
News Report

52nd Anniversary Celebration of Earth Day at LACC with Ron Finley

BY EDWARD LOCKE

Friday, April 22, 2022

On Friday, April 22, 2022 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, the 52nd Anniversary Celebration of Earth Day, hosted by Los Angeles City College (LACC) and Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) with the themes of "Sustainability, Climate Change and Our Environment," was held at the New Community Garden, Los Angeles City College, next to Martin Luther King Library, to raise awareness on the importance of the environment and the impacts that humans have on the planet.

LACC has been celebrating and honoring Earth Day since 2005. This year's event featured many activities, including honoring Ron Finley as the keynote speaker, demonstration on how to prepare healthy vegetarian food with herbs by Professor Gayle Stafsky, Director of Dietetics, offering participants tasteful food and drinks with small bites using garden ingredients prepared by LACC Dietetic students, such as herbs, and food from local market because of limited supply from the garden. The Dietetics program at LACC will offer Family and Consumer Studies (FCS) 21 (Nutrition) class for Summer Session, FCS 21 (Nutrition) and FCS 24 (Food Preparation) classes for Fall 2022.

Tents have been set up to offer small plants in plastic pots to participants through raffles, free food boxes from Subway and snack bars. There are displays of amazing Earth Day art posters created by students and addressing topics of climate change and sustainability; and tour of the City's New Community Garden where LACC students planted vegetables and fruits, and art students donated and display ceramic works that decorate the field and planters.

The most important feature in the event is Honoring Ron Finley, for his outstanding ecologically friendly and socially benevolent project. Ron Finley is a social activist, environmentalist, and humanist; he founded the Ron Finley Project (<https://ronfinley.com/>), aimed at "teaching communities how to transform food deserts into food sanctuaries, and teaching individuals how to regenerate their lands into creative business models," with the spirit of "gangsta" or "projecting strength on one's own terms, hip, cool, innovative, revolutionary, resolute, vital, the cutting edge." As "a rebel with a green thumb," Ron Finley started his project in 2010, he saw those often-neglected dirt patches next to the streets; and envisioned a new resource for food production. He planted some vegetables in his parkways in 2010; Soon after he was cited for gardening without a permit by the City of Los Angeles. He then started a petition with fellow green activists and demanded the right to garden and grow food in his neighborhood, fought back, and won. This started his horticulture revolution. He has grown up in the South Central Los Angeles's "food prison" or "food desert," and is familiar with the area's lack of healthy fresh produce. South-Central L.A. has higher obesity rates than more affluent neighboring communities like Beverly Hills, Glendale, and Pasadena, which are only a few miles to its north,

according to a 2011 study conducted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. There are currently 23.5 million people living in food deserts in the US. And cities with high African American and Latin American populations, including Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, New Orleans, and New York City, regularly top the list of those hit hardest by food scarcity. He knew what it was like to drive 45 minutes just to get a fresh tomato. Boldly and tenderly, Ron's vision to rejuvenate communities around the world through gardening, knowledge, and togetherness has taken root. The vegetables and fruits grown in Ron Finley's garden have been distributed to neighbors for free for years. "Ron got the law changed so that people can grow food on their parkway in the city of Los Angeles. The variety of food grown is always evolving, and includes oranges, lemons, pomegranates, bananas, nectarines, goose berries, apples, sunflowers, taro, artichokes, collard greens, herbs, Okinawan spinach, avocados, Japanese sweet potatoes, and more. Ron has a few core individuals who help manage the garden alongside him," said Miranda Akkari, Executive Assistant to Ron Finley.

Besides food production, Ron Finley Project also sells online T-shirts, magnets and bags printed with graphics celebrating local culture. They are printed by outside printing services.

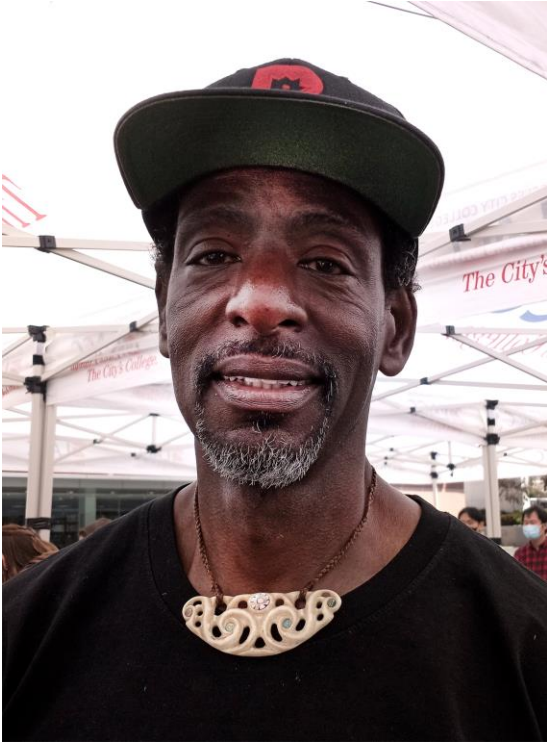
"We envision a world where people know nutrition and where it comes from. Where all ages embrace the act of growing, knowing and sharing the best of the earth's fresh-grown food," said Ron Finley in his website at <https://ronfinley.com>. In his keynote speech, Ron Finley said that "what my garden intends is to show people that we can design beautiful places and do beautiful things for beautiful people; ... nothing is more magical, nothing is more precious and nothing is more valuable than this."

Ron Finley's gardening project is described in details in three YouTube videos, with listed URLs:

- "A guerrilla gardener in South Central LA" (https://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerrilla_gardener_in_south_central_la?language=en)
- "The Gangsta Garden" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sajk7dNFA4o>)
- "Ron Finley: Urban Gangsta Gardener in South Central LA | Game Changers" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7t-NbF77ceM>)

The Earth Day Celebration LACC 2022 is quite successful. Approximately 400 people participated in the event.

Photos by Edward Locke



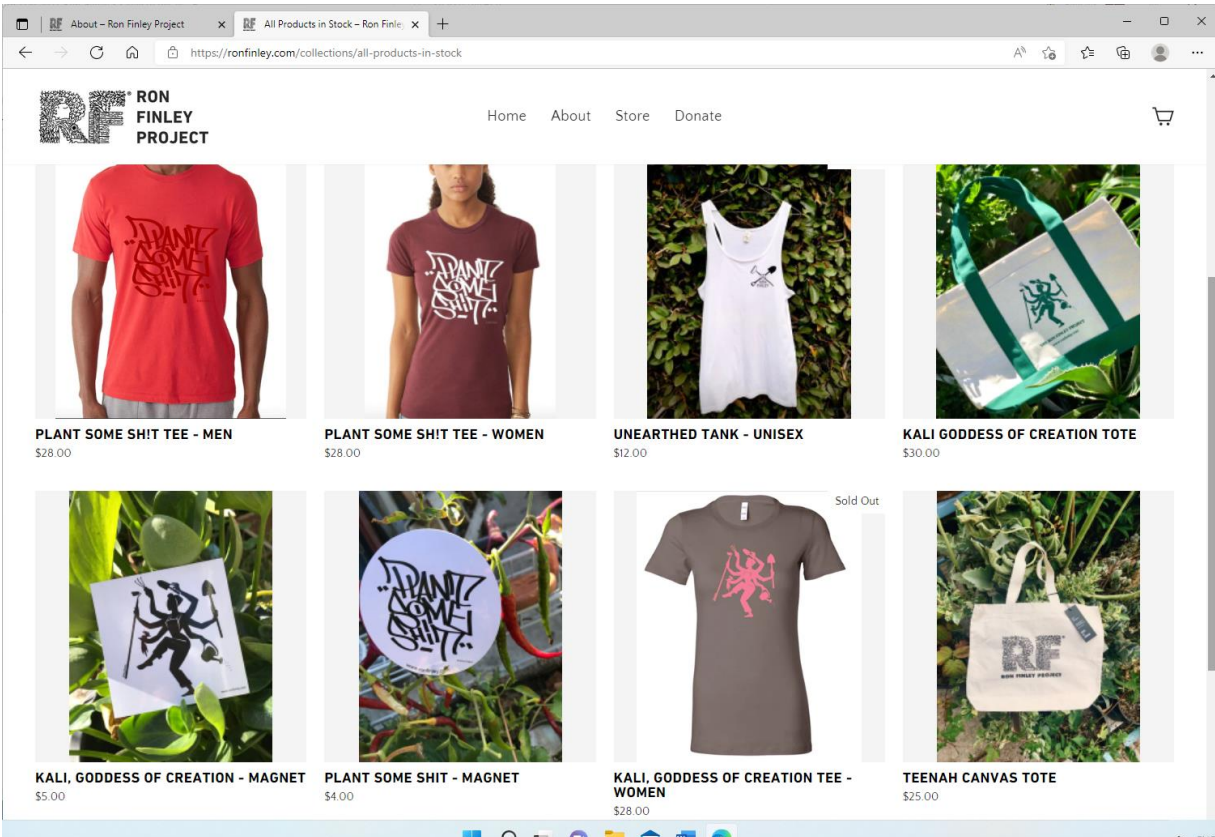
Ron Finley speaking at LACC Earth Day Celebration.



Ron Finley and Char of LACC Art Department Professor Alexandra Wiesenfeld at the podium (Photo credit: Edward Locke, The Collegian)



Plants grown in Ron Finley's garden, including: Taro root, Okinawan spinach, lemon, orange, banana (row 1); sunflower, cactus, Okinawan spinach/lettuce, fig tree, pomegranate tree (row 2); fig, sunflower, Okinawan spinach/lettuce, artichoke, Mexican marigolds (row 3); rosemary, nectarine tree, collard greens, squash, orange (row 4).



T-shirts and bags sold online at Ron Finley Project’s website at <https://ronfinley.com> (Source: <https://ronfinley.com>)



The City’s Garden next to the Martin Luther King Library.



Art student Alexandra Metz who studied ceramics at both LACC and Glendale Community College, and planted arugula, cucumber, and cilantro in a plot.



LACC students Joel Mefford and Stephanie Knudsen by the lettuce and other plants that they planted in the City's Garden.



The lettuce planted by Joel Mefford and Stephanie Knudsen, with WeChat code that leads to relevant webpage (Photo credit: Edward Locke, The Collegian)



Head of "The Sleeping Beauty" ceramic works in the City's Garden.



Hair of "The Sleeping Beauty" ceramic works in the City's Garden.



Details in “The Sleeping Beauty” ceramic works in the City’s Garden.



Other ceramic artworks on display in the City’s Garden. Names of artists:
 1st row (from left to right): Vanessa Juarez, Rosario Chavarría, Kam Brooks, Lizbeth Cova-Peña, Andres C. Janacua (LACC Art Professor),
 2nd row (from left to right): Lovepreet Gill, Alex Metz, Linda Cortez, Luisa Lopez-Perez, Jennifer Wong,
 3rd row (from left to right): Vanessa Juarez, Emily Wolfe, Kam Brooks, Hunter Vipheavini, Georgia Fanthorpe.



Various types of fruits and vegetables planted in the City's Garden.



Professor Gayle Stafsky, Director of LACC Dietetics program demonstrated on vegetarian food preparation.



Vegetarian food for participants to taste.



Kids from Children's Hospital Los Angeles displayed a piece of artwork.



Earth Day event related artwork made by kids from Children's Hospital Los Angeles.



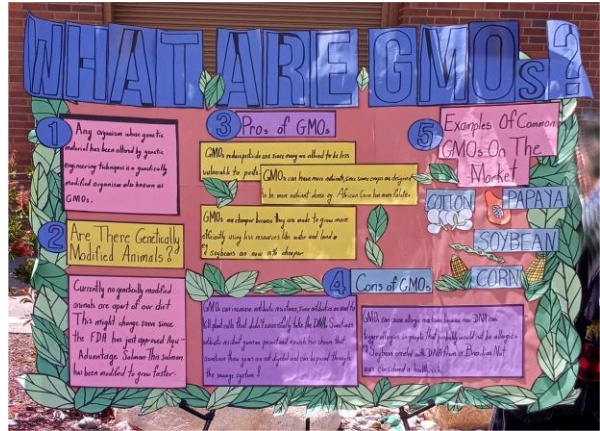
Kids from Children's Hospital Los Angeles displayed a piece of artwork.



Cookies made by kids at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and given to participants.



Earth Day event related poster on the topic of Pacific Garbage Patch made by LACC students.



Earth Day event related poster on the topic of GMOs made by LACC students.



LACC Students Nelly Babayan and Malakay Mann at LACC holding a poster on the topic of Vegetarian Diet.



Sculpture of food on display at the event.



Free Earth Day 2022 LACC T-shirts offered to participants, and worn by Edward Locke, the reporter.



Small plants with plastic pots given to participants.



Small plants with plastic pots to be given to participants.

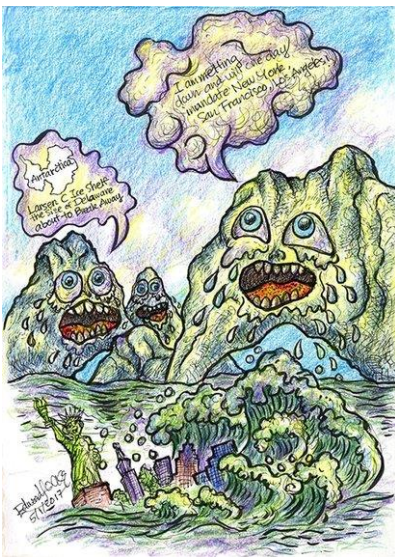


Participants in the Earth Day 2022 at LACC event listen to Ron Finley speaking.



Student participants enjoying free food and snacks at the event.

Earth Day Celebration Cartoons by Edward Locke



The Larsen C Ice Shelf inundating coastal cities, original drawing colored with woodless color pencils.



The personified angry Earth, original drawing colored with woodless color pencils.



The protesters, original drawing colored with woodless color pencils.



News source:
<http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/22/health/global-march-for-science/>

The Earth Day Protests, a news commentary cartoon, featuring the Larsen C Ice Shelf inundating coastal cities, the personified Earth, and the protesters.

