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Contact: Rafael McDonnell
(940) 565-4835
Metro (817) 267-0651
RMcDonnell@unt.edu

Coretta King's life continues to touch UNT campus, as world mourns her death

DENTON (UNT), Texas — Coretta Scott King's death at the age of 78 leaves a worldwide legacy of activism for peace and civil rights. She perpetuated her husband Martin Luther King's quest while introducing his message to new generations. One of her last public appearances, last year at The University of North Texas, continues to touch people.

Her final appearance in North Texas came in February 2005, when she spoke at UNT's annual Equity and Diversity conference. King also received an honorary degree from the university. **Dr. Dan Emenheiser**, director of diversity education for UNT's Division of Equity and Diversity says King expressed admiration with both the conference and the university.

"From the time that she arrived here, she was so gracious and generous with her time. She valued being on the campus, and her remarks to the conference were right on target with our theme," Emenheiser says.

Emenheiser says King was especially pleased that her daughter Yolanda would be speaking at this year's conference, set for Feb. 24 (Friday).

UNT regent Marjorie Craft was among the university officials who spent time with King during her campus visit.

"I was impressed with her humility and unselfishness," Craft says. "She told us of her experiences with her husband and carrying on his work, so much of which was risky and dangerous."

Craft noted that King was supportive of the conference and the university. "She was very happy to visit UNT...it wasn't just something she did, it was something she deeply believed in" she says.

Dr. J. Todd Moye, UNT assistant professor of history and former director of the Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project for the National Park Service, says that King was an important American figure in her own right.

"Journalist and historian Juan Williams called Mrs. King the 'African-American Jackie Kennedy' and I think he's exactly right to make the comparison. She conducted herself with such dignity in the face of a terrible personal tragedy in a way that inspired others," Moye says.

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Moye says the creation of the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change may be Coretta Scott King's biggest legacy.

“(She) raised the money and provided the vision for the Center,” Moye says. “Over the years the King Center has taught thousands of schoolchildren about the principles of nonviolence as an engine for social change and personal growth.”

Emenheiser can be reached at (940) 565-2456. Moye can be reached at (940) 565-4523.

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