The Bronx is No Longer Burning

By

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The Bronx is no longer burning but it is not yet flowering. The Bronx is part and parcel of New York City’s renaissance that began in the 1990s when the City’s economy converted from labor intensive manufacturing enterprises to a greater dependence on finance, insurance, and real estate. The City’s economic recovery is more apparent in Manhattan and the gentrified parts of Brooklyn than in the outer boroughs.

Bronx County in the Census of 2010 had reversed the population diminution that began in the 1970s. The influx of women into the labor market is a heartening sign and has boosted household income. But the Bronx remains the poorest borough with poverty rates hovering around 30 percent and specifically the rate in the South Bronx is a troubling 38 percent. Despite the uneven nature of the economic recovery, the Bronx is an integral part of the City’s dramatic improvement in public safety.

At the nadir of the crime and drug epidemic, New York City recorded 2,262 homicides. In 2012, there were 417 homicides and in 2013 that figure was further reduced to 335 homicides. In 1990, there were 653 homicides in the Bronx but by 2010 that number had been reduced to 127 homicides.

There are developmental projects that are already underway that will be instrumental in expanding the economy of the Bronx and enriching the quality of
life in the City’s poorest borough. With a new Mayor committed to tackling the stark problematic of income inequality and lack of affordable housing, the Bronx should benefit from those initiatives and in the coming years the borough may begin to flower. In any case, the immiseration that encompassed the Bronx from 1960 has been arrested and that is testimony to the resilience of the people who comprise this borough of 3.4 million people.