

Hope CommUnity Center celebrates Black History Month

By Teresa Sargeant
Apopka Chief Staff

In recognition of Black History Month, the Farmworker Association of Florida and Hope CommUnity Center hosted "Embrace Hope for Racial Understanding," where oral historian/author/professor Dr. Kitty Oliver discussed the fostering of race relations through storytelling.

The event, open to the public, took place at Hope CommUnity Center's South Hawthorne campus on Monday, February 12.

"I've lived through some phenomenal changes in this country, in this society, in this world, and so have many of you," Oliver said. "The problem has been we don't often have the opportunity to start thinking about raising ethnic relations in those terms because we're always told nothing has changed."

Oliver said she has collected over 125 oral histories from individuals of various races and backgrounds,

and asked them all the same questions about race and ethnic relations over time. In sharing a few of their stories, she played audio and video clips, and read excerpts from her books.

"I'm going to tell you a little bit about my journey," she said. "You can think about yours, and we can talk about the power of our stories and what we have to learn from each other if we just create opportunities like this to come together and begin to listen."

Oliver, 70, grew up in Jacksonville during a time of racial segregation. She said that there, she never encountered a white person in "close proximity."

"The only ones who came into our community would have been an insurance agent," she said.

Oliver is president of Kitty O. Enterprises, Inc., a cultural diversity consulting firm based in Fort Lauderdale, and director of the new Race and Change Initiative at Florida Atlantic University. She has been

featured on the CNN program "Black in America."

The Florida Humanities Council, with funds from the Florida Department State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, sponsored the program.

Lashae Copeland, a Hope CommUnity Center staff member, said Oliver's presentation lived up to her expectations and that she was grateful with a large turnout to the event, a turnout that packed the room.

"I think the message of Dr. Kitty Oliver is how do we embrace racial change in a hopeful way and I really think that she was able to deliver that message effectively," Copeland said. I really enjoyed how she took that message from the point of view of different cultures and different ethnicities."

The audience could

apply Oliver's advice about race relations to everyday life and living through storytelling, Copeland said.

"I think what she really touched on was storytelling, and I think storytelling is important in helping us create an understanding for one another," she said. "Once we are able to create that understanding, we can then come closer."

Raidel Moreno Armas, who attended "Embrace Hope for Racial Understanding," asked Oliver at the program how individuals can remain hopeful yet realistic about societal issues.

"I think she did an amazing job," Armas said after the event. "The one key word in her response was 'intention,' which is to remain intentional in everything we do because sometimes I see that happening in my group of friends. Most of my friends

would consider themselves activists, but it has happened that sometimes people get lost in seeing so many problems. It gets to the point that they start losing their intentions. They forget why they are pointing out problems. It's keeping track of pointing out problems, but then how to best move on from there and being intentional in ev-

erything we do."

Armas, who just returned to the Apopka area following his four-year attendance at a Colorado college, learned about the event while reaching out to many community organizers to see how he could best get involved. The Farmworker Association of Florida sent him a flyer announcing the program.

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City: Council will look at matter Feb. 21, March 7

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The City Council will purchase the property from the city contingent upon City Council approval of a PUD rezoning and Preliminary Development Plan for the proposed development.

The City Council will have a first reading on Wednesday, February 21, at 7 p.m. at City Hall, and a second reading on March 7 at 1:30 p.m., also at City Hall.

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You care so much, in fact, that you spend the time researching each race, issues, and the candidates before you vote. It might be your civic duty to mark a ballot, but you take it to the next level!

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There are other ways to learn about the candidates, but we believe **The Apopka Voter's Guide** is an excellent, side-by-side, one-stop guide for voters like you, the ones willing to go the extra step to do more than show up by actually casting an informed ballot.

**Be Informed and Vote
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The Apopka Chief

407-886-2777 • 400 N. Park Ave., Apopka

news@theapopkachief.com

www.TheApopkaChief.com

ads@theapopkachief.com

