

DeBorah Ahmed

University City's 2018 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Spirit Award Recipient



***"We must constantly seek ways
to bring the power within
-- without -- and grow in the
knowledge of what we discover."***

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The University City Board of Education's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Spirit Award is presented annually to an individual who, like Dr. King, has displayed a commitment to community through public service and

who has made significant contributions in the realm of social justice.

University City's 2018 MLK Spirit Award recipient is DeBorah Ahmed, executive director of the Better Family Life Cultural, Educational and Business Center, a 35-year-old community development agency that focuses on cultural and social service issues that impact urban communities and African Americans in particular. As a 1973 graduate of University City High School, she earned a master of science in Policy Analysis from Southern Illinois University in 1989 and a bachelor of arts in Anthropology from Grinnell College in 1977.

Ahmed embodies the spirit of Dr. King as demonstrated by her dedication to bettering the lives of families through social, cultural, artistic, economic, youth, housing and educational programs that promote positive and innovative change. During the Ferguson unrest in 2014, she was part of the team that provided counseling to quell tensions within communities. She and the Better Family Life team have also worked tirelessly to remove guns from the streets and mediate neighborhood concerns. She created a grass-root, anti-violence community sign campaign to spread awareness and bridge community relationships, "We Must Stop Killing Each Other" and now, "We Must Start Loving Each Other."

Ahmed holds numerous awards for cultural and artistic contributions and community service including the 2016 MLK Legacy Award for Outstanding Community Service from Beloved Streets of America. She was inducted into the St. Louis Griot Society in 2004 by the Black World History Wax Museum. She is a member of the St. Louis Chapter of the Drifters, Inc., a national African American women's civic organization.