Black History Month

Louis E. Martin: The Godfather of Black Politics

Presented by Billy R. Glasco, Archivist
Louis E. Martin

Journalist
Political Activist
Mentor to African American Leaders
Advisor to multiple U.S. Presidents

Right: Louis E. Martin, Assistant to President Carter (National Archives Identifier: 181236)
Far Right: Walking to the Oval Office: President Lyndon B. Johnson and Louis Martin (LBJ Library)
Early Life and Education

• Born November 18, 1912 in Shelbyville, Tennessee

• Family moves to Savannah, Georgia

• Attends Fisk University, and University of Michigan, receives Journalism degree

Left: Bird’s eye View, Savannah, Ga. (Courtesy of Georgia Archives Virtual Vault)
Career in Journalism

Employed at two esteemed Black Newspapers:

- The Chicago Defender
- The Michigan Chronicle

Founding member of the National Publishers Association

See The Chicago Defender’s inquiry sent to President Eisenhower about the murder of Emmett Till and the White House response

Right: NNPA Logo: Courtesy of The National Newspaper Publishers Association
Kennedy Administration

- Recruited to work Presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy
- Successfully advises Kennedy to reach out to Coretta Scott King after husband’s arrest during sit-in protest in Atlanta
- Credited with swinging Black American vote to Kennedy
- Begins tenure as Deputy Chairman of the Democratic National Committee (ends 1969)

Right: President John F. Kennedy visits with Democratic Congressional candidate from California, Augustus F. “Gus” Hawkins (center), and Deputy Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Louis E. Martin (right). Oval Office, White House, Washington, D.C. (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum)
Johnson Administration

- One of few presidential advisors that transition to Johnson administration following Kennedy assassination

- Influential in Johnson’s decision to nominate Thurgood Marshall to serve as the first Black American Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States

Learn more about Thurgood Marshall and the Timeline of Events Leading to the Brown v. Board of Education Decision, 1954

Left: President Johnson's Message Nominating Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court 6/13/1967 (National Archives Identifier: 306369)
Mentoring Black Leaders

Vernon E. Jordan

- Attorney, business executive and civil rights activist
- Served with NAACP, Southern Regional Council, Voter Education Project, United Negro College Fund, National Urban League
- Special Advisor to President Clinton

Right: Vernon Jordan meets with President Lyndon B. Johnson (Frank Wolfe/LBJ Library)
Mentoring Black Leaders

Clifford L. Alexander

- Serves with Martin in Kennedy, Johnson and Carter administrations
- Martin uses influence with Carter to secure Alexander’s appointment as Secretary of the Army, first Black American in that Cabinet level position
- Alexander focuses on diversity and awarding Army contracts to minority-owned businesses

Left: Former Secretary of the Army Clifford L. Alexander Jr., left, who served as secretary from February 14, 1977, to January 20, 1981, stands beside his official portrait after an unveiling ceremony at the Pentagon, 3/14/1984 (National Archives Identifier: 6424557)
Carter Administration

- Serves as Presidential Aide to Carter, 1977-1978
- Appointed Special Assistant to President Carter, 1978-1981

Right: Presidential Aide Cites Administration Achievements, 1/12/1978 (National Archives Identifier: 6233353)
Far Right: President Carter Names Louis Martin Special Assistant on Black Issues (National Archives Identifier: 6233319)
Right: Louis Martin with Guests Visiting the White House (National Archives Identifier: 184022)
## Further Inquiry

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### Records related to Louis E. Martin at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

### Records related to Louis E. Martin at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum