

THE TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE PRESENTS

THE
ASSASSINATION
OF

DR **MARTIN LUTHER KING**
JR

THE REAL STORY

americantruthnow.org



THE TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE

D E M A N D T H E T R U T H

A REPORT ON THE ASSASSINATION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

This report is presented by the Truth & Reconciliation Committee (TRC), which was formed in 2019 by members of the Kennedy and King families and public figures including Reverend James Lawson, Jr., Daniel Ellsberg, Martin Sheen, Rob Reiner, and David Crosby. The TRC is dedicated to helping America confront the truth behind the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Robert F. Kennedy, which changed the course of American history and adversely affect us to this day.

Written by leading researchers and journalists, this report is one of four that refutes the official government stories with documented evidence and compelling counter-narratives. As with other Truth & Reconciliation movements, our goal is not to punish the perpetrators but to help bring about a new era of understanding for current and future generations.

Many civil rights and political leaders, including Andrew Young, John Lewis, and James Lawson, have spoken publicly of their belief in a widespread conspiracy in the King assassination. Indeed, the official government explanation is a fabrication intended to sugarcoat the bitter fruit that has resulted from the murder of one of a handful of men capable of leading a mass movement for transformative change in the United States. Today we are eating the fruit of that denial: racial discrimination, poverty, police violence, and continued injustice.

It will surprise most readers that the documents and testimony from the House Select Committee on Assassinations (1977-1979) into the murders of Martin Luther King, Jr. and President John F. Kennedy are being held from public view until 2029. And the release of the remaining JFK documents in the National Archives, which was specified by Congress to occur no later than 2017, was pushed back by President Trump and again by President Biden.

We believe the American people have a right to know what these investigations uncovered and demand the immediate release of all documents and testimony related to these assassinations.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

In the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), represented the hope of a better life for millions of politically and economically disenfranchised African-Americans. Despite having detractors in the public, government, and media, King became America's most beloved and respected civil rights leader. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, King never abandoned his belief in non-violent action, and in 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which helped turn him into an international figure respected for his opinions on human rights, economic justice, and peaceful coexistence.

By 1967, King had increasingly focused on issues relating to poverty and had publicly declared his intense opposition to the war in Vietnam. In a famous speech, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time To Break the Silence," at New York's Riverside Church on April 4, 1967—one year to the day before he was assassinated—he publicly criticized America for the "giant triplets" of "racism, extreme materialism, and militarism," and called this country "the greatest purveyor of violence on earth."



A few days later, King spoke at a massive peace rally at United Nations Plaza and stated that "the promises of the Great Society have been shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam, making the poor—white and Negro—bear the heaviest burden." In December of that year, he announced a Poor People's Campaign that would have potentially brought hundreds of thousands of Americans of all races and faiths to encamp peacefully in Washington, D.C. and demand an end to economic injustice and the Vietnam War.

It's clear that Martin Luther King, Jr. was perceived as a growing threat to the institutional powers in the country. His murder, which silenced a powerful voice for civil rights and economic justice, contributed to the preservation of institutional racism and military expansionism that continue to this day.

THE ASSASSINATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

On April 3, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. returned to Memphis at the invitation of his friend and mentor, civil rights leader Reverend James Lawson, Jr., to continue his support for the Sanitation Workers' Strike for better working conditions and fair wages.

That evening, King gave his last, and one of his most inspired, speeches. It was also his most prophetic: "We've got some difficult days ahead, but it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop...I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land."

The next day, at 6:01 in the evening, King was standing outside his room on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, speaking with people in the courtyard below, when he was shot in the lower right side of his face by a single rifle bullet. He died one hour later.

THE OFFICIAL STORY

The State of Tennessee, supported by the U.S. Justice Department, claimed that King's assassin was "a racist loner" named James Earl Ray. They alleged that Ray fired the fatal shot from the second-floor bathroom window of a rooming house across the street from the Lorraine Motel and then rushed to his room, wrapped up his belongings—including the rifle—in a bedspread, ran off, and dropped the bundle in a nearby doorway. He then drove his white Ford Mustang to Atlanta and, with several aliases and fake passports, fled to Canada, then to England, then to Portugal and back to England, where he was eventually arrested at Heathrow Airport by Scotland Yard on June 8, 1968, and extradited to the U.S.

There were many obvious problems with the above story. To begin with, people who knew Ray well said he was not a racist; he even had a black girlfriend. And rather than being a loner, he was quite social and had recently taken dance lessons and bartending classes. Nor was he a Southerner, as many in the media claimed; he was born and raised in Illinois.

As with the assassinations of President Kennedy and his brother, Robert (two months after King), all evidence points to the construction of Ray as a patsy to take the blame for a government-directed assassination. James Earl Ray, Lee Harvey Oswald, and Sirhan Sirhan, the convicted killer of Robert Kennedy, bear striking resemblances in the ways they were chosen and moved into position to be considered the designated "assassins."

There were also disturbing issues with Ray's attorney, Percy Foreman, who had a history representing government and Mafia figures such as Jack Ruby in cases where the government wanted to silence certain defendants. Ray was under extraordinary pressure from Foreman to plead guilty; he was even told that if he didn't, he'd get the electric chair and

the government would go after his father and brother as accomplices. Foreman also offered Ray an illegal financial payoff and misled him into thinking he could get a new trial after pleading guilty.

Ray initially acquiesced and entered what's known as an "Alford Plea," in which the defendant asserts his innocence but admits that the evidence presented by the prosecution would likely be sufficient to persuade a judge or jury to find him guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. He was sentenced to 99 years in prison and the case seemed closed. However, the day after sentencing, Ray fired his attorney and, a few days later, tried to retract his plea. Ray spent the rest of his life seeking a new trial, which was never granted, and he proclaimed his innocence until his death almost 30 years later.

In the decades after the assassination, many discoveries were made concerning the actual events of that fateful day that indicated disturbing errors in the official version.

LETS LOOK AT THE FACTS

- The day King was murdered, his regular security detail, led by black officer Ed Reddit, was withdrawn by Frank Holloman, the Memphis Chief of Police, leaving King without any protection. Holloman had directed J. Edgar Hoover's FBI office in D.C. for eight years and had recently returned to Memphis to run the police and fire departments.
- King's room at the Lorraine Motel was mysteriously switched at the last minute from an inside room to an outside room with a balcony, making him extremely vulnerable.
- Eyewitness testimony suggests that the fatal shot probably came from the bushes behind the rooming house, not the bathroom window as the government alleged. Several people, including a *New York Times* reporter, saw a man in the bushes running from the scene, and some saw smoke rising from the same spot right after the shot. A taxi driver who saw a man run from the bushes into a police squad car was mysteriously found dead 24 hours later.
- Early the next morning, a man reporting to Police Chief Holloman ordered those bushes to be cut down—an act that illegally destroyed the crime scene.
- Eyewitnesses who testified that Ray was not the man seen leaving the bathroom were ignored during the investigations, and one was placed in a mental institution.¹
- The bundle of evidence Ray allegedly left in a nearby doorway, including a rifle and map of King's itinerary, seemed to be all too convenient, leading researchers and journalists to suspect that it was planted in an apparent attempt to link the murder to Ray.

¹ William Pepper, *The Plot to Kill King*, William Pepper, P. 218

- Many Army Intelligence agents, including sharpshooters, were positioned around the site. The first man to arrive at King's side was Marrell McCollough, a black Domestic Intelligence and Military Intelligence agent with the Memphis police department. McCollough officially joined the CIA a few years later.
- Ray maintained that he'd been manipulated by a shadowy figure named Raoul, who supplied him with money and a car, coordinated his complicated travels, and told him to buy a rifle to give to him at the boarding house on the day of the assassination. The government denied that Raoul existed, but Ray's attorney, William Pepper, proved not only that he did but also that he was one of Ray's CIA handlers. Many of Ray's aliases, taken from real people who looked like him, could not have been found without intelligence agency assistance. Ray's best-known alias, Eric Galt, was actually a living U.S. Army Intelligence operative.
- Donald Wilson, an FBI agent working out of the Atlanta office in 1968, searched an abandoned Ford Mustang determined to be Ray's car. Among the papers he found was one with the name "Raoul" and a list of sums and dates for payment; another had the phone number of the Atlanta FBI office.

1917-1968: AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE TARGETS THE KING FAMILY

During the 1950s and '60s, King was hated by an array of racists throughout the U.S., especially in the South. Among his greatest self-declared enemies was J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI from 1924 to 1972, who seemed convinced that King's backers were Communists out to damage America's interests. In the late 1960s, the FBI's secret Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), overseen by William Sullivan, created a network of informants and agent provocateurs who carried out illegal surveillance and office break-ins to undermine the civil rights and anti-war movements, with a special focus on King.

After King's "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963, Sullivan wrote a memo to Hoover: "I believe, in light of King's powerful, demagogic speech, he stands head and shoulders over all other Negro leaders put together when it comes to influencing great masses. We must mark him now...as the most dangerous Negro of the future in this Nation."² Sullivan added, "We must use every resource at our disposal to destroy him."

Shortly before King was to accept the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, the FBI sent him an anonymous letter and an audio-tape supposedly documenting King's private sexual activities and suggesting that he kill himself to avoid public exposure.³ Details of such shameless and illegal campaigns against King by the FBI have been documented widely in the national media.

² www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mlks-speech-attracted-fbis-intense-attention/2013/08/27/31c8ebd4-0f60-11e3-8cdd-bcdc09410972_story.html

³ www.nytimes.com/2014/11/16/magazine/what-an-uncensored-letter-to-mlk-reveals.html?_r=1&referrer=

The Senate Church Committee hearings investigating illegal FBI and CIA activities in the 1960s discovered a parallel CIA program, code-named MHCHAOS and run by Richard Ober, who reported to CIA Counter-Intelligence Chief James Angleton. Despite its charter disallowing the CIA from operating inside the United States, the agency used widespread illegal means to infiltrate, surveil, and disrupt the civil rights and anti-war movements.

It's important to note that King's father, Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., and his maternal grandfather, Reverend A.D. Williams—both also pastors of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church—had been spied on by Army Intelligence and the FBI going back to 1917. The Kings were considered dangerous because they spoke out against racial injustice and questioned government economic policies.

THE TRUTH GRADUALLY EMERGES

The government's case against James Earl Ray was weak from the start. And in the intervening years, so much contrary evidence has been discovered that it is no longer at all credible. Philip Melanson, Harold Weisberg, Mark Lane, William Pepper, and other respected researchers have worked tirelessly to seek the truth and point out errors in the official story.

The 1989 BBC documentary, "Who Killed Martin Luther King, Jr.?" presents several key witnesses who provide alternative narratives. Former FBI agent Arthur Murtagh told of instructions coming down from J. Edgar Hoover to his Atlanta office to "destroy King." When news of King's assassination came over the radio, a fellow agent clapped his hands and shouted gleefully, "We finally got him." Murtagh was so stunned by that comment that he left the FBI soon after.

The film also included testimony by Jay Richard Kennedy, a longtime CIA informant (1956-1972), who infiltrated the SCLC and other civil rights organizations, spying on King, Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, and other civil rights leaders. Kennedy maliciously and incorrectly linked King to the Chinese Communist Party, defending his actions by saying that the government was concerned that King's anti-war speeches would affect its ability to recruit soldiers for Vietnam.

In the film, an interesting figure named Jules Ricco Kimble spoke of working in Montreal for the CIA in 1967 and 1968 at the same time that James Earl Ray was living there, and admitted to his involvement in MLK's assassination and cover-up. On his deathbed in May 2020, Kimble spoke of being directed during the King assassination and cover-up by FBI counter-intelligence director, William Sullivan, and a high-level CIA officer he believed reported to James Angleton.⁴

The film also highlights a statement from a former CIA employee that there was a CIA identities expert named Raoul who was based in Montreal and who provided fake ID's to intelligence assets in 1968.⁵

⁴ Private Recording of TRC Member

⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=se9iEP-TiTO

ATTORNEY WILLIAM PEPPER AND THE KING FAMILY PROVE GOVERNMENT-LED CONSPIRACY

In 1978, New York attorney and close associate of King, William Pepper, was invited by SCLC leader Ralph Abernathy to meet James Earl Ray in prison. Pepper became convinced of Ray's innocence and began to study the case. Over time, evidence emerged that Loyd Jowers, the owner of Jim's Grill across the street from the Lorraine Motel and adjacent to the bushes from which the shot was likely fired, was deeply involved in the assassination. He had been a Memphis policeman with reputed Mafia ties. In 1993, Jowers appeared on ABC's "Primetime Live" and, as Pepper writes, "cleared James Earl Ray, saying that he [Jowers] assisted in coordinating the MLK plot." Jowers also stated that he had been visited by a man named Raul, who delivered a rifle and asked him to hold it until arrangements were finalized.

After all motions for a retrial for James Earl Ray were denied, and he died in prison in 1998, the last resort for Coretta Scott King and her children to get a public hearing was to file a civil suit. In 1999, they brought a wrongful death suit against Jowers seeking a symbolic \$100 in damages. The suit led to a jury trial with 70 witnesses that proved that Jowers, along with elements of the U.S. government, Army Intelligence, and the Memphis Police Department were involved in the assassination of Reverend King.⁶

After decades of research by Pepper, more of the truth about the assassination surfaced. Pepper's closing argument can be found in his 2016 book, *The Plot to Kill King*. Enough real evidence, eyewitness accounts, and confessions by government-connected participants in the assassination were brought into court to reveal a portrait of the unspeakable: from high levels of the U.S. government came the orders to kill.

THE WASHINGTON POST, KING FAMILY, & ASSOCIATES SPEAK OUT

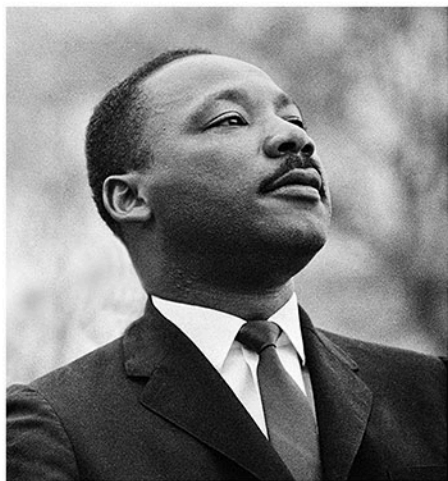
On March 30, 2018, after 50 years of mainstream media resistance to alternative narratives, *The Washington Post* published a front-page article, "Who Killed Martin Luther King, Jr.? His Family Believes James Earl Ray Was Framed." The article stated that the surviving King children, Martin Luther King III, Dexter, and Bernice, were all in agreement that James Earl Ray did not kill their father and that there was a continuing conspiracy to cover up the truth.

The article quoted the late Congressman John Lewis: "I think there was a major conspiracy to remove Dr. King from the American scene." And UN Ambassador, Congressman, and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, who was with King at the Lorraine Motel that evening, stated: "I would not accept the fact that James Earl Ray pulled the trigger." Young added that King's assassination came after those of President Kennedy and Malcolm X and shortly before Robert Kennedy's. "We were living in a period of assassinations," he said, implying possible linkages.

⁶ See transcript: 1999 Memphis civil trial

In Young's autobiography, *An Uneasy Burden*, he wrote: "When Martin began to address poverty and war, he began to challenge in an even more fundamental way the basic structure of the American economy...I believe that there was an element of conspiracy and a degree of involvement by some segment of the U.S. government...Ultimately, I do not believe that James Earl Ray possessed sufficient intelligence to escape from Memphis, much less acquire a passport and develop a plan to leave the country for what was then Rhodesia. A number of theories have been proposed and I am glad that people are investigating these events, since the possibility that there was a conspiracy within the U.S. government represents a serious threat to our democracy and the principles and rights that all U.S. citizens should hold dear."⁷

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S LEGACY



Leaders of movements for substantive change have long been anathema to the power elites, who have repeatedly destroyed progressive efforts to transform society. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a transmitter of a nonviolent, spiritual, and political energy so powerful that his very existence threatened the established order. To the U.S. government, King was a dangerous man. More than 50 years after King's assassination, the causes he fought for—equal rights, the end of U.S. wars of aggression, and economic justice—remain unfulfilled. Because King called the United States in his "Beyond Vietnam" speech the "greatest purveyor of violence on earth," he was widely condemned by the government and mass media that later—once he was long gone and no longer a threat—praised him to the heavens.

Today, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday is celebrated with a national holiday, but his death day has disappeared down a memory hole. Across the country, the "King Holiday and Service Act," passed by Congress in 1994, encourages people to make the day one of service (from the Latin *servus*, meaning servant and slave). Etymological irony aside, such service does not represent King's commitment to changing a system of racial and economic injustice and non-violently resisting the American warfare state.

If we hope to fulfill King's dream of an America rising to its moral imperative of true freedom and justice for all, then educating its people about who killed him and why, and why it matters today, is the greatest service we can do to honor his memory.

Many people with information about the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Robert F. Kennedy are still alive to tell their stories but won't be much longer.

⁷ William Pepper, *The Plot to Kill King*, p. 472

The House Select Committee on Assassinations' documents and testimony on the King and JFK assassinations continue to be withheld from the public until 2029 (50 years after the report's release!). And thousands of documents in the National Archives mandated by the JFK Records Collection Act for release by September 2017 were delayed by President Trump until October 2021. They are in danger of being held back again due to lobbying of President Biden by FBI and the CIA.

Our future depends on the American people discovering and confronting the truth of the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Robert F. Kennedy that so dramatically changed the course of American history. We must create a new understanding to help achieve King's dream of an America with freedom and justice for all. As King stated: "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality...I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."



HELP BRING THE TRUTH TO LIGHT

Please contact your Congress members, Senators, and President Biden to demand that they authorize the release of all documents and testimony pertaining to Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Robert F. Kennedy and to request the creation of an independent TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION that would help bring the facts of these assassinations to light.

www.americantruthnow.org