

THE VERDICT IS IN ON THE KING ASSASSINATION

By EDWARD SPANNAUS

In a verdict which sent panic through the combined cover-up apparatus of the U.S. Justice Department and the establishment news media, a jury of 12 ordinary citizens in Memphis found that a far-reaching conspiracy was responsible for the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King - forever dispelling the "lone assassin" theory.

The verdict came in a wrongful-death suit, filed last year by the family of the slain civil rights leader. The principal defendant in the suit was Loyd Jowers, a retired Memphis businessman who has said that he hired the actual killer of Dr. King. The suit was also brought against other "unknown co-conspirators." Jowers stated publicly in 1993 that James Earl Ray did not shoot Martin Luther King, but that he, Jowers, had hired a gunman, and that he had been paid \$100,000 to facilitate the assassination. Jowers also stated that he had hired the actual killer of Dr. King. The suit was also brought against other "unknown co-conspirators." Jowers stated publicly in 1993 that James Earl Ray did not shoot Martin Luther King, but that he, Jowers, had hired a gunman, and that he had been paid \$100,000 to facilitate the assassination. Jowers also stated that he had been approached by a man named "Raoul" who gave him a rifle - which was the rifle used to frame Ray.

King family attorney William Pepper argued to the jury that the assassination was the product of a multi-level conspiracy, involving the Memphis Police Department and local mafia types on the street level, and involving the U.S. Army intelligence agencies, the FBI, and the CIA on the federal level. Pepper is the author of a 1995 book, "Orders to Kill," which documented the role of military intelligence, the FBI, and others in the assassination plot.

Yes, Virginia, There is a Raoul
At the center of the conspiracy is "Raoul" - the shadowy figure who was the actual controller of James Earl Ray, the drifter who was set up as the patsy in the assassination. Although the anti-conspiracy theorists have always denied that Raoul ever existed, Pepper proved the existence of Raoul during the trial, and presented testimony that Raoul's family had stated that they are under U.S. government protection.

Although Pepper did not develop this aspect during the trial, Raoul was in fact linked to the British intelligence-spawned "Permindex" assassination bureau, which was prominently implicated in the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Last year, a former FBI agent disclosed that he had found two scraps of paper in the car abandoned by Ray after the assassination, which had money figures on them and contained the name "Raoul." One of the pieces of paper was a page of the Dallas, Texas phone directory with the number of the night club in Dallas which had been owned by Jack Ruby, the low-level mobster who shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald, the comparable

patsy in the JFK assassination.

Seventy Witnesses

The jury heard testimony from 70 witnesses, including:

King's widow, Coretta Scott King, and one of King's sons, Dexter King.

James Earl Ray's brother, who said that his brother had told him that Raoul framed him.

Memphis criminal court Judge Joe Brown, who had ordered tests on the rifle used to implicate James Earl Ray; Brown testified that this was not the murder weapon, saying that it "could not have hit the broad side of a barn."

Memphis Fire Department Captain Carthel Weedon, who testified that he had put two Army psychological operations operatives on the roof of the firehouse close to the assassination site, who had photographed everything. Weedon had never been interviewed by any law enforcement investigator.

Former Congressman Walter Fauntroy, who said that if the investigation conducted by the House Assassinations Committee in 1977-78 had taken longer, "We may have gotten to the bottom of everything." Fauntroy said he was never satisfied with the Committee's conclusion that there was no Raoul.

Media Attacks King Family

Within days of the verdict in Memphis, the major news media let loose a vile stream of invective against Pepper and the King family. The Washington Post called the trial a "sham," it termed the verdict "discredited" and called attorney Pepper "a conspiracy theorist," and accused the King family of "self-deception and an abuse of the legal system." It called the effort to rewrite the story of King's death a "deceit of history" comparable to denying the Holocaust.

The Post also ran an op ed by professional conspiracy-debunker Gerald Posner, who called the trial a "cynical sham," and threatened the King family that if they persist, this will only "permanently damage their credibility."

The New York Times published an op ed by former Justice Department official Nathan Lewin, who argued that the verdict was worthless because the defendant Jowers didn't defend himself; Lewin lied that the King family didn't call Jowers as a witness where they could have cross-examined him. (In fact, Jowers had agreed to testify, and later reneged, advising the King family and their lawyer that he would assert his Fifth Amendment privilege and refuse to testify.)

Pepper Responds

None of the editorials or op ed writers dealt with the evidence actually presented over the four weeks of trial. Nor could they. They simply hoped that, through repetition of their lies, they could convince the public that the trial was ridiculous.

Asked about these smears by EIRNS, attorney Pepper retorted, "Why didn't the jury find it ridiculous?"

"The jury heard all this evidence, and no matter what they say, they cannot deny the fact that a jury heard

this evidence, and a jury disagrees with them" - referring to the news media. "And a jury disagreed with them in about an hour's time, after four weeks of testimony. That speaks for itself."

Pepper said that the jury was about evenly split between blacks and whites, and that it was economically mixed, "ranging from bankers to day workers." And their verdict was unanimous.

EIRNS asked Pepper about one of the arguments presented in media, that the jury heard just a one-sided presentation.

"Well, what is the other side?" asked Pepper. "I'd be anxious to know what the other side is to testimony about how he put soldiers on the roof who photographed everything. And they buried the photographs. What's the other side to that?"

"I could go through 70 witnesses" with the same kind of argument, Pepper said. "The other side was Jowers's defense counsel, and he tried everything he could to get this case thrown out, he made a motion for a mistrial when Jowers was absent, he made a motion for a directed verdict at the end of the proof, on insufficiency, he made a motion for a mistrial when Jowers was absent, he made a motion for a directed verdict at the end of the proof, on insufficiency, he made a motion on the statute of limitations, they did everything they could to have the case thrown out; the judge denied everything. You don't read that in the papers."

Pepper presented the King family's case in the Memphis civil suit in nine "sections," starting with Dr. King's background, then moving into the local weapon, and the broader conspiracy which reached in to the higher levels of the U.S. government. One section was on the "cover-up" - involving the government and the news media.

Pepper told EIRNS that the coverups range from murder (that of a taxi driver, who saw the actual shooter coming down off the wall and getting into a Memphis police car, and who was killed the same night), to attempts to bribe James Earl Ray or to kill him, and news media information.

Pepper put an expert witness on the stand who testified for two hours about the history of government use of the media, and how the government had distorted and put out propaganda in this case, including fabricated articles. "Having done all that," Pepper said, "I was convinced that there was no way the media was going to give any kind of favorable coverage. That's not what they do."

The King family was not dismayed. "I think that this is history being created," said Dr. King's son Dexter after the verdict. "Anyone who would question whether the truth would come out, this is the last form of democracy that's still alive, where you have independent jurors rendering a verdict. So, we're very happy."

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(Above) On Thursday, March 27, 1997, Martin Luther King's son Dexter met with James Earl Ray in his Nashville prison. Ray's attorney, William Pepper, had urged Dexter King - who believes that a massive government conspiracy killed his father - to meet the confessed killer. During their meeting, Ray denied killing Dr. King. 'I believe you, and my family believes you,' said Dexter.

(Below) In the late 1970s, when Ray appeared before the House Select Committee on Assassinations, he was represented by Mark Lane, a caustic conspiracy buff who had earlier written a book contending that Ray was a patsy.



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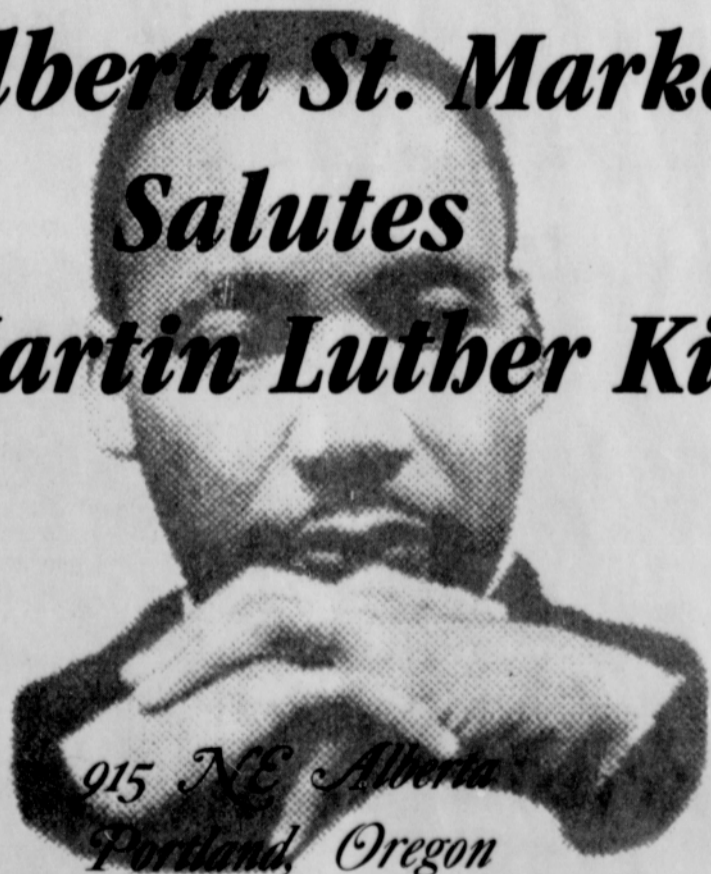
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