

# Black History Month

## Who Killed Dr. Martin Luther King?

*Assassination investigation called a cover-up*

BY JOHN ESTHER  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Early morning, April 04, 1968, a shot rang out in the Memphis sky and the legendary civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was dead.

The man accused of murdering King was James Earl Ray. That was the official version and the FBI and local law enforcement were sticking to it.

Now, in the spirit of King's mantra that "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again," Rev. James Lawson and Mark Lane's personal investigation into the assassination of King has been turned into a screenplay, "Slay the Dreamer."

Written by Lane and Donald Freed ("Secret Honor"), "Slay the Dreamer" is a thriller mixing fictional characters with historical facts. The two lead roles in the script are a father and son composite of people who looked into the assassination, Lawson told the Portland Observer.

A screenplay for the production attempts to expose one of the great cover-ups in this nation.

According to Lawson, "the assassination of King was never investigated."

A dear friend of King's, Lawson, 75, introduced Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent civil disobedience to King.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, King along with Lawson, Rev. Jesse Jackson and others lead effective non-violent protests against segregation and integral miscarriages of justice our government was executing against people abroad and here at home, especially against blacks and other people of color.



PHOTO BY J.C. MATSURRA  
Rev. James Lawson of Los Angeles, a personal friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, says authorities never investigated King's assassination. He's a consultant in the screenplay "Slay the Dreamer."

This made King an enemy of power and they were determined to stop him by any means necessary. The thinking was if they could kill President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and get away with it, who would care about some "uppity Negro" from the south, even if King was a Nobel Peace Prize recipient?

After King was assassinated on that day, the government went to work, framing Ray and

avoiding doing the proper interviewing that any murder investigation would require, much less one with national political implications.

"A make-believe investigation was done," said Lawson.

According to the investigation conducted by Lawson and Lane – the attorney representing Ray – the government ignored neighbors who saw men on the scene going in the

"To the day she died, Ms. Stevens never changed her story," said Lawson.

All the government really had as "evidence" was that Ray's white Mustang was one of two white Mustangs located at the scene. The state also claimed Ray was a racist.

"As black men, me and Ralph Abernathy know what a racist is," said Lawson who met with Ray along with Abernathy. "And we concluded that Ray was not."

Nonetheless, Ray confessed to the crime and there was no trial. Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison where he died in 1998. (According to Lawson and others, when riots broke out in prison, black inmates would protect Ray because they feared an assassina-

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opposite direction of the murder, used a known drunk named Charlie Stevens (who was seen

passed out just minutes before the murder) as the state's chief witness, and provided "no evidence" that Ray had committed the crime, said Lawson.

When Grace Walden Stevens, a woman who saw the gunman, did not and would not identify Ray in a photo as the man she saw at the scene of the crime, she was committed to a mental hospital.

tion attempt!) The screenplay has attracted actors including Leonardo DiCaprio and Samuel L. Jackson in the past, but it has not garnered the attention that Lawson and his company had hoped. No feature film has yet chronicled the life or death of King.

"Movies can help in the protracted struggle against the oppression carried out by the government," said Lawson. "They can help create a massive outcry against the savage assault on human life by our government."

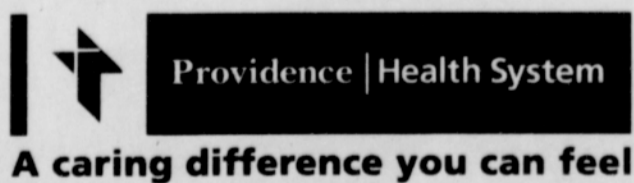
John Ester is a writer from Los Angeles.



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### Tea with Zora

Legendary author celebrated at IFCC

One of the most prominent African-American writers of our time, Zora Neale Hurston is a literary legend on equal footing with the most celebrated authors of the 20th century.

In two special Storytellerz events at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, local actors and community members will host a tea honoring Hurston's vital contribution to American literature and African-American history.

Audience members will be invited to participate by enjoying Southern-style sweet tea and tea cakes and bringing their own favorite passages to share.

The events are scheduled Sunday, Feb. 6 and Monday, Feb. 7 at 7:30 p.m. The theater is located at 5340 N. Interstate Ave.

Audiences are expected to be

invigorated with some of Hurston's lesser known works as well as notable classics such as "Their Eyes Were Watching God." Emphasis will be placed on using her work to understand and appreciate early rural Southern black culture, the roots of many African Americans living in the Portland community today.

The IFCC Storytellerz Readers Theater's program brings theater to everyday folks who do not believe they would ever be able to perform, either because of a lack of formal theater training, or the inability to learn lines. Nevertheless, they wish to be on stage bringing their love of the theater to an audience that does not nec-



Influential author Zora Neale Hurston will be honored at IFCC for her contributions to black history.

essarily embrace the experience of live theater.

Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$4 for seniors and students, plus three cans of food. For reservations, call 503-823-4322.

**"Everything that is done in the world is done by hope."**

— Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968)

*LifeWorks NW promotes a healthy community by providing quality and culturally responsive mental health and addiction services across the lifespan.*



Locations: NE 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue; NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.; N. Mississippi; N. Lombard and other sites throughout the Portland Metro area.