

## KKK Robes, Books Sell at Michigan Auction

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By DAVID EGGERT

HOWELL, Mich. (AP) - Ku Klux Klan robes sold for up to \$1,425 and a KKK knife drew a \$400 bid Saturday during an auction of KKK paraphernalia that critics have blasted as insensitive.

Auctioneer Gary Gray said a steady stream of people visited the auction house in Howell, about 55 miles west of Detroit, in the hours leading up to the sale, where participants could bid on seven KKK robes and items including buttons, books, movies and a lantern.

"Maybe I have taught more people about history, at least this week, than some schools," Gray said. "It's not a question of racism. That's intertwined. But it's not the main focus."

One of the robes was bought for \$700 by the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Big Rapids. Museum officials hope to use it to teach tolerance.



(AP) A Ku Klux Klan robe, held by an unidentified employee, center, of auctioneer Gary Gray, background...

"I felt like I was at a Klan rally at some times," museum curator David Pilgrim said.

Other robes sold for \$1,425 and \$1,150. Many of the people who bought items did not give their names. One person was seen wearing a KKK pin, and another wore an arm band with a Nazi swastika.

About 10 protesters gathered outside the auction house, holding signs that read, "Hate has no home here." Some tried to enter the house, chanting "No Nazis, no KKK," as about 200 people crowded into the auction.

"People say it's historical, but it shouldn't be something we have to remember every day," protester Michelle Soli said.

The NAACP branch in neighboring Oakland County and other civil rights groups have criticized the auction as insensitive. Members of a local diversity council were raising money to buy one of the robes for an anti-racism museum exhibit.



(AP) Amanda Shaver, 28, right, of Howell, Mich., joins in on a rally against an auction of Ku Klux Klan...

Jerry Gowlan, who attended the auction, said he planned to bid on KKK literature and pamphlets, but said he wasn't a supporter of the Klan.

"If we as a society don't learn from past mistakes, we repeat them," Gowlan said.

Community and business groups said the auction would do nothing to fix the town's racist reputation, which they trace to one man - Robert Miles, a KKK leader who lived on a farm outside Howell until his death in 1992.

The auction was originally scheduled for Jan. 15, but was delayed after Gray learned that was the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

After one robe was consigned for sale in early January, dozens of other items poured into the Gray's gallery because of the publicity.

Howell is a city of more than 9,000 people in Livingston County, one of Michigan's least diverse counties. In Howell itself, only 29 blacks were counted in the 2000 census.

Outside the auction, Howell Mayor Geraldine Moen was among the protesters. She said the auction reignited stereotypes about the community. "Hate and its symbols do not belong in Howell," she said.



(AP) An unidentified man, center, jokes with his friend about an anti-fascist protestor waving a flag at...