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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## Mural Panel Unveiling in Gowanus

### ***Groundswell Teen Artists Collaborate with ArtWorks for Freedom to Fight Human Slavery***

**Artwork Dedication Ceremony:** Friday, May 30 at 4pm  
**Location:** 540 President Street, Suite 1A, Brooklyn, NY 11215

NEW YORK, NY - Groundswell, New York's leading organization dedicated to community public art, and ArtWorks for Freedom (AWFF), an innovative non-profit founded by award-winning photographer Kay Chernush, unveil a series of anti-trafficking mural panels this afternoon. Entitled "What You See Is Not Who I Am," the panel series was created by teen artists, to be used as part of AWFF's Global Cities Awareness Campaigns.

"Slavery is a crime against humanity and exists in carpet workshops, brothels, mines, factories, fisheries, farms, hotels, and private homes in rich and poor countries," said Groundswell Executive Director Amy Sananman. "Through this meaningful collaboration with AWFF, Groundswell teen artists had a unique opportunity to make their voices heard on this critical issue which impacts millions of their fellow young people across the world."

The project aims to bring public art and creative opportunities to New York City's most underserved communities and youth. The group of students, working under the guidance of Groundswell Lead Artist Nicole Schulman and Assistant Artist Edwin Vazquez, created the panel series as part of Groundswell's Teen Empowerment Mural Apprenticeship (TEMA), an after-school program where teen artists meet weekly throughout the year to create large-scale public art projects for social justice organizations, such as AWFF.

"Human trafficking is one of the worst human rights atrocities in the world today. And it's not just an international problem, it's happening right here in communities in the United States," said AWFF Founder and Director Kay Chernush. "The youth are to be commended for tackling this difficult subject with seriousness and sensitivity and coming up with powerful ways of depicting it. I know people will be moved by these murals and that they will inspire viewers to take action against modern day slavery in their own communities."

The group began working on the series in October, meeting with experts in the fight against human slavery, taking field trips to relevant organizations and sites, conducting first person interviews, taking workshops on mural making, and researching the economic ramifications of the \$32 billion dollar criminal enterprise.

“Human trafficking is a tough topic,” said youth artist Maybelline Amaya. “It doesn’t just happen '*out there*' it happens here in this country too... to men, women, and children of all ages, to people who don’t deserve it.”

Previous public art projects that Groundswell teen muralists have installed include "Kaleidoscopic Dream" at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, "The Game of Not Playing" developed with the GED Plus Regional High School in the Bronx and "Respect the Work," built with Domestic Workers United (DWU) and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ).

“We’re making art, but we’re still helping,” continued Amaya. “We’re saying ‘we’ve heard your story and we want to help you make a difference.’ These projects make me want to advocate for underrepresented people and let their voices be heard.”

This project is made possible through the generous support of the Embrey Family Foundation. Major financial support for Groundswell’s 2013-2014 Teen Empowerment Mural Apprenticeship (TEMA) program is also contributed by Altman Foundation, Ethel and W. George Kennedy Family Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, Pinkerton Foundation, Variety The Children’s Charity of New York, and William Randolph Hearst Foundations, in addition to numerous individuals.

TEMA is made possible in part by public funds administered by the New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and New York City Department of Education.

Groundswell is grateful to the Office of the Mayor of New York City; the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President; and former and current New York City Council Members Sara M. Gonzalez, Letitia James, Brad Lander, Stephen Levin, and Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.

### **About Groundswell**

Founded in 1996, Groundswell brings together youth, artists, and community partners to make public art that advances social change for a more just and equitable world. Each year, Groundswell advances this mission by engaging 800 culturally underserved, marginalized, and economically disadvantaged young people, primarily aged 14-21, from New York's most diverse communities in their public art-making programs. Groundswell has worked with 95 established artists and thousands of NY youths to complete 450 public arts projects in over 75 of the city’s neighborhoods from the Bronx to the Battery and beyond. Groundswell is celebrating its 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary as New York’s leading organization dedicated to community public art. [www.groundswellmural.org](http://www.groundswellmural.org)

### **About ArtWorks for Freedom**

ArtWorks for Freedom is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to use the power of art in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking. It seeks to transform public attitudes, inspire anti-trafficking action and give voice to survivors. Through global partnerships with governments, human rights organizations and the private sector, AWWF deploys art in its many forms to catalyze popular movement against this crime against humanity, ultimately contributing to its eradication. [www.artworksforfreedom.org](http://www.artworksforfreedom.org)