

Social Worker's Art Featured in Black History Collection Aims to Lift People Up

Melina Brann grew up making art. She took art classes in college but ultimately decided to pursue a career in social work and therapy. In many ways, those two paths have come together as she turned to art to give herself an emotional outlet and as a way to support her community.

"Putting your emotions to paper is really interesting because it can start as one thing and then, as you're building from it, you come to realizations within your mind and within your art that things are different than what they appear," said Melina, a Lansing-based social worker and artist. "It gives you the space to take a step back and look at things from a different perspective. Art is a great expression and a way to reflect on what's going on, internally and externally."

Her work is one of three selected pieces of art featured on decorative pillows, stationery, gift bags, canvas tote bags, key rings, kitchen towels and throw blankets, for example, in our supercenters across the Midwest this month. The limited-edition products are part of our Black History Collection and will be available as supplies last through Feb. 26.

Melina's art was selected from hundreds of submissions after we put out a call for culturally inspired art in 2021 as part of our ongoing efforts to support underrepresented communities and ensure every customer sees themselves reflected on store shelves. The pieces were chosen by Meijer merchants, based on a team member vote.

"It's really unbelievable to think and picture my work in a store in general and then to be in stores across the Midwest is crazy to me," Melina said. "It's comforting to know that people appreciate the work I'm doing and understand the value in the pieces I create. And the importance of representation, especially nowadays. I just love that Meijer is embracing it."

Melina grew up in rural Michigan, in a largely white community, so Black History Month is meaningful to her because it gave her the opportunity to learn more about her ancestors, the work that has been done and what still needs to take place. In her piece, she purposefully uses a pastel color palette not typically associated with Black coloring to depict a "pyramid of faces," representing the building blocks of community.

"For this piece, I wanted to show how Black women and Black people in our community lift each other up," Melina said. "I hope my art sends the message that we're all in this together, and - no matter what we look like, no matter who we are - we can lift each other up and make anything happen."

Learn more about the [local artists](#) taking part in our Black History Month collection.

Additional assets available online: [Photos](#) ⁽³⁾

<https://meijercommunity.com/Social-Workers-Art-Featured-in-Black-History-Collection-Aims-to-Lift-People-Up>