

Martin Luther King's Unfinished Work Lauded

Peace, racial equality still elude

(AP) -- From the pulpit of the church where Martin Luther King Jr. once was pastor, Atlanta's mayor reminded the congregation Monday that his work for peace and justice remains unfinished.

Mayor Shirley Franklin admonished congregants at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church not to pay tribute to King's dream on his birthday, observed as a national holiday Monday, and then contradict it the next.

"Millions can't find jobs, have no health insurance and struggle to make ends meet, working minimum wage jobs. What's going on?" she said, repeating a refrain from soul singer Marvin Gaye.

"Thousands of black and Latino students drop out of high school believing education

will not matter and statistics say it doesn't because they can't find jobs ... What's going on?"

Earlier in the service, Georgia's newly elected congressman, Rep. Hank Johnson, paid tribute to King's children and their late mother, Coretta Scott King, who died nearly a year ago.

"On this day we honor their sacrifice and commitment, and we must carry on their work," said Johnson, a Democrat. "Today as we salute Dr. King, we also lift up the life and work of Mrs. King who left us last year."

In a ceremony Sunday at Ebenezer Baptist Church, King's eldest daughter evoked the civil rights movement while reminding those remembering her parents that America has not yet reached the promised land of peace and racial equality.

"We must keep reaching across the table and, in the tradition of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, feed each other," Yolanda King said Sunday during a presenta-



tion that was part motivational speech, part drama.

This year's holiday comes on the day King would have turned 78. King was assassinated while standing on the balcony of a hotel in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968. His confessed killer, James Earl Ray, was arrested two months later in London.

Coretta Scott King died last year on Jan. 31 at age 78. An activist in her own right, she also fought to shape and preserve her husband's legacy after his death, and shortly after his death she founded what would become the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change.

Gospel singer Byron Cage performs during a service to mark the 78th birthday of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., as King's nephew, Isaac Newton Farris, looks on. (AP photo)

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Obama Moves Toward Bid With presidential exploratory committee

(AP) -- Democratic Sen. Barack Obama on Tuesday took the initial step in a presidential bid that could make him the nation's first black to occupy the White House.

Obama filed papers creating a presidential exploratory committee, a move he announced on his Web site. He said he would announce more about his plans in his home state of Illinois on Feb. 10.

"I certainly didn't expect to find myself in this position a year ago," Obama said in a video posting. "I've been struck by how hungry we all are for a different kind of politics. So I've spent some time thinking about how I could best advance the cause of change and progress that we so desperately need."

Obama, a 45-year-old with little more than two years into his Senate term, is the most inexperienced candidate considering a run for the Democratic nomination. He quickly rose to national prominence, beginning with his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention and his election to the Senate that year, but still is an unknown quantity to many voters.

Two best-selling autobiographies — "The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream" and "Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance" — have helped fill in the

gaps but have still only touched a fraction of the public.

Nonetheless, he ranks as a top contender. His appeal on the stump, his unique background, his opposition to the Iraq war and the fact that he is a fresh face set him apart in a competitive race that also is expected to include front-runner Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New

York. an Indonesian student and the family moved to Jakarta. Obama returned to Hawaii when he was 10 to live with his maternal grandparents.

Obama is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he was the first African-American elected editor of the Harvard Law Review. He settled in Chicago, where he joined a law firm and taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago's Law School. He also helped local churches establish job training programs for residents of poor neighborhoods and organized a major voter registration drive in the 1992 election.

While working at the corporate law firm Sidley Austin in the summer of 1989, Obama met Michelle Robinson, then an associate attorney at the firm. They married in 1992, and have two daughters, Malia and Sasha.

In 1996, he was elected to the Illinois state Senate, where he earned a reputation as a consensus-building Democrat who was strongly liberal on social and economic issues. He backed gay rights, abortion rights, gun control, universal health care and tax breaks for the poor, but set himself apart from others by working with opponents to resolve policy disagreements and refusing to become a rubber stamp for his allies.



U.S. Sen Barack Obama looks out over the congregation of St. Mark Cathedral before speaking at a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. birthday celebration in Harvey, Ill., Monday. (AP photo)



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EDITOR: Michael Leighton
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington
CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt
OFFICE MANAGER: Kathy Linder
REPORTER: Sarah Blount

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