

Timeline: At the fore in civil rights fight

Jan. 15, 1929: Martin Luther King Jr. born in Atlanta.

1947: King begins as an assistant preacher at his father's church, Ebenezer Baptist, in Atlanta.

1948: Ordained as a Baptist minister, King graduates from Morehouse College in Atlanta.

1949: While at Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pa., King studies nonviolent philosophy of Gandhi.



World Wide Photos

King and his wife, Coretta Scott King, in Stockholm in '66

1953: King marries Coretta Scott on June 18.

1954: In May, the Supreme Court rules segregation illegal in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. King becomes pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala.

1955: In December, Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat, sparking the 381-day Montgomery bus boycott. King becomes the boycott's leader.

1956: King's house is bombed in January; King is indicted for conspiring to stop the bus company operations. In November, Supreme Court rules Alabama's bus segregation unconstitutional.

1957: In January, King and other black ministers found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In September, National Guard troops sent in to restore order as Little Rock Central High School desegregated.



1958: King is stabbed by a black woman while autographing books in a New York department store.

1960: Black students stage sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C. In October, King is arrested at a sit-in at an Atlanta department store. He's sentenced to four months of hard labor but is released after presidential candidate John F. Kennedy posts bail.

1961: The SCLC and other civil rights groups begin Freedom Rides. Violence erupts in Alabama, where a bus is burned and riders attacked. Martial law is declared in Montgomery.



1962: Two are killed in September during James Meredith's attempt to integrate the University of Mississippi.

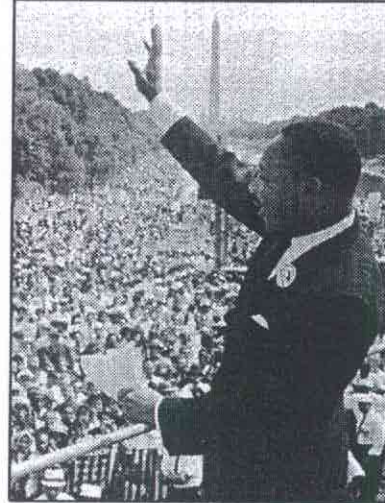


Ralph Abernathy, King arrested

AP

1963: During demonstrations to protest segregation in Birmingham, Ala., King is arrested. Placed in solitary confinement, King writes his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," explaining his support for nonviolent civil disobedience. Schoolchildren join the Birmingham protests: police use fire hoses and police dogs to halt them.

1963: In August, King leads more than 500,000 people in the March on Washington, the largest civil rights demonstration in history. He gives "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial. Two weeks later, four black girls are killed when a bomb explodes at Birmingham's Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church. FBI begins wiretaps on King and SCLC.



King speaks in Washington in 1963

AP

1964: President Lyndon Johnson signs Civil Rights Act. A month later, the bodies of three civil rights workers are found near Philadelphia, Miss. King becomes youngest person ever awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1965: In February Black Muslim leader Malcolm X is assassinated. Two weeks later, demonstrators beaten by police while marching from Selma, Ala., to Montgomery. King and 3,000 protestors begin a new march from Selma to Montgomery. That summer, President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act. In August, rioting breaks out in Los Angeles' Watts area, leaving 35 dead.

1966: Stokely Carmichael, head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee uses the slogan "black power." King and his family move to a Chicago tenement. He calls for an end to discrimination in housing, education and jobs. Two days later, rioting erupts in Chicago; two die. A month later, King is pelted with stones while leading a march through the city.

1967: In April, King predicts racial violence that summer. Rioting erupts in more than 30 cities. King and other black leaders call for an end. President Johnson appoints the Kerner Commission to investigate the cause of the violence. In November, King announces the Poor People's Campaign.

1968: On March 28, King leads march of striking sanitation workers in Memphis. The march turns violent: one black is killed. King leaves, but returns April 3. The following day, King is assassinated. Rioting breaks out in Washington, D.C. Thousands attend King's funeral in Atlanta.

1970: The King Center is dedicated in Atlanta on the 41st anniversary of King's birth. The center is part of the three-block King National Historic Site on Auburn Avenue.


1979: President Carter calls for a national King holiday.

1983: On Nov. 2, King holiday is signed into law.

1991: National Football League owners vote to move 1993 Super Bowl from Phoenix to protest Arizona's failure to pass a paid state King holiday.

1992: In November, Arizona passes initiative to establish King holiday. NFL lifts ban on Super Bowl in Phoenix.

1993: In January, New Hampshire becomes last state to approve King holiday. The *Memphis Commercial Appeal* reports the Army used U-2 planes and wiretaps to spy on King's family and other civil rights leaders.

The logo for the Memphis Commercial Appeal, featuring the word "Memphis" in a bold, sans-serif font with a stylized graphic element to its right.

Source: USA TODAY research

By J.L. Albert, USA TODAY

The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. — 25 years ago Sunday on a motel balcony in Memphis — shocked a nation, changed lives and forged a new resolve in the civil rights movement. A remembrance:

King: Memories of a fallen

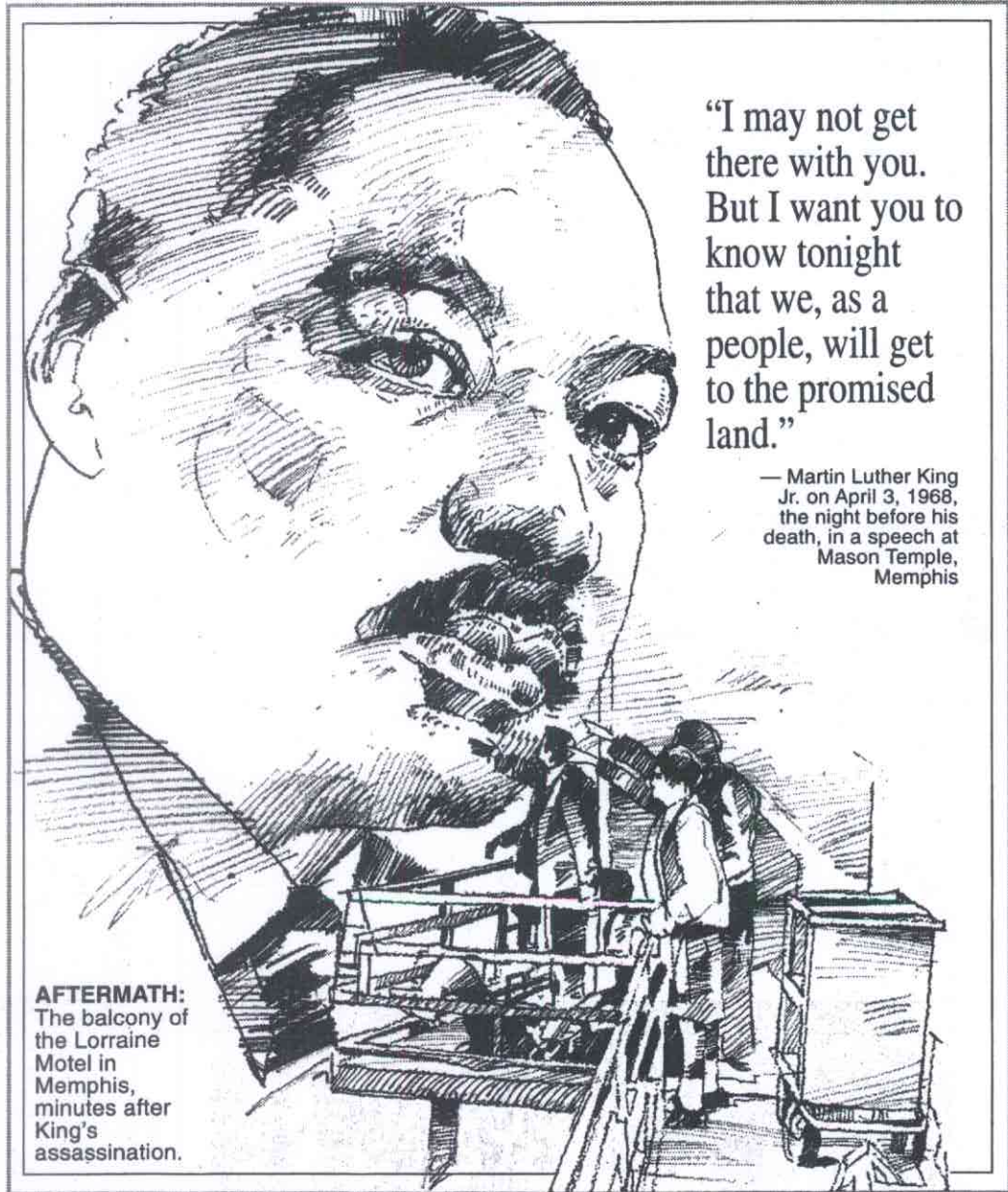
Andrew Young:
Awakened
a conscience

Young, one of King's closest aides, was underneath the motel balcony when King was shot. Young has been ambassador to the U.N., a congressman and mayor of Atlanta.

THE MOMENT: "We were waiting for him to put on a shirt and tie. When he came out (on the balcony), he asked me if he needed a topcoat. I said: 'You might better get it. You've been taking a cold and it's getting chilly out here.' ... Then I thought (the shot) was a firecracker or a car backfiring. When I looked up there, I didn't see him. I thought he was clowning around at first. I ran up there. The police started running toward us. We were pointing, saying, 'Go back the other way (where the shot came from).'"

"The bullet went through and clipped off the base of his chin and took half of his spinal column, just like somebody had taken a knife and cut it out. "You just didn't feel anything. Just numb, except in terms of getting an ambulance."

PERSONAL EFFECT: "It's hard to explain. It's something I've always lived with. But when you come out of a Christian background, death is a liberation and a victory. We were prepared by Martin to go ahead and keep on. On the Sunday before he went to Mem-



"I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land."

— Martin Luther King Jr. on April 3, 1968, the night before his death, in a speech at Mason Temple, Memphis

AFTERMATH:
The balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, minutes after King's assassination.

Photo resource: Ray Young, Time Inc. via AP

By Web Bryant, USA TODAY

leader

phis, we had a meeting with John Conyers, Harry Belafonte and Dick Hatcher. Martin was discussing how to take the energy of the movement into politics. That's one reason I went into politics, because of him."

NATIONAL IMPACT: "It awakened a long dormant conscience in academia and the business world. There was a dramatic boost in the number of black students enrolling in colleges the year after Martin's death. People began to realize the racial situation in America. Even those who fought against him suddenly realized that the only voice of non-violence was taken from us and they had better start doing something about this or something else might happen."



By Joe Stewardson, USA TODAY
YOUNG: 'Death is . . . victory.'

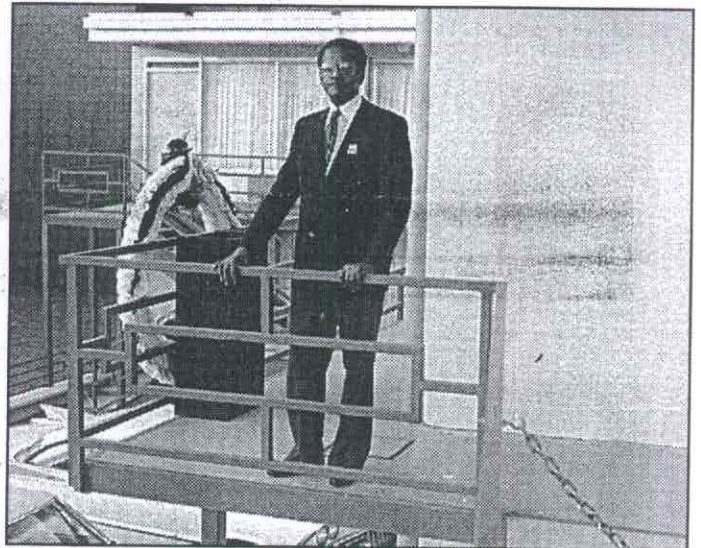
Rev. Billy Kyles: 'It just didn't seem real'

Kyles, a Memphis minister and civil rights activist, was on the balcony of the motel with King, waiting to take him home to dinner.

THE MOMENT: "It's almost as if the shooter was waiting for me to move so he could get a clear shot at Martin. I walked 4 or 5 feet down the balcony. I thought I heard a car backfiring. . . . When I looked over the railing, I realized everybody down there was ducking. I looked back up and saw Martin lying there. . . . There was just this tremendous hole in his face. I knew it was fatal to have that size hole. It just didn't seem real.

"I saw blood pouring from his face. I had picked his tie out. The bullet severed the tie and turned the knot upside down. There was a crushed cigarette in his hand, and the force of the bullet had picked him up and thrown him back. His eyes were moving, but he never said anything. I went to the phone to call an ambulance. I couldn't raise anybody. You had to go through the motel switchboard and there was nobody down there. I just started beating on the wall. Ralph (Abernathy) came in and patted me on the shoulder. But there was no way I could be calm.

"The police were coming toward us. I told them to call an



By John L. Focht, AP

ON THE BALCONY: The Rev. Billy Kyles at the Memphis motel where 25 years ago he was with King when King was shot.

ambulance on police radio."

PERSONAL EFFECT: "Many of us stayed in shock for five or 10 years. I had to make a choice. There wasn't much chance in me getting violent; it's just not my nature. But I felt, 'What's the use? To hell with this country.' I felt that way for a few days. The other side of me said: 'What are you talking about? Martin gave his life for a cause.' I saw him lying down on that balcony. He could have been president of a university or anything he want-

ed. But he died for people. I couldn't stop. I had to try and pick up the mantle and keep doing his work."

NATIONAL IMPACT: "It affected not only the nation but the world. It shows that one person can make a difference. When I saw young people standing on the tanks in Tiananmen Square with flowers in their hands and singing *We Shall Overcome*, I knew what kind of impact his life and this movement had on the world. It moved me."

Hosea Williams: 'Divided, conquered'

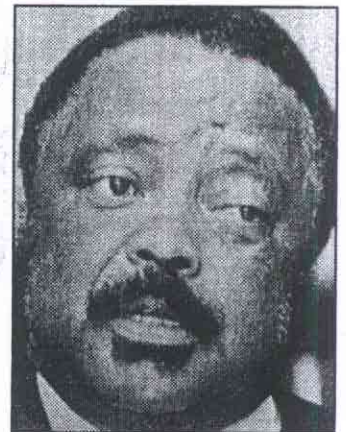
Williams, field organizer for King's marches, was underneath the balcony of the motel.

THE MOMENT: "I backed up and looked up. Dr. King wore only one kind of shoe, a Frank Brothers black shoe, and ribbed socks. I saw his shoe through the rail. When I got up to the body, Ralph Abernathy had King's head in his hands. I knew he was dead. White policemen came running out from a firehouse across the street. The first thing I thought was, 'They did it.'"

PERSONAL EFFECT: "I thought, 'How crazy can America be? They have killed the one man who lived and breathed non-violence, who kept the rest of us piped down, cool and patient.' Now we were really going to get this stuff straight once and for all with white America. I'm a chemist. I just had this desire to take molecules out of the air and construct a weapon and just kill everything that was white. But then I thought, 'That's just the opposite of what Dr. King

would want you to do.'"

NATIONAL IMPACT: "Dr. King had always told us, 'You've got to keep this team together and it won't matter if I die.' But we allowed the white power structure to divide and conquer us. Dr. King's dream has all but turned into a nightmare for those that it was meant to help. We became powerless, like a bad dog who barks but has no teeth. Dr. King never knew how influential, how powerful worldwide, he had become."



AP

WILLIAMS: Deadly 'desire'

Killing changed Memphis

By Mark Mayfield
USA TODAY

MEMPHIS — As ceremonies nationwide mark the 25th anniversary of Martin Luther King's death, a group of aging men quietly mourn anew.

They were among the 1,300 striking sanitation workers whom King had come to Memphis to stand with in 1968. Today many still speak of his death as a raw, personal loss.

"He died for us. You can't ask more of a man than that," says Leroy Bonner, now 81, who was among those workers.

In the aftermath of King's murder, many have tried to measure the effect of his life, and what followed. Perhaps nowhere did judgment weigh heavier than in Memphis.

Says National Civil Rights Museum executive director Juanita Moore: "The whole scorn of the world was on Memphis, just like Dallas after John Kennedy's death. But Memphis had another problem Dallas didn't — the race issue."

Many racial barriers have been broken. The city now has a black mayor and a black majority on the school board, and is one seat shy of a black majority on the City Council.

Yet problems persist. Blacks — 55% of Memphis' 610,000 population — are often poor. The average per capita income of blacks is \$6,982, compared with \$17,569 for whites.

The ongoing federal bank fraud retrial of Rep. Harold Ford, the state's only black member of Congress, raised new tensions. As a result, black leaders threatened a petition drive to ask the National Football League to reject Memphis' bid for a franchise.

Says Herman Ewing, head Memphis' Urban League: "Memphis has changed, but relative to the amount of time that has passed since Martin Luther King's death, we haven't changed nearly as

much as we should have."

In 1968, some of King's aides opposed the trip to Memphis. But many residents say his presence changed their lives.

"The strike gave the African-American community a strong sense of self-esteem," says Rosie Phillips Bingham, a college administrator whose father was among the strikers.

Leroy Bonner, who made less than \$2 an hour when the strike began, says wages improved and backbreaking conditions stopped when the strike ended — after King's death.

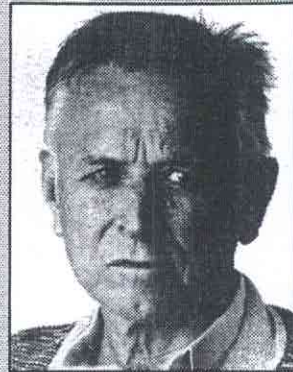
"If it hadn't been for him, I'd be gone now. The work would have just killed me," says Bonner. "He helped us in more ways than he did know."

Anniversary events, TV

► In Memphis, a march downtown Saturday and symposium at the National Civil Rights Museum.

► In Atlanta, communion services Sunday and wreath laying at King's tomb.

► In New York on Sunday, 50,000 expected at Beloved Community March; children asked to turn in toy guns for apples and books.



JAMES EARL RAY

On television

► *At the River I Stand*, PBS, 10 p.m. ET/PT Friday, a documentary on the Memphis sanitation strike.

► *Guilt or Innocence: The Trial of James Earl Ray*, HBO, 8 p.m. ET/PT Sunday. (Review of the mock trial, interview with Ray, 3D)

Conspiracy theories continue to surface

By LaCrisha Butler

Little evidence. No reliable witnesses. No ballistics tests.

In the 25 years since a single bullet ended the life of Martin Luther King Jr. on a balcony in Memphis, the cry has grown:

Did James Earl Ray — petty thief, admitted white racist, high school dropout — really kill King? And if he was involved, did he act alone?

Was he plotter, or patsy?

Ray, now 65 and imprisoned in Tennessee, began proclaiming he was coerced into confessing to the murder in 1969, after being held in solitary confinement for eight months.

At first, he was ignored. But as the years have gone by, some — even former lieutenants in the civil rights movement — say a new investigation and perhaps a trial is needed to bring out all the facts. Because he confessed, Ray was never tried.

"At the beginning of it, we just kind of said it didn't matter who killed him — white America killed him," says the Rev. Billy Kyles. "But as we grow older . . . history needs to know who killed Martin Luther King, and why."

Former District of Columbia delegate Walter Fauntroy, who served on the House Select

Committee on Assassinations that looked into King's murder, said he agreed with the panel's conclusions — until recently.

In 1978, after a two-year probe, the committee said King's murder was orchestrated by a St. Louis-based conspiracy that offered a \$50,000 bounty, and Ray was the gunman. The panel's files are sealed until 2027.

"I now believe that James Earl Ray was not the gunman, but a patsy in an elaborate conspiracy," says Fauntroy.

No one disputes that Ray was in Memphis, or that his fingerprint was found on a rifle at the scene.

And Ray acknowledges renting a room in the flophouse from which police say the single .30-caliber bullet was fired.

But he maintains he was set up by a man called only "Raoul," who gave Ray instructions and money to buy a car and weapon, and directed his movements across the USA before the assassination. Ray says he never fired a shot.

But G. Robert Blakey, general counsel for the House panel, says a new probe isn't needed.

Ray "is unworthy of belief," Blakey says. "He's a liar. He's a petty criminal."

LaCrisha Butler writes for Gannett News Service