

Clinton hears King family's

By Sonya Ross
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WASHINGTON — President Clinton told the widow of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. yesterday that he would "see what his options are" concerning her request that he appoint a commission to take a new look at Dr. King's 1968 assassination.

Coretta Scott King, accompanied by three of her four children, left the meeting with no commitment that Clinton would appoint a commission. But she said she felt com-

fortable with that and was willing to allow him time to respond.

"We wouldn't respect him as a leader if he made all those kinds of decisions without any consultations," she said.

White House spokesman Barry Toiv said Clinton made no firm decisions yesterday because he was waiting for the Justice Department's review of the family's request and for advice from White House lawyers about how to proceed.

Coretta King, along with her children Bernice, Dexter and Martin 3d, spent 40 minutes in the Oval Office with Clinton, explaining 30 years' worth of pain about the loss of their husband and father. The Kings also told Clinton they thought that the late James Earl Ray, the man who pleaded guilty to killing the civil-rights leader, did not act alone.

"It's difficult for me to appreciate the fact that one lone person could engineer what he did in terms of his escape, and what I know about him not being a good shooter," Coretta

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request to reopen death probe

King said. "We want to know the truth."

She said her family decided to ask that a commission investigate because they had received numerous calls and letters from people "who wish to come out if they are given immunity." They want a commission modeled after South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which can grant amnesty and immunity from prosecution to people who testify about crimes committed under apartheid.

"We think if people had a mecha-

nism they trusted, they would come forward and state what they know," she said.

Clinton spoke with the family by phone earlier this year, and Coretta King met with Attorney General Janet Reno in April.

Civil-rights activist Jesse Jackson, who was with Dr. King when he was shot, said he agreed with the family's quest and had told Clinton of his own feeling that federal officials should keep investigating because rumors persisted among black Americans that Dr. King was

the victim of a government conspiracy.

"We always thought there was a rush to close this case because it could implicate our government," Jackson said.

Ray confessed in 1969 to shooting Dr. King as he stood on the balcony of a Memphis, Tenn., hotel on April 4, 1968. Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison. But he recanted three days later, and until his death two months ago, he maintained that he was innocent.