Family of Dr. King Charged Group Building His Monument

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The family of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has charged the foundation building a monument to him on the Mall about $800,000 for the use of his words and image, an arrangement one leading scholar said Dr. King would have found offensive.

The memorial, including a 28-foot sculpture depicting Dr. King, is being paid for almost entirely with private money in a fund-raising campaign led by the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation. The monument will be turned over to the National Park Service.

The foundation has been paying the King family for the use of Dr. King’s words and image in its fund-raising materials. The family has not charged for the use of his likeness in the monument.

David J. Garrow, a Cambridge University historian who won a Pulitzer Prize for his biography of Dr. King, said he did not know of any other descendants that had been paid such a fee.

“One would think any family would be so thrilled to have their forefather celebrated and memorialized in D.C. that it would never dawn on them to ask for a penny,” Mr. Garrow said, adding that Dr. King would have been “absolutely scandalized by the profiteering behavior of his children.”

According to financial documents reviewed by The Associated Press, the foundation paid $761,160 in 2007 to Intellectual Properties Management Inc., an entity run by Dr. King’s family. Documents also show a “management” fee of $71,700 was paid to the family estate in 2003.

In a statement to The A.P., Intellectual Properties Management said that the proceeds it receives go to

the King Center in Atlanta and that the arrangement was made out of concern that fund-raising for the monument would undercut donations to the center.

Dr. King's son Dexter is the center's chairman, and his cousin Isaac Farris Jr. is president. Dr. King's two other surviving children, Martin Luther King III and Bernice King, are lifetime members of the board of directors.