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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



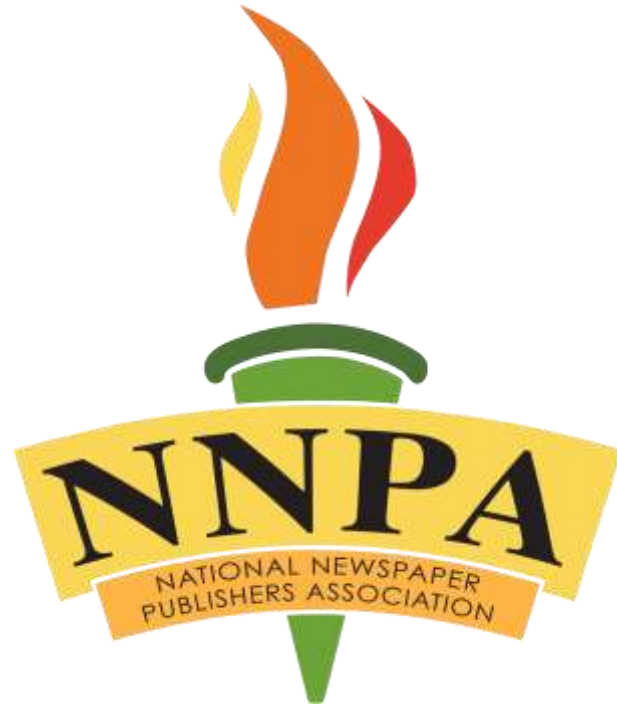
Employed at two esteemed Black Newspapers:

- ***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



Washington — President Carter has been committed to needs of black Americans and has moved the federal government "out of the shadow of 'benign neglect' into the sunshine of affirmative action," Presidential Assistant for Minority Affairs Louis Martin has reported.

Martin, noting that the President has reached the mid-point of his first term in office, said the black Americans "are asking what kind of beginning has been made—is he living up to expectations?"

"Given a partial review of the achievements of the Administration indicates that the record is clearly encouraging," Martin said.

Martin cited the President's achievements in the areas of governmental reorganization, employment, minority business and urban policy, and foreign policy.

"The issue pertinent to the needs of black Americans historically has been the issue of employment. President Carter

pledged to take action in this area, and he has," Martin said. He noted that the Administration has expanded and established new basic job programs, doubling the reach of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and obtaining passage of the Youth Employment Act. He also cited the Administration's successful support of the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill.

With the President's initiatives to some minority business, Martin said, "blacks have become job developers as well as job seekers."

"The cataloging of the achievements of the Carter Administration that are of special interest to blacks does not, of course, present a complete picture or give the full measure of the Presidency of Jimmy Carter. His integrity and deep moral commitment to do what is good and right cannot be fully comprehended by a list of good deeds alone. He has demonstrated in the first two years of his term that he can move America forward," Martin said.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 11, 1978

Office of the White House Press Secretary
Media Liaison

**PRESIDENT NAMES LOUIS MARTIN
SPECIAL ASSISTANT ON BLACK ISSUES**

President Carter has named Louis Emmanuel Martin to join the White House staff as a Special Assistant to the President, responsible -- among other duties -- for working on issues and programs of particular concern to black Americans.

Martin also will be responsible for liaison with black organizations around the nation.

Martin, 65, has served as a special assistant to Senator Adlai Stevenson since 1976. From 1969 to 1978, he was president and editorial director of the Chicago Daily Defender. He was deputy chairman of the Democratic National Committee from 1961 to 1969.

Before joining the committee he spent two years as editorial adviser to Amalgamated Press, Ltd., of Nigeria, and from 1947 to 1950 he was editor in chief of the Chicago Defender. From 1935 to 1947, Martin was editor and publisher of the Michigan Chronicle in Detroit. He worked as a free lance writer in Havana, Cuba, in 1934 and 1935.

Martin received a B.A. degree from the University of Michigan in 1934. He holds honorary LL.D. degrees from Harvard University (1970) and Wilberforce University (1951). He is a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Urban League, of the boards of directors of the United Way of America and the Overseas Development Council, and of the steering committee of the National Urban Coalition.

Martin has been chairman of the board of the Joint Center for Political Studies since 1970. He retired this year from positions on the boards of directors of Chicago City Bank & Trust Company, Amalgamated Bank & Trust of Chicago, Illinois/Service Federal Savings and Loan, and the Metropolitan YMCA of Chicago, and the board of directors of De Paul University of Chicago.

He served two terms on the Wayne County, Detroit, Board of Supervisors in 1942 and 1943, and he was President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association in 1950 and 1951. He is a member of the Federal City Club, the National Press Club, and Sigma Delta Chi.

Mr. Martin was born in Shelbyville, Tennessee, on Nov. 12, 1913. He is married and has five daughters. He currently resides in Washington.

Carter Administration



Right: Louis Martin with Guests Visiting
the White House (National Archives
Identifier: [184022](#))





Further Inquiry

Records of the National Archives/Presidential Libraries Related to Louis E. Martin

[JC-1003: Records of Louis Martin, Special Assistant to the President: A Guide to Its Records at Jimmy Carter Library](#)
(National Archives Identifier: **1084**)

[Jimmy Carter's Presidential Photographs, 1/20/77-1/20/81](#) (National Archives Identifier: **173341**) JC-WHSP

[Bradley Woodward Audiovisual Files. Media Liaison Office, 1977-1981.](#) (National Archives Identifier: **7560727**) JC-WHPO

[Oral History Exit Interviews](#) (National Archives Identifier: **162691**) JC-OH

[Black Media Mass Mailing Files, 1977-1981](#) (National Archives Identifier: **6210723**) JC-WHPO

[Roddey E. Mims' Files, 1976-1982](#) (National Archives Identifier: **150769**) JC-1130

[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](#)



President Carter with Louis E. Martin in the Oval Office (National Archives Identifier: [180706](#))