

NATIONAL  WORLD

King widow calls for inquiry

ATLANTA/Reuters

THE WIDOW OF SLAIN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER Martin Luther King Jr. has accused the U.S. government of conspiring to discredit witnesses and cover up evidence in his assassination 30 years ago.

Coretta Scott King has largely remained silent about the killing since King was gunned down April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis.

But in a news conference Thursday, she called on the government to establish a commission similar to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate the assassination. She later expanded on her suspicions in an interview with Reuters news agency.

"I was reluctant to talk about it for almost 30 years," she said. "I just didn't want to deal with it. Part of it was just the pain associated with it."

King said she believed the government has known at least since 1969 that James Earl Ray, who is serving a 99-year term after confessing to the slaying, did not act alone. She said if the case were brought to trial, evidence would show he

was not even the trigger man.

"It's clearly a coverup," she 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."

King said "very, very credible witnesses" have come forward but "nobody will listen to them."

She said former Representative Walter Fauntroy, who chaired the House of Representatives select committee on assassinations, told her he had seen evidence that the FBI wanted to silence her husband before he was killed. But she stopped short of accusing the FBI of complicity in the slaying.

"They [the FBI] monitored him all over the country and outside of the country he was monitored by the CIA. They said, 'We have to remove him from the scene,' and then they said, 'We have to destroy him,' and all of this is in the record."

She said that when her family began asking last year that Ray be put on trial, they too became the victims of government attempts to discredit them.

"We're asking for a trial that the man never had, and all they do is get people to discredit us."