



Beck Cultural Exchange Center

African American History & Culture

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Invited to Black History Month Presentation at the Bijou Theatre *The Art of Delaney: Redeeming, Reconciling & Healing*

(Knoxville, TN) – The public is invited to the Bijou Theatre, 803 South Gay Street, on **Monday February 24 6:30pm** for, a special tribute to Beauford & the Delaney Family, *The Art of Delaney: Redeeming, Reconciling & Healing*, an original Beck Cultural Exchange Center arts and cultural performance. This Black History Month presentation interconnects the story of the Delaney family with the story of African American history through the arts. The program is sponsored by the Beck Cultural Exchange Center along with the Bijou Theatre with support from UBS Financial Services.

Knoxville-born artist Beauford Delaney (1901-1979) is considered to be among the greatest abstract painters of the 20th century. The artist's lifelong friend James Baldwin described Delaney's compositions as a "metamorphosis into freedom" fueled by a painted light that "held the power to illuminate, even to redeem and reconcile and heal." The younger brother of Beauford, Joseph Delaney (1904-1991) decided in 1930 to become a professional artist like his older brother and moved to New York City, where he studied at the Art Students League with Thomas Hart Benton and anatomist George Bridgeman. Reverend John Samuel and Delia Elizabeth Johnson Delaney reared their children at 815 East Vine Avenue. Although this home that the Delaneys grew up in no longer exists, the elder brother, Samuel, owned a house that would become the last Delaney family home in Knoxville. Beck is restoring this ancestral home and preserving this extraordinary piece of Knoxville history as the future Delaney Museum at Beck.

This special tribute, hosted by Maxine Thompson Davis, will feature music by the Knoxville Opera Gospel Choir, celebrating over ten years of concert performances under the direction of Jeanie Turner Melton. Singing the final scene from Okoye's *Harriet Tubman* will be Adia Evans accompanied by Brian Salesky, Executive and Artistic Director of Knoxville Opera. This original presentation will also include dance performances by the Austin East Magnet High School performing arts department under the direction of Malaika Guthrie, and West African drum and dance. Yvette Rice with YR Productions will bring art to life with an array of artistic models on the runway. Saxophonist Casey McClintock will create dynamic rhythmic melodies. Actors, Dalton Miksa, Morrystown West High School, and Chris Cox, University of Alabama, will present an award-winning theatrical performance, "The Cure," and presenting Artece Slay as Delia Delaney, and Malik Baines as Beauford Delaney.

According to Beck President Rev. René Kesler, "*Beauford Delaney is by far the most important artist Knoxville produced in the twentieth century, at least in terms of national and international reputation. This special tribute will showcase the influence of Beauford's art and its ability to redeem, reconcile and heal, at a time when we need it the most.*"

Tickets are \$10 for Adults and \$5 for students K-12, and are available online at Ticketmaster (fees apply) or Bijou Tickets can be purchased at the Tennessee Theatre box office located at 224 Clinch Avenue on the side of the theatre (\$1.00 fee).

Ticketmaster

<https://www1.ticketmaster.com/event/1B00583FF0FDB671?brand=bijouthtr>

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ABOUT BECK

Beck is a nonprofit organization established in 1975 as a result of Knoxville's Urban Renewal projects. The projects relocated and displaced many black families and businesses. Absent of the establishment of Beck, these places and the people may never have existed. Beck is the storehouse of African American history and culture and is designated by the state as a primary repository of black history and culture in East Tennessee.

Beck is crafting the Beck Cultural Corridor. The Corridor will recognize and identify African American related historical and cultural monuments throughout the greater community including a special highlighted section of the area commonly known as Urban Renewal. A vibrant part of the Corridor will be the only remaining ancestral home of one of the greatest modern painters of the twentieth century, Beauford Delaney, his younger brother Joseph, a renowned artist, and the Delaney family. Beck is restoring this extraordinary piece of Knoxville history as the future Delaney Museum at Beck.

BECK VISION

To be the desired place that people go to learn, discover and experience the rich legacy of African Americans inside a vibrant Cultural Corridor.

BECK MISSION

To be the place where African American history and culture are preserved, nurtured, taught, & continued.

JAMES AND ETHEL BECK

Beck is named in honor of James Garfield (1881-1969) and Ethel Benson (1897-1970) Beck. James and Ethel were two of the most glamorous and influential members of the black community in Knoxville during the period of the 1920s-1960s and were the last people to live in the Beck mansion. Funds from the estate of James and Ethel were used to establish the Center.