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BRONX MUSIC HERITAGE CENTER PRESENTS BENEDICT J. FERNANDEZ EXHIBIT 'THE 60'S DECADE OF CHANGE'

Civil rights photos at Bronx Music Heritage Center

By Jaime Williams

Images of the Civil Rights Movement are currently on display at the Bronx Music Heritage Center, a cultural initiative of the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp.

The exhibit, called 'The 60's: Decade of Change,' is a collection of photographer's Benedict J. Fernandez's work capturing social unrest at the time. The exhibit was curated by the Bronx Documentary Center.

The collection of Fernandez's photographs illustrate an important chapter of American history, said Elena Martínez, artistic director of the Bronx Music Heritage Center.

"It's fitting for Black History Month," said Martínez.

The timing is also relevant to the renewed sense of activism that the country has seen this year, said Michael Kamber, founder of the center.

"This exhibit fits in perfectly," he said.

Fernandez, an Italian-Puerto Rican born and raised in East Harlem, was one of the most important photographers of the 60s, said Kamber, although over the years he has not received the same level of recognition as others.

"To me, he is one of the all-time greatest protest photographers," said Kamber.

Exhibit-goers can expect to encounter beautiful and powerful photographs that depict a wide range of moments in the sixties. While many of the photos depict the Civil Rights Movement of Martin Luther King, Jr., other show protests over the Vietnam War and other social events.

"They'll see one of the greatest chronicles of activism in our country's history," said Kamber.

The photos also range in tone, said Martínez, with some capturing intimate moments and others disturbing displays of racism.

"People get to see all sides of the story," she said.

Martínez said she hopes the exhibit is both educational and entertaining.

"I think it's important to see this history in an engaging and interesting way," said Martínez.

And even if many are well versed in the history of the Civil Rights Movement, Fernandez's photos will be new to them.

Most of the 38 photos have not been exhibited much in recent years, and some have never been seen before, said Kamber.

The free exhibit will be open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 2:30 to 7:30 p.m. through April 3 at the Bronx Music Heritage Center, 1303 Louis Niné Boulevard.

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