

FBI 'Neglected' Tips, Psychologist Claims

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A prominent black psychologist who interviewed James Earl Ray in August said yesterday the FBI may have known a bounty was out on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. before his 1968 assassination but did nothing about it.

Dr. Alvin Poussaint of Harvard University said the FBI role was one of "neglect" by failing to pursue information they probably had before the King killing April 4, 1968, in Memphis.

"I don't think the FBI engineered the assassination," Poussaint said. "I think it is quite possible they had information before the killing and didn't do anything. I think it's possible they knew of the bounty on his life but didn't follow up."

Poussaint, who spoke at Memphis State University, said he basically agrees with what will reportedly be the findings of the House Assassinations Committee that Ray killed King for money — which he never collected — offered by a right-wing St. Louis businessman.

He interviewed Ray for three hours in



Dr. Alvin Poussaint

August at Brushy Mountain State Prison, concluding that Ray was a racist not unlike many other white Americans in 1968.

He said that while Ray "probably did kill King," there were others involved in helping him, though he said he does not believe Ray's contention that a "blond Latin, Raoul," organized the assassination.

"I think 'Raoul' may include a number of people, including his brothers," said Poussaint. "It seems to me the (House committee) investigation has been quite thorough. The only thing that seems lacking to me is that not more people from the FBI have been questioned about what they did or didn't do."

Poussaint, who was active in the South during the civil rights movement in the 1960s, said the FBI's role of neglect in the King slaying was mirrored in its surveillance of all black activists at that time.

"Many in the FBI were Mississippians flying Confederate flags and who had close relationships with local police," he said. "The FBI also started the country's largest affirmative action program in 1967 when it had 10,000 blacks infiltrating and disrupting black groups."

A theme he brought to about 75 MSU students yesterday was one of black unity which, he said, has dissolved since the death of King 10 years ago. Poussaint said many young blacks today do not even know the names of civil rights leaders of the past who sacrificed to make life for blacks better today.

But he said many successful blacks feel they have achieved their standing through their own efforts.

Poussaint said the U.S. Supreme Court's Bakke decision, which ruled a California medical school's affirmative action program discriminated against a white applicant, has led to a "dismantling" of such programs at other schools which "were not comfortable with them in the first place. The surest way of having those doors closed again is to remain apathetic."