



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Harry Belafonte files

1954-1981

Sc MG 617

Summary

Creator: Kennedy, Jay Richard

Title: Harry Belafonte files

Date: 1954-1981

Size: 0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Purchased from Charles Apfelbaum Rare Manuscripts and Archives, 1997.

Abstract: Jay Richard Kennedy, author, composer, and publisher, was an entertainer and civil rights activist. He also was Harry Belafonte's manager and agent from 1955 to 1956. Born Samuel Richard Solomonick of Jewish immigrant parents in the Bronx in 1911, Kennedy was a union organizer and the circulation manager of the Communist Party's *Daily Worker*. He left the Communist Party after the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact, and started a new career as a writer, entertainer's agent, and stock broker. For a ten-year period beginning in 1956, he provided information and analysis to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on Belafonte, the American Communist Party, and the Soviet Union. He died in 1991, in Los Angeles. Kennedy's Belafonte files are divided into Agent and Informant series. The Agent files include correspondence between Belafonte and his agents, Kennedy and Jack Rollins; contracts; legal briefs; financial reports; and a termination agreement between Kennedy and Belafonte, a dispute which lingered until 1960 over the control of Shari Music Publishing. Also included are original materials and several versions of the script for the musical drama *Sing Man Sing*, with lyrics and music by Kennedy and Belafonte.

Preferred citation: [Item], Harry Belafonte files, Sc MG 617, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Accessioned by Andre Elizee, 2008.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photograph

Related Materials:

Garrow, David. *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1981

Steve Nelson papers, Tamiment Library and Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

Creator History

Jay Richard Kennedy, author, composer, and publisher, was an entertainer and civil rights activist. He also was Harry Belafonte's manager and agent from 1955 to 1956. Born Samuel Richard Solomonick of Jewish immigrant parents in the Bronx in 1911, Kennedy was a union organizer and the circulation manager of the Communist Party's *Daily Worker*. He left the Communist Party after the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact, and started a new career as a writer, entertainer's agent, and stock broker. For a ten-year period beginning in 1956, he provided information and analysis to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on Belafonte, the American Communist Party, and the Soviet Union. He died in 1991, in Los Angeles.

Scope and Content Note

Kennedy's Belafonte files are divided into Agent and Informant series. The Agent files include correspondence between Belafonte and his agents, Kennedy and Jack Rollins; contracts; legal briefs; financial reports; and a termination agreement between Kennedy and Belafonte, a dispute which lingered until 1960 over the control of Shari Music Publishing. Also included are original materials and several versions of the script for the musical drama *Sing Man Sing*, with lyrics and music by Kennedy and Belafonte.

The Informant files extend from 1956 to 1965. Federal agents, presumably from the CIA, interviewed Kennedy in the wake of Belafonte's hostile testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1956. Included are a 40-page "Summary of Some 30 Hours of Detailed Background" given by Kennedy to an agent identified as NF (January 1957), and a 36-page narrative, "Meeting with Steve Nelson", with attachments, authored by Kennedy (1956-1957). Also included are eight letters from Morse Allen, CIA director of Security Research Staff (1960-1965); an 8-page report on Belafonte culled from material provided by Kennedy (1965); and a 1965 "Last Will and Testament" by Kennedy, charging that, should he die of unnatural causes, "the assassins would be Peking communist agents in the United States working directly with Harry Belafonte, Stanley D. Levison, and Martin Luther King".

Arrangement: Arranged into two series: (1) Agent and (2) Informant.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American entertainers
African Americans in the performing arts
Artists' representatives
Entertainers -- United States

Names

Belafonte, Harry, 1927-

Kennedy, Jay Richard
Shari Music Publishing
United States. Central Intelligence Agency

Container List

Agent files 1954-1960

- b. 1 f. 1 Biographical materials on Kennedy
- b. 1 f. 2 Jack Rollins lawsuit 1955
- b. 1 f. 3 Belafonte letters 1954-1956
- b. 1 f. 4 Kennedy letters 1954-1956
- b. 1 f. 5 Termination agreement 1956
- b. 1 f. 6 Homes and Davis financial audit 1956
- b. 1 f. 7-8 Shari Music Publishing 1956-1960
- b. 1 f. 9-12 *Sing Man Sing* playscript
- b. 2 f. 1-3

Informant files 1956-1965

- b. 2 f. 4 Summary of Interview with Kennedy 1957 January
- b. 2 f. 5 Meeting with Steve Nelson 1956-1957
- b. 2 f. 6 Morse Nelson letters and report on Belafonte 1960-1965
- b. 2 f. 7 Kennedy's last will and testament 1965