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# Assassin's Lawyer Says Sirhan Sirhan Was Brainwashed

By [RUSSELL GOLDMAN \(@GoldmanRussell\)](#)

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A lawyer for [Sirhan Sirhan](#), the confessed assassin of Robert F. Kennedy, plans to present new evidence at a parole board hearing suggesting that he did not act alone, was potentially brain washed and cannot remember anything about the 43-year-old shooting.

"There is no question he was hypno-programmed," lawyer William F. Pepper told ABCNews.com. "He was set up. He was used. He was manipulated."

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Sirhan will appear before a California parole board on Wednesday for the 14th time since his May 1969 sentencing. It is the first time he will be represented by Pepper.

Taking a page from the conspiracies that have dogged the assassination of Kennedy's brother President John F. Kennedy, Pepper plans to introduce new evidence that suggests there was a second gunman who fatally shot RFK in the kitchen of a Los Angeles hotel, following his victory in the 1968 California presidential primary.

Pepper said he believes Sirhan was "hypno-programmed," essentially brainwashed to kill Kennedy and his memories were then erased.

The lawyer's tale has all the makings of a great conspiracy theory, if not a science fiction thriller akin to the "Manchurian Candidate."

"Ten independent witnesses say Sirhan was always in front of Bobby, never behind him," said Pepper, "but the autopsy says Bobby was shot at close range from behind the right ear."

Pepper says he believes he knows who ordered Sirhan to shoot Kennedy, but won't yet say who it is. He said in addition to the parole hearing, he is preparing an appeal.

Pepper said Sirhan is "remorseful" for his role in the 1968 assassination of Kennedy, but the gunman "does not remember anything about the shooting."

The image of Sirhan sitting in a California prison cell in 2011 regretting a



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crime he does not remember does not jibe with a defiant Sirhan sitting a California courtroom in 1969.

At his trial, Sirhan confessed to the crime and declared he had committed it "with 20 years of malice aforethought."

### **Second Gunman Conspiracy Theory**

Members of the Kennedy family declined to discuss the claims by Sirhan's lawyer.

The second gunman theory is not new, said Cyril Wecht, a renowned forensic pathologist and one of two independent physicians who examined Kennedy's body. Wecht was also one of nine forensic pathologists on a panel who

reexamined the JFK assassination, but the only one who dissented from the single bullet theory.

Wecht said the coroner in the RFK case gave "unchallenged, unequivocal" testimony to the grand jury that Kennedy had been shot from behind at close range. Witnesses all put Sirhan in front of Kennedy.

Wecht said it was scientifically plausible to hypnotize someone and induce them to murder, but said he did not know if there was enough evidence to suggest that in Sirhan's case.

Parole hearings are typically not the platform to introduce new evidence, or retry a case. Boards typically want to hear convicts express remorse for their crimes, not deny remembering them.

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But Pepper says "There is an exception when the factual narrative is wrong. Counsel has the right to correct those facts. I don't know why prior counsel never did that. I am going to clarify the record."

A spokeswoman for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation said she cannot comment on the specifics of Sirhan's case, but parole board hearings generally "are not to decide guilt or innocence."

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