

Writer says Helms can't prove

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Chapel Hill, N.C. (AP) — Even if Senator Jesse Helms gains access to tapes of FBI wiretaps on Martin Luther King, Jr., they would not expose the slain civil rights leader as a communist sympathizer, a researcher says.

David Garrow said the sealed tapes of telephone and motel room conversations in the 1960s "involve off-color humor and other utterances that, while embarrassing if put on the public record, would in no way im-

pugn Dr. King's basic moral character."

Mr. Helms (R, N.C.) says he needs the tapes to prove that Congress should not honor Dr. King with a national holiday.

Mr. Garrow, an assistant political science professor at the University of North Carolina, is working on his third book about the slain civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

He said one of his books, "The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.," and those of several other historians have

reported that Dr. King had an active extramarital sex life and enjoyed telling bawdy jokes.

But he said that should not be grounds for refusing to establish a national holiday in Dr. King's honor.

"If extramarital affairs were to bar notable American political figures from being honored by our country, many American presidents and other notables would not be eligible," he said.

Mr. Garrow said he has not seen the material that Mr. Helms is asking

King was communist

a federal judge in Washington to release, but he said he has talked with many FBI sources who have examined the contents.

"It is beyond any shadow of a doubt that Dr. King was a completely loyal American," he said. "Anyone who would question that must be extremely unfamiliar with King's entire career and thought."

Mr. Helms and some others are fighting a Senate bill that would make Dr. King's birthday a national holiday, effective in 1986. The House

has approved the measure 338-90.

President Reagan has said he will sign the bill if the Senate approves it. A vote is scheduled Wednesday.

Contending that Dr. King espoused "action-oriented Marxism," Mr. Helms has filed suit seeking to gain release of FBI wiretaps, which have been under court seal since 1977. The materials are not scheduled to be made public until the year 2027.

A hearing on the Helms suit is scheduled for today in Washington.