

MLK kin honors parents

ATLANTA (AP) - The eldest daughter of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King 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 at Ebenezer Baptist Church during a presentation that was part motivational speech, part drama.

King, 51, spoke a day before Monday's celebration of the civil rights leader's birthday, the first since the death last year of Coretta Scott King.

Yolanda King told The Associated Press the holiday provides an opportunity for everyone to live her father's dream, and that she has her mother's example to follow.

"I connected with her spirit so strongly," she said when asked how she is coping with her mother's death.

"I am in direct contact with her spirit, and that has given me so much peace and so much strength."

A stage and television actress performed a series of scenes that told stories including a girl's first ride on a desegregated bus and a college student's recollection of the 1963 desegregation of Birmingham, Ala.

After the performance — attended by members of the extended family and Yolanda's sister, Rev. Bernice King — Yolanda



Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, left, speaks with Yolanda King, center, and her brother Dexter King, at the Salute to Greatness, on Saturday in Atlanta. Guests applauded for the widow of Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta, as she was honored posthumously for human rights contributions and work to preserve her husband's legacy after his assassination.

King and her aunt, Christine King Farris, signed copies of their books, and Bernice King posed for photographs with attendees.

On Monday, Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King preached from 1960 to 1968, was to be the venue for more remembrances and speeches. The keynote speaker was to be Dr. Otis Moss Sr., pastor of Olivet Institutional Baptist Church.

In West Columbia, S.C., several hundred people gathered Monday morning for a breakfast prayer service honoring King.

Rev. Brenda Kneece, 45, executive minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, said King set the standard for sacrifice and vision.

"The vision became even more powerful because he understood the risks he was taking," Kneece said.

"It's very important for our children to know that his

sacrifice didn't win the war. We still have to keep at it."

In New York, rallies, speeches and volunteer efforts were to mark the King holiday, some invoking the Iraq War, the conflict in Sudan and local tensions surrounding the fatal police shooting of a Black groom.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Rev. Al Sharpton and Gov. Eliot Spitzer were expected to attend a forum, joining Nicole Paultre-Bell, whose fiancé was killed by police in a barrage of 50 bullets in November.

The Rev. Herbert Daughtry, the national minister of the House of the Lord Churches, said he would lead an act of civil disobedience outside the Sudan Mission in New York.

New Yorkers also planned to volunteer on the holiday in a spirit of service, such as knitting blankets for babies born to mothers with HIV/

AIDS, painting murals, building homes, revitalizing their community and making fleece scarves for the homeless.

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.

Shortly after his death, she founded what would become the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. For years, she worked to establish Jan. 15 as a federal holiday, which became a reality in 1986.

"When you see the commitment my parents exhibited ...it was not for fame or fortune," Yolanda King said.

"The best sermons are those that are lived."

Biden wants flag removed

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) - Sen. Joseph Biden said Monday he would vote to keep the Confederate flag off South Carolina's Statehouse grounds, a location that prompted the NAACP's on-going boycott of the state.

"If I were a state legislator, I'd vote for it to move off the grounds out of the state," the Delaware senator and Democratic presidential hopeful said before the civil rights group held a march and rally at the Statehouse here.

More than six years after the Confederate flag was taken down from the Capitol dome, its location in front of the Statehouse remains an issue at the heart of events

celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy.

Jim Hanks stood across from the Statehouse with about 35 Confederate flag supporters. "We love this flag. We love our heritage," said Hanks, of Lexington.

Some carried signs saying: "South Carolina does not want Chris Dodd," referring to the Connecticut senator who, along with Biden, attended the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People rally at the Statehouse.

Hanks said that Dodd, Biden and other Democrats running for president "would probably say most anything if it would get them votes."

In 2000, as the NAACP began its South Carolina tourism boycott, the flag was flying on the Capitol dome and in House and Senate chambers. Legislators agreed to take the flag down that year, but raised the banner outside the Statehouse beside a Confederate soldiers monument.

In November, Biden joked about South Carolina's Confederate past at a Rotary Club meeting in Columbia after organizers said their Christmas party at the Department of Archives and History would include a chance to see the state's original copy of the Articles

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Utah politicians work on holiday

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) - Monday was a Utah state holiday and a federal holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr. — except for the state's legislators, who reported to work that same day every year to open their annual session.

Civil rights leaders say the state — which doesn't have a single Black legislator — should be ashamed of itself.

"They really should be embarrassed," said Jeanetta Williams, president of the Salt Lake branch of the NAACP. "It does frustrate me — very much."

Lawmakers insist it's out of their hands because the Utah Constitution requires them to convene on the third Monday in January, the same day designated in 2001 as the state holiday honoring the slain civil rights leader.

"If the constitution changes every time another holiday is created it is cumbersome. It isn't simply a matter of approving it on the Hill, it has to go to the people," said Senate Majority Assistant Whip Sheldon Killpack, a Republican.

The constitution has been changed before, though. Voters did it a few months ago so businesses wouldn't have to pay property taxes on things like office furniture.

Williams believes it's time for Utah, the last state in the nation to establish a King holiday, to change its constitution again.

"We would like to see the legislative session begin on that Tuesday. It's just one day off," Williams said.

"I don't see a reason why it could not happen, but for some reason they just don't want to do it."

Senate President John Valentine said he believes the Legislature is honoring King by meeting on his holiday, since the first day of the session is largely ceremonial and includes speakers who address King's legacy.

"I've always felt good about the fact we honored Dr. King at that time hearing about his efforts. It provides an overview for the attitude for the Legislature to take into its session. Personally, it would be very disappointing if we lost that," said Valentine, also a Republican.

It would be more meaningful if the Legislature used the day to pass civil rights and other legislation that benefit the poor and needy, said the Rev. France Davis of Calvary Baptist Church.

"If we're not going to get that, why just do the show?" Davis asked.

State Rep. Dave Hansen agrees. The Republican hoped to get legislation passed Monday that would honor Juneteenth Day, which marks the date of June 19, 1865, when slaves in Texas learned they had been freed by the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. Under his measure, the anniversary would be recognized on the third Saturday in June.

"To me, I think it would be fitting," Hansen said. (See Holiday, Page 4)

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