

# Dr. King's Assassination 50 Years Later: Looking Back & Moving Forward

By Shawnta S. Barnes - April 2, 2018



Shawnta S. Barnes at the Dr. King Memorial in Washington D.C.

Last year, as Veterans Day approached, I decided I would interview my father. I knew he had served in the US Marine Corps and fought in Vietnam, but I didn't know much about his story and his perspective about the war. The first question I asked my dad during the interview was, "Why did you decide to join the military?" I did not know what my dad would say, but I wasn't expecting him to say, "I decided to join the military because Martin Luther King was just assassinated."

When I learned about Dr. King's assassination in school, teachers would focus on the sadness, the anger, and the riots that took place across the nation. We didn't talk much about how his death motivated people to take positive action. My dad wanted to study drafting and his mom (my grandmother) couldn't afford to send him. In the interview, he mentioned how black people were hopeless and depressed, but not him. He decided the military was his only option to achieve his goals.

This part of the interview with my dad has resonated with me because I knew we were approaching the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's assassination on April 4, 1968, at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Many times, we search in history books for answers and perspectives instead of starting with the people right around us. I decided to reach out to people, I know and respect, who were alive and old enough to remember Dr. King's assassination to gain an understanding of the day a Civil Right's giant took his last breath and to hear perspectives on moving forward 50 years later.

Below are the links to each interview.



[Dr. King's Assassination 50 Years Later: Looking Back & Moving Forward, James Stockton's Perspective](#)

Dr. King's Assassination 50 Years Later: Looking Back & Moving Forward,  
Mildred Guyse's Perspective

Dr. King's Assassination 50 Years Later: Looking Back & Moving Forward,  
Sue Wright's Perspective

Dr. King's Assassination 50 Years Later: Looking Back & Moving Forward,  
George Geder's Perspective