

Coretta King: Rights Leader In Own Right

ATLANTA — Coretta Scott King sometimes prefaces a response to a question addressed to her with "Martin used to say..." but none who know her doubt that she is a leader in her own right.

She arrived late and out of breath for an interview at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change, in a modest wood-frame building next to the home where her late husband was born.

Hangers-on and visitors to the center, which Coretta King runs, vied to have a word with her. It is often like that for the widow of the martyred civil rights leader.

There was a greeting and a handshake for all,

even a brief embrace and sisterly kiss for a favored few, but King is a woman in a hurry.

Coretta King, who supported President Carter for reelection, does not intend to permit the election of a Republican President and a congressional swing to the right slow her in the pursuit of her goals.

"I was extremely apprehensive during the campaign, but once Gov. Reagan won we all began to accept it and work with it," she said, sitting on the edge of the chair behind her desk. "We must try to find some points of agreement."

Nervously watching the flashing lights on her desk phone, she spoke quickly but often stopped to gather her thoughts.

"The Republicans believe there must be more involvement in joblessness by the private sector," she said. (Her organization is deeply involved in the problems of unemployment.)

"We favor this, too," she said. "If you take jobs from the public sector, you have to replace them with jobs in the private sector."

"Martin used to say that there has to be a commitment on the part of the federal govern-

ment," she said, "but I know now the government can't do it all. The private sector must help."

King, whose husband was slain by a sniper's bullet in Memphis in 1968, believes that unemployment contributes to racial violence such as the recent rioting in Miami and Chattanooga.

"If there is a lack of social programs and people don't have jobs, we are only setting the stage for more Miamis," she said. "Martin used to say, 'Violence is the language of the unheard'."

King believes that those who are unheard include poor whites. "This includes the Ku Klux Klan," she said. "They feel alienated, too. Some whites feel threatened when more jobs become available to blacks."

Institutionalized Change
"Institutionalized change is necessary," said King, who works with sociologists and is comfortable with their rhetoric. "Martin helped to bring about institutionalized change."

(See Rights Page 20)

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