

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

OU to honor accomplished children's book author and illustrator

By Amanda Benjamin, student writer

The Coretta Scott King Book Award 40th Anniversary Gala Celebration featuring award-winning author and illustrator Ashley Bryan will take place at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 9, in the Educational Resources Lab (ERL) in 350 Pawley Hall.

"This is a special celebration because it is the 40th anniversary," said Linda Pavonetti, associate professor of education in the Reading and Language Arts Department.

"The goals of the event are to make people aware of the award and let people know there are great authors and illustrators of color."

The Coretta Scott King Book Award is given to African American authors and illustrators for outstanding, inspirational and educational contributions in books for children. Honorees promote understanding and appreciation of contributions that people of all cultures make to the realization of the American dream. The award was created to honor the works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

Bryan has been an advocate for African and African American culture for more than 40 years.

"I hope that my work with the African tales will be, by the very nature of storytelling, like a tender bridge reaching us across distances of time and space," he said.

One of Bryan's major focuses is to bring spirituals to children so they know where the songs they hear came from, Pavonetti said. At the event, The Anonymous Quartet gospel group will sing three folk songs that Bryan illustrated in his 2008 Coretta Scott King Book Award winner, "Let it Shine."

Bryan has received a number of awards for his work, including The Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal, which is the ALA's most prestigious award. He was also the 2006 U.S. nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, which is the highest international recognition given to an author and illustrator of children's books.

Bryan was a professor and chair of art and visual science at Dartmouth College and received an honorary doctor of humanities degree from OU in 2003. According to Pavonetti, he has been a friend of OU since the late 1990s and has been a guest lecturer twice for the Reading department's summer class called "Authors and Illustrators."

Bryan also donated some of his paintings to OU, some of which are on display on the third floor of Pawley Hall.

For more information on the Coretta Scott King Book Award 40th Anniversary Gala Celebration, view the [event flier](#), call (248) 370-4877 or e-mail to amphelps@oakland.edu.



Ashley Bryan, center, poses with Mary Otto, now OU Vice President for Outreach, and university supporter Jerome Hill after delivering the commencement address at OU's May commencement in 2003. The painting is a work by Bryan that was donated to Oakland University by Reading Department Chair Jim Ciplewski and Associate Professor Linda Pavonetti.

SUMMARY

The Coretta Scott King Book Award is given to African American authors and illustrators for outstanding literary contributions. Author Ashley Bryan has been an advocate for African and African American culture for more than 40 years.

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