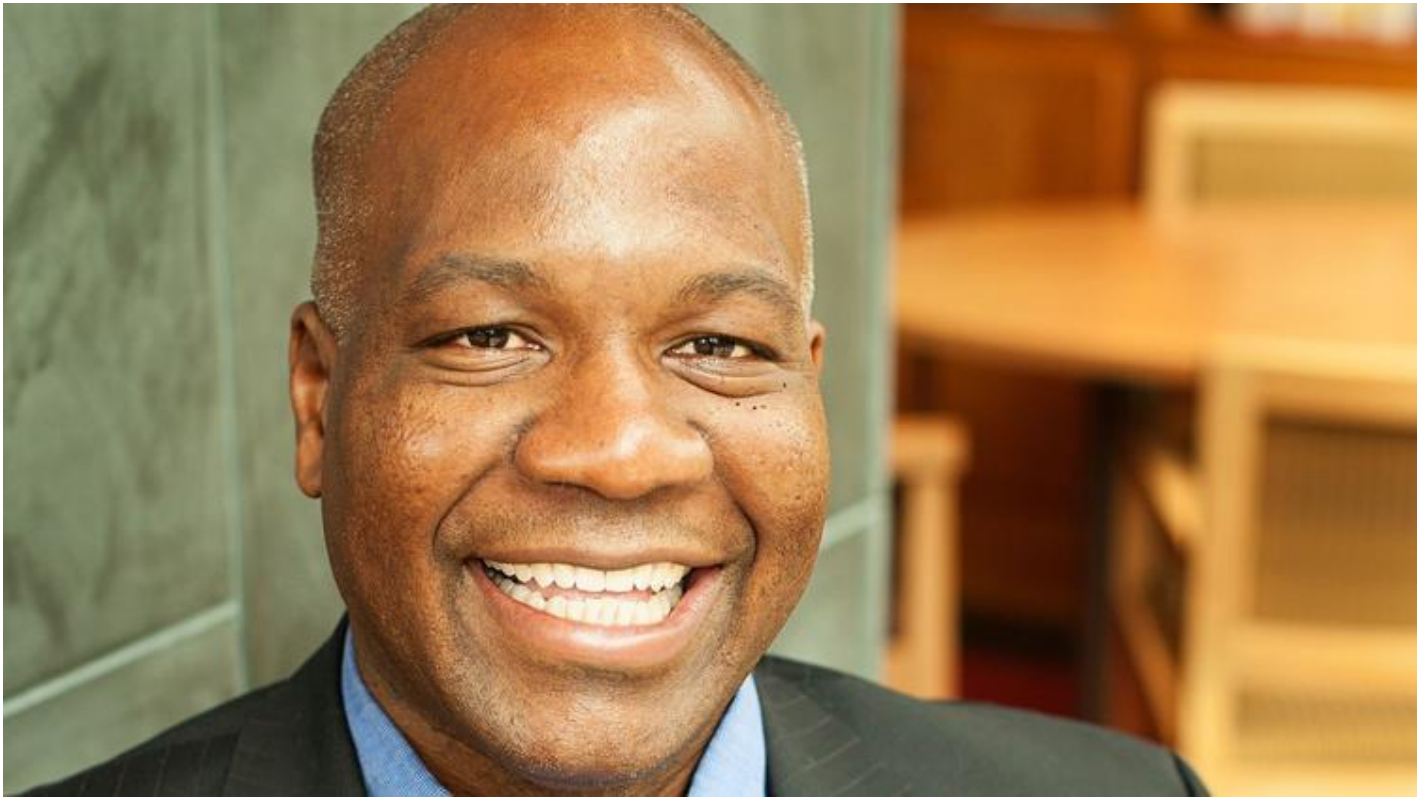


# W&M Professor recovers history of Africa's first Nobel Peace Prize winner in new book



William and Mary Professor Robert Trent Vinson will give a reading of his new book on Albert Luthuli, a human rights leader, Feb. 21 at the Reves Center for International Studies. (File courtesy of Beth Wood Photography)

By **SaraRose Martin**  
Staff writer

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College of William and Mary Professor Robert Trent Vinson traces the life of Albert Luthuli, Africa's first [Nobel Peace Prize](#) winner, in his most recent book "Albert Luthuli: [Mandela](#) Before Mandela."

The Frances L. and Edwin L. Cummings associate professor of history, Africana studies and international relations will give a reading of his work on Feb. 21 at the Reves Center for International Studies.

Published in August 2018 by the Ohio University Press, the book explains how Luthuli, who died in 1967, became one of the world's leading proponents of nonviolent civil disobedience.

"He really was Nelson Mandela before Nelson Mandela, if you can imagine," Vinson said. "People like Martin Luther King admired and looked to Luthuli as a mentor, as a model."

Vinson was the first researcher to look at Luthuli's personal papers, which had been smuggled into the U.S. and kept secret.

“He’s always been someone that’s intrigued me, but there hasn’t been that much about him,” Vinson said. “I got a really close look at how he thought about things and why he did what he did in terms of his politics, but also as a person.”

Vinson said Luthuli connected the apartheid struggle in South Africa with the broader global campaign for human rights of all people, and he was also a husband, father of seven children and progressive in terms of his gender politics.

“He seemed like a man of real integrity and honor and in this day and age, we could use more political leaders like that,” Vinson said.

Vinson ultimately wrote “Albert Luthuli” to recover his legacy as an important historical figure in the struggle for human rights; a legacy that has slipped through the cracks.

He looks forward to sharing how important Luthuli was, not only to South Africa but the world, with people who may have never heard of him.

“It’s always a nice surprise, to do a reading and discover who’s in the room and who knows what, and what conversations will spark,” Vinson said. “It’s a way to start a conversation.”

## How do I go?

When: 5 p.m. Feb. 21

Where: Reves Room of the Reves Center for International Studies at William and Mary

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