

King remembered for her legacy

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pathy of our entire nation at the passing of a woman who worked to make our nation whole," he said. "... This kind and gentle woman became one of the most admired Americans of our time. She is rightly mourned, and she is deeply missed."

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), who frequently spars with President Bush on social issues, focused on his family's long-time personal relationship with the King family. Noting that Dr. King was given a four-month jail sentence during the early 1960s for a minor traffic violation, Kennedy said: "I remember my brother calling her and saying he would do whatever was necessary," he recalled. "And Robert (attorney general Robert Kennedy) called the judge, who fortunately saw the light, and Martin was released."

Rev. Joseph Lowery, who co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. King, made it clear that he would not bite his tongue because President Bush was in attendance.

"She extended Martin's message against poverty, racism and war," he said. "She deplored the terror inflicted by our smart bombs on missions way afar."

With many already applauding, Lowery turned up the heat.

"We know now there were no weapons of mass destruction over there. But Coretta knew and we knew that there are weapons of misdirection right down here," Lowery said. "Millions without health insurance. Poverty abounds. For war billions more, but no more for the poor."

Jimmy Carter, former governor of Georgia, credited the Kings with legitimizing him as a national candidate, thus making it possible for a White Southerner to be elected president in 1976.

In an indirect dig at President Bush's fervent support or warrantless wiretapping, Carter reminded the mourners of what the Kings endured: "It was difficult for them personally with the civil liberties of both husband and wife violated, and they became the targets of secret government wiretapping and other surveillance."

As evidence that the struggle for equal rights is not over, Carter said, "We only have to recall the color of those in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi." After being interrupted by sustained applause, Carter continued, "Those who were most devastated by Katrina, to know there are not yet equal opportunities for all Americans."

The funeral was one of the rare times that four present and past presidents — Bush, Carter, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton — have made a joint appearance.

The elder Bush, noted for his clumsiness, drew laugh-

ter when he said, "This may be your lucky day. I lost a page."

If this had been a presidential sweepstakes, Bill Clinton would have been declared the clear winner. He received a standing ovation before he uttered a word. And when he did speak, it was with a passion he routinely uses to connect with black audiences.

"I don't want to forget that there's a woman in there," he said, pointing to a casket adorned with flowers. "Not a symbol. But a real woman who lived and breathed, and got angry and got hurt, and

had dreams and disappointments. I don't want us to forget that."

Clinton continued, "We're here to honor a person. Fifty-four years ago, her about-to-be husband said that he was looking for a woman with

character, intelligence, personality, and beauty, and she sure fit the bill. And I have to say, when she was over 75, I thought she still fit the bill pretty good."

The audience laughed in agreement.

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