majority of her time to raising their four children, Yolanda Denise, Martin III, Dexter Scott, and Bernice Albertine, Mrs. King became involved in her husband's efforts as a leader of the civil rights movement. Among her contributions, Mrs. King applied her training in music at Antioch College in Ohio and the New England Conservatory of Music in Massachusetts, in a series of Freedom Concerts that raised funds for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of which Dr. King served as first president.

After Dr. King's assassination on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Mrs. King turned her energy and attention to the creation of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta. Serving as its founding president, chair, and chief executive officer from 1968 to 1995, Mrs. King oversaw the training of tens of thousands of people in Dr. King's philosophy and methods. In 1995, the Center named Dexter Scott King chairman, president, and chief executive officer; in January 2004, Mrs. King became interim chair, and Martin III succeeded his brother as president and chief executive officer. Mrs. King led the efforts to have her husband's birthday recognized as a federal holiday and guided its inaugural celebration in January 1986. She was also the first woman to deliver the Class Day address at Harvard University and preach at a statutory service at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. During her life, she became an international figure in her own right, associated with peace and anti-poverty aims.

In remembering Mrs. King, Gerald A. Reynolds, Chairman of the Commission said: "The courage, dedication, and accomplishments of Mrs. King will forever serve as a beacon to others, and a measure of human ideals."

Mrs. King was born and raised in Marion, Alabama, where she was valedictorian of her high school class in 1945. Upon graduating from Antioch College with a degree in music and education, she received a scholarship to study violin and voice at the New England Conservatory of Music.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chairman Abigail Thernstrom, and Commissioners Jennifer C. Braceras, Peter N. Kirsanow, Arlan Melendez, Ashley L. Taylor, and Michael Yaki. Kenneth L. Marcus is Staff Director. Commission meetings are open to the media and general public.

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