

ART AND EMPOWERMENT MURAL

Better Family Life, a non-profit community development organization in St. Louis, unveiled Missouri's largest Black History mural.

DeBorah Ahmed is the Executive Director of the Cultural Center at *BFL* and oversaw the project. "I had a vision for a mural on the first floor of our cultural center. The mural tells a story of who we are, where we have come from, the challenges that we have overcome, and the contributions that we have made to the world. It acknowledges that we have a very powerful, productive, and progressive future."

The ***Art and Empowerment*** mural is a 96-foot-long illustrative timeline that begins at the dawn of humanity and ends with the present. Images evoke a gamut of emotions as visitors take in scenes of slave ships crossing the Atlantic, the Civil Rights era, the Harlem Renaissance, and much more.

"I'll look up at that mural, and it'll just say something special to me, and it will reinforce some space that I need to be in," said Ahmed. "What's my favorite part? That's hard. It depends on where I am spiritually and emotionally at a certain time."

Ahmed hired a world-renowned artist, Gonz Jove, for the project. "I looked at his portfolio and was just blown away. We are humbled that he decided to be a part of *Better Family Life*."

"My son and I came up with a design of how exactly we were going to be putting thousands of years of history in a 95-foot wall - which is quite a puzzle in itself", said Jove. "It has taken us nearly two and a half years to complete the mural. We spent a lot of time on drawing and research. Essentially, I tried for that wall to talk, to speak what history is telling us."

A curriculum will accompany the Art and Empowerment mural for teaching black history to elementary, middle, and high school students.

Located on Page Avenue in St. Louis, *Better Family Life* advocates the belief that a cohesive family is the foundation for every human being's development. For more information, please visit betterfamilylife.org.