



The new Dallas DA Files: Craig Watkins vs. Henry Wade

By James DiEugenio

In November of 2006 the citizens of Dallas elected Craig Watkins their first African-American DA. The 40-year-old Democrat defeated his Republican rival Toby Shook in a close election even though he was outspent by a factor of 18-1. Clearly, Watkins benefited by the wave generated against the Bush administration. But he also ran a reform-minded campaign that clearly appealed to a segment of the population.

Watkins vowed to place as much focus on crime prevention and redemption of criminals as possible. Many in the district attorney's office resisted this. Many of them worked for Shook. Shook was perceived as the heir apparent to retiring DA Bill Hill. Hill, in turn, represented the legacy of longtime DA Henry Wade. Wade, of course, was the DA at the time of the Kennedy assassination who -- within 36 hours -- broadcast to the world that he had no doubt Oswald was the killer of President Kennedy. Wade's office once issued a memo instructing assistant DA's not to take Jews, Negroes, Dagoes, Mexicans or members of other races on a jury, no matter how rich or well educated.

Unlike many other candidates who promise reform, Watkins has, so far, followed through, to the point where many of the lawyers in the office who backed Shook have left. For instance, Watkins set up a task force to partner with the Innocence Project of Texas to do DNA testing for convicts on death row. Several of them have had their verdicts overturned. He also issued new guidelines on how Dallas DA's would perform interrogations and how line-ups would be conducted, two procedures with which Kennedy researchers were quite familiar with. He even fired those who were not content with his accent on protecting the rights of the accused.

Note

Note

Now, as the accompanying story details, Watkins has focused his reform attitude on the assassination of President Kennedy. He has made public the existence of a secret stash of both exhibits and 15, 000 pages of documents that his office has been holding for over forty years. The trivial media has made much of a supposed transcript between Ruby and Oswald discussing the murder of President Kennedy on 10/4/63 at the Carousel Club. This document is clearly some kind of play on the dubious testimony of attorney Carroll Jarnagin. Some problems with this testimony are 1.) Jarnagin admitted he was drunk that night 2.) His companion did not recall any such conversation 3.) He failed a polygraph test. (See Seth Kantor, *The Ruby Cover-Up*, pp. 391-392).

Can I find
in this file
H. Wade

Pravin
+
Graham

This has distracted from the real question that should be asked about this disclosure. Namely, why did neither Wade nor Hill turn over this evidence in the decades preceding? They could have done it on at least four separate occasions: in 1964 to the Warren Commission, in 1977 to the House Select Committee on Assassinations, and in the nineties, to local and federal agencies.