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# History Was Cheated

Saturday, December 18, 1999; Page A25

It astonishes me how your paper flies to the defense of the "official truth" in the matter of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The underlying assumption in the editorial "The King Verdict" is that any attempt to question the no-conspiracy mythology perpetrated on the King family and the American people is a delusional exercise in "rewriting history" and an "abuse of the legal system."

An abuse of the American justice system did, indeed, take place. James Earl Ray, the alleged assassin, never had a trial in which the government's evidence in the case could be tested. Ray copped a plea because he was convinced, for many reasons that were amply demonstrated in his 1970s evidentiary hearing (Ray v. Rose) that his lawyer, Percy Foreman, was unprepared to go to trial and would have thrown the case had it gone before a jury. During the seven months Foreman was Ray's lawyer of record, he spent less than two hours conferring with his client and made no independent effort to examine the evidence. To put it mildly, Ray's Sixth Amendment right to effective counsel was violated.

The adversary proceeding, not infallible but still the best mechanism devised so far for arriving at the truth in a criminal case, was rendered inoperative in this most important civil rights homicide in the nation's history. That this was allowed to happen without intervention by the Ramsey Clark Justice Department or comment by our supposedly responsible watchdog press, including your paper, was almost as great a tragedy as King's cold-blooded murder.

--Gerald D. McKnight

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