

Curator's Statement: Bernard/Bernie Boston Retrospective: A Photojournalist, Social Justice Advocate, and Family Man

- Who among us in the 2000's has the courage to confront the armed National Guard carrying only flowers?
- Who among us is willing to face injury or death for our political beliefs?
- Who among us is a committed pacifist during this turbulent 21st century of wars and "armed conflicts" around the world?
- Who among us is willing to be a reporter/photographer during mass protests with the bravery of the late Bernie Boston?

The above questions, while written in the summer of 2023, are timeless. Much has happened since then, making clear this exhibition of Bernie Boston's photojournalist career remains as relevant, as timely, and urgent.

Bernard Boston, known affectionately as Bernie, began his career as a photojournalist for *The Washington Star News* (the *Evening Star*) in the late 1960s. He was promoted to Director of Photography in 1971 and later became a White House news photographer, remaining with the paper until 1981, when he joined the *Los Angeles Times* as Washington bureau photographer.

Out of all of these prestigious career accomplishments that have ensured Bernie Boston's place in history, his iconic 1967 Pulitzer-nominated photograph "*Flower Power*," taken at a protest outside the Pentagon during the Vietnam War era—a time of international anti-war activism—stands out. Bernie's image of young activists inserting flowers into the loaded barrels of National Guardsmen's rifles is still used today as an international symbol of anti-war pacifism. Although *Flower Power* was a second-place award winner, its longevity surpasses that of many first-place winners.

The Vietnam War was not the only political issue or controversy visually documented by Bernie Boston. His range of subjects included the Civil Rights Movement and many of its major leaders, the Black Power movement, the War on Poverty—which involved low-income people across racial and cultural lines—the United States' first presidential impeachment, the signing of the Oslo Peace Accord with President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, the late-1980s "Hands Across America" participants, and the protest demonstrations against South African apartheid. The list goes on.

In addition to Bernie's life as a documentary photographer whose work captured events of national and international significance highlighted in the McLean Project for the Arts gallery, he also had a fulfilling personal life that we are honoring and documenting at the Pleasant Grove Methodist Church/Francis Moore Museum exhibition, also located in McLean, Virginia. This exhibition is more family-centered, featuring photos of his wife, Peggy Boston; his late parents, who are buried near his grave in the Pleasant Grove cemetery; Bernie's extensive collection of Native American flutes; and photos and quotes from other family members that highlight his ancestral ties to Virginia's Tauxenent tribe.

Your feedback as visitors to this historic two-part retrospective of Bernie Boston's photographic career is welcome. *Bernard/Bernie Boston Retrospective: A Photojournalist, Social Justice Advocate, and Family Man* is located in McLean, Virginia, because Bernie was born here and spent most of his life in McLean and in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. We hope you are inspired, enlightened, and encouraged by these images to engage the local, national, and international stages with your own talents and contributions, helping to create a more peaceful world for future generations—or, as many Native Americans say, for the next seven generations.

Aho,

Dr. Phoebe Mills Farris (Powhatan-Pamunkey descent)

Curator