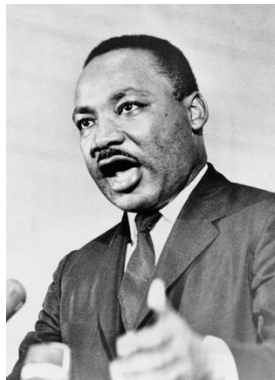


## Case Study- James Earl Ray: Conspirator or Lone Gunman

Since his arrest in 1968 for the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., endless speculation has swirled around the motives and connections of James Earl Ray. Ray was a career criminal who was serving time for armed robbery when he escaped from the Missouri State Prison almost one year before the assassination. On April 3, 1968, Ray

arrived in Memphis, Tennessee. The next day he rented a room at Bessie Brewer's Rooming House, across the street from the Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was staying.



Martin Luther King Jr.



James Earl Ray

At 6:00 p.m., Dr. King left his second story motel room and stepped onto the balcony. As King turned toward his room, a shot rang out, striking the civil rights activist. Nothing could be done to revive him and Dr. King was pronounced dead at 7:05 p.m. As the assailant ran on foot from Bessie Brewer's, he left a blanket-covered package in front of a nearby building and then drove off in a white Mustang. The package contained a high-powered rifle equipped with a scope, a radio, some clothes, a pair of binoculars, a couple of beer cans, and a receipt for the binoculars. Almost a week after the shooting, the white Mustang was found abandoned in Atlanta, Georgia.

Fingerprints later identified as James Earl Ray's were found in the Mustang, on the rifle, on the binoculars, and on a beer can. In 1969, Ray entered a guilty plea in return for a sentence of ninety-nine years. While a variety of conspiracy theories surround this crime, the indisputable fact is that a fingerprint put the rifle that killed Martin Luther King, Jr., in the hands of James Earl Ray.