**The Black Madonna makes her mark in the least religious state in the US**

[Portions taken from Damian Costello's article in NCR](https://t.e2ma.net/click/5hgiym/1iab0o/909w1od)

On the side of the public library in the biggest city in the [least religious state](https://t.e2ma.net/click/5hgiym/1iab0o/ptax1od) in the U.S., the Virgin Mary holds the infant Christ.

"Black Freedom, Black Madonna & the Black Child of Hope," a 16-by-12 foot mural on the south-facing exterior wall of the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, Vermont, is the creation of [Raphaella Brice](https://t.e2ma.net/click/5hgiym/1iab0o/5lbx1od), a 26-year-old Haitian American artist who is drawing deep from the font of her cultural identity and faith. In the process, she's injecting new spiritual energy into a state often imagined to be strictly secular.

According to Raphaella, her vocation started in the womb. By chance, her mother saw a documentary about the Renaissance artist Raphael on PBS. "She was fascinated by his story and named me Raphael. It was the hospital that added the 'la' at the end." ...

When the Burlington City Arts, in collaboration with the city's Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, put out a "call for artists" for the second annual Juneteenth BTV celebration April 2022, she was intrigued but didn't know what to depict, let alone if she could do a mural that portrayed her digital skills. A colleague suggested a Black Madonna to fit the theme of the Juneteenth celebration, "A Love Story."

The idea resonated with Raphaella for multiple reasons. She had a deeply Catholic childhood. Her Haitian family, like most Haitian families, is intensely spiritual. "We went to church all the time," she remembers. "I couldn't escape it."...

[The Black Madonna also made herself the mother of Haiti](https://t.e2ma.net/click/5hgiym/1iab0o/lecx1od). Known in Haiti as the Vodoun lwa Erzulie Dantor and the Catholic Our Lady of Czestochowa, the Black Madonna was a revolutionary spiritual force in the country. "This spirituality — the fusion of African spirituality and Catholicism — literally freed my ancestors from the French colonizers."

Raphaella submitted her proposal for "Black Freedom, Black Madonna & the Black Child of Hope" and heard right away of her acceptance. She jumped in, learning the medium on the fly. It took one month and the result was the 16-by-12-foot mural that now adorns the side of the library.

It wasn't until Raphaella finished the mural that the significance of the piece and its healing properties came to life. When the mural went up on June 15, 2022, two circular rainbows appeared above it. When she went to her car, she rediscovered a holy card of Our Lady of Czestochowa on the dashboard that her mother had given her when she first moved to Vermont.

Raphaella took these signs as affirmations of her work. "The universe knew that this was what I needed to do. I realized that we do all these things to be seen when in reality we just need to see ourselves. Doing that piece was a validation of who I am. I saw me."...

To see more of her paintings, learn more, and read the entire article, [**CLICK HERE**](https://t.e2ma.net/click/5hgiym/1iab0o/16cx1od).