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King Family Files Suit Against Suspect in MLK Assassination

By Lisa Pease

History now owes yet another debt to the family of Martin Luther King, Jr. Due to the efforts of Coretta Scott King, Dexter King, James Earl Ray's attorney William Pepper and others, Janet Reno has authorized an inquiry into the assassination of Martin Luther King. According to the statement issued by the Justice Department,

The inquiry will review allegations raised by former FBI agent Donald Wilson and former Memphis Bar owner Lloyd Jowers, suggesting that there may have been an assassination conspiracy broader than James Earl Ray. The evidence gathered during the inquiry will be followed wherever it may lead.

The Justice Department plans to issue a report of its findings at the end of the probe. The case is being handled by the fifty-four year old Barry Kowalski out of the Civil Rights division. Kowalski was the prosecutor who obtained the conviction of the officers who beat Rodney King. Commenting on his new role, Kowalski stated, "This is a lot less daunting than whether a city is going to burn again," referring to the fires set in the aftermath of the original trial, in which the officers were acquitted. Kowalski also won convictions against Klu Klux Klan members for abducting and hanging Michael McDonald in Mobile, Alabama. Although he lost a conviction in 1980 against a man who has since confessed to the crime, Kowalski successfully secured convictions against two neo-Nazis for the 1984 murder of Denver talk show host Alan Berg.

Kowalski joined the Marines in 1967 and served in Vietnam, despite his personal opposition to the war. Kowalski explained, "I thought it was unfair that poor guys had to go but rich guys didn't." He also said that at that time he had "political ambitions" and though he would

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COVER-UP

Excerpts from Stuart Galanor's excellent new book on the Kennedy Assassination

have more credibility opposing the war as a veteran.

After the war, Kowalski graduated from Catholic University's law school. After a brief brush with politics working on George McGovern's 1972 campaign for the presidency, Kowalski lost his original enthusiasm. "I became cynical," he explained. "With what I saw in the war, what I learned from my dad [a two-time Democratic Congressman], and from working on the McGovern campaign, I decided politics just wasn't for me."

From 1974 to 1981, Kowalski taught law at Antioch. In 1981, he joined the Justice Department. "People who accomplish things in life have to believe that what they're doing is the most important thing in the world," Kowalski told the press recently. "I get obsessed with a case when I'm working on it. This is the only thing I'm working on right now."

To ensure that Kowalski and the rest of his team examine the most important evidence, the King family has filed a civil suit against Lloyd Jowers. December 16, 1993, Jowers, on ABC's

Prime Time Live broadcast, told the world that he had been hired to find a killer for King, and that the man who shot King was not James Earl Ray. Jowers came forward in the hopes of being granted immunity so he could safely tell what he knew of the conspiracy to kill King. However, no one in Memphis wanted to talk to Jowers. By filing suit, Dexter King explained, Jowers' testimony can now be taken and made an official part of the assassination record. King added that while most civil suits are brought for damages, the King family just wants to put the truth into the record.

Jowers' attorney said his client was not surprised by the suit.

Jowers has met with Dexter King twice in the past year to discuss his role in the assassination. Now, the King family wants Jowers to tell his story under oath so that the Justice Department can include Jowers' statement as evidence

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From the Chairman's Desk:

The King family continues the struggle forward. As Lisa Pease notes in her cover story, they are now taking legal action themselves to pursue the mysteries of Martin Luther King's death. On another track, Lisa discloses that Attorney General Janet Reno has appointed Barry Kowlaski as the lead attorney in her tentative reopening of the King case. We don't want to speak too soon but, all in all, Kowlaski seems like a good enough choice. We will track this evolving story as closely as possible for our readers. *Probe* also welcomes author and Tennessee resident Mike Vinson, who provides us with more information concerning the King case, including an interview with Jerry Ray.

We excerpt Stewart Galanor's new book *Cover-Up* in this issue. Incisively written and handsomely produced, this new effort includes an abundance of wonderfully recreated pictures and graphics that do much to dispute many of the findings of the House Select Committee on Assassinations in many different areas. For instance, in a bit more than two pages, Galanor impales Vincent Guinn's certification of the single bullet theory. In this issue, we have excerpted a section on the medical evidence which we think is one of the best synopses of that complicated and tangled web we have seen. Galanor takes us through the mutations of this important evidence showing how the conflicts create an irreconcilable quagmire over something that should be simple. That it is not in itself reveals something is quite odd.

Speaking of the HSCA, I complete my two part history and analysis of that body. This was one of the most difficult articles I have ever written because it was so painful to find out exactly what that body had actually done with the evidence. For me, it was appalling. I assure the reader that this article could have been extended over four or more issues, since everywhere I looked in those volumes the same sort of evidentiary problems existed. I also include a look at Robert Blakey's oh-so-close relationship with the intelligence community, especially the CIA. The Regis Blahut affair is discussed here with the use of newly declassified documents.

Donald Gibson has written a unique and quite interesting article on three of the the most prominent representatives of the left in this century. He particularly examines their relationship with John F. Kennedy and the assassination. The line he follows through the three figures tells us something about why the state of the left is pretty much inconsequential today. His analysis of Noam Chomsky's book on Kennedy's Vietnam policy is especially relevant to the torpor that exists in that political arena today. For Chomsky, the Council on Foreign Relations and other such organizations of the power elite don't really matter. And neither does the Kennedy assassination. No wonder he gets so much exposure.

The Assassination Records Review Board officially expired at midnight on September 30th. Unlike the media, we actually have and have read their Final Report. Unlike the mainstream press, we aren't going to lie about it either. But in order to do justice to the material, we will present their findings in the next issue. Yes, we will still be around awhile even though they are gone.

Jim

What is CTKA?

Citizens for Truth about the Kennedy Assassination was organized as a result of the April 1993 Chicago *Midwest Symposium on Assassinations*. At the end of that conference, it was generally decided that the time had come to create a political action group, which would urge the executive branch of our government to reopen the unsolved assassinations of the 1960s — i.e., the murders of President John F. Kennedy, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, and Dr. Martin Luther King. CTKA endeavors to ensure that the agencies of the government fulfill their mandate to release *all the remaining records* pertaining to the JFK assassination; to amend the current Freedom of Information Act to render future covert actions more difficult to hide; and to urge the American people to discover the truth about their history.

If you are not already a member of CTKA, please consider supporting our efforts with a subscription to *PROBE* or a donation to help cover the hidden costs of running a not-for-profit organization. Thanks to all of you who are already CTKA supporters. Let's continue to work together to get the truth out about our collective past.

King Case

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in the current inquiry.

According to the suit, "Raul"—the man who appears to have set up James Earl Ray to be the patsy and whose actions resemble those of an intelligence handler—brought the rifle to Jowers, who then gave the rifle to a third man. Afterwards, the shooter returned the gun to Jowers, who hid the rifle in Jim's Grill, the bar below the rooming house where Ray had been staying. The next morning, Jowers returned the rifle to Raul. Jowers' original confession came about when a former girlfriend who was with him the day of the assassination told a reporter she had seen Jowers come into Jim's Grill holding a rifle right after hearing what sounded like a shot. Fearing that he might soon be hauled into court, Jowers came forward and confessed to his role, but stated he was not the shooter.

Because it is well known that the FBI was secretly bugging and harassing Dr. King up to the time of his death, the Justice Department has stated that the FBI will not take part in the current review. Instead, investigators will be drawn from other agencies and private agencies. Let's just hope "other agencies" don't include the CIA. For all the talk about the FBI and Martin Luther King, the CIA would have had as strong a motive to get rid of King. King, like the two assassinated Kennedy brothers, was opposed to the Vietnam war at a time when it was exceedingly lucrative to war interests. Add to that the weird double trail of two Eric Galts, the strange circumstances surrounding Ray's arrest in England, and other oddities, and the spectre of CIA involvement is easily conjured. In addition, there is a curious trio of people condemning the latest probe and warning us not to expect anything.

G. Robert Blakey, the former head of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (and subject of a two-part expose by Jim DiEugenio in this and the previous issue of *Probe*), offered this assertion: "To the degree it raises people's false hopes, it will just dash them one more time." He also said he found Jowers was not credible, adding that Ray's original guilty plea was "overwhelmingly supported by the evidence." Blakey called for people to stop looking into the assassinations of the past. The more we look, the more we understand why Blakey says this. He was personally responsible for significant parts of the cover-up in both cases.

Another apologist for the government has also gone on record saying Jowers is only in it for the money: Gerald Posner. On NPR's *Talk*

of the Nation, Posner stated:

once I got into finding out what was behind Jowers I discovered that he had changed his statement many, many times, and I also discovered that the attorney general down in Memphis -- is part of their own investigation in the last four years -- had extensively looked into Jowers, had concluded he wasn't credible. I saw their information and was convinced that, in fact, Jowers had concocted this story, most likely because he hoped to sell it to a Hollywood studio for about \$300,000.

Lloyd Jowers is now 71 years old and in failing health. What we do with \$300,000? Posner added insult to injury by bringing up Jowers' appearance this year on a bizarre show called "Lie Detector." Posner made the following statement, and managed to add to his already long list of errors and omissions:

Jowers also recently flunked, it should be noted, a lie detector test on all of the key elements of his story, on ABC, the very same station that had broken the story in '93 must be commended for now having gone back to it, with Sam Donaldson, putting him on the air, doing the lie detector test, and saying at the end: I'm sorry, it turns out the that story is false across the board.

ABC did not air the show. Fox did, according to an ABC news report. And Posner failed to note that the man who tested Jowers was a former FBI agent. Remember that even Reno isn't trusting the FBI on this case anymore. And why would someone pretend that they had been involved in a murder conspiracy—even for a large sum of money? That strains credulity. Jowers was adamant throughout that he was telling the truth. The FBI man, on the other hand, was mercilessly berating him. I happened to catch that show. Guess who else was on? Mark Furhman. And according to the lie detector, he wasn't a racist, didn't plant the bloody glove, and deserved an apology. But of course, the show was hosted by Marcia Clark.

On NPR, Posner did not stop at slurring Jowers, however. Next, he took on Jerry Ray, saying he wouldn't be surprised if Raul was really a name for Jerry Ray, and that he thought if there was a conspiracy, it would be a small one, possibly involving Ray's brothers.

Posner was joined on *Talk of the Nation* by Roger Wilkins, a professor at George Mason University who had known King. Wilkins could hardly provide balance to the show. He lauded Posner's book and suggested any new probe should take Posner's work into account.

Curiously the same two had done the same show several months earlier, when the story of former FBI agent Don Wilson having found slips of paper containing the name Raul first appeared. In this earlier appearance, Wilkins recounted that he had worked in the Department of Justice at the time of the King assassi-

nation. In fact, he had flown to Memphis the night of King's murder and spoken with Attorney General Ramsey Clark. President Johnson sent Wilkins, along with Clark and another person from the White House to offer condolences to Mrs. King. Wilkins laughed off suggestions of a relationship with Hoover and said Hoover didn't trust him. Wilkins is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Wilkins has a very curious episode in his background. Besides working for the DOJ and teaching history, he also worked as a reporter for, among others, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. In fact, Wilkins shared in the *Post's* Pulitzer Prize for his contribution to the original Watergate reporting. Later, he served on the Pulitzer Prize board, and overruled the judgement of the prize committee, throwing out their choice and awarding the Pulitzer instead to Janet Cooke, the famously discredited *Washington Post* protege of Bob Woodward. Cooke was exposed as having made up the character around which her Pulitzer Prize story "Jimmy's World" centered. The committee was predictably furious at having been overruled. Was Wilkins trying to throw a bone to his former employer? Or his former Watergate reporting colleague? Or was Cooke a CIA asset being groomed for bigger and better things, who unexpectedly got caught in a lie?

The only voice supporting the King family in their efforts to reopen this case was the Reverend Walter Fauntroy, who worked on the King case for the HSCA. His comments bear repeating:

I chaired the subcommittee investigating Dr. King's assassination. I am very pleased that the attorney general has moved to look at the allegations of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Jowers, for the reason that we can determine — I think it would shine some serious light on two aspects of the investigation, where there was a lot of circumstantial evidence but no sufficient hard evidence to suggest a conclusion.

... the fact that this so-called "Raul" had practices and patterns that seemed to follow that of a handler — did intrigue us in the committee. We could never tie down whether in fact there was a "Raul." We were very close at one point, when a hotel operator in Los Angeles in the last week of — in the month of March — indicated that Mr. Ray had gotten three calls from someone in New Orleans...it is my understanding that on the phone bill was a phone number for Raul. And that it was to an establishment in Dallas.

I don't know that. We'll find that out, because I believe that the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department will, in fact, find the truth on that matter.

Let's hope that Fauntroy is right. In the words of the great Bobby DeLaughter, who brought justice to the killer of Medgar Evers after 30 long years had passed, "Is it ever too late to do the right thing?" ♦