

DEAR MR. WEISBERG;

Hope Everything is well with  
you.

There is no need to answer  
this letter.

I Hope The ENCLOSED NEWS-  
PAPER ARTICLE Helps in some way.

AS REGARDS THE KING  
ASSASSINATION I DON'T IF 'HOOVER  
DID IT ALL, KNOWING WHAT HE WAS  
DOING? CONSPIRACY BEFORE MURDER,  
COVER-UP AFTER MURDER?

NO ONE TOLD ME, OR ~~AND~~  
TAUGHT ME TO LIKE J. EDGAR HOOVER  
AS I WAS GROWING UP - BUT, ~~NEVER~~  
~~NEVER~~ THE LESS, I WAS QUITE AN  
ADMIRER OF HOOVER AND HIS FBI.

ONE THING SEEMS REAL TO  
HISTORIANS, AUTHORS, JOURNALISTS (OVER)

AND ~~EVER~~ REPORTERS — WHAT IS  
CONVEYED TO ME IS THAT J. ED-  
GAR HOOVER, AND HIS FBI, DID NOT  
LIKE ~~PEOPLE~~ BLACK people. HOOVER  
SIMPLY DID NOT LIKE AFRO-AMERICANS

BEST WISHES.

Sincerely,  
Jerry Hamblen

# In the King case, what role did the FBI play?

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B Section

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By Earl Ofari Hutchinson

**T**he conclusion by a Memphis, Tenn., jury that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was the victim of a conspiracy seemed to vindicate those who have long protested that King was the target of organized crime and the government.

One of those who has worked the hit-victim angle especially hard is William Pepper, former attorney for James Earl Ray, the convicted killer who died in prison last year. In a civil suit brought by King's family, the jury agreed that Ray was a Lee Harvey Oswald-type patsy and that the order to kill King came from organized crime figures. The most damaging charge by Pepper, who represented the Kings in this suit, was that two teams of Army snipers lurked outside King's Memphis motel room the day he was killed, and they also had orders to open fire on him.

Ray himself stoked the conspiracy flames by saying that he was framed and recanting his guilty plea. When these allegations were set against the backdrop of the FBI's decadelong war on King and suspicions that it didn't tell all in its investigation of the assassination, it was more than enough for conspiracy theorists.

But despite the Memphis verdict, the evidence is irrefutable that Ray was the trigger-man. His fingerprints were on the alleged murder weapon. He was at the crime scene and he confessed. Over the years Ray told different people different things about his activities and whereabouts at the time of the murder. That's why his protests of innocence and frame-up a quarter-century later sounded like a guilty man desperately trying to cash in on the notoriety of the case.

**T**he King family and those who sincerely want to get to the truth about the King murder would be better served by publicly campaigning for the FBI to open its files, which were ordered sealed for 50 years by a federal court in 1977. If the court refuses, then public pressure should be put on Attorney General Janet Reno to increase the scope of the limited

investigation that she ordered at the behest of the family and appoint an independent counsel to fully investigate the King assassination.

That investigation would have to start with the FBI. It still has not answered many questions about the secret war it waged against King from the late 1950s to the day of his murder. According to public documents, former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and the Justice Department tried to tie King to the Communist Party. The assault on King was more than Hoover acting out his paranoid obsessions

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against a man he considered a subversive; it was a war against the black movement. And Hoover decided that the cheap and dirty way to win was by discrediting the most respected and admired symbol of that movement.

**F**BI agents deluged King with wiretaps, poison-pen letters, threats, harassment and sexual leaks to the media. During its investigation of the assassination, Hoover claimed that the FBI did not find a single fact to indicate any conspiracy; Ray was the "lone nut" assassin. But the many questions the FBI probe did not publicly answer about Ray's possible links to white supremacist groups and the role of government agents who were at or near the Lorraine Motel the day King was killed have created deep public suspicions that Ray didn't act alone.

The Memphis jury didn't uncover any hard proof that the government, racist groups or organized crime figures directly ordered King's murder. An independent probe might at least allay some of the lingering suspicions that government agencies didn't tell the complete truth. But even this wouldn't be enough to absolve the FBI of its disgraceful and illegal campaign against King. The climate of suspicion and hostility it created toward the civil rights movement made it possible for Ray to murder King. And ultimately the FBI must share some of the blame.

*Earl Ofari Hutchinson is the author of "Crisis in Black and White." This opinion appeared in the Los Angeles Times.*

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