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James Earl Ray Files Suit Seeking FBI Tapes

Associated Press

James Earl Ray, serving a 99-year sentence for the murder of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., filed suit Tuesday seeking public release of tapes the FBI made in the five years it kept tabs on the civil rights leader.

He said the tapes and transcripts of their contents "will assist in the exoneration of plaintiff" in the King assassination in 1968. There was no elaboration.

"The purpose of the National Archives is to preserve records and make them available to scholars and the general public, not to cover up political murders and perpetuate the blackmailing of politicians," Ray said in a complaint filed in federal court here.

He apparently composed the complaint without the aid of a lawyer, and asked the court to overlook technical errors. "Plaintiff presently resides in the state of Tennessee wherein he is incarcerated in the state penitentiary at Petros, Tenn.," Ray said.

He also asked that the suit be approached "in the law and spirit that the court's judge's colleague, Hon. John Sirica, approached and adjudicated the Watergate affair." Ray's complaint was assigned to U.S. District Court Judge Harold Greene.

Ray's brother, Jerry, concluded his testimony before the House Assassinations Committee last month by saying:

"I think on behalf of James, if we get the FBI files out of the archives we'll find out who did kill Martin Luther King."