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Leadership Legacies

Marilyn L. Grady

How often do we stop to consider the impact leaders have had in our lives? How often do we consider the impact we have in the lives of others? Certainly educators make a difference in the lives of others every day; however, how often do educators consider their leadership legacies?

Recent obituaries and testimonials to Coretta Scott King and Wendy Wasserstein are reminders of the leadership legacies of these women.

About Coretta Scott King (1927-2006), Burch in *The Miami Herald* (February 1, 2006) stated “Coretta Scott King built a legacy from pain and progress, first as the wife who stood tall next to a man bent on changing the ways of this land, then as a widow veiled in delicate black lace, and finally as the curator of Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream” (p. 1). In an article titled, “Civil rights icon dies at 78” by Copeland in *USA Today* (February 1, 2006), Coretta Scott King was called “the queen of black America” (p. 1). In tribute to her, Rep. John Lewis, D-GA, said “Her greatest legacy is that in building the King Center, she built a living memorial to her husband. She fought to get his birthday made a national holiday. She institutionalized his memory for generations to come. . . . She must be remembered . . . as one of the founding mothers of the new America” (p. 2A). House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said, “In the nearly 40 years (since Martin Luther King Jr.’s death), she agitated, she struggled and she remained committed to the vision. She was a civil rights leader in her own right, and with her singularity of purpose and tenacity, she often triumphed.” (p. 2)

Wendy Wasserstein’s (1950-2006) legacy also deserves notice. She was described by Dolen in *The Miami Herald* as “Wendy Wasserstein (was) the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright who turned the concerns of her generation’s women into laughter-laced dramatic art” (January 31, 2006, p. 1). According to Andre Bishop, Lincoln Center Theatre artistic director, “Her plays speak to a lot of concerns of professional, successful, intelligent women everywhere” (p. 1). Among her plays are “Uncommon Women and Others,” “Isn’t it Romantic,” “The Heidi Chronicles,” “The Sisters Rosenweig,” “An American Daughter,” and “Old Money.” According to Dolen in *The Miami Herald*, “Wasserstein’s best-known role was as the woman playwright of her generation” (p. 4A).

These two women have left incredible leadership legacies. Their vision, persistence, tenacity, commitment, and passion are palpable. As women educators pause to consider their leadership legacies they should keep these models of leadership in mind. According to the authors of *Your leadership legacy: The difference you make in people's lives* (2004), "the legacy you live is the legacy you leave."

References

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- Burch, A. D. S. (2006, February 1). We have lost an extraordinary woman. *The Miami Herald*, pp. 1A, 16A.
- Dolen, C. (2006, January 31). Her plays blended humor, stage art. *The Miami Herald*, pp. 1A, 4A.
- Copeland, L. (2006, February 1). Civil rights icon dies at 78. *USA Today*, pp. 1A, 2A.

Proposals for presentations at the *20th Annual Women in Educational Leadership Conference* are being accepted! The conference will be October 8-9, 2006, in Lincoln, Nebraska. For information about the conference or proposal guidelines contact Marilyn Grady at mgrady1@unl.edu