

Mrs. King Urges Conspirator Hunt

By DONALD PHILLIPS

ATLANTA (UPI) — Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s widow and his successor said yesterday they now believe more strongly than ever that a conspiracy brought about his assassination last April.

Coretta King and the Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, who succeeded King as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said the search must continue for persons they say acted with James Earl Ray in a plan to kill King.

Mrs. King, in a statement here following Ray's guilty plea in Memphis, said:

"For the family of Martin Luther King Jr., there is a sense of emotional relief. For the movement we have been spared a trial which would compel us to relive the fearfully tragic events of his death.

"But we realize that this is but a respite. This plea of guilty cannot be allowed to close the case, to end the search for the many fingers which helped pull the trigger," Mrs. King said.

"All concerned people must press the state of Tennessee and the U.S. government to continue until all who are responsible for this crime have been apprehended. Not until then can the conscience of the nation rest."

"My belief in the conspiracy has been strengthened" by the courageous admission of James Earl Ray," Abernathy told a news conference here.

The SCLC is committed therefore to remain alert and until justice is meted out to all the perpetrators," Abernathy said.

Both Mrs. King and Abernathy again stated their opposition to capital punishment.

"The death penalty for the man who pleaded guilty to the crime would be contrary to

the deeply held moral and religious convictions of my husband," Mrs. King said.

"Retribution and vengeance have no place in our beliefs. The execution of Mr. Ray, who has not yet told the full story, would not serve the ends of justice," Mrs. King said.

"My husband believed that we must separate the man from the deed. In that spirit, I look beyond James Earl Ray to the racism which pervaded — and still poisons — the climate of America.

"It was the real killer. It incited violence against a man who was the very essence of non-violence. It fostered hatred against one whose love for all mankind was unconditional.

"If America would dedicate itself to bring racism to trial and sentence it to oblivion, then my husband's death would have served the creative purpose for which he devoted his whole life," Mrs. King concluded.