

Coretta Scott King Hails Lambda's Civil Rights Work

by Patricia M. Logue, MRO Managing Attorney



Kristine Wolff 1998

Coretta Scott King giving the keynote address at the Midwest Regional Office's annual Bon Foster Civil Rights Lecture on March 31 in Chicago.

crowded a Palmer House banquet room to hear this cherished veteran of the civil rights movement.

Noting Lambda's own place in history, King observed, "Every human rights movement needs an organization dedicated to pursuing justice in the courts... The NAACP Legal Defense Fund and other civil rights organizations and attorneys won great victories that have made America a more just and democratic nation. I therefore commend Lambda for providing outstanding leadership in protecting and expanding the legal rights of lesbian and gay Americans."

King's very presence was a rebuff to opponents who play a divide and conquer brand of politics, and she forcefully urged continued efforts to further coalition efforts.

"As an African-American woman, I am concerned about discrimination against my race and gender," she said. "But it's just not good enough to support human rights for one's own race or culture and then be silent about injustices to other groups. As long as that's all we do, our success will be limited, and we will be working against each other instead of with each other."

"I've made the decision that I'm not going to put up with homophobic bigotry because it's morally wrong and because it lowers human rights standards for everyone," King noted that some activists have sought to discourage her advocacy of gay civil rights, but she is adamant: "I've always felt that homophobic attitudes and policies were unjust and unworthy of a free society and must be opposed by all Americans who believe in democracy." *continued on next page*

Similarly, King spoke of the AIDS crisis as part of a larger crisis of health security in the United States. "The families of people with AIDS not only suffer a human tragedy, but often financial ruin as well because insurance companies won't protect them. Women with breast cancer and people with other illnesses and disabilities have had similar experiences. Clearly, we have got to work harder to create a more compassionate health care system, which leaves no person behind — a system that takes responsibility to insure that no citizen with any illness or disability be denied medical care."

Just days before the 30th anniversary of the assassination of her late husband, she invoked Dr. King's profound words and extolled early civil rights work by many lesbians and gay men.

"As Martin once said, 'We are all tied together in a single garment of destiny... an inescapable network of mutuality... I can never be what I ought to be until you are allowed to be what you ought to be.'"

She continued, "Therefore, I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brother and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people. Gays and lesbians stood up for civil rights in Montgomery, Selma, in Albany, Georgia, and St. Augustine, Florida, and many other campaigns of the civil rights movement. Many of these courageous men and women were fighting for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own, and I salute their contributions."



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At the Bon Foster Civil Rights Lecture in Chicago are (back row) The Rev. Dr. Kenneth B. Smith, Steve Wakefield, Patricia Logue, Kevin Cathcart, (front row) Maggie C. Daley, Coretta Scott King, and Lisa Freeman.

The luncheon crowd brought together Lambda supporters from many walks of life — from high school students to civic, corporate, religious, and other community leaders, gay and non-gay, of all races and ethnicities. The gathering gave hope that the "art of alliance" Dr. King advocated in his last book, as quoted by Mrs. King, will allow our movement to find "millions of allies, who in serving themselves, also support us, and on such foundations, unity, mutual trust, and tangible accomplishments will flourish." ▼

CORETTA SCOTT KING SUPPORTS LAMBDA AT BON FOSTER LECTURE

Coretta Scott King spoke forcefully at Lambda's 25th anniversary luncheon and Bon Foster Memorial Civil Rights Lecture on March 31, bringing nearly 700 people to their feet at Chicago's Palmer House.

Event Co-Chairs Steve Wakefield, associate director of the Night Ministry, and Lambda Board Member Lisa Freeman, along with Honorary Event Co-Chairs Maggie C. Daley, First Lady of Chicago, and the Rev. Dr. Kenneth B. Smith, president of the Chicago Theological Seminary, headed a host committee of more than 50 prominent Chicago politicians, business people, community organizers, and Lambda board members to welcome Mrs. King to Chicago.

The annual Bon Foster Memorial Civil Rights Lecture serves as an educational forum at which Lambda considers its work in the broader spectrum of civil rights struggles taking place across the nation. Bon Foster was a Chicago attorney who died of AIDS in 1991, and his generosity supported the creation of Lambda's Midwest Regional Office in 1993. Patricia Logue spoke of the successes Lambda has achieved in the Midwest since that time and noted this year is also the fifth anniversary of the Midwest Regional Office. ▼

SPECIAL EVENTS

Milwaukee Celebrates
Lambda 25
July 14

Michiana Reception
August 22

Ladies at the Links
September 13

Cleveland Celebrates
Lambda 25
September
(date to be announced)

SAVE THE DATES!



Patricia Logue with special guests Margarethe Cammermeyer and Randy Block, and Host Committee Chair Howard Israel at the annual Michigan in March Lambda 25 reception at the Detroit Club.

DETROIT CELEBRATES LAMBDA 25 WITH THIRD ANNUAL MICHIGAN IN MARCH

Some 300 enthusiastic Lambda supporters crowded the elegant Detroit Club on Friday evening, March 27, to celebrate Lambda's 25th Anniversary and to listen to the moving stories of Randy Block, whose lover Jerry Crane died shortly after he was forced from his teaching job, and retired Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer, a Lambda plaintiff when she became the highest ranking soldier discharged from the military. The Michigan community this year raised a record-breaking \$23,000, and many thanks are owed to the host committee (headed for the second year by Howard Israel) for its marvelous efforts achieving this extraordinary success. ▼

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