



Press Release

Holocaust & Genocide Memorial Grove To be Dedicated at SSU March 29

ROHNERT PARK, CA. MARCH 1 – A lasting memorial to the Holocaust and genocides in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and North America will be dedicated on the campus of Sonoma State University on March 29.

Rwandan United Nations Ambassador Prof. Joseph Nsengimana will be the keynote speaker at a lakeside ceremony and unveiling of an original sculpture of glass and steel designed and constructed by Prof. Jann Nunn, associate professor of sculpture at SSU.

Other speakers will include representatives from ethnic and national groups victimized by genocide including Native Americans, Armenians, Jews, Cambodians and Darfurians of the western region of the Sudan.

The sculpture, a three-year-old project entitled the Erna and Arthur Salm Holocaust and Genocide Memorial Grove, is intended to remember past and present genocides and serve as a rededication of world commitments to prevent future crimes against humanity.

The monument will carry the personal remembrances of survivors of the Holocaust and genocides as well as the relatives and friends of the dead on some 460 laser inscribed bricks that are part of the sculpture foundation. The memorial bricks have been purchased from people throughout the Bay Area, Los Angeles, New York City and Chicago, North Carolina and Nebraska, Ontario, Canada, and other areas of the United States.

The sculpture will become a permanent installation at the edge of a lake in Alumni Grove on the northeast side of the campus.

The project is being sponsored by the Center for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide and School of Social Sciences at SSU, the Alliance for the Study of the Holocaust of Sonoma County, and private citizens. No public money was used to finance the approximate \$100,000 project.

The sculpture design consists of two 40-ft long railroad tracks emerging from a gentle grassy rise, crossing a foot path, and narrowing to a width of six inches where the rails disappear into a black granite pedestal and foundation of a 10-ft tall, clear glass tower.

The tower, a cylinder fabricated from 5,000 pieces of glass, will be illuminated from dusk to dawn, by sunlight during the day and artificial internal lights at night.

On the granite base will be engraved the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

"The narrowing distances between the tracks and the convergence into the lighted tower represent the hope that as civilization progresses and we learn from past errors there will be fewer incidents of genocide and holocaust," said Nunn.

The dedication program is Sunday, March 29, 3 – 5 p.m. on the SSU campus. A reception at the Campus Commons will follow. The lakeside program is open free to the public.

Other speakers will include:

- Prof. Brenda Flyswithawks, Santa Rosa Junior College and a member of the Bird Clan (Cherokee) Tsalági Nation
- Archpriest Fr. Sarkis Petoyan; Very Rev. Fr. Baret Dz. V. Yeretsian and Very Rev. Barthev Gulumian, representing the Western Diocese of Armenian Church of North America
- Rabbi George Schlesinger, Beth Ami, Santa Rosa
- Venerable Masarin Visothea, Cambodian Buddhist Temple, Santa Rosa
- Jerry Fowler, Save Darfur Coalition, Washington, D.C.

The program will begin with welcomings by Prof. Elaine Leeder, Dean, School of Social Sciences, and SSU President Ruben Arminana. It will also include Native American singers and drummers, Yiddish music, Cambodian classical dancers, and a Rwandan dance group.

The sculpture was designed and constructed by Nunn. She was assisted by students of the SSU art department and organizers. It is being funded by private contributions, in-kind donations of materials and services from Sonoma County area businesses, and funds raised from the sale of memorial bricks that will make up the railroad-tie base of the iron tracks and on which personal statements on the Holocaust and genocide are inscribed.

The project has been spearheaded by Prof. Leeder and David Salm, a Sonoma County businessman and leading financial supporter, who together conceived the idea for the memorial three years ago and enlisted the enthusiasm of the sculptor Nunn.

Leeder brings two perspectives to the project.

As Dean of the School of Social Services at SSU, she said the Memorial Grove will be an important addition to the landscape of the university which for 25 years has been home to the Center for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide.

From a personal standpoint, Leeder said Nunn's art will stand as a monument to members of her own family – a grandmother, aunt, uncle on her father's side and dozens of relatives from her mother's – who were victims of the Holocaust.

"I've been a survivor's daughter my entire life. This is probably my lasting memorial to the victims," said Nunn, a former visiting scholar at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Project activist David Salm, whose parents fled Nazi Germany shortly after the Nazi attacks against Jews in November 1938 – Kristallnacht – and whose father was imprisoned at Dachau for four weeks, hopes the project will both commemorate the past and cause people to be more aware of genocides still occurring today.

Although the Memorial Grove sculpture's railroad tracks will cross the foot path along the lake, it will be installed in such a way that passersby may not realize they are in the presence of a monument to millions of victims of genocide.

"We do that everyday, walking over present and past atrocities as they occur throughout the world. We still go on, pattering along with our normal lives," he said.

Memorial bricks are still available for purchase. The bricks come in two sizes. A 4 x 6 inch brick, which costs \$100, provides purchasers with three lines of text. An 8 x 8 inch brick, at \$250, provides six lines of text.

A short video on the project is available online at www.sonoma.edu/socsci. To find out how to purchase a memorial brick, contact Sophia LaRosa, sophia.larosa@sonoma.edu 707-664-3221, (fax) 707-664-3920.

Sonoma State University is located in Rohnert Park, 50 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge in Sonoma County.

Contacts:

Prof. Elaine Leeder
Sonoma State University
1801 East Cotati Ave.
Rohnert Park, CA 94928-3609
(707) 664-2112, leeder@sonoma.edu

David Salm
Santa Rosa
707-544-2220, sonofsalm@sbcglobal.net

Prof. Jann Nunn
Associate Professor of Sculptor
cell: 510-326-6630, office: 707-664-3043
jann.nunn@sonoma.edu, <http://www.jannunn.com>

For more information, contact Bob Klose, 707-824-8332, bklose@pacbell.net or Jean Wash, 707-664-2057, jean.wasp@sonoma.edu #