

Prof. David Garrow  
Dept. Political Science  
C.C.N.Y.  
New York, N.Y. 10031

12/21/87

Dear David,

I've finished Bearing the Cross. It is a truly fine job! Remarkably fine!

Before I'd finished it Mike Moscato told me of criticism about your handling of King's personal life. Such criticism is worse than merely unfair because you did understate what you could have said and because you did strike close to a perfect balance in the treatment that honesty did require. Moreover, given what you did not go into, the FBI's extensive handling of it and the widespread use of what the FBI leaked, how could you and your integrity have survived not going into it? Had you ignored this your book would have been clobbered.

After reading the last chapter I think there are some things you would like to know, based on what I recall of my reading of the HQ and field office MURKIN, strike and Invader records, which do include some of those filed under POCAM, what the FBI calls the Poor Peoples' Campaign and the March on Washington. And a few of the CIA's records. I don't recall whether I showed these to you. They even had what was in King's pockets and, mysteriously, the copies filed with the court's papers are missing from the court's files!

One of the two young people killed by the Memphis police, Payne, was murdered.

The account of the riot given you is bobtailed in several respects. The first vehicle asked to take King away refused. King's people did not ask to be taken to the Rivermont. The asked for the then famous downtown hotel the name of which skips me. It was the police who decided on the Rivermont and I agree with their judgement. It was more isolated whereas the hotel was close to the riot scene. King was not, from the FBI's record, afraid for his life, which the quote you use can be taken to mean. He was inside the violence <sup>area</sup> and was shocked by it and wanted to be away from it. The FBI, knowing the truth, made up for misuse the rest. Including, and I have these records, the whole bit about the Rivermont and King's alleged cowardice. The dirty job was carried out in Memphis, where the Commercial-Appeal had a cartoon of a cowering and frightened King being carried away under the caption "Chicken a la King."

Your accurate treatment of Lawson and the Invaders is also unfair to Lawson. He'd been dealing with the Invaders patiently for a long time, trying to help them and they were impossible and did try, with some success, to blackmail ~~Not~~ only Lawson, many of the older blacks.

Not only were the Invaders not responsible for the riot, they had decided to stay away. I've always wondered whether the police finks inspired the kids to do it.

The first to reach the fallen King were not Kyles or Abernathy. It was Marrell McCullough. He was a young black graduate of the police academy who'd never worn a uniform when he was assigned to penetrate the Invaders, who never had any formal education. They took the unfortunate name from a TV show. He appears to have been responsible for some of the violence attributed to them. He acted as Minister of Transportation. He'd been driving Orange around that day, had just returned to the parking lot and was first up the stairs. Joe Couw, on assignment for public TV, was in a nearby room. He grabbed his 35 mm so the pictures would be his and he has a shot of McCullough leaning over King before the towel was brought, he alone.

Kyles originally refused to talk to me but once when I got to speaking to a black who identified himself, as I recall, as a Rev. Smith from SCLC HQ, he was to be joined by Kyles, invited me to wait, and Kyles did speak to me briefly. (I'd wanted to speak to him for my book, not after it was published.) He did not even

indicate to me that he was first to the body.

Particularly because of King's shifted emphasis to economic issues and POCAM I think the strike and Invaders files I have round out the picture for scholars and for history. Jerry McNight has done two understated articles for South Atlantic Quarterly on them. The reflection of the FBI's attitude, HQ and field, toward the kinds of efforts King was making is quite good and clear in them.

I think also that the Office of Professional Responsibility records fit in nicely. If you have forgotten, they conducted the in-house investigation of what the FBI did to King. When the judge ruled, incorrectly, that these records were not within my request, because of my health Jim Mesar filed for them and got them and the report. The large inventory I showed you lists the records FBIHQ directed the field offices to provide for this investigation, if I may use that word. OPR lists and summarizes those records, heavy on the surveillance and Cointelproing. The page I sent you identifying Lish Whitson is an OPR record.

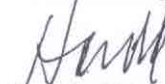
The guy who ran OPR was a Memphian. He'd clerked for Judge MacRae, who sat on the Ray evidentiary hearing. (Jim and I have all the transcripts, by the way.)

I'm not suggesting that it was decisive in King's determination to return to Memphis after the riot but I do think that the muscle of the whole thing by the FBI and the attention it got left him little choice. If he had not returned he's never have lived down the coward libel.

The OPR's records, by the way, include their interviews, of King's people and in FBI field offices. The CIA's include some of your friend Jay Kennedy's awful stuff and his refusal to report to the FBI. His name is obliterated. He tried to interfere even with the funeral arrangements, as I recall.

Great job! Thanks!

Best wishes,



Harold Weisberg

cc M.Moscato