

BLACK HISTORY MONTH and the American Experience

Struggle for Justice Echoed in King Funeral

Mourners say goodbye to First Lady of Civil Rights

(AP)—Four U.S. presidents joined more than 10,000 mourners Tuesday in saying goodbye to Coretta Scott King, praised by President Bush as "one of the most admired Americans of our time."

"I've come today to offer the sympathy of our entire nation at the passing of a woman who worked to make our nation whole," President Bush told King's four children and the crowd that filled New Birth Missionary Baptist Church for the funeral of the widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"Coretta Scott King not only secured her husband's legacy, she built her own," Bush said. "Having loved a leader, she became a leader, and when she spoke, Americans listened closely."

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin stressed that King spoke out, not just against racism, but about "the senselessness of war and the solutions for poverty."

"She sang for liberation, she sang for those who had no earthly reason to sing a song," with a voice that was heard "from the tintop roofs of Soweto to the bomb shelters of Baghdad," Franklin said.

Former President Carter echoed that theme of a peaceful struggle for justice in a service that grew increasingly political as other leaders questioned what the Bush administration was doing to continue the Kings' dream.

The Rev. Joseph Lowery, who co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Martin Luther



Martin Luther King III (far left) Yolanda King (center) and Dexter Scott King (far right) holds hand with other members of the King family during funeral services for Coretta Scott King Tuesday in Lithonia, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta. (AP photo)



Former President Bill Clinton arrives at the Coretta Scott King funeral ceremony at the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church. (AP photo)

King Jr., spoke directly to the current administration's foreign and domestic policies.

"Our marvelous presidents and governors come to mourn and praise ... but in the morning will words become deeds that meet need?" Lowery asked.

"For war, billions more, but no more for the poor," he said, in a take-off of a lyric from Stevie Wonder's song "A Time to Love," which drew a roaring standing ovation. The comments drew head shakes from Bush and his father as they sat behind the pulpit.

Coretta Scott King, who carried on her husband's dream of equality for nearly 40 years after his death, died Jan. 30 at the age of 78 after battling ovarian cancer and the effects of a

stroke.

Former Presidents Clinton and Bush, poet Maya Angelou and the Kings' children were also among the more than three dozen speakers during the funeral.

"I don't want us to forget that there's a woman in there, not a symbol," Clinton said, standing behind King's flower-covered casket. "A real woman who lived and breathed and got angry and got hurt and had dreams and disappointments."

Angelou spoke of King as a sister with whom she shared her pain and laughter.

"Those of us who have gathered here, ... we owe something from this minute on, so this gathering is not just another footnote on the pages of history," Angelou said.

"I mean to say I want to see a better world. I mean to say I want to see some peace somewhere," she said to roaring applause.

Outside the suburban church Tuesday morning, the lines to get into the funeral and to attend the final viewing of King's body started forming before 3 a.m.

"There's one word to describe going to go see Coretta - historic. It's good to finally see her at peace," said Robert Jackson, a 34-year-old financial consultant from Atlanta whose 10-year-old daughter, Ebony, persuaded him to take her to the church.

More than 160,000 mourners had waited in long lines to pay their respects at public viewings since King's body was returned to Georgia - on Monday at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where her husband preached in the 1960s, at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church on Tuesday morning, and during the weekend at the Georgia Capitol, where King became the first woman and the first black person to lie in honor there.

The funeral followed a day of

continued ▼ on page A6

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