

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

A Day On, Not a Day Off

January 16th



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



“Everyone has the power for greatness, not for fame but greatness, because greatness is determined by service.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

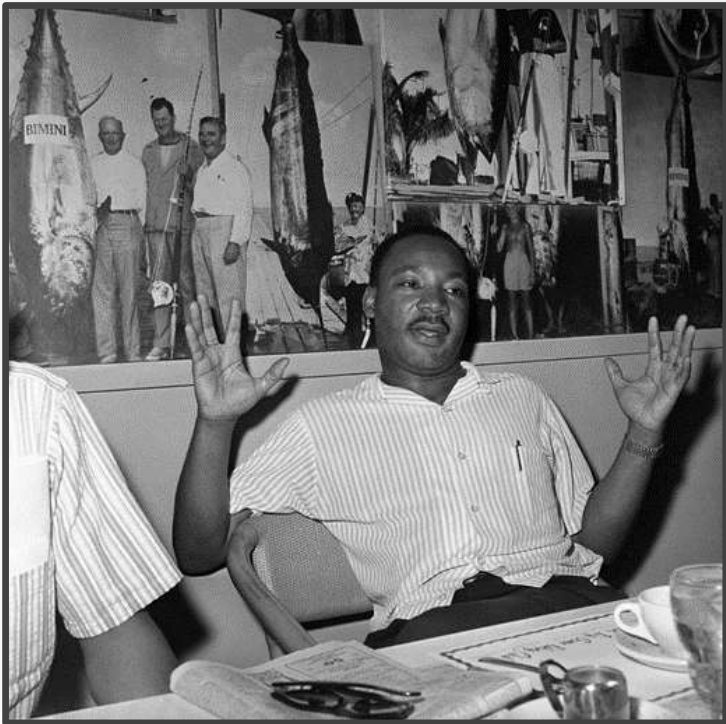
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY



Each year, on the third Monday in January, the Department of Defense (DoD) joins the nation in honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

King is remembered as America's preeminent advocate of nonviolence and a leader of the Civil Rights Movement. While others were fighting for equality by "any means necessary," he used the power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance.

PRESENTATION



King's achievements are well documented. However, few people know of the history and connection he had with the island of Bimini in the Bahamas. This presentation discusses King's time in Bimini, where he came to write two of his most famous speeches.

BIMINI

King chose Bimini because it was where his friend, politician and civil rights reformer Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. had a home.

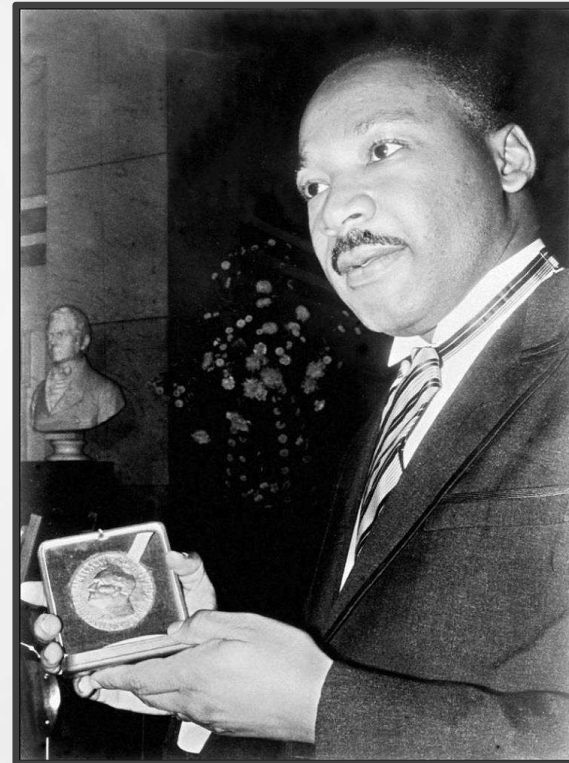
Artist Tommy Saunders worked as a personal assistant for King during his visits. Meanwhile, Tommy's older brother Ansil, a boat builder and champion bonefisher, became King's guide and friend. He would take King to secluded parts of the island where he could be alone with his thoughts.

Like King, Ansil Saunders is a deeply religious man, and the two quickly bonded over their faith.

NOBEL PRIZE SPEECH

During one visit to Bimini, King wrote notes for his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, which he gave in Oslo in 1964.

King was awarded the prize for his nonviolent resistance to racial prejudice. At 35 years of age, he was the youngest person ever to receive the award.



I'VE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAINTOP SPEECH

In 1968, King returned to the island. Saunders, again, found a quiet place on Bonefish Creek, where King would write his final speech, *"I've Been to the Mountaintop."* His speech, Saunders said, almost revealed what was ahead for King.

"Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop... And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land."

ANSIL SAUNDERS

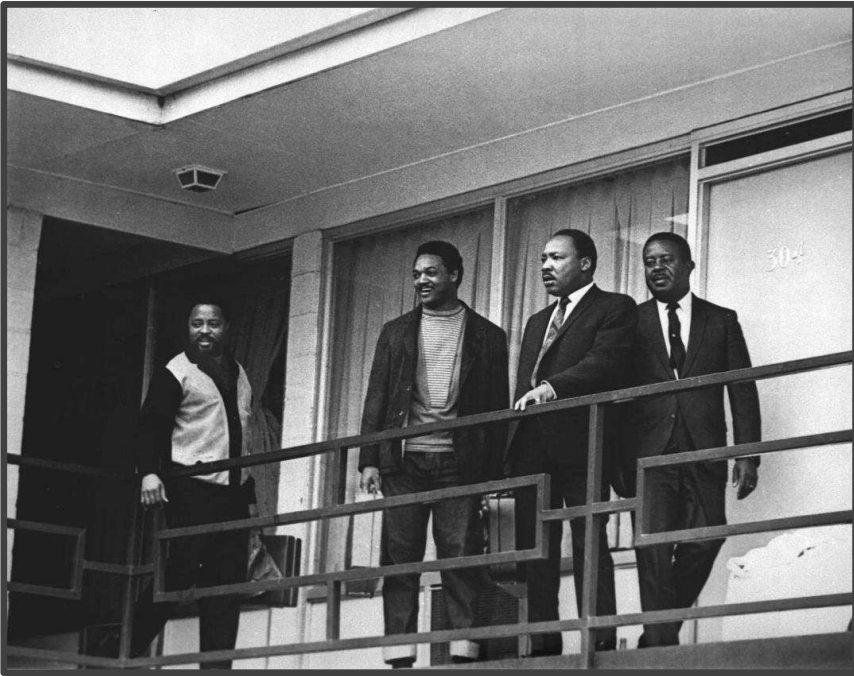
Saunders shared in a later interview, his conversation with King. He said, *“He told me ‘You know, Ansil, I don’t think I’ll make 40 years old.’”*

He went on to share, *“We didn’t have time to fish because he wanted to just write at that time. He came to Bimini to feel peaceful.”*



Ansil Saunders, Photo Courtesy of Cold Collaborative

KING'S DEATH



On April 4, 1968, days after returning from Bimini, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

April 3, 1968, Hosea Williams, Jesse Jackson, King and Ralph Abernathy on the Lorraine Motel balcony. Photo courtesy of Charles Kelly/AP

MLK DAY PASSAGE

Congress passed a bill designating Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday as a national holiday starting in 1986.

The Department of Defense first observed Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1985, a year before it became a federal holiday.

AMERICORPS



In 1994, Congress designated Martin Luther King Jr. Day as the first and only federal holiday observed as a national day of service. They charged the Corporation for National and Community Service, now operating as AmeriCorps, with leading this national effort.

The MLK Day of Service encourages all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities.

CONCLUSION

The Defense Department recognizes that freedom, equality, and inclusion are true force multipliers and imperative to the national defense and the strength of our nation.

King recognized the power of service. Observing MLK Day through service continues the DoD's mission of promoting change and building communities.

The men and women of the DoD honor King by living up to the standard he set. Together we safeguard his legacy, and, as one DoD family, rise to meet today's challenges.

Prepared by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, Patrick Space Force Base, Florida January 2023

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The educational information within this presentation is designed to raise individuals' general awareness on this topic. The information in this document is not to be construed as an official DEOMI, U.S. Military Services, or Department of Defense position.