

King's widow seeks new probe into death

On the eve of the 30th anniversary of his assassination, Martin Luther King's widow accused the government of a massive conspiracy to cover up evidence in the case.

As King's family prepared for a private ceremony at his tomb today, Coretta Scott King called for a national commission to investigate the murder of her husband, who was gunned down April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis.

Her family had previously called for a new trial of James Earl Ray, who confessed to the murder, then recanted.

"We have witnesses who have come forth and told my family they would like to tell what they know about the case, but nobody will listen to

them," Mrs. King said.

"These are very, very credible witnesses."

One of them, Loyd Jowers, has claimed meetings to discuss the assassination were held in a Memphis restaurant in the days before King was killed.

Prosecutors have dismissed Jowers' account, saying he appeared to be trying to sell his story.

Jowers' lawyer, Lewis Garrison, said his client has not sought money, only immunity from prosecution.

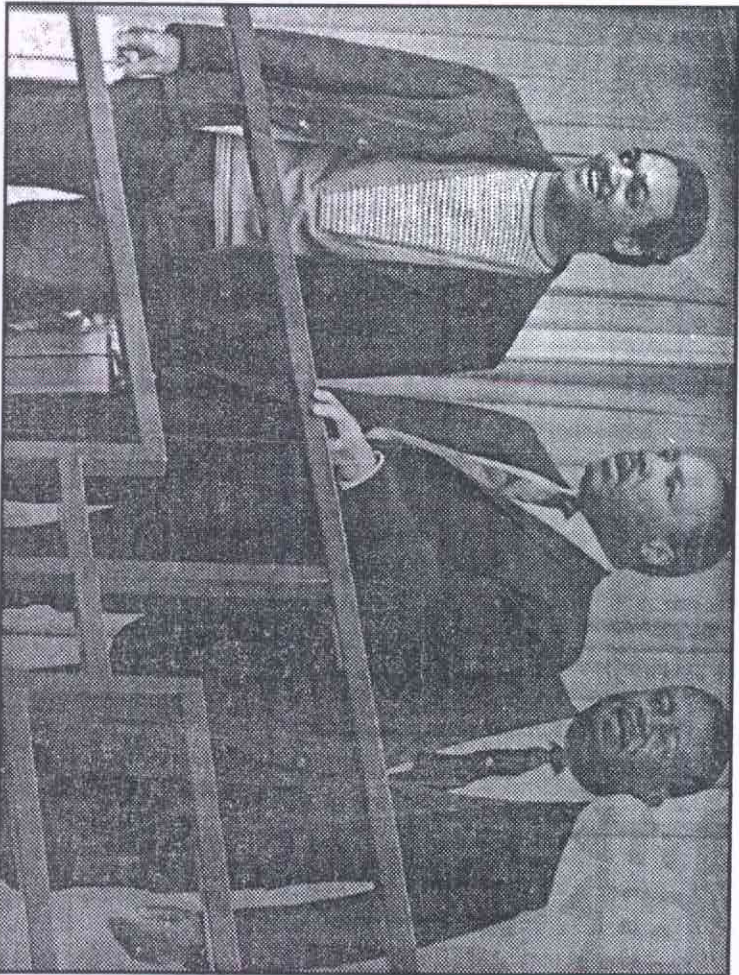
"It's clearly a coverup," Mrs. King said. "They have tried to discredit anyone who comes forward."

"If they aren't afraid, why don't they have a hearing so these people can be investigated in a court of law? That's the way we do things in this country. It's called due process."

Mrs. King said she had been reluctant to talk about the murder for 30 years.

"I just didn't want to deal with it," she said. Part of it was just the pain associated with it."

But she said she believes the government has known



TRAGEDY WAITING TO HAPPEN: Dr. King is flanked by Jesse Jackson (left) and Ralph Abernathy at the Lorraine Motel on April 3, 1968 — the day before he was slain. AP

at least since 1969, that Ray, who is serving a 99-year term after confessing to the slaying, did not act alone.

A congressional investigation two decades ago concluded Ray was the sole killer.

But Mrs. King said she wanted a panel similar to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that would provide immunity for anyone with information about the crime.

"I believe that such a commission could make a major contribution to interracial

healing and reconciliation in America," she said.

Talk of a possible conspiracy dominated a three-day commemoration of King's death that began yesterday in Memphis.

The Rev. James Lawson, a close King associate, endorsed the call for a fresh investigation of the assassination at a kickoff church service yesterday.

"The issue is not, has there been a conspiracy. The issue is, who killed Martin Luther King Jr.," Lawson, pastor of Holman United Methodist

Church in Los Angeles, said.

"We're not going to be closed down... We will not permit the crucifixion of Martin Luther King to be buried," he added.

Thousands of supporters were expected to march today along the route King took in support of striking garbage workers shortly before his death.

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CORETTA KING

Sees fed coverup.