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Mural Unveiling in Crown Heights

**Young Women of Color Illuminate Their Worth
Through Community Garden Mural**

Mural Dedication: Tuesday, August 30 at 1 pm
1401 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11216

CROWN HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN – This summer, a team of young women artists illuminated and celebrated the power of women of color within both the public and private spheres through a new mural in Crown Heights. Their mural, entitled “Passing Wisdom, Planting Seeds,” investigates and elevates perceptions of women of color's self-worth in order to challenge how racism and sexism impact contemporary culture. Inspired by the strength and community leadership of the mural site, **Mama Dee's Community Garden**, particular attention was given to the Afro-Caribbean women of Crown Heights. Through this process, the young artists owned their roles as leaders in building a more just and equitable world.

Their 37 x 45 ft mural, created with the nonprofit **Groundswell**, will be unveiled at a dedication Tuesday, August 30 at 1 pm.

The mural team worked as part of the young women's leadership development program, *Voices Her'd*, a part of the two-month long flagship summer youth employment program, the *Summer Leadership Institute*. In lessons facilitated by **Co-Lead Artists Jazmine Hayes and Danielle McDonald**, the young artists researched, designed, and fabricated the mural.

The composition is structured around two archetypical figures, an elder and a young woman. The elder woman, representing ancestral wisdom, looks upward at the younger woman, her hand stretched with an encouraging, supportive gesture. The young woman, modeled after one of the youth participants, continues the upward gaze, looking towards the future. Throughout the mural, symbols of figurative, architectural, spiritual, and natural importance to women of color gesture to the complexity of individual and communal identity: A Yoruba female deity holds hands with a 1960's era civil rights protester. A boy wearing a crown referencing Labor Day Parade gazes thoughtfully at Ieshia Evans, who was recently featured in the viral protest image at Baton Rouge, following the shooting of Alton Sterling. By juxtaposing these many images, the mural tells the impressive story of women of color's power, activism, and potential.

“Braids twist and turn throughout ‘Passing Wisdom, Planting Seeds,’ tying together a rich narrative of the empowerment of women of color throughout this mural,” said **Groundswell Interim Executive Director Rob Krulak**. Women, young and old, are shown together in this mural to illustrate their force as the foundation of their communities. The young artists behind this mural are seeking to

urgently understand, define, uphold, and promote their power as women of color. These positive representations of women of color resonate with the mural's setting in a community garden to create a lasting contribution to the neighborhood and community."

Through the mural-making process, the young women have become ambassadors for positive social change. **Youth artist Lydia-Rose Aigbedion** (21) reflected on the impact of the mural on her participation in the mural-making process: "I have always considered myself an advocate for social justice. However, I was not as aware of women's issues in public spaces as I am with them in private spaces, such as in home or classroom settings. This mural has given me the confidence to project my thoughts to a wider, more public audience. It is my hope that this mural, and all the work that I put into this mural, will support social justice for years to come."

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Major financial support for Groundswell's 2016 Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) is contributed by Altman Foundation, Brooklyn Community Foundation, David Rockefeller Fund, Lambert Foundation, Pinkerton Foundation, Sills Family Foundation, Slomo and Cindy Silvian Foundation, and Tikkun Olam Foundation, in addition to numerous individuals.

SLI is made possible in part by public funds administered by the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Summer Youth Employment Program, the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity Work Progress Program, New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, New York City Council Member Brad Lander, and New York City Council Member Stephen Levin.

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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