

Library honors Black History Month with art exhibit, storytelling

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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An art exhibit entitled, “Black Lives Matter” is on display to the public through the month of February at the Octavia Fellin Public Library. The more than two dozen works span the year 1964 to the present and are part of a collection done by local artist and former college professor

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Dana Chandler.

"I don't really have a real favorite of the ones that are on display at the library," Chandler, 75, commented. "I like all of them."

Among the works on display, one is titled, "Haitian Slave Trade, All About the Money (1991)." Another carries the title, "Whiskey, Rum, Pear, Apple, Bullets (1981)." Each painting denotes a degree of social commentary as it pertains to Black History Month.

Chandler, a retired professor of art history and Afro-American Studies at Simmons College in Boston, said he doesn't really receive a lot of feedback about the works, but, nevertheless, respects it when it comes his way. Chandler noted that he's been a resident of the Indian Capital since 2004, saying this year marks the second time his works have been on exhibit at the library.

Library Director Mary Ellen Pellington said she receives positive comments about Chandler's works.

"He's a wonderful artist," she said, adding that the library makes a strong effort to put on presentations throughout February. "All of his artwork is amazing."

Chandler said he coined the "Black Lives Matter" name for the exhibit to pay tribute to the "murders" of young black men in Baltimore, Chicago and Ferguson, Mo. "Why not give it that name?" Chandler said. "I think it's time we pay more attention to what is happening in all of our communities."

African Drum Presentation

African storyteller Camille Dodson told about a dozen gathered at Fellin Feb. 16 that before there were cell phones there were drums.

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“Drums were the mechanism that was used to communicate,” she said. “Drums have a very important role in world history.”

The Lesotho-born Dodson now lives in the Albuquerque area, but makes it a point to come to the Indian Capital yearly for the presentation. Dodson’s presentation consisted of inviting participants to share in drum-playing and trivia.

After the hour-long presentation was over, Dodson fielded questions. “I don’t know too much about Lesotho,” participant John Rains of Gallup said. “Where exactly is it?”

Dodson responded with short explanations and anecdotes about Lesotho, saying the country’s inhabitants are called “Basothos.” The country of just more than 2 million went independent from England in 1966, and is encircled by the bigger South Africa.

“I thought it was a very good information presentation,” Rita Peynetsa of Window Rock said afterward. “I mean how many people even know the history of African instruments and for that matter Lesotho?”

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