

II – Questions

1. Find out information about the defendant/ the crime/ the sentence / the place.

The defendant/the accused is named Willie Jerome Manning. He was charged of the murder of two students that were found dead in 1992 in the state of Mississippi and was sentenced to death for that crime in 1994. He was supposed to receive a lethal injection on May 8th, 2013, the date when the article was published.

2. What is the topic of the article? Why?

A few hours before being executed, the Mississippi Supreme Court decided to block Manning's execution as the evidence that was used to condemn him was erroneous/ false/ wrong/ incorrect.

3. Find out details on the crime that was committed.

Manning was accused of shooting Jon Steckler and Tiffany Miller dead/down. The bodies/corpses were found in a rural area in Mississippi in December 1992.

Manning's lawyer asked for the execution to be postponed arguing that the testimonies against his client concerning ballistics tests and hair analysis were beyond the limits of science/ could not be ascertained by science.

4. What was the decision of the court?

After the first discussions about the case, the court had rendered a 5 to 4 decision in favor of a stay. But after further analysis, the court was more unanimous and gave a 8-1 verdict for the execution to be suspended.

5. Explain the evidence of the bullet found in a tree.

Based on Manning's girlfriend's testimony, the FBI had compared the bullets found in the victims' bodies and those that Manning had fired at a tree in his garden and had concluded that they matched. This piece of evidence was one key evidence that helped sentence Manning to death. But recent disclosure showed that this analysis was incorrect.

6. Which other piece of evidence was used at court?

DNA analysis on hair found in one of the victims' car was also used to charge Manning. But, once more, the results were said to be incorrect by the FBI themselves.

7. What did the defense lawyers ask for? On which grounds?

They used the FBI disclosures to ask for new testing and evidence analysis while asking for the stay of Manning's execution. They explained that the new analyses would prove their client's innocence and exonerate him from the murders.

8. What was the defendant's reaction?

Manning sounded quite optimistic about this unexpected development. He strongly believed he had God's support to go through this new hardship. He strongly believed his execution would be stopped.

9. What were the members of one of the victims' family about to do?

Tiffany Miller's family had planned to witness Manning's execution and were already on route when they were contacted by the officials that announced them his execution had been blocked.