

POINT OF VIEW

TO BE EQUAL

The spirit of unity

By Hugh B. Price
President
National Urban League



HUGH B. PRICE

It rated just a small notice in the mainstream newspapers I saw last week. On the weekend of Feb. 22, the Oak Grove CME Church in the central Georgia town of Elko, a church with a predominately black congregation, was destroyed by fire. Police have arrested three white men in their early 20s and charged them with arson.

So, the burnings in parts of the South and Southwest go on, largely out of the national eye.

Fortunately, however, something else is continuing as well: The church-rebuilding movement that welled up in

response to the publicity about the burnings. This is a movement of individuals and organizations who know that decent people cannot allow the arsonists, particularly those motivated by bigotry, to have the last word.

John T. Dillon is one of the many people who are

Carl Rowan's Commentary

James Earl Ray, the two-bit thief imprisoned for the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has always deserved a full-fledged trial. His incarceration has always smelled of suppression of ugly truths, making it an ugly episode in our system of criminal justice.



CARL ROWAN

So I am pleased that Dr. King's widow, Coretta, and his children, are supporting the request of Ray, now 68 and reportedly dying of liver disease, for the full-fledged courtroom trial that he never got.

Ray was imprisoned for 99 years on the basis of a confession he gave after his lawyer warned him to confess or die in the electric chair. His recantation of that confession was ignored during some weird legal maneuvers that seemed aimed at ensuring that he would never say in court what he knew about who might really have ordered the assassination, or fired the bullet, that snuffed out Dr. King's life almost 29 years ago.

Six years ago, after being allowed to study thousands of FBI documents, I wrote the following in my book, "BREAKING BARRIERS": "Nothing will ever end the suspicion, the speculation, about who really killed Dr. King. I shall go to my grave believing that Hoover, Sullivan, and others in the FBI had a role in silencing the black man they professed to fear, but surely hated."

One of the jurists in the strange lockup of Ray, Judge W. Preston Battle, Jr., once expressed open doubt that, confession notwithstanding, Ray acted alone. The FBI documents convinced me beyond a whisper of doubt that Ray got sophisticated help from some agents of the U.S. government in getting from Memphis, site of the murder, to Atlanta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Windsor, and then to London, Lisbon and back to London's Heathrow airport, where he was arrested. The not-very-smart Ray clearly had help in getting phony passports and the money needed to escape for more than a month one of the greatest manhunts in FBI history.

The King family's hope is that during a trial Ray might testify to facts that will enlighten the world about a possible conspiracy to kill Dr. King. In a Memphis courtroom, Judge Joseph Brown turned down the eighth request for a new trial by Ray's lawyers. The judge lifted the strange lid of suppression only to the extent of asking a court of appeals to permit sophisticated new tests to determine if the bullet that killed Dr. King really was fired from a gun taken to Memphis by Ray.

Years ago, the judges should have said, "Let's put everything everyone has on the table and see if we can fix blame for this crime." With Ray holding on to life, it is still not too late.

determined not to allow those who are mean-spirited to prevail.

And his deciding to act has brought to the church-rebuilding effort the spirit and the dollars of perhaps thousands of other individuals — and the resources of one of the world's corporate giants: For John T. Dillon is chairman and chief executive officer of International Paper, the world's largest wood products company.

Early last summer, Dillon, moved by news articles describing the extent of the attacks, told the National Council of Churches that International Paper would provide from its store of construction products as much material as necessary to rebuild any church the Council determined needed help.

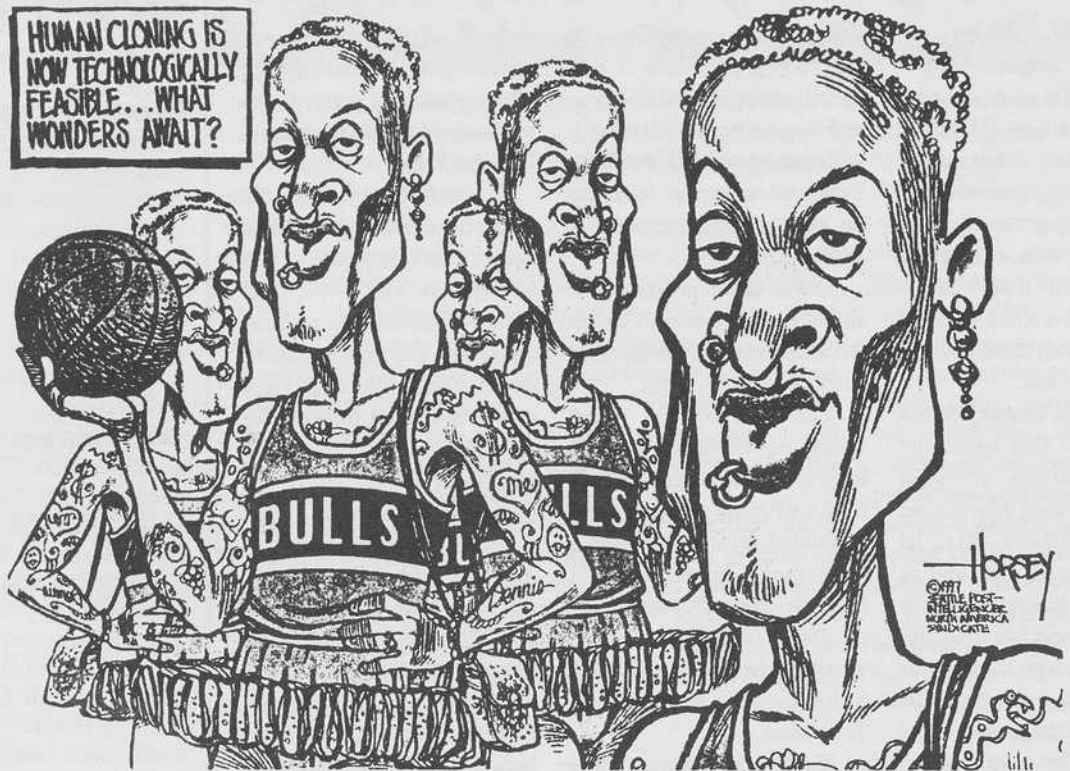
The Council had to set up the Burned Churches Fund to funnel monies, materials and volunteers to help rebuild the besieged congregations.

Dillon put no cap on the amount of materials International Paper would contribute nor time-limit on when the commitment would end. He told me this week that the commitment remains open-ended.

In addition, Dillon promised that the company would use its trucks and truck drivers to deliver the materials to the churches. That pledge saves the churches considerable costs. But, since many of the damaged churches are in small towns and rural communities far from International Paper's established delivery routes, it requires the costs to alter a significant part of its overall delivery schedule.

If you haven't heard of International Paper's commitment, it's not surprising. The company (See Unity, Page 12)

HUMAN CLONING IS NOW TECHNOLOGICALLY FEASIBLE...WHAT WONDERS AWAIT?



Rethinking the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson

It was incredible to see Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King Jr., sitting in the witness box in a Memphis courtroom demanding a new trial for her husband's convicted assassin, James Earl Ray. Her concern was not with Ray, but as she put it "to determine truth" about King's assassination.

The involvement of the King family in the case was triggered by news reports in January that Ray was near death in a prison hospital. Ray's attorney, William Pepper, seized on the attention to push his claim that Ray is a Lee Harvey Oswald-type patsy and that King's killing was orchestrated by the government.

Pepper played the conspiracy card hard. He maintains that the shot that killed King was not fired by Ray but by an assassin named Raul and/or another gunman, and that there were two teams of army snipers nearby waiting for orders to open fire on him. He swears that he has affidavits from the conspirators to prove it. And he has convinced a Memphis judge to recommend new tests to determine if the rifle prosecutors claim is the weapon Ray used to kill King, is really the murder weapon.

Ray stoked the fires of controversy by screaming that he was framed and recanting his guilty plea. When these allegations are set against the backdrop of the FBI's decade long war on King and suspicions that it didn't tell all in its investigation, it's more than enough to send conspiracy theorists to the barricades.

The FBI's secret war against King began during the late 1950's. With the blessing

of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, 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 one man, 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.

Hoover assigned Assistant FBI Director William Sullivan the dirty job of getting the goods on King. Sullivan branded King as the "most dangerous Negro of the future in this nation."

In his book "My Thirty Years in Hoover's FBI," Sullivan described the inner circle of men assigned to get King. "There were at the top, no fewer than 14 men with high ranking positions who not only never objected to the investigation of King, but because of Hoover's pressure were vigorously behind it."

Sullivan coordinated a shadowy group called the "Seat of Government" committee

formed in 1963. The group was made up of special agents mainly drawn from the Washington and Atlanta FBI offices. Their chore was to monitor all of King's activities.

Much of their dirty tactics are well known. They deluged him with wiretaps, physical surveillance, poison-pen letters, threats, harassment, intimidation, and leaked sexual smears to the media.

Conspiracy theorists and Pepper are convinced that the government didn't stop there, that this was all part of a grand plot to murder King.

Hoover claimed that the FBI did not find "a single angle" 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 no proof that the FBI or other government agents killed King. But because of the ferocity of the FBI's secret war against him and the many questions the FBI probe left unanswered, clouds of doubt hang heavy over King's assassination.

Still Hoover probably got it (See King, Page 11)

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper. Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc. 900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 Telephone (702) 380-8100 • Fax (702) 380-8102

Contributing Writers:
Jackie Brantley
Lee Brown
Carl Chamberlain
Ron Gibson
Loretta Arrington Hall
Barbara Robinson
Diana Saffold
Fred T. Snyder
Photographers:
Stacy Banks
John Broussard
Jonathan Olsen

Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor
Lynnette Sawyer, General Manager
Nancy Watson, Managing Editor
Willis Brown, Production Manager
Don Snook, Graphics
Ed & Betty Brown, Founders
Subscriptions payable in advance
Six months \$15.00 • Twelve months \$25.00
The rates apply to Continental United States only
Member:
National Newspaper Publishers Association
West Coast Black Publishers Association