

# King family urges new probe

They and Andrew Young asked Clinton to issue such an order. Truth is their aim, they said.

By Larry Copeland  
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

ATLANTA — The family of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn., 30 years ago tomorrow, and Andrew Young, one of Dr. King's top aides, urged President Clinton yesterday to order a renewed probe of the killing.

Standing between her husband's tomb and the eternal flame that burns in his honor, Coretta Scott King made an impassioned entreaty for the President to take action that would begin her family's healing — and the nation's.

"I realize many people would rather forget about the assassination of my husband, and for America to focus on working toward the goals that defined his dream for America," she said. "But I feel strongly that you can't heal the scars of racial violence without exposing them to the light of truth."

Young and Coretta King were joined at a news conference by three of her four children, Dexter Scott King, Martin Luther King 3d and Bernice King; Dr. King's only surviving sibling, Christine King Farris; Walter E. Fauntroy, who headed a 1978 congressional inquiry of the assassination; and Lewis Garrison, attorney for a onetime Memphis cafe owner who claims to have knowledge about the assassination.

Young, in his strongest remarks to date on the killing, proposed a federal truth and reconciliation commission — similar to the one in South Africa investigating crimes committed during apartheid — with the power to grant amnesty in order to get at the truth.

"My interest in this is not justice, frankly — it's truth and mercy,"



At the King Center in Atlanta, Coretta Scott King said that a new investigation would begin the healing of her family and the nation.

said Young, the former mayor and U.N. ambassador who is now a businessman. "I think it's inappropriate to try to put all this burden on one man and forget about it."

Young does not believe that James Earl Ray — who confessed in 1969, recanted almost immediately and is serving a 99-year sentence — acted alone. He said that an inquiry into lingering inconsistencies would bring a measure of closure.

The courts have repeatedly upheld Ray's conviction. Just last week, a Memphis district attorney said that a reinvestigation into the assassination had uncovered no evidence that anyone other than Ray, now 70 and ailing, was involved.

Practically from the moment Dr. King crumpled to the floor of the second-floor balcony outside his room at the Lorraine Motel on April 4, 1968, many have doubted that Ray acted alone — although the theories floated in the ensuing years have been harder to corral than smoke.

While Young did not offer any new evidence for a conspiracy, his rethinking of the tragedy is part of a growing reassessment among

some of those closest to Dr. King.

Last year, Dexter King visited Ray in prison and said he no longer believed that Ray had killed his father. Dexter King and his mother both testified in Memphis last year in a failed effort to win Ray a trial. The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, former president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, also has called for a trial.

One of those joining the call for a new federal inquiry was Fauntroy, the former Washington delegate who chaired the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which in 1978 investigated Dr. King's murder. "Had my committee been in possession of the information that has surfaced here in Atlanta the past two weeks . . . the investigation would have taken a far different route," he said.

The brief life span last week of one such bit of evidence illustrates how details — real and alleged — about the slaying have emerged to tantalize, only to disappoint.

Donald Wilson, a former FBI agent, said he had stolen notes from Ray's car when it was impounded in

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Atlanta shortly after Dr. King was killed. He said those notes contained the phone number of a Dallas nightclub owned by Jack Ruby, who killed Lee Harvey Oswald two days after Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

Within days, two FBI agents who participated in the search of Ray's car said Wilson had no part in it, and an FBI spokesman called Wilson's story a "total fabrication."

In the city most closely identified with Dr. King — he was born in Atlanta and is buried here — yesterday's effort to begin a process that would finally inter some old ghosts was one of the major events in a weeklong commemoration.

Except for a wreath-laying ceremony tomorrow, it was the only activity the King family is participating in. Dexter King said the family would not take part in commemorations in Memphis because that city houses too many painful memories.

Young said he became especially convinced of the need for a new inquiry after he met recently in Little Rock with Loyd Jowers, who owned Jim's Grill, a greasy spoon under the rooming house across from the Lorraine where prosecutors say Ray stood when he fired the fatal shot.

Young said Jowers told him that the killing was plotted inside his restaurant, and that a man he knew as a Memphis police officer handed him a still-smoking rifle — which he dismantled and hid away — minutes after Dr. King was killed.

Young said Jowers also told him he was given money by a Memphis mobster to pay off that hit man. Jowers first went public with his claims in 1993. Memphis prosecutors have dismissed them.

After Dr. King was killed, the thankless job of explaining the act to his children fell to Young.

Young recalled being struck by the "understanding, wisdom and compassion" of the children.

All these years later, Young said, he simply wants to help them find whoever killed their father.