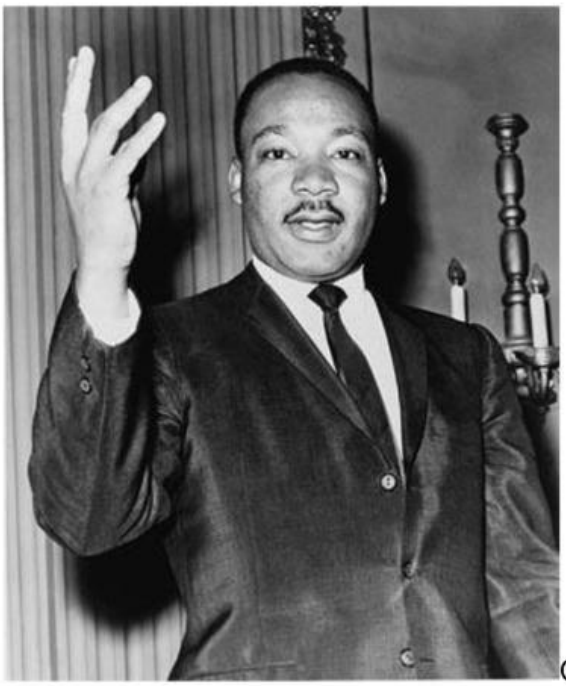
Who killed Martin Luther King?

On the night of April 4th 1968, someone was waiting opposite the windows of the Lorraine Motel, in downtown Memphis.

In front of the motel, a big white Cadillac was parked; it was the car in which the Rev. Martin Luther King was being driven round, as he travelled through the southern states, speaking to audiences in towns and cities, promoting the cause of non-violence and civil rights.

When King stepped out onto the balcony, to take a breath of fresh air after eating his dinner, a **shot** rang out. The civil rights leader and Nobel-prize-winner, the man who preached non-violence, fell to the ground, fatally wounded. Within minutes, he was dead.

The news spread like wildfire round the USA; the man who had done more, perhaps, than any other to further the rights of Black people in the United States of America, had been assassinated, it seemed, by a lone sniper, a white extremist. Weeks later a man by the name of James Earl Ray was arrested and sentenced to 99 years in prison for the assassination. But is that really what happened?

Though James Earl Ray initially confessed to killing King, it was not long before he **retracted** his statement; and to this day, there are those who do not believe that Ray was actually guilty of the crime for which he spent almost 30 years behind bars.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Indeed, even Dexter King, Martin Luther King's son, believed that Ray was not his father's assassin.

But if Ray did not do the deed, who did? And why? Was it just a pure racist crime? Or was this a political assassination ordered by some faceless figures in some secret service? The theory that King was really assassinated by the Secret Service has been growing more and more popular over recent years, and was even the subject of an "X-Files" episode. So how real is the conspiracy theory? And what reasons might anyone other than a racist have had to **get rid of** a charismatic and peaceful leader like Martin Luther King?

We have to take ourselves back to 1968. Since 1955, King had been at the front of the Civil Rights movement in the USA. He had given great support to the year-long bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, which eventually led to the desegregation of public transportation; he had used his skills as a passionate orator to inspire black people to stand up for their rights, in housing, education and other civil rights; and he had gained the **backing** of a growing number of whites. He was in the front line of the anti-segregation demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, which probably did more than any other protest to further the cause of civil rights.

During his brief presidency from 1960 to 1963, Kennedy paved the way for a Civil Rights Act, which would officially ban race-based segregation throughout the USA. Though Kennedy was gunned down before he had time to put the act through Congress, Lyndon Johnson completed the job, and by the end of 1964, the Civil Rights Act was law, and Martin Luther King had won the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Racism, however, had not disappeared. More laws, including the 1968 Civil Rights Act, were needed to fully **eradicate** all forms of official racism. But even then, laws could not change the deep-seated **bigotry** of many southern whites; the more Civil Rights laws were passed, the more some racist groups felt threatened.

1968 was a crisis year in many countries. The Civil Rights movement in the USA had more or less merged with the anti-Vietnam War movement. Black leaders like King were being joined by the pacifist gurus of a new generation of educated young white Americans, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. At the same time, in the black ghettoes of the **rustbelt** cities, a new and more aggressive movement had emerged: Black Power.

In the opinion of some observers, America was slowly sliding towards civil unrest on a large scale. Though King, with his non-violence, was no supporter of civil conflict, he was the no.1 figurehead of black America. Hence the conspiracy theory.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

According to the theory, King was assassinated by the government (whoever that may have been) to prevent the USA from severe civil conflict. A week before King was assassinated, a peaceful march in Memphis had been provoked into violence by a gang called "the Invaders". Nobody knows who was behind the Invaders - but someone was.

James Earl Ray admitted that he was involved in the assassination of King, but claimed that he was part of a plot, the dumb guy who was used by others who tricked him into it. He claimed that the gun that killed King was actually fired by a man called "Raoul" - but who Raoul was no one knows. Dexter King, who studied events surrounding his father's death in the minutest detail, believed that Ray was telling the truth.

New scientific tests suggest that it was not Ray's gun that fired the bullet that killed King. So if it was "Raoul", not Ray, that really assassinated Martin Luther King, why did he do it, and on whose orders? Was it the CIA, or some other secret organization, nervous about rising black militantism and opposition to the Vietnam War? Or was King's assassination masterminded by some secret white supremacist organisation?

Maybe we will know one day, maybe not.

WORDS:
shot: , gunshot, sound of a gun being shot - **retracted :** withdrew, denied, took back - **release :** liberation, freedom, - **get rid of** : eliminate, kill - **backing** :support, help - **act :** law - **eradicate** : eliminate, remove -**bigotry** : narrow-mindedness, people with narrow and fixed ideas, extremism - **rustbelt** : The Rustbelt is the part of the USA (from Chicago to Virginia) where old fashioned heavy industries have gone into decline.

1. Select the best equivalent of the following words used in the article:

Wounded: amused, hurt, confused
to further: to promote, to stop, to discourage
like wildfire: very fast, slowly, in an excited manner
behind bars: drinking, working in a pub, in prison
release: liberation, imprisonment, record
deed: action, death, plan
paved the way: seriously opposed, prepared, did nothing about
hence: next, this explains, here
masterminded: analysed, planned, killed

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2. Choose the right answer:

1. What movement emerged in the black ghettoes of rustbelt cities in the late 1960s?

   A. Purple power
   B. White power
   C. Yellow power
   D. Black power

2. Martin Luther King was:
   A. Nobel Prize winner
   B. The violence activist
   C. A preacher
   D. All of the above

3. James Earl Ray was convicted for murdering Martin Luther King. How many years he spent in prison?
   A. 30
   B. 99
   C. 26
   D. 'till his death

4. Who managed to make The Civil Rights act be fulfilled?
   A. Martin Luther King
   B. Kennedy
   C. James Earl Ray
   D. Lyndon Johnson

5. When was the Civil Rights act accepted?
   A. 1960
   B. 1963
   C. 1964
   D.1968

6. Who is believed to have assassinated Martin Luther king for real?
   A. James Earl Ray
   B. Raoul
   C. The government
   D. Dexter King

3. True (T) or False (F):

1. Martin Luther King was shot after eating his supper.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2. The news of King's death spread during the wildfire.

3. James Earl Grey retracted his guilty plea sometime after admitting to the crime.

4. Martin Luther King was in the front lines of the anti-segregation demonstrations in Alabama.

5. Kennedy was shot after he put the Civil Rights Act to the Congress.

6. A week before killing M.L. King a gang called "The invaders" started violence in peaceful march, which took place in Birmingham.

7. Dexter King believes that a man named "Raoul" killed his father.

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