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Institutions need study: Weisberg

Political assassinations cannot be examined without also examining basic institutions in society, according to Harold Weisberg, who spoke Wednesday night at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

He is considered an authority on the King and Kennedy assassinations.

Congress, the courts and the press failed to act during the alleged cover-up of the two assassinations, Weisberg said. "This is the reality of our national life. We are not following whodunits. We are looking at how our institutions work and if they need reexamination," he said.

"James Earl Ray did not kill King," Weisberg added. "I don't know who did. But with such a horrendous crime, there had to be a pretext of solution."

A conspiracy is a combination of at least two people "to do what the lay says is wrong," Weisberg said. "The King evidence shows it was beyond the capability of one person alone. The same is true of John F. Kennedy."

The same people did not kill both men, he said, but there was a philosophical connection between the two assassinations. The killings, he said, served the same purpose — to remove men whose policies had undergone paralleling changes from national leadership.

"There was unity in these crimes," Weisberg said. "There are political consequences regardless of who committed the crimes."

Ray cannot be placed at the scene of the assassination within two hours of the crime, he said, adding that Ray was having a tire fixed when King was shot "and we can prove that."

The physical layout of the rooming house bathroom where the assassin supposedly was makes it impossible to shoot accurately, Weisberg said. For example, there was a double

window sill and an assassin would have had to shoot downhill, through the wood, while standing on the bathtub, he said.

Besides, the supposed murder weapon was found 10 minutes before King was killed, Weisberg said.

"The evidence was planted and the cops knew it. The people who framed Ray did not expect the FBI to go for such a cockamamy story. They needed some lead time and J. Edgar Hoover had other needs," he said.

Ray, who had escaped from prison, had been in Canada searching for money to finance a permanent trip abroad, according to Weisberg. He was contacted by organized crime, Weisberg said, although probably not the Mafia, to smuggle contraband, in exchange for money and a new identity. The people manipulated Ray's moves throughout the country, according to Weisberg, with the ultimate goal of framing him for King's murder.

The FBI has 88 volumes on the Ray case, Weisberg said, and all are expected to be made public through Freedom of Information Act suits. "That's just a drop in the bucket," he said. "But it will show how the FBI works... the actual operations of the best known police agency in the world."