

Bahamas pays tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, JR.

Dr. King's Bimini connection

NASSAU, BAHAMAS, January 19, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This year, Martin Luther King Jr. Day falls on Monday, January 19, and as celebrations in honor of the legacy of the civil rights icon take place across the United States, Mrs. Joy Jibrilu, Director General of The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, has stated, "The people of The Islands Of The Bahamas are extraordinarily proud of Dr. King's



visits to our country. Knowing that some of his soaring oratory and his mighty voice may have been inspired by time he spent visiting with us is a momentous honor. It is a privilege for all Bahamians to pay tribute to this amazing man whose passionate voice awakened the conscience of all people". The Director General is referring to the island of Bimini, a tiny land of simple pleasures, beautiful people, pristine waters, and a fishing haven for decades, where Dr. King vacationed.

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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr

Just 50 miles from the coast of Florida, the author Ernest Hemingway lived on the small island chain in the 1930s, famously tangling with blue marlin and giant tuna in Bimini's electric-blue waters. But, it is part of the great legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that his visits to the island significantly impacted the people of Bimini. A bronze bust of his image, at the Bimini Craft Centre in Alice Town, serves as a memorial to

Dr. King's historic legacy. Bahamians are pleased to note that it was during Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit in 1964 that he wrote his famous Nobel Prize Acceptance speech; and while visiting in 1968, he wrote his Sanitation Workers speech.

One local islander, Ansil Saunders, a boat-builder and bone-fishing guide, took many distinguished visitors out on the water, including Dr. King, and has often reflected on their boat trips together. Saunders recalls that in 1968, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., the first African-American Congressman from New York, owned a home in Bimini and lived out his final years on the island. During that time, he and Saunders became friends and often fished together. It was in 1968 that Powell asked Saunders to take his guest out fishing, and that guest was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. His visit with Powell was his second visit to Bimini—he was writing a speech that he planned to deliver to a group of striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. His first visit had occurred four years earlier, when he had come to the island to write his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Saunders recalls taking Dr. King through bonefish creek—when he slowed the boat that day, the civil-rights leader had said that he felt a connection to nature, and to God. "When I stopped the boat, there were some birds overhead, the tide trickled by, snappers were running under the mangrove roots and a stingray was burying and reburying itself," Saunders recalled. "Dr. King looked up and said, 'There's so much life here ... so much life all around us. How can people see all this life and yet not believe in the existence of God?'"

King traveled back to Memphis and delivered his speech to the striking sanitation workers. He spoke of going to the mountaintop and looking over. "I've seen the Promised Land," King said. "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. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." He was assassinated the next day.

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