



**CHICAGO
FREEDOM
SCHOOL**

2023

YEAR IN REVIEW



**CO-EMPOWERING WITH YOUTH
HONORING THE PAST
BUILDING MOVEMENTS FOR CHANGE**

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FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dearest comrades and community—

Many in our community are in despair. We are marching in solidarity with our Palestinian comrades. We are feeding migrant families outside of police stations. We are demanding housing for all, including Black Chicagoans. We are writing our loved ones on the inside. We are tired. We are grieving. But we are also ORGANIZING.



This summer, 25 young people circled up at Chicago Freedom School for the Freedom Fellowship and engaged in liberatory learning. In the Fall, they met to organize an action or tactic to support Cops Out of CPS and the Final 5 Campaign. The Septima Clark Project developed a youth-led curriculum that will take our liberatory education work into Chicago Public Schools. We invested in our youth leaders with capability-building training, and we offered training to our communities.

Chicago Freedom School cultivates and amplifies the leadership of Black and Brown youth as they envision and organize toward collective healing and liberation. Being able to build with so many powerful Black and Brown youth ages 14-24 from our city gives me so much hope and possibility in building the world we deserve.

As we share our year in review, I am hopeful for tomorrow and the year to come because of you—our community. Our community is full of so much joy, healing, and celebration! 2024 will bring the 60th Anniversary of the SNCC Mississippi Freedom Schools. I hope you will join us for special events to honor liberatory education!

In community,
Tony Alvarado-Rivera
Executive Director

FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP

BUILDING A GENERATION OF BLACK AND BROWN ORGANIZERS FOR HEALING AND LIBERATION



25 BLACK AND BROWN YOUTH LEADERS AGES 13-17 SPENT SIX MONTHS LEARNING MOVEMENT HISTORY, BUILDING COMMUNITY ORGANIZING SKILLS, AND CREATING ACTION STRATEGIES FOR POLICE FREE SCHOOLS AND FINAL FIVE CAMPAIGNS.

“This whole program really improved me as a person. It really changed my mindset on things. It makes me forgive people more and love people more and speak about what’s going on.”

**SAFARI, 2023
FREEDOM FELLOW**

“One thing I want others to know is the sense of community we all have. Everyone has your back.”

**2023 FREEDOM
FELLOW**

NORTHSTAR LIBERATORY TRAINING COLLECTIVE

A 10-WEEK PROGRAM FOCUSED ON HEALING JUSTICE AND TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE, WITH A VISION TO SUPPORT PARTICIPANTS TO BECOME TRAINERS AND FACILITATORS OF HEALING-CENTERED YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.



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"I had a great experience with Northstar! The group was really chill and freeing. This was an excellent environment where we practiced joy and really considered our support systems. I learned so much about myself during this time and began to heal. My favorite part was the healing retreat...It was like nothing I had ever experienced and so full of love and care.... Care in a way that we all deserve."

Z SAGE, 2023 NORTHSTAR PARTICIPANT

SEPTIMA CLARK PROJECT

With support from the Illinois State Board of Education's Philip Jackson Freedom Schools grant, we spent the last 6 months working with alumni to adapt our Freedom Fellowship curriculum into an after school program. In 2024, we will partner with two schools to pilot the program with 20 young people and small cohorts of educators and parents.



Photo: Septima Clark youth curriculum writers and project coordinator, Taylor Casey

PROJECT HEALUS



Launched in 2016, Project HealUs explores the history of the reproductive justice movement through intersectional lenses to explore the social and political ways that we engage our bodies, our selves, and each other. In 2023, Project HealUs' Leadership Council completed a series of strategic planning retreats, aimed at revising the program for a re-launch in 2024.

Photo: Project HealUs Leadership Council member, Anaya, with Jacquelyn Hamilton at a planning retreat

POPULAR EDUCATION

EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WITH TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO DISMANTLE OPPRESSION IN ALL FORMS.



WE TRAINED OVER 300 YOUTH WORKERS, COLLEGE STUDENTS, AND NONPROFIT STAFF IN ANTI-OPPRESSION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES THIS YEAR!

MANY THANKS TO OUR TRAINING PARTNERS

Americorps Gardeneers Program
Depaul University
Inspiration Project
Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy at UIC
MCA Youth-led Workshop Series
Prison Neighborhood Arts Project
Vocal Justice Youth Summit
W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation

SKILL BUILDING FOR YOUTH LEADERS



FACILITATION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT INTENSIVE

Fifteen of our alumni co-leads from the Freedom Fellowship, Septima Clark Project and Northstar Liberatory Training Collective spent nearly 50 hours this past spring strengthening skills in curriculum development and facilitation “training of trainer” intensives. The goal was to teach our youth leaders how to write and facilitate curriculum using popular education and centering racial justice. We partnered with expert curriculum writers including an organizer from the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, one of the co-founders of Black Breastfeeding week, and the former director of curriculum at the Global Citizenship Experience Lab School.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH LEADERS

A team of five freedom fellowship alumni, led by CFS alum Kaya Massey, worked together to plan the curriculum and structure for the 2023 Freedom Fellowship. Prior to the Summer Leadership Institute, they participated in a series of workshops aimed at deepening their skills and leadership in youth program development and organizing - including conflict deescalation, CPR and First Aid, and more.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP BOARD & YES TEAM

YOUTH LEADERSHIP BOARD

The Youth Leadership Board (YLB) is a central governing body composed of alumni from CFS's programs. YLB members help design programs, engage in organization-wide decision-making, participate in strategic planning, and lead public engagement work. We are revising the YLB model for 2024 from one that only included Freedom Fellowship alumni to one that includes alumni from all programs.



YES TEAM



Launched in 2014, the Youth Engagement Storytellers (YES Team) is a group of recent alumni who are trained in participatory evaluation and then lead program evaluation. This year, the YES team received multiple days of training in evaluation and revised our evaluation tools. We are deeply grateful to Freedom Fellow alum Uriel Hernandez and CFS co-founder Dr. Keisha Farmer-Smith for training and guiding the group this year.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

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We are also deeply grateful for the more than 450 donors who gave a financial gift in 2023! Thank you!

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