



HIDEKI TOMIOKA/Emerald

TK McDonald scoops soil onto the base of a newly planted tree in Martin Luther King Jr. Park.

Tree planted in King's honor

Tasha Eichenseher
Oregon Daily Emerald

Blue skies and a brilliant rainbow graced a circle of reflective citizens present to rededicate Martin Luther King, Jr. Park by planting a cherry tree there, last Saturday.

"That is a sign from Martin Luther King about the color of this country," said Guadalupe Quinn, co-chairwomen of the Eugene Human Rights Commission, about the rainbow.

The afternoon vigil and tree planting was one of many events organized by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee, to commemorate and honor King's birthday, Jan. 15.

Several community members, including Quinn,

County Commissioner Bobby Green, University Rabbi Hanan Sills, and LeRoy Dickens, vice-chairman of the Human Rights Commission, spoke about the implications and results of King's work.

"I would like to thank God for Martin Luther King. Because of him we can be who we are," Green said. "His struggle for justice has not been in vain."

"The most influential thing [King] said was that we have to live as brothers and sisters and die as fools," Dickens said. "Looking around this circle, I know that King's spirit is still there."

This is the second tree planting sponsored by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. The park is located on the corner of 10th Avenue and Grant Street.

Artist puts soul into his work

Pat Daly
Oregon Daily Emerald

To artist Arvie Smith, painting is one of the hardest jobs in the world.

"It's never easy," he said about his art. "You're on the line if you're being honest with yourself. You're pouring out your soul."

A selection of Smith's paintings are on display in Room 115 Lawrence Hall, 1190 Franklin Blvd.

The show, "Strange Fruit," explores "cultural and sexual issues dealing with race," Smith said.

A visiting fine arts professor from Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Smith sees a correlation between the ideas Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught and

how he feels about his own work.

"It would be that all men are free. Everyone has the right to do what they want, as long as they don't hurt someone. Expression is one of those freedoms."

"In a general kind of way," he said, "I'm an African American artist trying to break into a field dominated by white males."

"I think Martin's (King) big thing was human rights," he said. "That's what I'm talking about, the right of expression."

One of the most powerful paintings Smith said he ever created was on the day King was killed. When Smith heard the news, he said, he went out and immediately began painting. Not usually an abstract artist, Smith said he threw a lot of himself and his anger into that work.

"This was just rage," Smith said. "I thought it was a great catharsis."

Smith's personal history, and that of his family, are part of his paintings. His great grandmother was a slave, a fact not missed in Smith's works, many of which look at historical black/white relations.

For a time, Smith worked as a social worker in South Central Los Angeles, where he lived as a young man. Smith said those experiences, both growing up and as an adult, play into his work.

"I saw so much working with kids and families," he said. "I saw pimps and prostitutes on the same corners as when I was growing up. Nothing had changed."

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