

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mural Unveiling in Brownsville**

**How the Past Illuminates the Future:**

**Youth Muralists Re-discover Hidden Treasures of Brownsville**

**Mural Dedication Ceremony:** Tuesday, September 2 at 2pm

**Location:** 62 Herzl Street, Brownsville, Brooklyn, NY 11212

**NEW YORK, NY** – Groundswell, in partnership with the New York City Department of Probation (NYC DOP) and the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District (BID), is pleased to announce a dedication ceremony to celebrate the unveiling of a remarkable public mural, entitled “It’s Not A Dream If You Will It.” The mural was created as part of *Transform / Restore: Brownsville*, designed to highlight Brownsville’s hidden treasures and reveal the community-led revitalization taking place within the neighborhood.

Launched with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) through its national Our Town initiative, *Transform / Restore: Brownsville* is designed to engage young adult probation clients, local businesses, and community members in the creation of visible and permanent change in Brownsville, Brooklyn. As the third mural to be unveiled among a series of five, “It’s Not A Dream If You Will It” is an essential part of this ambitious two-year initiative, supporting the transformation of the narrative of Brownsville through public art and neighborhood beautification.

Through the project, 16 teens, many of them local Brownsville residents, collaborated with Lead Artist Misha Tyutyunik and Assistant Artist Justin Batten in a six-week intensive summer job program, as a part of Groundswell’s flagship Summer Leadership Institute (SLI). Throughout the mural design and fabrication process, youth participants engaged in brainstorming sessions to re-define the concept of ‘hero’ and ‘role model.’ To be installed on Herzl Street, the 46’ by 58’ “It’s Not A Dream If You Will It” inspired by Theodore Herzl’s famous quote – “If you will it, it is no dream.” – emphasizes a change of mindset and encourages psychological transformation within the participants and the viewers.

During the research phase, the project team visited the Brooklyn Museum and Brownsville Heritage House. “We dug through the history of Brownsville, aiming to figure out a path for our community in the future. What is the best way to achieve that other than getting to know our neighborhood first?” said youth participants Sean Turner, among five other Brownsville residents on the team. “We want to show the concept of transformation through envisioning a brighter alternative, making everyone

that walks by the mural take pride in the history of our neighborhood and be confident with where we are heading.”

At the bottom left of the mural, a silhouette is nestled among Brownsville-born community leaders and celebrities, suggesting that everyone can become a neighborhood hero through this process of acknowledgment and discovery. The water image at the bottom of the mural further suggests transformation through upward and continuous progress, inspired by Greek philosopher Heraclitus’ notion “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”

“In this mural, we emphasized the history of public art and its deep association with civic movements by incorporating different models of subway train speeding across the wall, powering the momentum for transformation,” said Lead Artist Misha Tyutyunik.

“It is exciting to see how a series of projects in the neighborhood can gradually contribute to a changed narrative of Brownsville. The change is cumulative, catalyzed and facilitated by every single engagement with young probation adults, local businesses, and community members,” said Groundswell Founder and Executive Director Amy Sananman. “Not only Groundswell and our community partners, but our talented youth artists are eagerly anticipating the next *Transform/Restore* project.”

“Our partnership with Groundswell and the Pitkin Avenue BID has successfully enabled probation clients to become more deeply connected to their community. Through *Transform / Restore* our clients have been affirmed as active community participants,” said NYC DOP Commissioner Ana Bermúdez. “By having them involved in participatory public art projects, the City of New York is certain we are one step closer to our shared vision of stronger and safer communities.”

“The Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District is pleased to see the third mural unveiled through our collaboration with Groundswell and the City of New York, supporting our ongoing effort to create a safe and vibrant environment for local businesses to thrive,” said Daniel Murphy, Executive Director of Pitkin Avenue BID. “By encouraging visible change, we look forward to expanding this sense of safety, community ownership, and collective connection to more places in Brownsville.”

Brownsville, which maintains the highest concentration of public housing in the entire nation with more than 25,000 residents living in 18 developments, is in the midst of a community-led revitalization. As the neighborhood is transformed by grassroots activists, business leaders, and government agencies, *Transform / Restore: Brownsville* will support and make visible this transformation through the creation of five public artworks over two years. The initiative will engage 90 youth (40-60 of which are court-involved) and hundreds of community participants through a proven collaborative artmaking model. The initiative will benefit Brownsville’s entire population of 116,000 through a strengthened business district and resulting quality of life improvements.

“It’s Not A Dream If You Will It” is made possible through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts, through its national Our Town initiative; New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Council on the Arts, through the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) Initiative; and the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District. Lead scholarship support is provided by Brooklyn Nets.

Major financial support for Groundswell's 2014 Summer Leadership Institute (SLI) is contributed by Altman Foundation, Catskill Watershed Corporation, Charles Lawrence Keith and Clara Miller Foundation, David Rockefeller Fund, Dedalus Foundation, EILEEN FISHER, Ethel and W. George Kennedy Family Foundation, Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund, Irene B. Wolt Lifetime Trust, Lambent Foundation, M&T Bank, Pinkerton Foundation, Variety The Children’s Charity, and William Randolph Hearst Foundations, 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 State Office of Public Safety, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Summer Youth Employment Program, New York City Department of Education, and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Groundswell is grateful to the Office of the New York State Attorney General; Office of the Mayor of New York City; the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President; New York State Assembly Member Joseph Lentol; and New York City Council Members Brad Lander, Stephen Levin, Carlos Menchaca, and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito.

### **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. This mural was completed as part of Groundswell’s flagship program, the Summer Leadership Institute (SLI), which employs over 140 youth each summer as paid apprentices on mural projects that beautify neighborhoods and give voice to ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented the public dialog. To follow a youth-driven social media campaign highlighting SLI, use #GroundswellNYC. [www.groundswellmural.org](http://www.groundswellmural.org)

### **About the New York City Department of Probation**

The New York City Department of Probation helps build stronger and safer communities by working with and supervising people on probation, fostering positive change in their decision-making and behavior, and expanding opportunities for them to move out of the criminal and juvenile justice systems through meaningful education, employment, health services, family engagement and civic participation. [www.nyc.gov/html/prob/](http://www.nyc.gov/html/prob/)

### **About the Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District**

The Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District is an organization dedicated to creating and maintaining a clean, safe, vibrant and thoroughly liveable space within Brownsville Brooklyn’s Main

Street. The BID supplies supplemental sanitation services, helps maintain public safety, creates and implements public space beautification projects, stages special events, works to attract new and diverse retail and promotes local retailers. The Pitkin Avenue BID was founded in 1996. Pitkin Avenue has been one of Brooklyn's most popular shopping destinations since 1896. [www.pitkinbid.org](http://www.pitkinbid.org)

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