‘OASIS in Atlanta’ Reveals a Little-Known Chapter of Civil Rights History

Nearly 19 years in the making, the documentary explores faith, racial reconciliation and Christian leadership during Atlanta’s Civil Rights era.



OASIS Films

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, October 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After nearly 19 years of research, recovered footage, production setbacks and perseverance, the historical documentary OASIS in Atlanta is now reaching audiences with a compelling story of faith, Civil Rights history and racial reconciliation.

Produced by OASIS Films, LLC, the documentary examines a lesser-known dimension of Atlanta’s Civil Rights story: the role Christian ministers and interracial relationships played in encouraging dialogue, social justice and peaceful progress during a period when racial tensions were intensifying throughout the South.

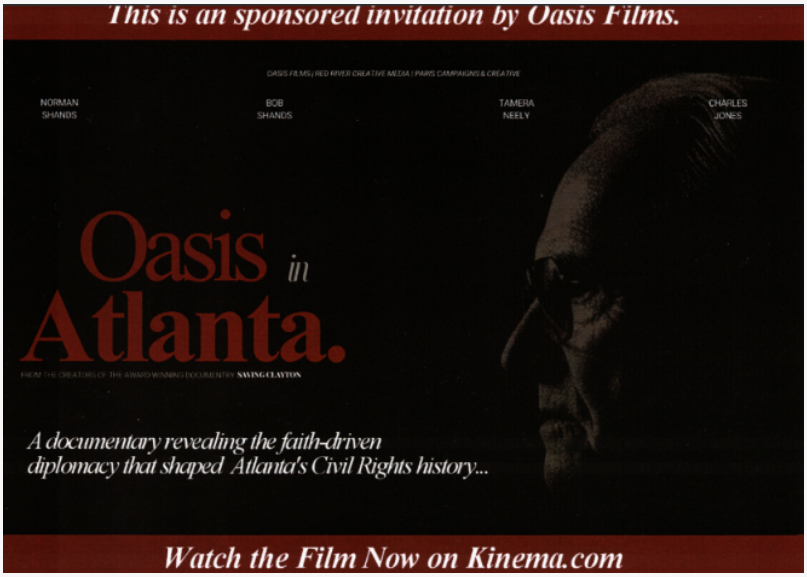
> “The film is powerful… extremely powerful. God knows we could use a nation of people like your Dad.”
>
> *Col. Richard McDonald, USAF Ret.*

At the center of the film is Dr. O. Norman Shands, a white Baptist minister whose ministry brought him into close relationship with Black and white religious leaders during the 1950s and early 1960s, including Martin Luther King Sr. Rather than attempting to replace familiar accounts of the Civil Rights Movement, OASIS in Atlanta adds another perspective to the historical record by examining people and relationships that may not be widely known.

The film also explores a question closely associated with

Atlanta's history: why did the city experience a different path from communities such as Birmingham and Little Rock, which became nationally associated with intense racial conflict?

Atlanta eventually became widely known as "The City Too Busy to Hate." OASIS in Atlanta examines how faith-based relationships and Christian leadership contributed to the environment that helped Atlanta navigate some of the era's most difficult challenges differently.



OASIS Postcard



Bob Shands

For Executive Producer and researcher Bob Shands, the story is deeply personal.

Shands began the journey after publishing his 2006 book, In My Father's House: Lessons Learned in the Home of a Civil Rights Pioneer. Shortly afterward, a local public relations professional approached him about developing the story into a documentary. Some of the most significant footage featuring Dr. Shands was recorded around 2007 and 2008, followed by additional interviews with people familiar with the events during a 2011 trip to South Carolina and Atlanta.

The project then encountered obstacles that could have ended it completely, including the death of the original filmmaker. Substantial portions of the recorded interviews were lost at that time.

Years later, Shands connected with Kevin and Janelle Batts of Red River Creative Media, who ultimately brought the film to completion despite their own life challenges that interrupted the project along the way. Despite the repeated setbacks, the project survived.

What began nearly two decades ago eventually became the completed OASIS in Atlanta documentary, illustrating a story of perseverance behind the camera that closely mirrors the themes of conviction and perseverance found within the film itself.

The historical materials preserved by the Shands family provide important support for the documentary. Dr. Shands recorded memories of his relationship with Martin Luther King Sr., interracial ministerial meetings and his belief that Christian pastors had a responsibility to address racial injustice rather than simply remain silent.

The film approaches these subjects with a goal of racial reconciliation rather than confrontation.
That distinction is especially important to Bob Shands, who hopes the documentary encourages viewers to examine history thoughtfully while considering what can happen when people choose relationships, courage and faith over division.
Early viewers have responded strongly to the film.

Col. Richard McDonald, USAF Ret., a longtime friend of the Shands family who was baptized by Dr. Shands, described the documentary as “powerful, extremely powerful.” McDonald said the film caused him to reflect on how unaware he had been as a child of the integration efforts taking place around him and of Dr. Shands’ involvement in Atlanta’s peaceful response to racial tensions.

Ralph Howe, Senior Pastor of Crossroads Impact Church in Orlando, Florida, described the documentary as “very powerful and well done,” particularly noting the archival footage of Dr. Shands and the remarkable journey through which important historical material was preserved.
Shibu Mathew of Lenexa, Kansas praised the documentary for honoring those who worked to recognize the image of God in every human being while also highlighting the persistence required to bring the story to completion.

The documentary is supported through a Fiscal Sponsorship from the Southern Documentary Fund and is currently available through Kinema.

Audiences can explore opportunities to watch or host the film at:
https://kinema.com/films/oasis-in-atlanta-zmbnlj

Churches, educational organizations, community groups and individuals interested in Atlanta Civil Rights history, Christian history, racial reconciliation and documentary filmmaking are encouraged to discover the story.

At a time when discussions surrounding race, faith and American history can quickly become polarized, OASIS in Atlanta offers audiences an opportunity to examine a different kind of legacy, one built through faith, relationships, courage and the pursuit of community.

About OASIS in Atlanta
OASIS in Atlanta is a historical documentary produced by OASIS Films, LLC examining Christian leadership, interracial relationships and Civil Rights history in Atlanta. Through archival materials,

firsthand recollections and historical interviews, the film presents a lesser-known story centered on faith, perseverance and racial reconciliation.

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