

## The Issue of the Role of Jesse Jackson (if any) in Martin Luther King's Death

extracted by Dick Atlee, 14 January 2016, from the deposition in William Pepper; [\*The Plot to Kill King\*](#) (Skyhorse Publishing, 2016), pp. 572-76, 624-31

**Background:** Russell Adkins, Sr., of Memphis, was a Klansman, a Mason, and strongly connected to both the "Dixie Mafia" and to the formal and informal white power structure in Memphis. He was a central figure in the planning of King's murder, starting in earnest in 1964, but also before that. The fact that it was done in Memphis was due to Adkins and the infrastructure that had been put in place long before. It was so sufficient that the U.S. military operation that was running in parallel with it and poised to pull the trigger turned out not to be necessary. Ironically, Russell Adkins died in 1967, never seeing the fruits of his labors.

His son Russell Jr. carried on the family efforts in the assassination and was a key player. Also a player, though not so crucially involved, was a younger son, Ron Tyler Adkins. Growing up in a family steeped in corrupt manipulation and the planning for King's murder, he absorbed a tremendous amount of first-hand inside information. He proved to be an invaluable source of understanding of the murder after a change of heart brought him in 2014 to lawyer William Pepper, who had been investigating the case for over 35 years. In his 2009 deposition with Pepper -- available in Pepper's final (2016) book on the assassination, *The Plot to Kill King* -- Ron talked about a number of key players in the plot to kill King, among them:

- \* Clyde Tolson, J. Edgar Hoover's second in command, gay partner, and money runner to the Adkins family for many years;
- \* "Junior" Adkins, Ron's older brother, extremely involved in the assassination, and, according to Ron, the shooter (though Pepper has strong evidence suggesting it was a particular Memphis police officer);
- \* Frank Holloman, the head of the Memphis Police and Fire Departments;
- \* Frank Liberto, local produce dealer and connection to Carlos Marcello's New Orleans mob;
- \* O.Z. Evers, the black leader in Memphis who was the go-to guy for the Adkins family with respect to the black community, and the person who distributed J. Edgar Hoover's money (coming through the Adkins family) to the various FBI informants;
- \* Rev. Billy Kyles, the black minister who under the pretense of an invitation to dinner at his house arranged to have King at the target spot at exactly the right time; and last but not least,
- \* Jesse Jackson (with whom King had earlier seemed upset for some reason), who had arranged to have King moved from a protected room at the Lorraine Motel to the exposed room where he was shot, and had, under false pretenses, just before the assassination, removed from the motel the armed local group that was protecting King.
- \* (Not mentioned in this abridgement is close King associate, Ralph Abernathy, who originally got Pepper involved in pursuing this investigation, but about whom Pepper's research has given him grounds for suspicion of involvement in the assassination.)

From the voluminous and wide-ranging deposition, I've tried to extract the information that is relevant to Jesse Jackson's role and eliminate conversational redundancy. I have, however, included quite a bit of material that is not directly related to Jackson yet provides a sense of what Ron knew and how he knew it. The areas I have removed are indicated by "..." ellipses.

## Video Deposition of Ron Tyler Adkins

In the Matter of:

Corretta Scott King vs. Lloyd Jowers

December 10, 2009

Q: For the Plaintiffs: Mr. William Pepper

Q: For the Defendant: Mr. John Toland (not involved here)

Also present: Mr. Roy Johnson (*italics*) and others

Transcription: Brian Dominski, Alpha Reporting Corp.

A. ...You want to know what I know today about Clyde Tolson.

...

Q. Yeah, when it started and a little bit of the history, as much as you can tell us.

A. First time I ever met him was out of the old airport is where the old National Guard Armory planes used to be. It was the Memphis airport, but it was a little old airport...

He would fly in the airport and daddy told me -- I said where you going? He said, to see a man about a dog... Sometimes he would say, you want to go? He said, load up. I had to run out there and get in. First time I remember meeting him, daddy said, you know, if you want to go, get in. I got in the car. We went on out there and picked him up at the airport. He was a big connection with daddy. I mean, he used daddy and gave daddy money to do different things, you know. He was at the house quite a bit.

...

Q. What did he give your father money for? What kind of activities?

A. In the particulars of what we're talking about here, I know that he gave daddy money on two separate occasions. I don't know the dates. I can tell you about when they were. I don't know exactly how much money it was. But daddy told him that, you know, he needed some money to pay these boys.

Daddy took the money and give it to O.Z. Evers with the instructions that -- daddy and O.Z. stayed on the phone a lot. Now here is what I can tell you about that. Daddy and O.Z. would probably talk if not every day, every other day. O.Z. Evers was getting daddy information on the movement, whereabouts and the future coming and goings of Martin Luther King.

Q. Now what time was this roughly?

A. This was way before they killed him. This was early 1960's, I mean early 1960's. It could have started in the late 50's. I'm not sure.

...

Q. You are saying that O.Z. was giving your father information about Martin King's movements, and your father was giving him money?

A. Yes, sir. He was taking that money -- I heard these conversations. I've heard some of these conversations. Part of that money went to Solomon Jones, who I personally worked with in this town. He gave part of that money for Solomon because Solomon knew some of the movements and what was going on. He give part of that money to Jesse Jackson, and he give part of that money to Billy Kyles.

Q. Now, wait. Your father gave money to O.Z.?

A. My father give money to O.Z. O.Z. distributed that money under my father's instructions.

Q. So your father told O.Z. to give it to Jesse Jackson and Kyles?

A. How this worked was he would tell my father who needed money and what the money was going to be used for to gather what information... That money was given to Solomon Jones, Jesse Jackson and Billy Kyles.

...

Q. Right. So Jackson and Kyles are being paid off by O.Z. following your father's instructions to provide information on Martin King's coming and going, his movements?

A. Yes, sir. And besides that, daddy had so many connections -- daddy had some good federal connections... Clyde Tolson told daddy that Billy Kyles, Jesse Jackson, and Solomon Jones were all paid informants for the FBI, that they were being paid out of the Memphis office from... Mr. Holloman. That Holloman had them under -- directly under his thumb as far as getting payment and them being paid informants.

Now, I don't know to what extent that went to. I don't know whether or not they was telling him about phone calls or telling him about speeches he was going to give or where he was going to be, but I do know this: I do know that it was different from the information daddy was gathering for the killing. I know that was different information. I'm almost positive it was different information.

Q. Now this money that your dad was getting to O.Z. that found its way to Jackson and Kyles --

A. Had nothing to do with the money that Holloman was paying Kyles, Jackson and Solomon.

Q. It had nothing to do with it, separate payments?

A. Separate payments.

Q. Did that particular money come from Tolson?

A. That Holloman was getting?

Q. No, that your father was getting.

A. It came directly from Clyde Tolson to my father's hand in a brown bag or a -- one of them like they've got a metal thing around inside the leather that you open up, kind of like a doctor's bag but a little bit bigger bag. He would keep his paperwork and stuff in there, money in there. That's the way he traveled.

...

Q. How often do you recall or do you know that your father gave this money to O.Z.? How often would Jackson and Kyles be paid off during this period of time?

A. You know, I don't know how often they were being paid off, because I wasn't at the payoffs. I'd say daddy give him money probably six or seven, eight times in a period of probably 64 to 67, early 1967, all the way up to March, maybe even April of 67...

That money was directly to go to information -- he would show daddy, I got this information. It wasn't like on a legal pad. They had ledgers. He would show, daddy, look here, I've got this information here, and then his initials over here. This is from, J.J., Jesse Jackson, or this is from Solomon or this is from Kyles...

He would come and show daddy the ledger and say, this is what we've got, this is the information we've got, he is going to be in Montgomery, he is going to be in Greenbow, Alabama, or where he is going to be.

Q. Where did -- what did your father do with that information?

A. I have no idea. I'm assuming he used it to give to Tolson and that Tolson would --

Q. Let them know?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Were you present in the little house on any occasion where you saw the money changing hands between O.Z. and your father?

A. I never saw daddy take the money out and hand it to him. I did see -- I have seen Clyde Tolson open the bag up, open the brief thing up and pull his papers out and take the money out. It was usually in the bag. It was usually in a sandwich -- you know, the brown bags. He would set the money down.

Then daddy would open the sack up and pull the money out and they'd go to counting. They

both counted. That's the way the old man did business, one potato, two potato, three potato, four. That's the way they did it.

But as far as seeing him hand it off and say here is \$1000 for Solomon or here is \$200 for Kyles or whatever, I never saw it go that way. I know the money went that way. I saw the money laid out. Daddy would take the money and put a rubber band around it and write on there who it was going to, Solomon Jones, S.J., Billy Kyles, B.K.

That money was stacked on top of the other money, was stacked on top of the other money, was put in the bag, and I have seen O.Z. pick the bag up off daddy's desk right inside the door and leave out with it. I have seen that.

- Q. Have you seen the bundles of money labeled? Have you seen the labels on the bundles of money... that said "B.K." or "J.J."?
- A. Sure I saw that. I saw my father when he wrote them down there. Daddy would take a piece of paper and tear it off like that and write on there, this is for this one and there is for this, you know. I don't know if one was getting a certain amount.
- Apparently -- why put -- this is my figuring. Why put people's initials on a scrap of paper and put a rubber band around it on their pile if everybody is getting the same amount of money for their work? Apparently somebody is getting more money or what's the purpose of putting that on there?
- Q. Do you recall, as closely as you can, the first time you saw a bundle of money with that kind of label on it?
- A. 64... It was before Christmas, but it was -- school was already back in process... [After] Martin King... took the Nobel Peace Prize in December of 1964... he was raised to another level in terms of his credibility and prestige. They were trying to put him into a lower level a whole lot before that. They were talking about killing him back in the 50's, I know, at our house in the late 50's.

- 
- Q. Okay. Now, he stays at the Lorraine on the 3rd. He is supposed to stay down in the lower... Room 202. Somehow that room gets changed... and he gets moved up to 306.
- A. Right. Jesse Jackson did that.
- Q. Tell us what you know about how that happened, how that one got changed?
- A. O.Z. called him and told him to move him outside, move him up and move him out, put him on the corner if you can. The man that owned the hotel, O.Z. contacted him.
- Q. Walter Bailey?
- A. Right. O.Z. contacted him and said that Jesse was coming to see him. Jesse went down there and talk to the man. I wasn't there when it happened, but he talked to the man. It was a little while after that before I got there, but he went in there and he talked to the man and moved him up and moved him into... 306.
- Q. Now how do you know that O.Z. told Jesse to do this?
- A. Because O.Z. called my mama and got instructions to do it.
- ...
- Q. And how did your mother give him instructions?
- A. Because Frank Holloman had given it to Junior, and Junior give it to mama.
- Q. So Junior used your mother as the point person for that information?
- A. No. Frank Holloman called Junior or Frank Holloman told Junior -- I think Junior was with him then. Frank told Junior that they needed to get some stuff done. He said we can get O.Z. to do it, we just need to get mama to call him.

O.Z. didn't talk to a lot of people after that. When daddy went down [1967], I mean he helped and he did everything he could, and he did would Junior and them asked, but mama had more stroke with him than anybody did.

Q. So Junior told your mother... to get ahold of O.Z.

A. ... It was him and mama on the phone. Mama just told me that she had to get hold of O.Z., get the phone book.

Q. Your mother told you this is what happened?

A. Right. Go out to garage, get daddy's phone book and bring it in here. I said, all right.

Q. So you brought the phone book in with O.Z.'s number in it?

A. I brought his phone book in which had hundreds of numbers in it.

Q. Yeah. She called O.Z.?

A. Yeah.

Q. You were present during the call?

A. I was standing right beside her.

Q. You were standing beside her when she made the call?

A. Right... She told O.Z. she needed to talk to him and was he where he could talk. She said, this is Mae, Ms. Russell. He asked her if he could call her back. Apparently somebody was there or whatever. She said yeah, I'll be waiting for your call, but I need to talk you right away. She sat down in the chair where -- we had a chair that had looked like a school desk kind of like that had a phone thing on it, and I sat down the dining room chair, I turned the chair around to the table and sat down in the chair about as far from you to me away from my mama and we sat there and waited for the phone to ring.

The phone rang and it was O.Z. O.Z. said, Ms. Mae, what can I do for you? That's what mama said he said. Mama told him that they needed to get Dr. King moved and that she needed him to get ahold of Jesse or somebody and get him moved, would it be possible to get Jones to get it done?

They didn't trust Jones to get it done. So -- he didn't trust Jones to do it. So he got Jackson to do it. That's all I know. I know that he got Jesse Jackson to get him moved or he told Jesse Jackson to move him, you know... [Years later] I asked mama, I said, you know, what was the deal with Solomon? She said, Solomon wasn't handling the money... after we talked about it, you know, and after I talked to Junior some more and I talked to some more people, the deal was Jesse Jackson was paying for everything that was happening. He was in control of -- what's the word, Roy?

*Mr. Johnson: He was the comptroller. He was the treasurer.*

A. So that's how he got -- apparently that's what made him -- he could say, okay, we want to move him from there room to room and we went want to get rid of these boys over here and we need to go, get them out of here and tell them we didn't pay for the room. Who was that Roy? Help me out here.

Q. The Invaders [an armed black Memphis gang supporting King] were moved.

A. The Invaders. But they had already paid -- Jesse had already paid for that room. They had already paid for that room or whoever paid for it paid for it.

Q. SCLC [King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference] paid for it.

A. But they still had to go. It was like, you've got to go. That all come through O.Z., which all come through Junior, which every bit of it come through... Holloman to Junior, Junior to my mother...

Kyles is the one that was instructed to get Martin to the door at 6:00 straight up, straight up. Jesse was supposed to be out there. Jesse got chicken shit -- excuse me, Jesse got chicken shit

in his blood and he went on downstairs, because Solomon -- Solomon and me talked about this [years later] over in Buford's office. I said, what did you run for? He said, shit, I knew what was fixing to happen, I seen them moving, and I was cleaning out of there. I said, well, that was a good move...

Q. All right. Now, the basic question in terms of the involvement of Solomon Jones, Billy Kyles and Jess Jackson is whether they knew in fact there was going to be a hit on Martin King on the 4th of April.

A. They knew it for a fact... I'm going to tell you something that I do remember...

Later on after the assassination, sometime in the 1970's, and I'm going to say it is around 1975, 1976, Solomon and me had met at Walter Buford's. We were talking...

Essentially he admitted that they had talked to O.Z. Evers. They had been paid some money I believe it was about ten to twelve days -- I believe it was probably less than two weeks before they killed Dr. King.

Q. By "they," who do you mean?

A. O.Z. -- the money come through the house, come through mama to Junior, and I think Junior is the one that probably took the money over to O.Z...

So what I do know is this: I do know that they had been paid for information that apparently he was coming to town and when he was going to be in town and where he was going to stay. I think they had set up for him to stay at the Lorraine ahead of time. I think that Jesse was told -- when I say "I think," you know, I wasn't sitting in a room listening to the conversation and I wasn't talking the conversation with somebody, but I believe -- this is my personal opinion from talking to my mother and my brother, who were involved -- is that Jesse needed to have him at the Lorraine Motel because they were set up to work out of Jowers' place [a bar across the parking lot from the Lorraine].

Well, in this situation they shot from here to the end of that hall down there, you know, and that's not a hard shot, you know. A good even shot out through there, you know, he was supposed to be shot -- I heard the conversation "Shoot the son-of-a-bitch in the mouth." I heard Frank Holloman tell Russell, Jr., "I want the son-of-a-bitch shot, shoot the son-of-a-bitch in the mouth." I heard --

Q. You heard Holloman say that?

A. Yeah. In another conversation before that I heard Frank Liberto tell Junior, "It has got to be done right away, it has got to be done right away, shoot him in the head."

Q. What is the timing of these two conversations?... Holloman's conversation was after Liberto. Liberto was three days before?...

A. Probably three days.

Q. Let me back you up a bit. Your mother and Junior, what did they exactly say about the awareness of Jones, Jackson and Kyles? What did they specifically say that you recall?

A. In separate conversations and with all three of us sitting outside of the swing together -- well, Junior was sitting on a number 10 washtub that was turned over, and mama was in the glider, and we talked about it. And mama said, well, that went just like it was planned to be done. It was done just like it was planned to be done. It went the way it was supposed to go. Mama said, well thank God for O.Z.

Q. ...what I'm trying to focus in on as much as possible, I know you are convinced that Jackson, Kyles and Jones --

A. I know for a fact that they were.

Q. -- knew about this assassination. But what I'm trying to --

A. Billy Kyles was told to get him out of the room. O.Z. Evers told him get him out of --

Q. Kyles or Jackson?

...

A. Kyles was told to get them outside that door at straight up 6:00.

Q. Who told Kyles that?

A. Kyles was told that by O.Z. Evers, but my brother told my mother to call and tell them 6:00 and make damn sure it wasn't a minute late.

Q. Who confirmed that call was made?

A. My mother.

Q. Your mother told you that?

A. Yeah my mother, my brother told me, I talked to Liberto after that, I talked to Holloman since then, you know.

Q. But your mother and your brother in particular told you that?

A. Yes.

Q. That's important. And Jackson -- in terms of Jackson moving the room, how do you believe so strongly that Jackson knew he was going to be hit?

A. O.Z. told him to move him.

Q. Evers told him to move him?

A. Yes, because he was the money man is what -- now I don't know this. I'm just telling you what I was told.

Q. That's what you were told?

A. Because my mother told me that because she said that Jackson was the money man.

...

My mother had been -- my father dealt with O.Z. Evers for years. My mother was the closest thing to my father in this deal. Therefore, O.Z. trusted my mother. It was "Ms. Mae" or "Ms. Russell." So I can trust her. So I know that what O.Z. was told to do he done.

Q. Right. But in terms of Jackson --

A. In terms of Jackson, he is a piece of shit.

Q. Yes, and we agree on that, perhaps. But how do you know that Jackson knew that King was going to be hit?

A. Man, all I can tell you, Pepper, is my mama told me that, my brother told me that, I talked O.Z. about it.

Q. Told you --

A. I'll tell you somebody else who even told me about it was Solomon Jones. Solomon admitted that it was him, Jackson and Kyles and that Kyles was the front man to get them out of the room, and he told me, he said, when the time started getting near, Jackson kept checking his watch and he carried his ass downstairs and got behind the damn wall by the pool where his ass wouldn't get shot. This come out of Solomon's shot himself over here in Buford's office.

Q. That's good.

A. So chicken shit Jackson --

Q. That's good.

A. -- he is as wormy as a three-day-old Beagle puppy.

Q. That's the kind of response I want. That gives us some clarity on that...