



The Fullerton Arboretum
1900 Associated Road
Fullerton, CA 92831
Main (657) 278-3407
Fax (657) 278-7066
www.fullertonarboretum.org

News Release

Contact: Ami Becker
Education Manager, Fullerton Arboretum
Direct: (657) 278-4681
Email: abecker@fullerton.edu

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Special Educational Panel Discussion Covering Fair Housing in Orange County During Cold War Era Fullerton Arboretum--May 4, 2011

FULLERTON, CA--On May 4, 2011, at the Fullerton Arboretum Pavilion, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm, a special free panel discussion will feature the heroic stories of those who fought strongly for fair housing in Orange County during the early Cold War period. Two panelists, Dr. Sammy Lee (a Korean American) and Dorothy Mulkey (an African American) relate their own highly publicized and significant struggles to overcome barriers preventing them, respectively, from buying a house in Garden Grove and renting an apartment in Santa Ana. Three other panelists (two Mexican Americans and one Euro American) narrate the battles of their fathers, Alex Bernal and Ralph Kennedy, to secure housing rights for Orange County's racial minorities, particularly in Fullerton. Finally, the panel's moderator (a Euro American) shares his insights about the topic at hand as a longtime member of the Orange County Fair Housing Council.

This week, we are highlighting panelist Dr. Sammy Lee and Dorothy Mulkey. Dr. Sammy Lee, in 1954, had been a two-time gold-medal Olympic diving champion, an officer in the U.S. Army, a goodwill ambassador for America sent around the world by President

Eisenhower, and was a medical doctor. That year, this famous Korean American was attempting to purchase a home in the Orange County City of Garden Grove and was told that minorities were not allowed in the tract he had chosen. He did not take that lightly, so he contacted the San Francisco Chronicle. Their reporter went to the housing tract and tape-recorded the developer's highly racist remarks about Asians and his unwillingness to sell to Dr. and Mrs. Lee. The incident became national press. In 1957, the Lees had to deal with two other housing incidents as well. Dr. Lee and his wife Roz live, currently live in south Orange County.

The Dorothy Mulkey Supreme Court case, *Mulkey v. Reitman*, along with *Mendez v. Westminster*, was one of the two most important civil rights cases in Orange County history, as well as one of the most important in California history. In 1963, Dorothy Mulkey and her husband Lincoln Mulkey were plaintiffs in a case involving discrimination in their attempt to rent an apartment in an almost all-white area of Santa Ana. Theirs became the lead case used to show that the initiative, Proposition 14, which eliminated all fair housing laws in the state, was unconstitutional. The case worked its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where by a 5-4 vote, Earl Warren casting the deciding vote, the court declared that indeed Proposition 14 was unconstitutional. Dorothy Mulkey lives in Santa Ana not far from where the discrimination took place.

We encourage you to join us on May 4th from 4:00 pm to 7:00pm with panelist Dr. Sammy Lee, Dorothy Mulkey, Alex Bernal and Ralph Kennedy. This event is in coordination with the opening of the "New Birth of Freedom: Civil War to Civil Rights in California" exhibit at the Orange County Agricultural and Nikkei Heritage Museum at the Fullerton Arboretum on April 30, 2011. Content for the exhibition includes the contentious debate over slavery in California, the position of ethnic minorities in the Gold Rush era, California's participation in the Civil War, Japanese-American internment during World War II, important southern California-based court cases that opposed discrimination in education, jobs, and public.

For more information, call (657) 278-4681 or email to abecker@fullerton.edu. Visit our website at www.fullertonarboretum.org.

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