



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
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June 1, 2011

Resolution:

COMMUNITY BOARD TEN'S SUPPORT FOR THE PRESERVATION AND STORAGE OF FRANCO THE GREAT GASKINS' HISTORIC HARLEM STOREFRONT MURALS ALONG 125TH STREET

Whereas, it is the mission of the Arts & Culture Committee to: a) encourage the use of Art in public space (e.g., parks, gardens, lobbies, libraries, etc.), b) reinforce pride in Harlem's creativity and cultural expression, c) encourage the creation of public/private partnerships in order to make public spaces available for local artists to exhibit their work, d) increase the public's level of access to information about the arts by publishing an Art, Culture and Entertainment Newsletter/Website about events in the community, and e) form collaborations with art and cultural institutions to enhance the community's access to the arts;

Whereas, Franco the Great, known as the "Picasso of Harlem," is internationally known for his new art form—painting lavish, intricate, and lively murals on metal gates for storefronts along 125th street in Harlem, also unofficially known as "Franco's Boulevard"—his artistic work having being seen, appreciated, and celebrated by visitors to Harlem from as far away as Africa, Japan, France, Central America, Canada, Spain and Brazil;

Whereas, when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968, there were riots in the streets, and Harlem storeowner reaction was the introduction of dreary looking metal gates on the storefronts, in 1978 Franco the Great took it upon himself to change a negative into a positive by creating a new art form on the steel gates, using Sundays, when stores are closed, to paint over 200 gates from the west to the east Side of 125th street;

Whereas, over a period of 25 plus years, Franco the Great's storefront murals have lifted the image of Harlem as a community;

Whereas, there are only (25) of Franco the Great's original (200) gates remaining that are in imminent danger of being destroyed as Harlem storeowners are now required to replace their metal gates with ones made of fiberglass required by the City of New York;

Whereas, Franco the Great has secured verbal agreements from Harlem storeowners to allow him to keep his remaining (25) gates in the event that they must be replaced with new ones—in the past, his gate murals were discarded in the trash never to be seen again;

Whereas, Franco the Great currently has nowhere to store and preserve his (25) remaining gates for posterity; and has asked the Arts & Culture Committee to provide him with an official letter of support seeking the long-term preservation and storage of his famous storefront gate murals that can be shared with Harlem's elected officials and business owners who may be able to assist him in securing and paying for space to house his last remaining gates;

Whereas, Franco the Great will also shortly establish a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of his historic gates that will also allow him to raise funds to support their storage and ability to travel nation-wide;

Whereas, the provision of a letter of support for Franco the Great's gate murals preservation project was unanimously approved by the Arts & Culture Committee on May 9, 2011; and

Therefore be It Resolved, that Manhattan Community Board 10 recognizes the significant artistic and cultural contributions made by Franco the Great to the Harlem community, and beyond, over the past twenty-five years; and

Therefore be It Further Resolved, that Manhattan Community Board 10 will provide Franco the Great with a written and executed letter of support "*seeking the preservation and storage*" of his historic Harlem storefront gate murals for posterity, and urging Harlem's elected, civic, community and business leaders to immediately move to assist in support of this endeavor as well.

At a regularly scheduled General Board Meeting on Wednesday June 1, 2011, Manhattan Community Board 10 unanimously voted to approve this resolution with a vote of 39 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstentions.