

ENTERTAINMENT

Book reveals leader's activism

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Sponsored by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a new book hit bookstores nationwide chronicling the life of Louis Martin, the "godfather of Black Politics."

Written by former "Ebony" Magazine contributor Alex Poinsett, "Walking With Presidents: Louis Martin and the Rise of Black Political Power," details Martin's rise from a Detroit newspaper editor to labor activist to adviser for three United States presidents.

"Walking with Presidents' fills a major gap in political history by bringing Louis Martin out of the shadows and onto center stage where he belongs," said Eddie Williams, whom Martin recruited 25 years ago to be president of the center, a national, non-partisan institution which conducts research and analysis on public policy issues of particular concern to African-Americans.

The center also publishes books, reports and other publications on a range of social, economic, political and international issues.

"Martin was a consummate insider who cared more about the advancement of African-Americans than personal credit and believed that politics was the avenue through which blacks could gain justice and opportunity," Poinsett said.

"Louis E. Martin's name has little of the public resonance that accompanies those of Martin Luther King, Jr., or Thurgood Marshall, or even lesser known black leaders such as A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin," said Pulitzer-prize winning civil rights historian David J. Garrow. "But Louis E. Martin's name belongs on the same page with these better known and more celebrated compatriots," said Garrow, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Walking with Presidents" tells the little known story of Martin's pivotal role in the 1960 presidential elections. His distribution of more than two million pamphlets to black voters about late President John Kennedy's sympathetic call to Coretta Scott King while her husband languished in a Georgia jail, shored up Kennedy's black vote and helped him win the election. Martin advised former president Franklin Roosevelt on his 1944 re-election campaign, and former presidents Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter during their administrations.

Boy in the Hood

Hakim Alston joins the cast of TNT's The New Adventures of Robin Hood

Questions prepared by Sentinel-Voice reporter Damon Hodge.

S-V: Describe Kemal, what we can expect from him and your feelings about the character.

H: Regal. Prince Kemal is the ultimate warrior. His devotion to loved ones, friends and family is unfailing. The loss of his love, Princess Kadija, has driven him to right that which is wrong; to pursue justice. Although a lone warrior, he aids Robin in his righteous quest. I like Kemal. He personifies that which is strong and good. He is a strong character who kicks butt.

S-V: What spawned your interest in acting?

H: I stumbled into it. A producer turned up to watch me at a tournament in Los Angeles. He liked my look and I landed a role in "Shootfighter." I never had the (mis)fortune of auditioning. I'm very lucky to have been involved in projects back to back. I feel blessed.

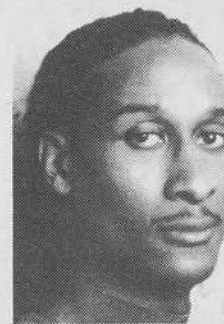
(Alston held duo roles - athlete and actor - for a time. While competing, he also played in the pilot episode for "Vanishing Sons" and "Mortal Kombat," in which he played a mythical warrior with magical powers. He credits fight choreographer Pat Johnson with motivating him and bringing him to the attention of the Robin Hood's producers).

S-V: Did you act in your youth?

H: I didn't because martial arts was my passion.

S-V: How did you get into kickboxing?

H: My mama. She didn't like organized pee-wee football and thought my brother and I should try something different. We were both skeptical of karate because it wasn't popular with our friends, but by the end of the first class, I was hooked. I really liked the spiritual/physical combination. Kickboxing is a sport derived from martial arts and I liked the competition



Name: Hakim Alston
Age: 31
Birthplace: Oakland, Calif.
Schooling: College of Charleston, S.C.
Interests: Working with youth programs, holding karate seminars for disadvantaged youth, assisting with the Urban League and playing with his daughters.

Hobbies: Skiing, basketball, football and martial arts
Occupations: Currently, acting. Also part owner in Sintex International, an international marketing company. Bagged groceries in the 11th grade and worked at a Charleston cigar/tobacco store during college

aspect.

(Alston is a 4th degree black belt who retired as International Sports Kickboxing Association World Heavyweight Kickboxing Champion and PKL World Full Contact Karate Champion).

S-V: Has the discipline learned from being a top-notch kickboxer eased your transition into acting? Acting isn't as easy as it looks.

H: I agree. The transition was pretty smooth, but not without difficulties in understanding acting as a craft. As in kickboxing, there is a similar need to invest time and energy into training. Acting is now a challenge, just as martial arts. I now have certain goals to achieve as well as a desire for the pursuit of excellence.

S-V: What actors/actresses do you most admire?

H: I most admire Sidney Poitier because of his class and grace. Robert Deniro has a great power to him, and I find Gary Oldman's versatility to be inspirational. And of course, Bruce Lee is the man when it comes to action movies.

S-V: Is your acting style unique or have you drawn from others you admire?

H: I think all artists draw from each other to a certain extent, but in order to succeed, you must still be uniquely different. I have to be true to Hakim. Copying others is a cardinal sin. My instinct is to rebel and be different.

S-V: What does Hakim Alston see in his acting future?

H: Hopefully projects that I can be proud of and that will make my kids proud too.



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