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Clinton Declines To Order Probe Of King Killing

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Coretta Scott King, widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King

Washington

President Clinton told the widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. yesterday that he could not create a panel to reopen the inquiry into the civil rights leader's assassination 30 years ago.

Instead, Clinton told Coretta Scott King in an Oval Office meeting that the question of whether to reopen the case will remain under review at the Justice Department and that the administration will act on the advice of Attorney General Janet Reno.

Coretta King said after the meeting that she will continue to press for a new investigation into her husband's death, saying she does not believe convicted assassin James Earl Ray acted alone in the killing.

"We tried to ignore this thing for

years, but it didn't go away," she said, flanked by three of her children — Martin Luther King III, Dexter Scott King and the Rev. Bernice King.

Clinton, however, gave no indication that he would create a commission, as Coretta King wants, modeled after the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is reviewing apartheid-era human rights abuses in exchange for immunity for perpetrators who come forward to tell their stories.

"The president just said he would have to see what his options are," Coretta King said.

Ray, who died in April at age 70, pleaded guilty in 1969 to King's assassination at a Memphis hotel on April 4, 1968. Ray later recanted his confession.