
Ray's Allegation of Coercion Called Absurd by Tennessee

MEMPHIS, June 18 (UPI)—The State of Tennessee branded as an "utter absurdity" yesterday James Earl Ray's allegation that he had been coerced into pleading guilty to the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Two Assistant Attorneys General, W. Henry Haile and William J. Haynes Jr., made the comment in a memorandum filed in Federal Court. United States District Judge Robert M. McRae Jr. is to meet with attorneys for both sides Friday to set a date for a hearing on Mr. Ray's charges. The hearing was ordered by the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

Mr. Ray pleaded guilty to the 1968 murder of Dr. King and was sentenced to 99 years in prison, but almost immediately began efforts to gain a new trial, contending he was coerced into pleading guilty by his attorneys.

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