

HOLLAND CITY HALL

Seeing more clearly



Photo Illustration: Bernard Kleina's color photography documenting his journey as a young priest in the civil rights movement along side Martin Luther King Jr. will be displayed throughout City Hall Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 19-20. He will also give a talk on civil rights and fair housing at noon and 6 p.m. Monday.

EMILY BROUWER/SENTINEL STAFF

Exhibit shows MLK in rare full color

By Andrea Goodell
@hollandsentinel.com
(616) 546-4275

For many, Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement are known only as a page in a history book. With rare color photographs of King set to be on display at Holland City Hall, visitors can see more clearly what demonstrators saw in 1965.

"Younger people find them a little more relevant. They don't seem like they're from an ancient time," said photographer and civil rights activist Bernard Kleina.

In 1965, Kleina was a young Catholic priest who took up King's call for clergy to join the civil rights marches in Selma and later in Chicago. Perhaps if Kleina had been

a professional photographer, he would have used black and white film, but his Kodak Retina Reflex camera was loaded with color slide film to capture family snapshots.

The resulting photos are some of the few color images of King and the only known ones taken during the Chicago Freedom

SEE KING, A4

KING

From Page A1

Movement marches and rallies.

Dozens of Kleina's photos will be on display at Holland City Hall, 270 S. River Ave., during office hours Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 19-20. He will speak on fair housing and civil rights issues at noon and at 6 p.m. in Holland City Council chambers there. Thirty of the same images are part of the collection of the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture scheduled to open in 2016.

The city received a \$500 donation from Haworth Inc. for the exhibit, but is still seeking donations to help cover the cost of bringing Kleina and his exhibit to town.

The Chicago Freedom Movement marches depicted in the photographs

gave rise to the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and to Kleina's passion for fair and open housing. He left the priesthood and became the executive director of HOPE Fair Housing Center in Wheaton, Ill., devoting his life to the issue.

"I really felt more hopeful then than I do now," he said. "Cities are still very segregated racially. When people don't know each other, they're very suspicious of each other."

Marching in Selma, Ala., changed Kleina's life forever. But in Chicago he learned racism's grip wasn't restricted to the South. In Selma, he was detained for "parading without a permit" for walking down the street with four others, some of whom were black. But in Chicago, he was injured when hecklers threw bottles, cherry bombs and rocks at the civil rights protesters.

"Often we in the North don't like to be reminded that we made mistakes then and are still making mistakes now," Kleina said.

Holland's Human Relations/International Relations Manager Esther

Fifelski was shaken up when she first saw Kleina's color photos of King at a fair housing event in Grand Rapids last year.

"When you see the pictures, and they're in color it kind of takes your breath away," she said. "It really kind of shakes you up. ... It's very emotional. It's like a call to action or a call to move forward in life to progress in civil rights."

As many times as Kleina photographed King, standing a few feet away from the man, he never actually met King. It's one of his biggest regrets in life, Kleina said. The time never seemed right. His photo exhibit alleviates some of that.

"It's kind of my way of helping other people see what I saw and helping other people feel what I felt when I was in these demonstrations, when I was listening to Dr. King, when I was very moved by his message of nonviolence and the many other messages that he had."

— Follow this reporter on Facebook and on Twitter, @SentinelAndrea.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

'The gift of hope'

Civil rights activist documented Chicago Freedom Movement in color

By **Andrea Goodell**
@HollandSentinel.com
(616) 546-4275

Martin Luther King Jr. gave America many gifts, activist and photographer Bernard Kleina said Monday during a speech at Holland City Hall.

"One gift that lasts forever is the gift of hope. It is hopelessness more than pain that crushes the human spirit," said Kleina, who marched alongside King in Selma and Chicago.

It isn't often that Kleina is invited to a municipality to speak, he said to a packed house with more than 100 people at Holland City Hall. More often, it's civil rights

KING

From Page A1

organizations, nonprofits and fair housing centers.

"Injustice still happens in so many ugly forms and hurtful ways, and it doesn't happen in a vacuum. All of us either see it, feel it, hear it, ignore it, profit from it, tolerate it, initiate it, provoke it, perpetuate it, suffer from it or die from it," Kleina said.

The fire that carried him through decades of fair housing activism was lit by Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights protests in Selma and Chicago.

"A riot is the language of the unheard, and we must honestly admit that there are several things that America has refused to hear," he quoted King as saying at one of the rallies

In 1965, Kleina, then a young Catholic priest, took up King's call for clergy to join the civil rights marches in Selma and later in Chicago, and his Kodak Retina Reflex camera was loaded with color slide film to capture family snapshots.

The resulting photos are some of the few color images of King and the only known ones taken during the Chicago Freedom Movement marches and rallies.

He documented not only the marchers, but those around them. Kleina was shocked to see the violent reactions of counter-protesters to the nonviolent marches, some of them wearing T-shirts bearing names he recognized, those of local Catholic schools.

"As I was photographing them, I was thinking, 'Why are you so angry?'"



Photographer and civil rights activist Bernard Kleina marched with Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma and Chicago. He spoke at Holland City Hall Monday in honor of Martin Luther King Day. PHOTOS BY ANDREA GOODELL/SENTINEL STAFF



Megan Koops-Fisher, left, and Ylsa Campos examine a color photo of police during a Chicago Freedom Movement rally by Bernard Kleina. Kleina has the only known color photos of Martin Luther King Jr. in Chicago. His exhibit remains on display through Tuesday, Jan. 20, at Holland City Hall, 270 S. River.

In Selma, Kleina was arrested for "parading without a permit" because he dared to walk down the street with four other people, some of whom were black. His photo appeared the next day in the Selma Times Journal.

"Sometimes we think we haven't progressed very far, and it's true we have a long way to go, but when you read the paper, you think was it really that bad in 1965? And, yes, it was," he said, holding up a poster of the front page.

The reactions to the Chicago marches were more violent — "We were met with cherry bombs, rocks, bricks, spit," Kleina said.

Dozens of Kleina's photos will continue to be on display at Holland City Hall, 270 S. River Ave., during office hours today. Thirty of the same images are part of the collection of the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture scheduled to open in 2016.

— Follow this reporter on Facebook and on Twitter, @SentinelAndrea.