



CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL

OFFICIAL MEDIA KIT



ABOUT CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL

Rooted in the long legacy of liberatory education, Chicago Freedom School (CFS) creates new generations of critical thinkers who use their unique experiences and power to create a just world.

Founded in 2007, CFS builds intergenerational partnerships and facilitates programming for young people of color while offering training to individuals and organizations committed to movement building. Inspired by the Mississippi Freedom Schools of the Civil Rights Era, CFS takes an innovative approach to youth activism and leadership development through social justice and movement history education, community organizing, healing justice, and transformative justice.





YOUTH LEADERSHIP & EDUCATION

Chicago Freedom School believes in the power of young people.

Our programs equip young people and adult allies with the tools to develop actionable strategies for social change. Young people are at the center of organizational and programmatic decision-making as program designers, curriculum writers, and evaluators. Beyond the programs below, our Youth Leadership Board is a key governing body with a central role in organizational decision-making, staff hiring, and strategic planning.

PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Freedom Fellowship is a 6-month intensive social justice leadership program for BIPOC youth ages 14-17 that explores social movement history, systems of oppression and liberation, community organizing, and youth-led action.

Project HealUs explores the history of the reproductive justice movement through intersectional lenses, examining the social and political ways that we engage our bodies, ourselves, and each other.

Northstar Liberation Education Collective focuses on healing justice and trauma informed practice, with a vision to support young folks to become trainers and facilitators of healing-centered youth development.

Training and Capacity Building on topics such as racial justice, trauma-informed healing practices understanding adultism and more.

Chicago Freedom School supports young people to take action for justice in their personal lives and communities. Our Youth Organizers partner with youth leaders across the city to address some of the most pressing issues facing Black and Brown communities. We support young people to lead action through relationship-building, skill development, and healing and wellness practices.



YOUTH ORGANIZING

ORGANIZING EFFORTS INCLUDE:



Core coalition member for #CopsOutCPS which seeks to remove all police from Chicago Public Schools. As of July 2021, over 30 high schools voted to remove one or both **police officer positions** from their budgets.



Core coalition member of the Final Five campaign, which seeks to close the remaining 5 youth prisons in Illinois.



Host political education and community organizing skills workshops for hundreds of youth organizers throughout the year to build community and strategy for youth-led organizing.



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HOLISTIC CARE & SUPPORT

CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL OFFERS HOLISTIC CARE TO OUR YOUTH ORGANIZERS



HEALING CENTERS DURING PROTESTS

CFS continues to open its doors to young organizers during downtown protests to provide food, PPE, and a safe space to emotionally process.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Police harassment and the relentlessness of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many CFS youth to experience increased anxiety, grief, isolation, health concerns, and economic insecurity. CFS partnered with networks of qualified, culturally conscious Black and Brown mental health therapists to provide free, one-on-one therapy sessions to support mental wellbeing and healing.

CHICAGO YOUTH MUTUAL AID (CYMA)

CYMA is a partnership between Chicago Freedom School, Youth Empowerment Performance Project, Assata's Daughters, Circles and Ciphers and Street Youth Rise Up that provides food, grocery cards, PPE, cleaning supplies, toiletries, and cash assistance to young organizers in need. Since May 2020, CYMA has served 500 unduplicated young people and their families by offering resource advocacy and has provided 3,000 different items through the CYMA Store.



CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL: WE'RE AN IDEA AND A PRACTICE.

When the Girls Best Friend Foundation gathered grantees together in January 2004 to ask what resources could be made available to support citywide youth activism, Mariame Kaba came ready with a one-pager on "Freedom Schools." After 2 years, with the support of dozens of intergenerational organizers from across the city, we brought CFS to life!

CFS was first envisioned as an intensive, youth-driven summer program focused on providing Black and Brown youth of all walks of life with experiences and tools that would enable them to discover the leader and organizer within. The vision was to create models of bottom-up organizing that didn't look at youth as tokens or manipulate young people's strategy and thought, but instead built partnerships where youth can be at the table or even break down the table!

Since we opened our doors in 2007, CFS has been a political home for thousands of youth and adult comrades who are drawn to CFS because they can bring their full selves to our programs as we work collectively to raise consciousness, cultivate healing, and fight for liberation. Young people stay because we build community and a social justice orientation, rooted in Black history and Black liberation, that extends beyond any particular campaign to be sustained through their lifetimes.







Our work is an idea, and it is also a practice. The practice of building community. Building space to imagine an abolitionist future. Building skills. Building healing. Building coalitions for change.

-TONY ALVARADO-RIVERA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL

AT 15 YEARS

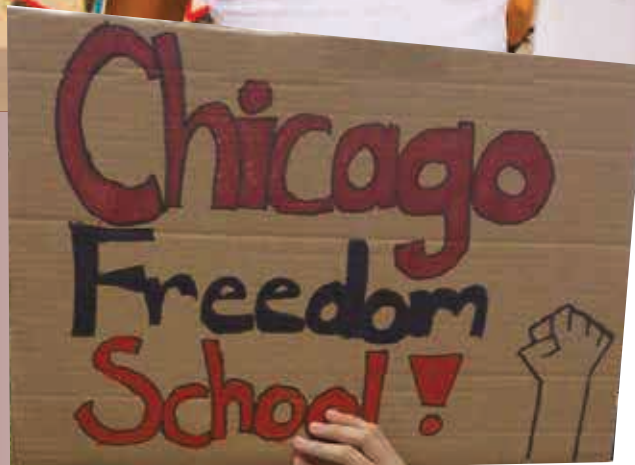
-  700+ young people have participated in our core programs
-  17,000 +youth and adults have participated in our workshops and trainings
-  Compared to their national counterparts ages 15-25, CFS alumni are two times more likely to volunteer, 4X more likely to participate in a protest, and 2X more likely to vote
-  100% of 2021 Fellows believe that young people can work together to bring about social change and 83% agree or strongly agree that they can create change in their schools and neighborhoods (Up from 66% pre program)
-  83% believe it is their responsibility to advocate for social justice
-  83% feel confident to share skills and tools with others about creating social change

*Data from a 2012 Freedom Fellowship alumni survey and a 2021 Freedom Fellowship program evaluation





QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS



"One thing I love about [CFS] is the community that they've built together."
- 2012 Freedom Fellow

"CFS opened my mind to the possibilities of pure liberation in this world."
- 2013 Freedom Fellow

"One of the best workshops I have attended. I have learned a lot of info, but also learned a lot about my own biases."
-2016 workshop participant

"I feel more confident that I am aware and have tools to interrupt racism."
-2016 Workshop Participant

"CFS is a place that lets you be free."
- 2019 Freedom Fellow

"CFS instills more intention in your healing. Our healing is resistance. Us being whole is resistance."
- 2021 Northstar Participant

"Being with CFS and going out to protest and help people, it did open my eyes and made me realize more in depth what the real world looks like. We can change it."
- 2020 Freedom Fellow

"CFS instills more intention in your healing. Our healing is resistance. Us being whole is resistance."
- 2021 Northstar Participant



PARTNERSHIPS

PROGRAM PARTNERS AND TRAINING CLIENTS

- After School Matters
- Bradley University
- Chicago Desi Youth Rising
- Chicago Public Schools
- Circles and Ciphers
- Erie Neighborhood House
- Girls Rock Chicago
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Lawrence Hall
- League Inc.
- Lifted Voices
- Loyola University Chicago
- Northwestern University
- Northwest Side Housing Center
- Roosevelt High School
- School of the Art Institute Chicago
- UIC College of Medicine

FOUNDATION PARTNERS

- Albert Pick Jr. Fund
- Allstate Foundation
- Alvin H. Baum Family Fund
- Andrew Family Foundation
- Bright Promises Foundation
- Chicago Foundation for Women
- Children's Foundation
- Cricket Island Foundation
- Crown Family Philanthropies
- Emergent Fund
- Field Foundation
- Fry Foundation
- Julian Grace Foundation
- Ms. Foundation for Women
- Moore Philanthropy
- New Visions Foundation
- Polk Bros Foundation
- Providence Bank and Trust
- Racial Justice Pooled Fund
- Tides Foundation
- W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation
- Voqual

*a sample of past and current partners and funders.



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IN THE NEWS

Chicago Tribune

NEWS

Spirit of the '60s lives again

By Jamethan E. Briggs and Tribune staff reporter
Chicago Tribune • Jul 29, 2007 at 12:59 am

In the summer of 1964, long before the teenagers gathered at Jones College Prep were born, the Mississippi freedom schools taught a generation of youth how to change America.

Now the Chicago Freedom School, based on the non-traditional Southern schools that taught students how to battle segregation, hopes to spark similar activism among young people who don't remember police dogs, fire hoses and "colored only" water fountains.

CHICAGO NEWS

City cites Chicago Freedom School after they provided meals to protesters in Loop

by: [Tonya Francisco](#)
Posted: Jun 8, 2020 / 06:21 PM CDT
Updated: Jun 8, 2020 / 06:21 PM CDT

BLOCK Club

The Chicago Freedom School Offered Food, Water And Rest To Weary Protesters Trapped Downtown — And The City Cited Them For It

The school, which ordered pizzas and gave out granola bars, was cited for "preparing and serving large quantities of food without the proper retail food establishment license."




Photo: Tonya Francisco for Block Club

CHICAGO

BEST OF CHICAGO

Top Army Corps
Best Local Quarantine Playlist for
Best Street Food Hot
Best Local Quarantine Playlist for
Africa
Black & Brown Sex W

Six Chicagoans Who Stood Up and Stood Out During the Protests

APR 26, 2020, 10:48 AM



CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Youth activists in Chicago area reimagining the future

Even now as police put parks to law enforcement agencies, youth activists are using their voices to challenge — and change — societal norms.

By Lisa Roggen • Aug 16, 2020, 8:25am CDT



CHICAGO

Jacquelyn Hamilton Helps Activists Live Their Politics

The Chicago Freedom School member, teenage therapist, and hula-hooper offers her insights.





Need to talk to someone for your story?

Let us connect you to the right source. Chicago Freedom School Youth are leaders between the ages of 14-24 from across Chicago who are able to speak about youth activism, youth organizing, and more.

Chicago Freedom School staff are experts in creating space where young people and adult allies can build knowledge, skills, and agency; elevating social justice movement history to support thoughtful action and strategy in the present; building the capacity of adult allies to understand and support youth-led social change; coordinating intergenerational public events on youth activism, movement history, and organizing.

THE CFS YEAR IN REVIEW
B-ROLL AND LOGO UPON REQUEST
PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS:
THE CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL SD
HEART OF CFS



AWARDS



MARY MORTEN AWARD FOR JUSTICE (2021)
FROM THE PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

RON SABLE AWARD FOR ACTIVISM (2012)
FROM THE CROSSROADS FUND

THE NEW LEADERS FOR A NEW CHICAGO AWARD IN 2021.
RECEIVED BY TONY ALVARADO-RIVERA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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