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Remembering Sister Dorothy Stang

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The University of Dayton will honor the memory of Sister Dorothy Stang next week with a presentation from an environmental and human rights activist who wrote a book about the life and death of the nun murdered in Brazil in 2005.

Binka Le Breton, author of The Greatest Gift: The Courageous Life and Martyrdom of Sister Dorothy Stang, will speak about Stang at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 11, in the Kennedy Union Boll Theatre on the University of Dayton campus.

Le Breton will hold a reception and book signing from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Dayton International Peace Museum, 208 W. Monument Ave.

The University of Dayton department of sociology, Center for Social Concern and the human rights studies program, the Dayton International Peace Museum, Mercy Siena Retirement Community and Chaminade Julienne High School are sponsoring the events.

Stang, born and raised in Dayton, joined the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur at the age of 17. She spent nearly four decades as a missionary in Brazil where she became a naturalized citizen. She lived in primitive conditions in the rainforest, taught peasants sustainable farming techniques and fought illegal logging and ranching.

The University of Dayton granted Stang an honorary degree a year after her death, and in 2008, the United Nations named her a Human Rights Prize recipient.

Stang was shot to death in Brazil, on Feb. 12, 2005, as part of a land dispute over the displacement of peasants.

Two ranch hands were found guilty of her murder in December 2005. A court convicted Vitalmiro Moura in 2007 of ordering Stang's murder and sentenced him to 30 years in prison, but he was released last May after a retrial overturned his conviction.

Le Breton and her husband live in Brazil and founded the Iracambi Rainforest Research Center, which focuses on conservation, sustainability and human rights. She is the author of Voices from the Amazon, Rainforests, A Land to Die For and Trapped: Modern Slavery in the Brazilian Amazon.

She is currently an expert consultant to a film commissioned by the National Geographic Society about modern day slavery in the United States.

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