



The Front Page

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Would Martin Luther King, Jr. Be Pro-Gay?

Split in Martin Luther King's own family reflects larger debate over gay marriage

ATLANTA (AP) - Martin Luther King Jr.'s youngest child lit a torch at her father's tomb last month to kick off a march advocating a ban on gay marriage, creating a strong image linking the slain civil rights icon to today's heated social debate.

But just nine months earlier, King's widow defended the rights of gays and lesbians in a speech at a New Jersey college.

King never publicly spoke on gay rights while leading the charge toward racial equality in the 1950s and '60s, but the clash over gay marriage has prompted people close to his legacy to pick sides and interpret how they believe King would stand on the issue if he were alive.

Coretta Scott King, a longtime supporter of gay rights, has often invoked her late husband's teachings while advocating tolerance and equality for homosexuals. Most recently, she denounced the proposed national constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in a speech at New Jersey's Richard Stockton College.

"Gay and lesbian people have families and their families should have legal protection, whether by marriage or civil union," she said in her March 23 address. "A constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages is a form of gay bashing and it would do nothing at all to protect traditional marriages."

Martin Luther King III also has condemned homophobia. As an organizer of the 40th anniversary commemoration of the 1963 March on Washington, King and his mother invited gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups to participate.

But the Kings' youngest child, Bernice King, helped lead thousands of people in an Atlanta march last month that had an anti-gay agenda.

The march, organized by Bishop Eddie

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"The arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice." -- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

NGLTF Honors King

Matt Foreman, Executive Director National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, released this statement in honor of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday:

"We honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In his life, Dr. King - greatly assisted by our own Bayard Rustin - bent the arc of history toward racial and economic justice. Since the deaths of these prophetic figures, those who walked beside them have continued their vision, and included justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans in their work.

We hold up with gratitude the members of Dr. King's family and those who fought beside Dr. King while he was alive:

"The white, the Hispanic, the black, the Arab, the Jew, the woman, the Native American, the small farmer, the businessperson, the environmentalist, the peace activist, the young, the old, the lesbian, the gay and the disabled make up the American quilt."

- Reverend Jesse Jackson, during his 1984 address at the Democratic



Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Mandy Carter of Southerners on New Ground (SONG), and Coretta Scott King at the 40th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington.

National Convention.

"I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brotherhood and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people."

- Coretta Scott King, at the National

Gay and Lesbian Task Force Creating Change conference, Atlanta, GA, November 9, 2000.

"Homophobia is hate, and hate has no place in the beloved community."

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Allen Named Domestic Policy Adviser

By Bob Roehr
Contributing Writer

Claude Allen will become the chief domestic policy adviser in the Bush White House, according to an announcement made on January 5. Gay and AIDS advocates are concerned by the possible implications for community issues.

Allen, 44, is a social conservative and African

American. He has served the last four years as the number two person at the Department of Health and Human Services where he has been a strong supporter of abstinence only HIV prevention programs and restrictions on abortions.



Claude Allen

that the seat traditionally had been filled by a Marylander. Other Democrats happily supported their claim as they did not wish to see yet another strong conservative vote added to what many observers see as the most conservative federal cir-

The agency also has conducted "audits" of AIDS services organizations and activities that many within the community have characterized as harassing in nature.

Allen was nominated to be a federal judge on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2003. But Maryland's two Democratic Senators blocked the nomination with the claim

cuit court in the country.

He served as Virginia's secretary of health in the 1990s. In the 1980s he was one of the first black staffers for conservative Sen. Jesse Helms. As press secretary during the 1984 reelection Allen said that Helms' opponent had ties to "queers" and "radical feminists."

Allen was asked about those remarks during his judicial confirmation hearing. He said that he did not believe the words were derogatory, nor had he intend to use them in a derogatory manner.

That has not allayed the concerns of community advocates. They remember that Gary Bauer used that position to influence policy decisions during the Reagan administration.

"I hope it is not a sign of social policy for this administration," said Terje Anderson, executive director

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