

Portland Opinion

Articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer

USPS 959-680
Established 1970

STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF,

PUBLISHER

Charles H. Washington

EDITOR

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.

COPY EDITOR

Joy Ramos

BUSINESS MANAGER

Gary Ann Taylor

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Shawn Strahan

4747 NE Martin Luther King,

Jr. Blvd.

Portland, OR 97211

503-288-0033

Fax 503-288-0015

e-mail pdxobserv@aol.com

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to

Portland Observer

PO Box 3137

Portland, OR 97208

Periodical Postage
paid in Portland, OR

Subscriptions are
\$60.00 per year

DEADLINES

FOR ALL SUBMITTED MATERIALS:

ARTICLES:

Monday by 5 P.M.

ADS:

Friday by noon

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer—Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication—is a member of the National Newspaper Association—Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association—Serving Portland and Vancouver.

Still no proof of government conspiracy

Yet FBI has much to answer about King's murder

By EARL OFARI HUTCHINSON
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The conclusion by a Memphis jury in a civil lawsuit brought by the family of Martin Luther King, Jr. that he was the victim of a contracted hit seemed to vindicate those who have long protested that King was the target of a vast conspiracy by organized crime and the government. One of those who has worked the hit victim angle especially hard is arch conspiracy buff and former attorney for James Earl Ray, William Pepper. The Memphis jury bought his claim that Ray was a Lee Harvey Oswald-type patsy and that the order to kill King came from organized crime figures. The most damaging charge by Pepper was that two teams of army snipers lurked outside King's Memphis motel room the day he was killed and they also had orders to open fire on him.

Before his death in 1998, Ray probably did more than anyone else to stoke the conspiracy flames by screaming that he was framed and recanting his guilty plea. When these allegations were set against the backdrop of the FBI's decade long war on King and suspicions that it didn't tell all in its investigation of the assassination, it was more than enough to send conspiracy theorists rushing to the barricades. But despite the Memphis verdict they are still rushing to the wrong barricades. The evidence is irrefutable that Ray was the triggerman. His fingerprints were on the alleged murder weapon. He was at the crime scene and he confessed to the murder.

Over the years Ray told different people different things about his activities and whereabouts at the time of the murder. That's why his protests of innocence and frame-ups a quarter century after he murdered King always sounded like those of a loathsome, and discredited man desperately thrashing around to save his conscience, grab media attention, and cash in on the notoriety of the case.

The King family and those who sincerely want to get to the truth about the King murder would be better served by publicly campaigning to lift the fifty year seal imposed by a federal court in 1977 on FBI wiretaps and surveillance data gathered on King between 1963 and 1968. If the courts refuse then public pressure should be put on Attorney General Janet Reno to increase the scope of its much too limited investigation she ordered at the behest of the King family and appoint an independent

counsel to fully investigate the King assassination.

That investigation would have to start with the FBI. It still has not answered many questions about the secret war it waged against King from the late 1950's to the day of his murder. According to voluminous public documents released to researchers and government investigators, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and the Justice Department relentlessly tried to tie King to the Communist party. The assault on King was more than Hoover acting out his paranoid obsessions against a man whom he considered a dangerous subversive, it was a war against the black movement. And Hoover decided that the cheap and dirty way to win that war was by discrediting the most respected and admired symbol of that movement.

Many of those dirty tactics employed by FBI agents against King are now well known. They deluged him with wiretaps, physical surveillance, poison-pen letters, threats, harassment, intimidation, and smear sexual leaks to the media.

During its investigation of the assassination, Hoover claimed that the FBI did not find a single fact to indicate any conspiracy in the assassination. Ray was the man and the FBI slammed the book on the case. It was the "lone nut" assassin theory repeated again. There's, of course, no proof that the FBI or other government agents killed King. But the ferocity of the FBI's secret war against him and the many questions the FBI probe did not publicly answer about Ray's travels, his possible links to white supremacist groups, and conservative business groups in the South, and the role of government agents that were at or near the Lorraine Motel the day King was killed have created deep public suspicions that Ray didn't act alone. And worse, these same unanswered questions have left just enough wiggle room for conspiracy theorists to have a field day trying to unravel secret plots, cover-ups and finally blame the government for killing King.

The Memphis jury didn't really uncover any hard proof that the government, racist groups, or organized crime figures directly issued orders to kill King. An independent probe, however, might at least allay some of the lingering doubts and suspicions that government agencies didn't tell the complete truth about King's murder. But even this still wouldn't be enough to absolve the FBI of its disgraceful, destructive, and illegal campaign against King. The climate of suspicion and hostility it created toward the civil rights movement made it possible for Ray to murder King. And ultimately the FBI still must share some of the blame for that.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is a nationally syndicated columnist and the director of The National Alliance for Positive Action. email: ehutchi344@aol.com

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,
Before Congress went into recess in November, a couple of bills were proposed that would shift responsibility of toxic waste clean up at the Superfund Site from the profiting polluters to the taxpayers while lowering clean-up standards. The Willamette River, which runs through the heart of Portland, is one of the five most polluted rivers in the nation and is currently on the verge of being designated a Superfund Site. I want to see the river properly cleaned-up and the parties responsible for polluting pay the tab. Unfortunately, Representatives Blumenauer and weaken clean-up and the parties responsible for supporting H.R. 1300 and H.R. 2580, the bills that will not only weaken clean-up standards, but burden taxpayers with

the potential clean-up costs. If polluters are no longer responsible for the toxic waste they produce, there is no incentive for not producing more.

Congress is also considering another toxic waste clean-up bill at this time. H.R. 2956 is in favor of strengthening Superfund legislation, making the clean up of these sites more possible. If you would like to see the Willamette River and Superfund Sites cleaned up properly and the expense of polluters, I urge you to check out these bills on line and to contact your representatives and voice your opinion.

Sincerely,
Caroline Jexierski
Portland

Honor Martin Luther King, Jr. by performing acts of kindness for 2000 King Holiday

By MARTIN LUTHER KING, III
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

My father would have celebrated his 71st birthday in the first month of the new Millennium.

While I did not have the chance to work by his side, through his action and his writing I have learned the lessons of a lifetime — that kindness and justice are the foundations of a noble life and that individuals can change the world.

My father helped lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 because he was inspired by the courageous act of one woman who stood up for the dignity of all people by sitting down at the front of the bus. Rosa Parks challenged America to honor its belief that all people are created equal, and she proved that individuals could change history.

The bus boycott proved that everyone could participate in building a movement. It was a million small, yet powerful acts — including a year of walking to work and marching for justice — that touched the hearts and minds of people across the nation.

I would like to invite educator and students across America to carry my father's legacy into the new century by participating in the third annual Do Something Kindness and Justice challenge, an innovative school-based leadership program that encourages student in grades K-12 to perform Acts of Kindness (helping others) and justice (standing up for what is right) for two weeks following the 2000 Martin Luther King, Jr.

National Holiday (January 17 – 28, 2000).

Each day during the two — week education initiative, millions of students nationwide will learn about values of responsibility, compassion, honesty, nonviolence and moral courage while performing Acts of Kindness and Justice in their schools, homes and communities. In its first two years, more than 2 million students from 25,000 schools performed Acts of Kindness and Justice to keep my father's dream alive. Judy from Venice High School in Los Angeles collected clothing to help the homeless in her neighborhood. Cassandra from Utah visited a friend who was terminally ill; hugging her and helping her do things she couldn't do by herself. Sarah from Altus Middle School in Oklahoma helped her pack supplies for hurricane victims. These young people show how individuals can make a difference when they choose to take personal action to improve their community.

Every school in the nation is invited to participate. For two weeks, teachers spend approximately 15-25 minutes each day teaching the virtues of kindness and justice. Students write down their individual Acts of Kindness and Justice, and each school posts their Acts on Do Something's interactive website — www.dosomething.org — keeping track of their community-building efforts and sharing stories and experiences with students nationwide. Schools without Internet access can submit their Acts by mail. Top performing students and school

will receive national recognition and are eligible to win prizes.

Educators can register for the 2000 Do Something Kindness & Justice Challenge on the Internet at www.dosomething.org or by calling Do Something at 212-523-1189. Each teacher who registers will receive a free Educator Guide with an age-appropriate curriculum, instructions for posting Acts of Kindness and Justice on the Internet and incentives to encourage student participation. Through the Do Something Kindness & Justice Challenge, young people across America are putting into practice the ideals to which my father devoted his life. If students commit to one day of kindness and justice, then they can commit to a week of kindness and justice—a week becomes a year, a year becomes a lifetime.

By standing up for our beliefs and taking action to improve our communities and nation, we will help make my father's dream of equality and justice a reality.

Send
Letters to the
Editor
to
P.O. Box 3137
Portland Or. 97208



Just think: Your son is bright, healthy and headed for college one day. You love the direction your career has taken. You're doing a lot of the things you planned and even a few you didn't. Living life to the fullest is easy when you have family behind you. American Family Mutual Insurance. Call and talk to one of our helpful, friendly agents. You'll find out why we're consistently rated A+ (Superior) by A.M. Best, the insurance rating authority. Then, go on. Dream. Plan. What you do next is up to you and we'll be here to help you.

You have family behind you.

All Your Protection Under One Roof.



American Family Mutual Insurance Company and its Subsidiaries, Madison, WI 53783-0001 www.amlam.com