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Bush Pays Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.

October 29, 2009 12:29 PM

President Bush led the American people Monday in events honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. - the civil rights leader who gave his own life in the cause of freedom. Mr. Bush spoke at a ceremony marking the annual King Day Holiday in the United States.

Not far from the spot where Martin Luther King once spoke of his dream of equality for all Americans, President Bush remembered the man and his mission.

"In the space of just a few years, through the power of his intellect, the truth of his words, and the example of his courage, he left this country a different and better place," he said.

Reverend King began his ministry in the segregated southern United States half a century ago. He became the voice of the civil rights movement, and his speech at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on a sweltering day in 1963 touched the conscience of a nation.

President Bush said Martin Luther King, Jr, believed in the founding ideals of America. Speaking from the stage of Washington's Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Mr. Bush said Reverend King knew that the promise of freedom was a promise for all.

"Dr. King loved America enough to confront its injustices, not compromising the truth and not fearing any man," he said. "And America loves him in return."

The president also used the occasion to praise outgoing Secretary of State Colin Powell, who was honored at the Kennedy Center event with a special award

presented by Georgetown University to a leader who embodies Reverend King's ideals and commitment to community service.

"More than four years ago, when I needed a secretary of state, I knew what I was looking for," he said. "I wanted somebody who believed deeply in the values of our country and could share them with the world."

Colin Powell was the first African-American to serve as secretary of state. If confirmed by the Senate, Condoleezza Rice will be the second. Confirmation hearings for Ms. Rice, who currently serves as National Security Advisor to the President, begin Tuesday.

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The 76th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King Jr. was commemorated in the church where he preached and in the neighborhood where he grew up. Mike Cooper reports from Atlanta on events marking the federal holiday honoring Reverend King. The hometown celebration of the birthday of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. began with an ecumenical service at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King preached before he was assassinated in 1968...

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Dorothy Height is one of the most influential civil rights activists in the United States. For more than 50 years, she has been president of the National Council of Negro Women, a non-profit organization whose mission is to advance

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Throughout the United States, ceremonies, parades and church services honor the birthday of U.S. civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Although his actual birthday is January 15th, the third Monday in January has been set aside to honor the man and his crusade for social justice.