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arts &
entertainment

Roe v. Wade celebration to feature speakers, controversial paintings

By Whitney Phaneuf
Mustang Daily

Roe v. Wade will celebrate its 26th anniversary on Friday, Jan. 22 and San Luis Obispo National Organization for Women is honoring the medical providers fighting to keep abortion legal.

The free event at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship Hall will feature stories of doctors who gave their lives to protect a woman's right to choose, with contributions by community activists, including an exhibit by local artist Dorothy Riggs.

Angie King, coordinator of the San Luis Obispo chapter of NOW, said the murder of abortion provider Dr. Barnett Slepian and the bombing of the Birmingham clinic inspired the theme, "Honoring our Medical Providers."

"All the doctors killed had stated they felt it was their duty to do this and believed strongly in a woman's right to an abortion," King said.

Speakers will include representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Association of University Women and Planned Parenthood. Stories of the lives of three doctors killed by violence since 1992 will be told.

King said that extremist groups

are increasingly cutting off access for abortions through these acts of violence. She also noted that less than 15 percent of United States' counties have a clinic that provides abortions.

"It doesn't hit home until someone needs one," King said.

An arson fire burned a San Luis Obispo Planned Parenthood in February 1995, and though no one was injured, the building was totaled. King said the fire was considered by some law enforcers to be a concerted effort against clinics throughout California.

Aeronautical engineering senior Sharon Perkins recalls how she felt when she found out about the clinic fire.

"I was in shock. It was the first time abortion rights hit close to home. I never realized how dangerous it could be for clinic employees," Perkins said.

Riggs, an exhibiting artist, said she became involved in the Roe vs. Wade celebration because she feels passionately about women's issues, especially a woman's right to an abortion.

"There is no more important civil right for women, next to voting," Riggs said.

Her paintings are often symbols for larger issues such as rape, feminism, and women's health care.

"I paint symbols for women's rights so the female can be honored, as opposed to discriminated against," Riggs said.

Her painting "Yin and Yang Peppers" became the center of controversy when it was removed from the county courthouse last summer due to complaints that it was "too sexually explicit."

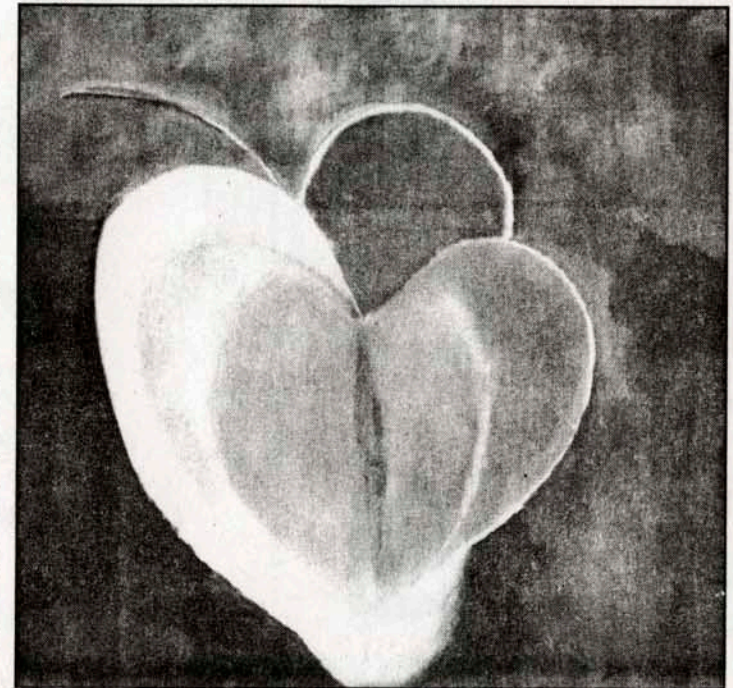
"It totally took me by surprise, and I felt I was being censored," Riggs said.

The painting was intended to express the harmony and balance between the male and the female, Riggs said. The seeds inside the right pepper represented ovaries and the seeds of life, while the stem of the left pepper represented the male.

"There is nothing dirty about that. We must stop being ashamed of our sexuality," she said.

Riggs will be presenting "Yin and Yang Peppers," along with her new piece "Forbidden Fruit," at the NOW event.

King wanted to incorporate art into the Roe vs. Wade celebration after reading that the Birmingham clinic re-opening included an art



STILL LIFE?: "Forbidden Fruit" is a painting by local artist Dorothy Riggs that will be featured at the Roe v. Wade celebration this Friday, Jan. 22 at 6 p.m. at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship Hall, 232 Foothill Blvd.

exhibit. She contacted Riggs, who became involved in the celebration and joined NOW.

Political science senior Kathryn Lovell, coordinator of the Cal Poly chapter of NOW, thinks it is important to remember Roe vs. Wade, since women gained control over their reproductive rights with the

Supreme Court ruling.

"Having grown up in the pro-choice era, I cannot imagine living in a society without the option of abortion," she said.

The Roe v. Wade celebration begins at 6 p.m. at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship Hall at 232 Foothill Blvd.