

# MURDER IN MEMPHIS

The Blood on the hands of Lyndon Johnson has yet to dry



"....J. Edgar Hoover had a contract taken out on Martin Luther King's life through a New Orleans Mafia connection, and it was carried out at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968...."

The role of our government in the assassination of Martin Luther King has long been hinted at in certain circles, but the recent public appeals by the King family for a retrial of James Earl Ray has thrustred that theory into public prominence. Accepting the already well-documented but still officially unacknowledged facts of the FBI's involvement in illegal wiretapping, infiltrating, blackmailing and other blatantly illegal covert operations against American citizens and political organizations since the late fifties is only the first step in coming to embrace information that is no longer highly speculative or even particularly controversial. James Earl Ray did not kill Martin Luther King, and his peripheral responsibility being construed as the sole cause of King's death is the legacy of the highest figures in the American government of the last half of this century.

personalities, policies, and intelligence gathering units to identify and combat the major elements within the Civil Rights movement in the early sixties became a top priority for a variety of governmental agencies besides the FBI, including the U.S. army, and even contemporary FBI and CIA spokesmen are unable to deny that Martin Luther King was a major target for these activities.

James Earl Ray, now on the verge of death from liver chitrosis, has long maintained that he was not directly involved in the shooting of King, and the "throwdown gun" that was found in a doorway not far from the Lorraine Hotel and was attributed to Ray, was not in fact the gun that killed King.

William Pepper, Ray's attorney, has long argued for a new trial for his client, who recanted his admission of guilt and claimed police coercion in the confession, and is lobbying to have new ballistics tests performed on the

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title. Ray was reportedly held in a cell in Memphis for eight months after his extradition from Britain. He claims his mental condition had deteriorated due to the fact that the cell was brightly lit twenty-four hours a day, with closed circuit t.v. cameras, round the clock guard and audio surveillance. Under these conditions, with a continual pressure by attorneys to plead guilty, Ray finally signed an admission. One day after his plea, having had the lights turned off in his cell for the first time in nearly a year, he wrote a letter to the presiding judge, Preston Battle, recanting his plea and requesting a trial. He claimed to be a patsy in a larger conspiracy and demanded to tell the truth before a jury. Battle died while the request was still under consideration, and the state court ruled subsequently ruled against him. The trial was denied, and he had already been sentenced to ninety-nine years.

The bullet removed from King's body has never been decisively proven to have been fired from Ray's gun. The weapon in question is a Remington Gannemaster 30.06. Ray claims a man who he knew only as "Raoul" tossed the weapon for authorities to find as a red herring. Ray's attorneys have never been allowed to examine the rifle, and both the FBI and House Select Committee On

Assassinations were unable to determine that the rifle was indeed the murder weapon. New Electron microscope technology is assumed to be able to determine what previous optical microscopes could not. A string of FBI spokesmen have long argued

against the new test claiming additional data "would not significantly enhance information previously gathered...". While this is clearly a stall tactic by the agency most likely to suffer from further scrutiny and allegation, there is a strong bipartisan push to re-open the investigation.

The propulsion for a new trial and new claims of Ray's innocence has come largely from the King Family itself, primarily King's son Dexter, who has repeatedly asserted his support for Ray, and his firm belief in Ray's innocence.

"...as awkward as it might seem, I believe you and my family believes you, and we will do everything in our power to see you prevail..." Recently on CROSSFIRE, in fact, Dexter King claimed to have located the real RAOUL, although he refused to release the true identity of the alleged triggerman, preferring to wait until a full trial can be convened. Speculation has it that "Raoul" was a triggerman for New Orleans mob bosses who



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James Earl Ray



were contracted by the CIA to commit the shooting.

Clearly, the HCSA, whose findings on the assassination are sealed until 2029, did little to unearth the truth surrounding King's death.

HCSA lead counsel, G. Robert Blakey held examinations in a cursory fashion, slanting questions toward the intelligence community, and if anything, the committee's sole purpose seemed to be to exonerate the FBI and CIA, not to find the true killer.

Prosecutors claim Ray shot King on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel from a boarding house bathroom window across the street, despite the fact that a bank of trees block the view of the balcony from that angle, as well as numerous witnesses who claim to have heard the shot come from ground level. Less than a month after the assassination, Memphis city maintenance workers inexplicably cut down the trees, photographs of which were never introduced as evidence in an effort to prove Ray could never had made the shot as proposed. Ray, who was rated to be an "average" marksman during his military service, has long claimed that it would take a expert shot with a great deal of luck to have assassinated King from that vantage.

In 1994, a woman named Betty Spates, who worked at Jim's Grill which is located next to the boarding house containing Ray's alleged sniper's nest, claimed that the owner of the grill, Lloyd Jowers, ran through the restaurant immediately after the shooting

with a rifle, and then broke it down, hiding it in the trunk of his car. She claimed Jowers threatened to kill her if she ever revealed what she had seen, but this lead was never followed up on, and Jowers died before he could be questioned about her assertions.

The weakest link in the investigation has always been the activity of the Memphis police. Their blatant mishandling and ignoring of evidence is on par with the circus surrounding the O.J. trial, and has long been an impediment to the search for answers.

One repeated theory is that the actual shooters were CIA gunmen disguised as Memphis police, and several associates of Carlos Marcello, a New Orleans crime boss, claim this to be true. Just prior to the killing, despite dozens of death threats against King, the security detail assigned to protect him was reduced from eight to two. Of the two officers left, one was black. He was sent home because of a "threat against his life". This left one remaining policeman.

When a private ambulance arrived immediately after the shooting, Memphis police insisted on waiting for a city ambulance and would not allow King to be immediately transported to the hospital. He died en route.

Clearly, King was a threat to the state of the nation as the FBI saw it at the time. J. Edgar Hoover publicly called him an "agitator" and a "moral degenerate". He also was reportedly furious by King's winning of a Nobel Prize, and thought that he himself should have been bestowed the honor.

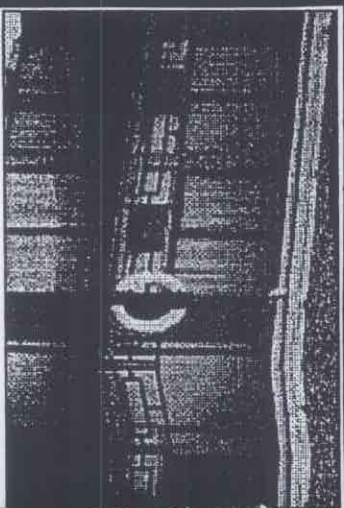
Clearly, King's assassination effectively ended a groundswell of black political consciousness in this country, and thirty years later, it still hasn't recovered.

COINTELPRO documents have proven that vast steps were taken to interrupt, frame and even murder black leaders at the time, including trying to blackmail King with pictures of one of his affairs, and it is not so great a step to assume that the inconsistencies and obvious mistrusts in the framing of James Earl Ray point to a government cover-up. Anyone who thinks our government at that time was incapable of cold blooded murder in the name of

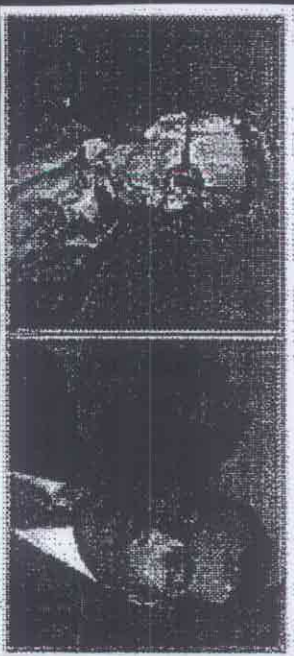
"freedom" was not standing outside the democratic convention in Chicago in '68, has not read the history of the destruction of the Black Panther movement, knows nothing about the bombings of Laos and Cambodia during the Vietnam war, and probably voted for George Bush.

What is truly disgusting is to be living in a country that honors a man with a national holiday, names streets and highways and public schools after him, yet refuses to investigate the circumstances surrounding his death. There is clearly a mountain of contradictory evidence that has yet to be fully examined, and there are enough unanswered questions to warrant full scale rioting and looting, yet James Earl Ray is allowed to come closer and closer to his demise, and with it, the last link to the truth.

At 6:01 p.m., on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King stepped out of his motel room on the way to get dinner. As he leaned over the railing of the balcony to speak to his chauffeur, a rifle shot rang out, knocking him back onto the balcony floor, where he lay dying. Five years earlier, John F. Kennedy lay in the back seat of his limo in Dallas, already dead on the way to the hospital.



The balcony of the Lorraine Motel



Ray and Dexter King