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Mural Unveiling in Bushwick

Young Men of Color Call for “The Fall of Oppression” Through Mural

Mural Dedication: Tuesday, August 30 at 10 am
21 Manhattan Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206

BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN – This summer, a team of young men of color created a mural encouraging and inspiring their peers to know their value and know their rights. With an approach centered on personal narratives and storytelling, the team challenged notions of identity to break cycles of inequity facing young men of color today. Their mural, entitled “**The Fall of Oppression**,” depicts young men of color impacted by internalized injustice as they realize their potential as empowered community leaders.

The 80 x 13.5 ft mural, created with the nonprofit **Groundswell**, will be unveiled at a dedication Tuesday, August 30 at 10 am.

The youth mural team worked as part of the young men’s leadership development program, *Making His’tory*, a part of the two-month long flagship summer youth employment program, the *Summer Leadership Institute*. In lessons facilitated by **Lead Artist Raúl Ayala** and **Assistant Artist Ashton Agbomenou**, the young artists researched, designed, and fabricated the mural. This mural is the second Groundswell work featured at this location, the Bushwick Food Bazaar supermarket. “The Fall of Oppression” echoes the project created by last summers’ all-male team, entitled “I Just Want to Come Home,” addressing the complex relationship between police and young men of color.

Inspired by Diego Rivera’s mural, “Man at the Crossroads,” and its visual use of narrative, the artist team structured “The Fall of Oppression” in a two-part arc of transformation. On the left, the design confronts the drain of injustice on society. Figures in dull earth-tones have their faces covered with box-like masks, representing conformity and anonymity. These boxes are attached to oil pipes that metaphorically drain the natural resource of young men of color’s imagination from the community. At the center of the design, a young man of color has removed the box-like mask. He stands in realization of his own power. A winged skull hangs over him, representing life and the wisdom of ancestors. To his right, a community gathers to support one another’s liberation. Box-like masks are replaced with images of traditional African masks to show the strength of connecting with one’s heritage. A trio of figures hold a lantern emblazoned with the slogan “Justice for all.” Banners with the messages “Seek strength through knowledge” and “Busca la fuerza en el conocimiento” erupt from the lantern.

Bogopa Service Corp and Food Bazaar Supermarkets is honored to have Groundswell’s all-male *Making His’tory* team creating a mural encouraging and inspiring young men of color to know their

value and know their rights. “The wall at our 21 Manhattan Avenue Food Bazaar is a work of art to behold, filled with so much richness, inspiration, hope and deep emotion. It has been an awe-inspiring experience to listen to and share ideas, feelings, and thoughts with these young men through their creative process,” said **Suzanne Kuczun, the Director of Marketing and Employee Development**. “Their approach, centered on personal narratives and storytelling, truly challenges the notions of identity and attempts to break the cycles of inequity facing young men of color today.”

“At the heart of ‘The Fall of Oppression’ is a call to action demanding justice for all,” said **Groundswell Interim Executive Director Rob Krulak**. “The mural leads the viewer through how injustice limits imagination. The young men chose not end their narrative there. They instead offer solutions through youth empowerment, community resistance, and the pursuit of power through knowledge. The mural powerfully articulates the artists’ creativity and strength as young men of color fighting injustice, and envisions a more just and equitable world.”

“I had a huge change in mindset this summer,” said **youth artist Kamal James (20)**. “Working with my peers/brothers this summer has been an invaluable experience. I learned to appreciate the difference I have with others and channel a better vibe into my daily activities. Painting ‘The Fall of Oppression’ helped me redirect my emotions of being a man of color into something more powerful and beautiful. Thanks to Groundswell, specifically the teaching artists Raúl and Ashton, I’ve learned to be more tolerant of others and uncomfortable situations. I carry a lighter bag now.”

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About Groundswell

Groundswell, New York City’s leading organization dedicated to community public art, brings together youth, artists, and community partners, to make public art that advances social change, for a more just and equitable world. Our projects beautify neighborhoods, engage youth in societal and personal transformation, and give expression to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented in the public dialogue. www.groundswell.nyc

