

# Family's Fee Request Stalls King Memorial

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Efforts to raise money to build the national Martin Luther King Jr. memorial on the Mall have stalled because the memorial foundation so far has been unable to get permission from the King family to use the slain civil rights leader's image and words in the fundraising campaign.

The King family wants to receive a fee as part of such an agreement, said Harry Johnson, president of the King National Memorial Project Foundation Inc.

The memorial, estimated to cost \$100 million, is to be built on a four-acre Tidal Basin site within the sightline of the Jefferson and Lincoln memorials. The site was dedicated last year, and the foundation, by law, has until Dec. 12,

2003, to raise the necessary funds. Congress often has granted extensions of such deadlines for memorial projects.

Johnson, who is also president of the memorial's sponsor, the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, would not say how much money has been raised. But he indicated that it was not a large amount and that most prospective donors are holding off on contributions until the foundation's negotiations with the King family are resolved.

General Motors Corp., for example, which already has contributed \$750,000 to the memorial, has suggested that a larger donation would follow. Those plans are on hold because the issue of permission to use King's name and likeness has not been settled, company spokesman Bill Noack said.

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sponsorship of the project.

The King family was criticized recently for allowing the Nobel Peace Prize winner's image to be used in commercials for Cingular, a cellular telephone company, and Alcatel, a French telecommunications company.

"Certainly, as a result of those criticisms, we are overly conscious that we aren't going to do anything that will spark further criticism," Harris said. "We don't want to exploit the estate. . . . We don't want Dr. King on a soda can or on the side of a bus."

A fee from the memorial foundation also would help offset any decline in fundraising that the center might suffer because of donations to the Mall project, Harris added.

"It's been very difficult for us," she said. "We want to see this project happen, but we want people to realize that Dr. King's legacy is a living legacy."

Johnson, a Houston lawyer, said he remains optimistic that an agree-

ment will be reached, although he added that the foundation's lawyers are researching whether a legal agreement with the King Center is needed.

"I believe our intent is to use the images in a very responsible manner," Johnson said. "I am very confident we will build a memorial and that will happen in the best interest of the American people."

The King memorial was authorized by Congress for a Mall location in June 1998, and the Tidal Basin site was approved by several federal commissions in December 1999.

The proposed design, which has yet to receive official approval from the commissions, features a figure of King emerging from a rough-hewn boulder within a landscape of large stones, flowing water and cherry trees.

On April 4, 2000, the 32nd anniversary of King's death, Coretta Scott King visited his crypt and said she was pleased with the plans for a

national memorial in Washington for her husband. When the design was unveiled a few months later, she called it "uniquely beautiful and meaningful."

But the King family also has been aggressive in seeking to control the

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In a written statement, the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, which is governed by the King family, said it is discussing a "permissions agreement" with memorial organizers that will "outline the parameters of their fundraising to ensure that potential corporate sponsors use Dr. King's image appropriately."

"Any funds that we receive from this agreement will go towards supporting the King Center's mission," Tricia Harris, the center's managing director, said in an interview. The center houses exhibits about King's life and teachings and runs educational programs to promote his legacy.

Harris said the King family wants to protect the way King's image, speeches and writings are used in the memorial foundation's appeals for funds, as well as in ads that corporations may run to promote their

rights to King's image and words.

The King family won a lawsuit in 1982 that prevented a businessman from marketing plastic busts of King.

The civil rights leader's heirs later sued USA Today for printing his "I Have a Dream" speech without permission, dropping the suit in 1993 in exchange for a payment.

In July 2000, the family accepted a

cash payment in exchange for dropping a suit it had brought against CBS News for including excerpts of the "I Have a Dream" speech in a documentary on Mike Wallace's career. The news corporation was selling the documentary for \$99.95.

*Researchers Karl Evanzz and Bobbye Pratt contributed to this report.*