

King: Belafonte wanted to sell 3 documents

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1967, had a collective pre-sale estimate of \$750,000 to \$1.3 million.

"The King estate believes the documents being offered in Thursday's auction are a part of the wrongly acquired collection," Isaac Farris, CEO of the King Center in Atlanta, said Wednesday. "The King estate is currently in conversations with Sotheby's to establish the truth."

It's difficult to know whether the papers might end up in Atlanta, as part of the King collection that now resides at Morehouse College, said Doug Shipman, director of the city's future Center for Civil & Human Rights. If they are sold, a buyer would have to donate them or allow them to be exhibited at the center, which is scheduled to open downtown in 2011.

About 10,000 King documents his family had planned to auction at Sotheby's in 2006 were bought for \$32 million by the city of Atlanta and are housed at Morehouse College, King's alma mater.

Belafonte could not be reached for comment on the dispute.

He earlier said the papers were given to him by King or by his wife after the civil rights leader was assassinated in 1968.

Sunday, Belafonte said he was putting the documents up for sale because "I am at the end of my life - I will be 82 shortly - and there are a lot of causes I believe in for which resources are not available, and there is a need to redistribute those

resources."

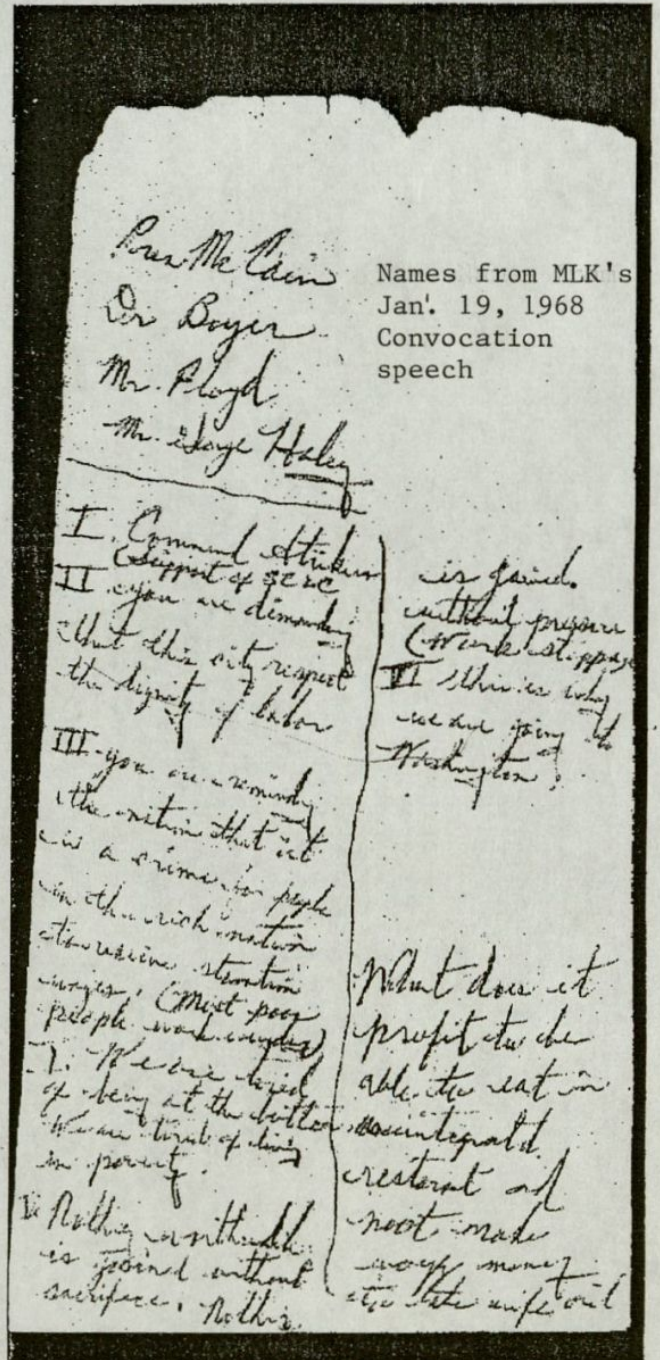
He recalled how he became a close friend and early follower of King's civil rights movement in the mid-1950s and provided him with an apartment for his use on visits to New York.

It was there, Belafonte said, that King drafted the first speech attacking U.S. involvement in Vietnam. When he flew to Los Angeles to deliver the speech to a celebrity-studded audience, he left behind the outline, written on three pages of yellow legal pad.

Also up for sale were scribbled notes for a speech King intended to deliver in Memphis on April 7, 1968, defending the right of city sanitation workers to strike for a living wage. The notes, found in King's pocket after he was gunned down on April 4, 1968, on a Memphis motel balcony, were given by his wife to the late Stan Levison, a close friend who then gave them to Belafonte, he said.

The third item was a condolence letter from then-President Lyndon B. Johnson to Coretta Scott King, expressing sympathy over her husband's murder and promising all federal and local law enforcement resources to find the killer. Belafonte said she had given him the letter.

Selby Kiffer, a senior curator of documents at Sotheby's, said the anti-war letter probably would rank in importance with the most significant papers in King's archive, his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," the draft of his "I Have a Dream" speech and his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.



The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s notes for a speech and two other manuscripts had been up for sale by Sotheby's.

VF CONVOCATIONS
KING, MARTIN LUTHER, JR.
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