

June 21, 1978

Mr. James Earl Ray-65477  
Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary  
Petros, Tenn. 37845

Dear James:

You no doubt know by now that your brother John was arrested by the FBI and is now in jail in Marion. The pretext was that he had committed "perjury" before the Select Committee. However, he has not been indicted for perjury or charged with perjury. Obviously this is additional pressure upon the family to get you to "cooperate" with the Committee. This is the same kind of "cooperation" that William Bradford Huie was willing to pay for. I have written a long letter to John today asking for all of the information that he has about his arrest. It may be that he was illegally arrested; certainly he was improperly arrested. I will try to get the American Civil Liberties Union to represent John in this matter and if they will not take the case I will try to get a private lawyer. In addition, I am raising this matter with all of the ministers, black and white, and various other members of our support group.

There is also a great deal of very good news. The House Select Committee demanded all of the records of Grace Walden's stay at the Western State Hospital. I refused to make those records available because the Committee has proven itself to be irresponsible in that it leaks information to the news media. I asked for an enforceable agreement with the Committee in which they would agree not to release information about Grace which might be harmful to her and they refused to enter into such an agreement. In the alternative, I offered to give them all the records if they agreed to waive their immunity so that Grace might sue them if they improperly released those records. Of course they refused to waive their immunity. The Committee then filed a motion before Judge Evans of the Probate Court demanding all of Grace Walden's records. They also were considering asking the court not to let me see Grace's records even though I am her guardian and her lawyer because in their view there is a conflict of interest since I also represent you. On Monday, June 19, we argued the case before Judge Evans. Judge Evans granted a temporary restraining order to us to prevent anyone from the Select Committee from looking at the records, and he ordered the hospital to turn over all of the records to me. I have the records now and they prove conclusively that Grace was held as a political prisoner for ten years because she would not testify against you.

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I have now met and interviewed a reporter who interviewed Grace Walden approximately 30 minutes after Dr. King was assassinated. He said she was completely sober at the time and identified the man she saw come out of the bathroom as a very short man with black and gray hair. Her description is consistent with the description she has given for the last ten years and is totally inconsistent with the description of you. The reporter also said that Charlie Stephens was very drunk at the time and told him "it was a nigger what done it." In addition, I now have a tape recording made by Captain Thomas Smith, Chief of Homicide of the Memphis Police Department at the present time, who was the Chief Investigator for the Memphis Police Department for the King assassination ten years ago. On that tape, Tommy Smith told BBC television earlier this year that he met Stephens "minutes" after the assassination and that Stephens was drunk and unable to tell him anything because of his intoxicated condition. On that same BBC program, Phil Canale said the only person who could state that James Earl Ray came out of the rooming house just after the assassination was Charlie Stephens.

I have the clipping that you sent to me from the Catholic Weekly in which the Priests Council was reported to have demanded a trial for you. As you know, I met with the members of the Council earlier that day to ask them to issue that statement. The Memphis Ministers Association, made up of all of the religious leaders in Memphis, has now adopted as its own, the Priests Council statement and on behalf of all of the religious leaders in Memphis has demanded that you be given a trial.

We are planning to meet with our friends in Memphis for "A Week For Justice" in Memphis for September or October. During that week, Dick Gregory, Rev. Lawson and I will speak at all of the colleges in and around Memphis, before the League of Women Voters and before all community organizations that we can. As we plan it now, the week will end with sermons on Sunday morning in many churches throughout the State of Tennessee demanding that you be given a trial.

During December of this year the Democratic Party will hold its national mini convention in Memphis. As you know, the Democratic Party will meet at its convention in 1980 as it did in 1976 to nominate candidates for the Presidency and Vice Presidency. In 1978, it will meet to develop positions on national issues. I have already addressed the largest Democratic Party organization in California. They will place on the agenda in Memphis in December before the Democratic Party, a demand that you be given a trial. Rev. Lawson, who had invited Dr. King to Memphis in 1968, has been asked to speak about the demand for a trial for you. If sufficiently good continuing organizing is done between now and December, it may be that if this question is being raised on the floor of the convention, religious leaders, both black and white, will be leading their congregations in a march on the convention demanding that there be a trial for you.

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In order to help organize this activity and to work on a full-time basis with other lawyers in Tennessee on the legal aspects of the case, I will be moving from California within the next 8 or 10 weeks. I will move to Memphis and remain there until after we have won an acquittal in your case.

The Council of Black Trade Unionists, an organization made up of all of the important trade union leaders in America who are black, has just passed a resolution demanding that you be given a trial. This came about because one of the black trade union leaders was present at the Holiday Inn Rivermont on April 3 of this year when I briefed the religious leaders just before they released their statement in Memphis on April 4.

Rev. James Lawson is forming a Committee for Truth and Justice regarding the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. I enclose a piece of literature so that you can learn a little bit about that organization. Among those who have already joined the organization are Linus Pauling, a recipient of two Nobel prizes, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Rev. Joseph Lowrey, who is the President of SCLC, the organization that Dr. King was the President of when he was assassinated. A point of interest is that Walter Fauntroy is Chairman of the Board of SCLC which means that he serves under Rev. Lowrey. I met with Lowrey recently and he strongly supports and will publicly speak for demands for a trial for you. He believes that Fauntroy is under great pressure to prevent the truth from coming out but that he, Rev. Lowrey, will do everything in his power to secure a trial for you. I am now working with another Tennessee lawyer, Duncan Ragsdale of Memphis, who has been associated with me in the Grace Walden matter. He is a young conservative lawyer, a Marine Corp veteran who served in Viet Nam, and an active member of the Republican Party. As soon as he began to work with me in Grace's case, Hugh Stanton, Jr., who I'm sure you recall and who now is the Memphis District Attorney General, warned him about becoming involved in your case. Stanton told him that there was overwhelming evidence of your guilt. Ragsdale, who is a very good guy, was outraged at the violation of legal ethics since Stanton, as your former lawyer, is prohibited from discussing any aspect of your case with anyone. Ragsdale is willing to testify should we bring an action to punish Stanton under the canons of ethics. Ragsdale was invited by executives of the transportation industry in Memphis to address that group of 40 leaders on any subject that he wanted to discuss. At first he chose a discussion of what a voluntary army means to the U.S., but after he met me and he became involved in Grace's case, he changed the subject and discussed Grace Walden as a political prisoner and the need for a trial for James Earl Ray. The talk was well received by many of these executives and many of them asked what they could do to help in the effort.

During the Week of Justice, I expect to call together a substantial number of Tennessee lawyers who can be trusted to have a legal seminar on all aspects of your case. In order to do that I am going to start assigning key areas of research to various lawyers and law students now so that these matters can be fully explored during September. For example; it seems clear now that Canale made

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statements to the British Courts in order to have you extradited, although he knew that the assurances he was giving to the court at that time were false. Since Canale's own chief investigator stated that Charlie Stephens was drunk at the time of the assassination, and since Stephen's was saying that a black man had killed Martin Luther King, it is clear that Canale knew that Stephens was not a witness who he could rely upon. Therefore, the extradition itself was based upon deliberate false statements made by the authorities. As you know, there are many other legal questions to be explored including 17-117, the torture and coercion utilized to force you to enter a plea of guilty, the newly discovered evidence including Grace Walden's statements and the statements of alibi witnesses. The law is on our side and you are clearly entitled to a trial. All that needs be done now is to continue to change the political atmosphere in Tennessee and in the nation so that the Tennessee authorities will no longer make up the law as they go along in your case. I must tell you that I am beginning to feel confident, not only that we are moving in the right direction, but that in the very near future the atmosphere may permit the courts to rule on the merits.

I have raised some of the legal matters that I will be pursuing together with other lawyers in the paragraph above. I should like you to address yourself to these questions and to any other suggestion that you might have regarding applications for a trial.

I have a few other matters that I must take care of before leaving California and I expect to wind them all up within the next two months or so. Then I will be leaving for Memphis and working on a full-time basis to secure and win a trial for you. If you know of contacts in Memphis or elsewhere in Tennessee, please send that information to me as we will be organizing a Committee for Truth and Justice in Tennessee and we will need all of the volunteer assistants we can have to handle all of the ongoing organizational activities.

I have sent a letter to Blakey, copy of which I enclose. Keep thinking positively, we are getting closer and closer to a trial.

Sincerely,

Mark Lane

ML:br  
Enc.  
cc: John Ray