

# Yolanda King, MLK's eldest child, dies

By Erin Haines  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Yolanda Denise King, daughter and eldest child of civil rights leader the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., has died, said Steve Klein, a spokesman for the King Center.



Y. King

King died late Tuesday in Santa Monica, Calif., at age 51. One of her final public appearances was April 27 in Charlotte at "Filling Big Shoes, Ordinary Women Doing Extra Ordinary Things," a luncheon sponsored by the National Kidney Foundation.

Klein said the family did

not know the cause of death but think it might have been a heart problem.

Born on Nov. 17, 1955, in Montgomery, Ala., King was just an infant when her home was bombed during the turbulent civil rights era.

As an actress, she appeared in numerous films and even played Rosa Parks in the 1978 miniseries "King." She also appeared in "Ghosts of Mississippi." She founded a production company called Higher Ground Productions.

King was also an author and advocate for peace and nonviolence. Her death comes more than a year after the death of her mother, Coretta Scott King.

Yolanda King is survived by her sister, the Rev. Bernice A. King; two brothers, Martin Luther King III and Dexter Scott King; and

an extended family.

Arrangements would be announced later, the family said in a statement.

Yolanda King was the most visible and outspoken among the Kings' four children during activities honoring this year's Martin Luther King Day in January, the first since Coretta Scott King's death.

At her father's former Atlanta church, Ebenezer Baptist, she performed a series of one-actor skits on King Day this year 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.

She also urged the audience at Ebenezer to be a force for peace and love, and to use the King holiday each year in January to ask

tough questions about their own beliefs on prejudice.

"We must keep reaching across the table and, in the tradition of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, feed each other," King

said.

When asked then by The Associated Press how she was dealing with the loss of her mother, King responded: "I connected with her spirit so strongly. I am in

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

Herbert L. White of The Charlotte Post contributed.

## College student launches letter campaign to television networks

By Nisa Islam Muhammad

THE FINAL CALL

"Dear Ms. Lee, when I heard about a letter writing campaign to BET, I knew I had to participate because I am disgusted with images of black women in the media, particularly those provided by television and music videos. I can no longer tolerate the way women are portrayed and the disgusting way that BET perpetuates this behavior.

"I will never understand how a company that is supposed to be the voice for black people, makes them look worse than any other organization in the world. Some of the videos that are played at BET can be classified as pornographic. The lyrics to the songs, with these outrageous videos, are just as alarming. Black women are all depicted as nothing but sexual objects and their only value stemming from various parts of their bodies."

That's how the "strong letter" begins to Debra Lee, CEO of BET. Angela Boudreaux from Houston, Texas, a sophomore at Spelman College in Atlanta, started her second year of writing letters to express her disdain of the images of black women on TV.

"I started the first one last year at convocation; I was excited and passionate about doing something. I did it for two days, but only got eight letters," she told The Final Call.

What a difference a year makes. This year, convocation came in the middle of the Don Imus controversy. Imus called the Rutgers women's basketball team, "Nappy headed hos" on his radio show.

Those remarks led to his firing by CBS and MSNBC, and a nationwide conversation about those remarks, rap lyrics and the images of black women in the media.

"I created an organization called WORTH - Women Offering Representation That Heal. My faculty advisor is Dr. Tasha Stanley. She's been my personal mentor too. WORTH took over the letter writing campaign this year," Boudreaux said.

"This year it was a week-long campaign and different organizations sponsored a day to get letters signed. We've gathered over 100 letters."

WORTH is offering students a choice of three letters to sign - strong, moderate or passive.

Majdah Muhammad, a sophomore from Silver

Springs, Md., signed the moderate letter, which included the following:

"With all of the influence and power that BET has as a global network for Black entertainment, it is capable of changing how the world views black people through new, innovative, and revolutionary shows that offer a much wider range of personalities and lifestyles within the black race.

"As Black Entertainment Television, it is your responsibility to create the most comprehensive representation of Black life and entertainment. Should you choose to ignore these suggestions, you are openly turning your back on the prospect of a better Black Entertainment Television network. I hope that you will choose to do the right thing."

Muhammad told The Final Call, "I was excited when I heard about the letter writing campaign and wanted to be a part of it. I signed the letter that critiqued what they were doing, but also encouraged them to do something better."

Writing letters to BET is not the only thing the letter writing campaign is doing. They are also circulating a petition thanking TV One for their positive depiction of black women. So far, they have over 300 signatures.

"Thank you, TV One, for airing positive, multi-dimensional representations of black people to ourselves and the world! Thank you for being a network that educates and entertains. Thank you for being a network that inspires, motivates, and uplifts black America.

"Most importantly, thank you for not being like BET! As a sign of our thanks, please know that those listed below support your network because you are different! We do not support BET or networks like it, and recognize the need for more networks like you! We thank you again!"

The students at Spelman have distinguished themselves as opposing the negative images of black women in the music and media.

For two days, they participated in a town hall meeting "The Oprah Winfrey Show" had, discussing the responsibility rap music has in the negative portrayal of black women.

Benjamin Chavis, executive director of the Hip Hop Summit Action Network, was a guest on the show for the second day of the meeting, and invited the Spelman students to participate in

further discussions on this issue.

To get involved with the letter writing campaign, e-mail Boudreaux at [aboutrea@spelman.edu](mailto:aboutrea@spelman.edu).

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