

New Court Setback for James Earl Ray

Cincinnati

James Earl Ray cannot repudiate his confession that he assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and cannot stand trial, a federal appeals court ruled yesterday.

The unanimous decision from the U.S. court of appeals, for the sixth circuit, was the latest of several setbacks for Ray in his seven-year attempt to have the controversial guilty plea tossed out.

Ray, 48, serving a 99-year sentence at the Tennessee state prison in Nashville where he works in the prison laundry, will now take his case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ray pleaded guilty to first degree murder on March 10, 1969, and the case never went to trial.

But immediately after entering the plea, Ray began trying to get it changed, contending that attorneys more interested in money than his fate had talked him into pleading guilty.

"The plea was entered voluntarily and knowingly," the judges said yesterday of the plea-bargaining arrangement that guaranteed Ray would not receive the death sentence.

As for Ray's contention that he did not have "effective" lawyers because Hanes and Foreman were involved in financial contracts with author William Bradford Huie, the judges said they "disapproved" of the arrangement but it "does not necessarily mean that Ray was denied effective assistance of counsel."

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