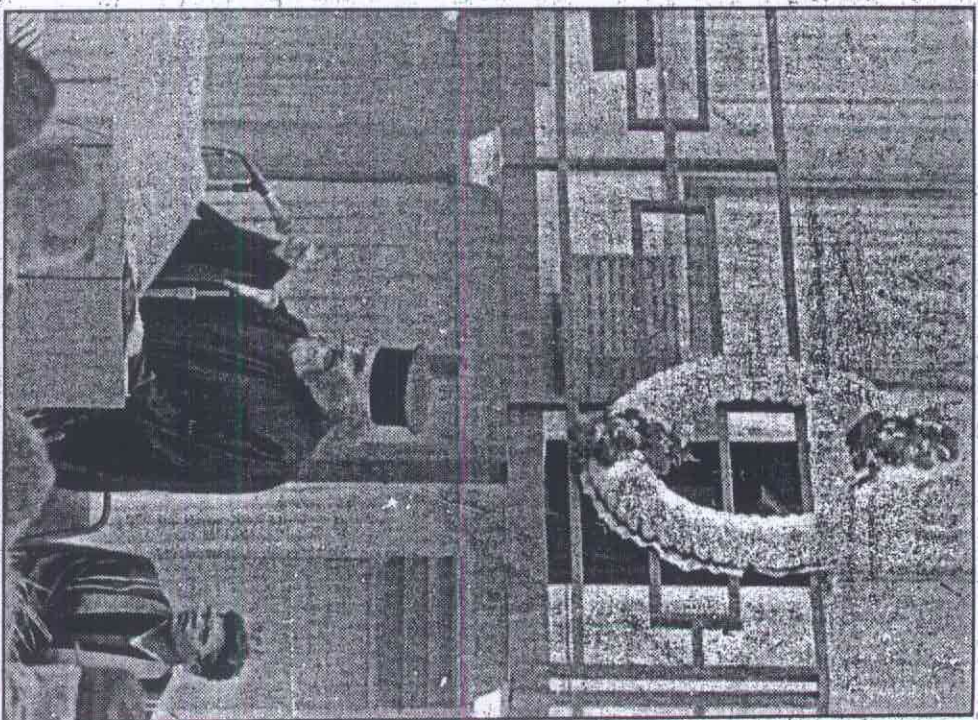


From left, the Rev. Joseph Lowery, King's daughter Yolanda, Coretta Scott King and another daughter, the Rev. Bernice King, sing "We Shall Overcome" yesterday at King's Atlanta grave.



The Rev. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy speaks at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis yesterday in front of the balcony where King was shot.

A March Left Undone

King's legacy lauded, but goals called unfulfilled

By Ford Fessenden

STAFF WRITER

On the anniversary of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, the civil rights movement paused yesterday to reflect on how far short of his vision the nation has fallen in the quarter-century since his death.

In ceremonies in his hometown, Atlanta; in the city where he died, Memphis, Tenn., and across the country, the legatees of King's martyred leadership praised the progress that has been made toward racial equality. But mostly they decried the distance still uncovered.

"We have not overcome," Memphis Mayor W. W. Herenton, who became the city's first black elected mayor in 1991, told about 4,000 people at the Mason Temple in Memphis, where King gave his last speech the night before he was killed. "We still have racism, bigotry, poverty, joblessness, homelessness and greed."

In Pasadena, Calif., a few miles from the site of the federal trial of four white Los Angeles police officers in the beating of a black motorist, the Rev. Jesse Jackson urged congregants at the All Saints Episcopal Church to "not just be spectators and witnesses to violence, but find a way to do something about it."

"We cannot put our destinies in the hands of 12 jurors and debating lawyers," Jackson said. The officers' acquittal on state charges in the beating of the motorist, Rodney King, touched off the bloody riots last year that claimed 53 lives.

Speaking later in Los Angeles, Jackson called on President Bill Clinton to hold a town hall meeting in South Central Los Angeles before the verdicts in the beating case are reached.

"The same plan to rebuild Moscow must apply to rebuild America," he said, a reference to the weekend summit between Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

In Atlanta, Coretta Scott King, breaking with a tradition of remaining silent on the anniversary of her husband's death, called for a new mass movement to complete the unfinished journey.

"African-Americans still suffer pervasive economic discrimination," King said in remarks at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where her husband

was once pastor. While blacks have become enfranchised politically, the income gap between blacks and whites remains nearly as wide as it was in 1968, said King, who heads the Atlanta-based Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change.

King's remarks came after a ceremony in which a wreath was placed at her husband's grave in Atlanta. She called on followers to give the anniversary meaning by joining a march on Washington. Civil rights groups and their allies have planned the demonstration for Aug. 28, the 30th anniversary of the

1963 March on Washington in which her husband attracted world attention with his "I Have a Dream" speech.

A poll published yesterday confirmed that many black Americans believe race relations have gotten worse since King's death. The New York Times-CBS Poll of 1,368 adults found that 52 percent of black respondents said race relations are the same or worse than they were in 1968. Forty-five percent thought things had improved. Among whites, 42 percent felt things were the

Please see KING on Page 22

same or worse, and 54 percent felt things were better.

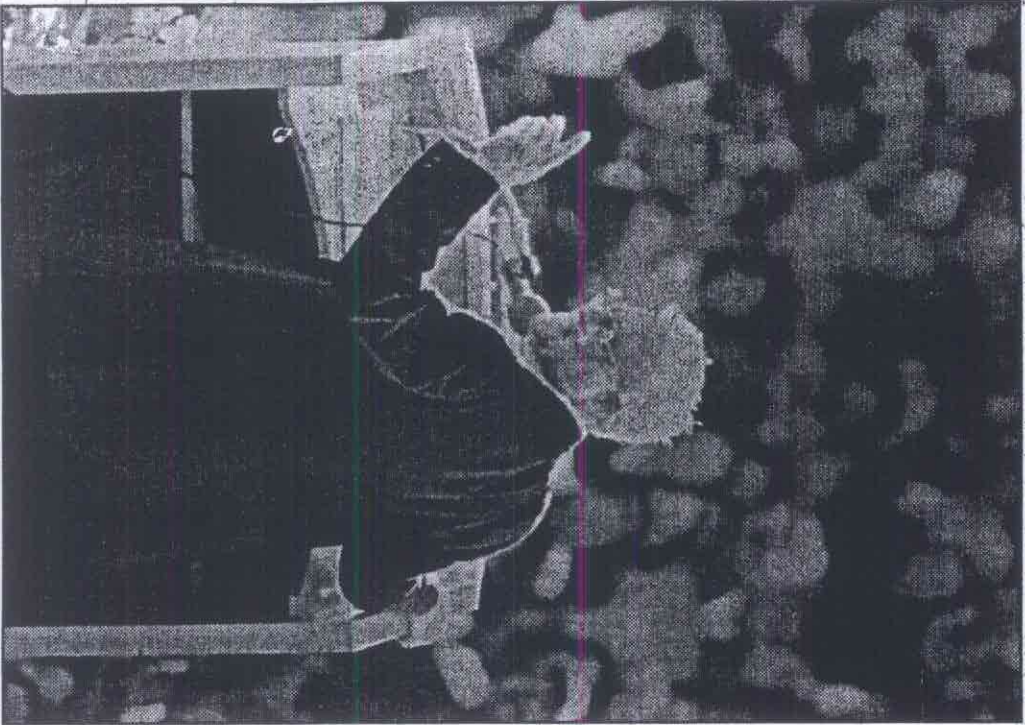
The poll was taken March 28-31 and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points for whites and 6 percentage points for blacks, since fewer blacks were interviewed.

In Memphis, outside the National Civil Rights Museum, about 300 people stood in a steady rain for a candlelight prayer vigil and a moment of silence in King's honor. The museum is on the site of the former Lorraine Motel, where a drifter, James Earl Ray, shot King to death. The 1964 winner of the Nobel Peace

Prize, in Memphis to support a strike by sanitation workers, was 39 at the time of his assassination. Ray is serving a 99-year prison sentence for the killing, though he sought to recant his guilty plea shortly after entering it.

In New York City, Mayor David N. Dinkins joined several hundred people in a march by the United Nations to honor and remember the civil rights leader. A memorial service at United Nations Chapel also drew former boxers Muhammad Ali and Floyd Patterson and writers Norman Mailer, Derek Walcott, Alice Walker, Gloria Steinem and Toni Morrison.

This story was supplemented by news-service reports.



AP Photo

Benjamin Hooks speaks in Memphis yesterday

Mock Trial Jury Clears Ray

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Memphis, Tenn. — James Earl Ray was acquitted of slaying the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. during a mock trial in a cable TV special last night.

The three-hour program, "Guilt or Innocence: The Trial of James Earl Ray," was broadcast on HBO on the 25th anniversary of King's slaying. The verdict has no legal weight. Ray, serving 99 years for shooting the civil rights leader in 1968 while King stood on a motel balcony, testified in the mock trial by satellite from Riverbend State Prison in Nashville.

In 1969 Ray pleaded guilty to the slaying but later tried to recant his plea.

The 10-day, unscripted mock trial was filmed

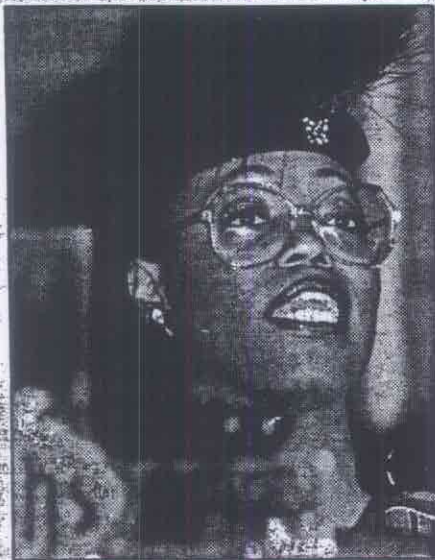
in Memphis in January with a real judge, real lawyers, real witnesses and an out-of-state jury. The broadcast was produced by Thames Television of London. Both defense and prosecution participated in editing 56 hours of testimony into the three hours.

The program will be aired four more times this month.

Ray repeated his claim that a mysterious gunman named "Raoul" manipulated him and set him up to take the blame. He said his guilty plea was coerced.

In 1978, a U.S. House special committee concluded Ray shot King, but that he may have had help and that the investigation should have looked more closely at Ray's brothers.

'He's So Much Alive'



Newsday / Bill Davis

Sharon Davis of NAACP

Bells tolled and taps were played at a Copiague church last evening in memory of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"I hope I played well to honor his legacy," said Marcus Lightbourne, 13, a student at Copiague Junior High School, who played the mournful call on a trumpet at the Bethel AME church. "I was very influenced by that, and how African-Americans are trying to gain equality in America."

About 130 people attended the service, including Norman Mayo, 67, of North Babylon. "He's not really dead," Mayo said of King. "He's so much alive. I have always walked in his footsteps and I see his dream so much alive. We love him and we continue to follow him."

The church's pastor, the Rev. Floyd N. Black, led the service, which was opened with a hymn.

Among the speakers was Sharon Davis, president of the Central Long Island branch of the NAACP, who said, "The destiny of King's dream is not forgotten . . ."

She noted that the Rodney King affair in Los Angeles has been a distortion of King's dream. "Now we are waiting with baited breath for the outcome of the federal case," she said.

Davis said that with the revival of interest in Black Muslim leader Malcolm X, whose philosophy is often considered diametrically opposed to King's, people are beginning "to go back to basics, go back to King's dream of justice and equality."

She added, "For a time there we had gotten away from family values, the concept of the extended family and the dignity of a job whether it's at the top or bottom of the corporate ladder."