

Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701

12/12/75

Mr. Dan Rather
CBS News
524 W. 57 St.,
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Mr. Rather,

Some time ago, intending it as a courtesy to you and so that you would not take anything personal from it, I wrote you to say that despite prior agreement I was declining to appear on the CBS King assassination "special."

You were not obliged to reply and you did not. However, I did think you would have some appreciation of the fact that what CBS had done confronted me with a conflict of interest and that ethically I could resolve it no other way.

James Earl Ray, as you know, refused to be interviewed on your "special." Separately his counsel objected.

Today I received a letter from him in which he tells me that you, personally, by-passed his counsel and through his brother Jerry sought to get him to agree to an interview with you.

You and everyone involved at CBS know this case is far from final decision.

You also knew that there is not a thing Jim Lesar or I could do ethically that we did not do for CBS, without asking or getting paid - and we neither have any regular income.

There is dispute among you as to whether or not an effort was made to blackmail Jim Lesar into urging Ray to grant an interview. This was possible only because CBS insisted on interviewing Mr. Lesar on areas of fact he said should not be addressed to him and should be to me. Yet no effort was made to interview me and he was taped and he did, inadvertently, make the kind of error of fact expectable of the expert on law. This was the basis of the attempt at blackmail.

You may have no knowledge of this, directly or indirectly. And my information of your efforts through Jerry Ray is contradiction to the position of James Ray's counsel is not first hand.

However, I do believe this raises ethical question. You are not, I hope, a man without awareness of them. I therefore would appreciate either a denial from you that you made any such effort through Jerry or an explanation of the legal ethics and James Earl Ray's rights as you see them.

Yesterday's mail brought a copy of a CBS release sent to a reporter who made the copy for me. It begins, "Did James Earl Ray, acting alone, kill the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King?" (sic)

Can you conceive that one in my position can take this as an expression of bias? It raises questions of conspiracy but not of Ray's possible innocence. It is not, in my opinion, possible for CBS to have spent all the time it has and made in court the representations it has and not found reason to believe that perhaps Mr. Ray was not the killer. Unless, of course, its representations to Mr. Lesar and me about the purposes of its Tennessee litigation, so long delayed, are not truthful. When I consider that CBS accepted from the Department of Justice the pictures I displayed yesterday I find no basis for reduced suspicion.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

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Harold Weisberg

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Dear Roger,

I'd have written you sooner but I can't keep up.

This is so you will not be troubled if you discover something and wonder if I know. I know some, not all.

Stanton
CIA I know that up at the top the appropriate initials added to a name are not only a "d" and an "r" but begin with before "d."

I have reason to believe that the same initials are properly applied to others below the top. I don't know which but I have good reason to believe the fact.

Whether or not net, I get reports that there were news items on CBS stations on my press conference as late as last night.

While there can be other explanations, the selection used on AM TV yesterday morning could not have been less faithful to the purposes or content of the press conference and are a cut of what I said I did not want to go into, leaving out the intro. I began by saying that while I am Ray's investigator I was not appearing in that role and asked that questions crossing into that area not be asked.

The net effect was to air what those of evil intent could take as an indication that I have been working on a solution or have come to one.

That for whatever reason, no matter how innocent, this was sued with all that had news value and didn't hurt CBS machismo is not comforting.

I didn't think earlier that CBS could use this in the special after I'd refused to appear on it but they have a right to and I can't object to anything except dishonesty or unfairness. (The aired cut I regard as deliberately unfair because it was taken out of context and was out of the context of the press conference.)

However, not expecting this I knew others would be taping so I had a couple of others tape for me. One student has reported back. He forgot his tapes, I gave him a 90 and a 60 and he says he missed the last two questions.

While I did not have time to prepare properly and because of an unexpected change felt I could not use the press release that was a partial explanation, the reaction I've gotten has been good. I'd like the day to come when I can have a summary for the press, which needs it, and xeroxes.

Best,