

# **Peggy Wallace Kennedy, Civil Rights Activist**

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Born into one of the most powerful political families in the history of the American South, Peggy Wallace Kennedy is recognized as one of America's most important voices for peace and reconciliation. From her unique perspective of living behind the gates of the Alabama Governor's Mansion as her father, George Wallace, rose to become one of America's most influential populists, Peggy Wallace Kennedy offers a compelling narrative of her family's history and its relevance to the current version of the politics of rage.

Traveling with her father in 1968 during his presidential campaign, Peggy bore witness to the power of anger and fear at Wallace Rallies in America's heartland and northeastern factory cities as crowds of disaffected white men and women saw themselves in her father's eyes. And in May of 1972, she was called from a college classroom and told that her father had been gunned down in the parking lot of a shopping mall in Maryland.

However, it is the story of Peggy's personal journey to redemption and the love of her two sons that captures the hearts of those who hear her voice. After years of standing in the shadow of others, Peggy Wallace Kennedy challenges us to believe in ourselves so that we too can walk to higher ground. And she demonstrates best the notion that none of us can be held responsible for the circumstances of our birth, but all of us will be held responsible for who we can become.

Mrs. Kennedy has participated on special panels and delivered keynote addresses at national and state conferences, government agencies, corporate and special events as well as colleges, universities and high schools. She has participated in programs at the National Archives, Congressional Forums with Congressman John Lewis and on the 50th Anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March joined Reverend Bernice King, the daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol as a living testament to the power of change and reconciliation.

Media Appearances include *CBS with Bill Plante*, PBS, *NPR with Michelle Norris*, Sirius Radio with Joe Madison and Mark Thompson, *MSNBC with Lawrence O'Donnell*, the Broadcast Network of Japan, Finnish Broadcasting and Al Jazeera, US.

Peggy attended Mississippi State College for Women and Troy University. She is a former public school teacher. She has two sons, US Army Captain Leigh Kennedy, a decorated veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Burns Kennedy, a graduate of the University of Alabama and now pursuing his love of history as an Archivist.

Peggy has been married for forty-one years to Justice H. Mark Kennedy, a judge for over two decades including two terms as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama. Judge Kennedy, upon request, often shares his unique and often humorous insight into the psychology of contemporary southern politics in a question and answer format following Peggy's remarks.

Peggy and Mark are presently co-authoring a book on their extraordinary journey through the politics of the south and their work for racial healing and justice in the 21st Century America.

In recognition of her mission and work, Mrs. Kennedy has received, among others, the Rosa Parks Legacy Award, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Woman of Courage Award, Emmitt Till Legacy Foundation, Achievement Award, Oakwood University, I am a Man Award, April Fourth Foundation, Human Rights Award, The Brown Foundation and the MLK Commission Award, San Antonio, Texas.