

CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) at Loyola University Chicago was asked to partner with the Chicago Freedom School (CFS) for an evaluation for the inaugural year of their summer programming.

CURL is a non-traditional research center that utilizes a community-based, collaborative research model to address issues facing communities and organizations in the Chicago-area.

This final report prepared by CURL includes an overview of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, the main evaluation activities, highlights of findings from all data collected, and recommendations. In addition to the final report, the CURL team submitted periodic progress reports to CFS. These status reports provide in greater detail the methods and findings from this evaluation.

“The students I have worked with have been energetic, excited, and criminalized/ignored by many in their community in Chicago.”
“They [the students] are seeking opportunities to further their learning but continuously finding roadblocks.”

-Teachers describe how past experiences have influenced their decisions to become involved in the Chicago Freedom School.



About the Chicago Freedom School and the 2007 Summer Leadership Institute

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The CFS Summer Leadership Institute was a six-week program, where youth (“Freedom Fellows”) participated in courses that made connections between their own interests and social justice issues. The Summer Leadership Institute was designed to allow the Freedom Fellows to have an opportunity to ask questions about their lives, to see the connection between the means and the ends of creating change, and to develop as agents of social change. In addition, all the Freedom Fellows spent each Friday engaged in a Civil Rights Institute, which explored how social movements happen and how individual action and historical forces combine to create change.

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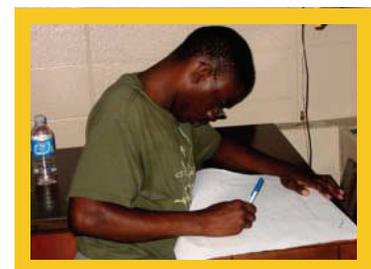
While there may be no such thing as a “typical” day at the CFS Summer Leadership Institute, from Monday to Thursday there was a general daily structure of a morning institute, followed by lunch, an afternoon institute, and an optional wellness hour. Freedom Fellows participated in either one institute or two, depending on whether they were able to attend the program part-time or full-time (95% attended full time). Fellows also received a stipend for their participation to allow young people to participate who would have otherwise not been able to do so due to the financial hardship of not working over the summer.

Each course had two instructors who brought different approaches to the subject and taught on alternating days. There were also institute coordinators who worked full-time to facilitate community-building and provide hands-on support to the course instructors. After the afternoon institute, there was an optional wellness hour for students, staff and instructors. This was a chance for the young people, staff and instructors to get together and talk about issues ranging from sexuality to health and fitness.

On Fridays, the schedule changed so that all Freedom Fellows attended a Civil Rights Institute together instead of going to their separate classes. The Civil Rights Institutes were open to the public and their topics varied. On one day that the evaluators attended, the theme was Arts in Activism. This particular Friday featured a group of performers from the Nahualli Aztec Mexican Dance Group who came to talk about and demonstrate how they use dance to take action in their communities. On the same day, one of the instructors from CFS talked about how she has used performing arts to give voice to issues of her identity, and to raise awareness about topics such as gay rights and street harassment. Thus, the Civil Rights Institute served as a means to further exemplify the power one has as an agent of change.

The courses that were offered included:

- Music (Social Justice Music/DJing and Afro Caribbean rhythms and dance)
- Media Arts 1 (Journalism/Community Newspaper and Poetry)
- Media Arts 2 (Media Analysis and Video Production)
- Health (Sexual Health and Holistic Health)
- Sports (Social Justice in Sports and Coaching)
- Performing Arts (Stage Acting and Spoken Word Poetry)





CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Collaborative Endeavor

All evaluation activities conducted represented a true collaboration between the Chicago Freedom School and CURL. The CURL team consisted of several Undergraduate Fellows (paid research fellows), Urban Studies Students, and Research Staff. Early on in the process, the CURL team worked closely with the CFS Steering Committee to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the program, agreement on the evaluation goals, and joint insight into how to meet those goals. The CURL team worked closely with CFS staff and also attended meetings with the Evaluation Subcommittee as well as the Marketing, Publicity and Outreach committee. Every step of this evaluation, from the formation of goals and research questions, to the development of instruments, to the data collection and analysis, to the reporting of findings and recommendations was informed and influenced by both the Chicago Freedom School and CURL. This collaborative effort ensured that every participant's expertise and insight was utilized and that the evaluation was strong in both methodological rigor as well as usability.



Evaluation Methods

The evaluation team, together with the CFS Steering Committee, recognized that it was important to gather information from the youth participants, the teachers and the staff who were involved in the inaugural summer. The data were collected from the following:

CFS Stakeholders:	What was collected:
Freedom Fellows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 39 Freedom Fellows completed surveys at the beginning of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute. All 39 Freedom Fellows completed surveys at the end of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute. 16 of the 39 Freedom Fellows participated in a follow-up survey 6 months after the end of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute. (Data collection took place over a 7 week period.)
CFS Teachers & Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All facilitators (18 teachers and 5 staff members) completed a survey at the beginning of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute. 17 teachers and 5 staff members completed a survey at the end of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute. Director and Youth Organizer interviewed during the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute.
CFS Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group with the Marketing, Publicity, & Outreach Committee during the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute.



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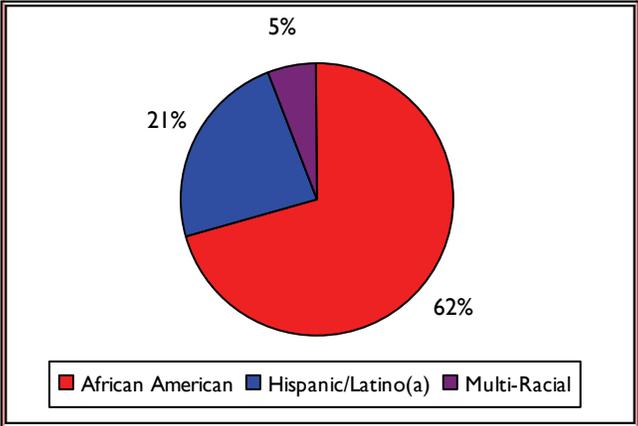


Who Participated in the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute?

Freedom Fellow Demographics

The ages of the students ranged from 14 to 16. Just over two-thirds (68%) of the students were female and 32% were male. No students identified as transgender. While all of the 39 Freedom Fellows completed pre and post-summer surveys, only 34 students reported their ethnicity.

Freedom Fellow Self-Reported Racial Composition



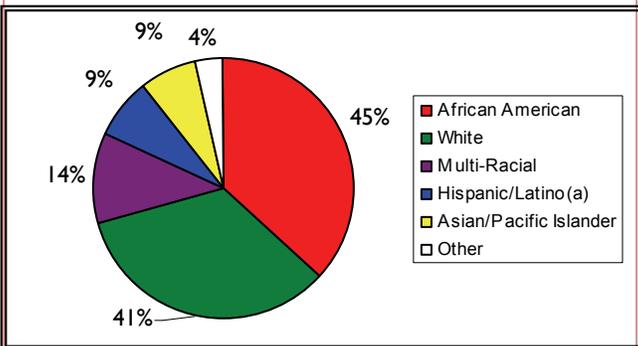
Teacher and Staff Demographics

The gender of the group was evenly split; 10 of the teachers and staff identified as male, 10 identified as female and 2 identified as transgender/other.

Of the 18 teachers who reported age, the ages ranged from 19 to 44 with an average of 28 years.

The age range for staff was slightly younger with a range from 18 to 30 years of age with an average age of 23 years.

Teacher & Staff Self-Reported Racial Composition



Key Sections of this Report

This evaluation report focused on the inaugural year of the CFS Summer Leadership Institute. The data revealed many insights into the program. What follows is a brief overview on three key aspects of the CFS Summer Leadership Institute Program- (1) Movement Building; (2) Youth Development; and (3) Staff Development.

Movement Building

- Sociopolitical Consciousness of Freedom Fellows
- Taking Action for Change
- Who do the Freedom Fellows view as Allies for Social Change?

Youth Development

- Identity Development: Becoming Agents of Change
- How the Freedom Fellows Define a Leader
- How the Freedom Fellows Define Activists
- How the Freedom Fellows View the CFS Experience

Staff Development

- Pedagogy & The Classroom
- How Did CFS Staff Evolve as Agents of Change?
- How Did CFS Staff Facilitate Freedom Fellows to be Agents of Change?

This report is composed of highlights from all data collected. For additional information or questions about this evaluation please contact:

<p>Chicago Freedom School</p> <p>719 S. State St., Suite 3N Chicago, IL 60605 p: 312.435.1201 f: 312.435.1203 Email: info@chicagofreedomschool.org http://chicagofreedomschool.org</p>	<p>Center for Urban Research & Learning Loyola University Chicago</p> <p>820 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1000 Chicago, IL 60611 p: 312.915.7760 f: 312.915.7770 Email: curlweb@luc.edu http://luc.edu/curl</p>
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CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL MOVEMENT BUILDING



About the Chicago Freedom School and the 2007 Summer Leadership Institute

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The CFS Summer Leadership Institute was a six-week program, where youth ("Freedom Fellows") participated in courses that made connections between their own interests and social justice issues. The Summer Leadership Institute was designed to allow the Freedom Fellows to have an opportunity to ask questions about their lives, to see the connection between the means and the ends of creating change, and to develop as agents of social change. In addition, all the Freedom Fellows spent each Friday engaged in a Civil Rights Institute, which explored how social movements happen and how individual action and historical forces combine to create change.

"It started when I came to the Chicago Freedom School... it helped me work with diverse people...helped my leadership skills... and gave me insight on so many things."

-A 2007 Freedom Fellow describes what shaped his/her career as an activist.

Sociopolitical Consciousness of Freedom Fellows

At the conclusion of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, Freedom Fellows indicated the following **sociopolitical BELIEFS**:

- Belief that taking a stand and taking action in different forms is important and an effective way of creating change.
- Belief that violence is less effective and less justifiable when taking action.

At the conclusion of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, Freedom Fellows indicated the following **sociopolitical BEHAVIORS**:

- Trying to bring about change in their community as an individual, leader, and as part of a group.
- Discussing issues with people their own age, adults, and teachers.
- Seeking knowledge about current events.



Taking Action & Movement Building Strategies

Freedom Fellows were asked how likely they were to engage in different forms of taking action both at the beginning and end of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute.

Forms of Action:	Before Program:	After Program:
Collect signatures for a petition	33%	52%
Start or join a boycott	9%	16%
Run my own meeting	14%	27%
Run my own social justice organization	3%	13%
Organize for change in my community	26%	42%



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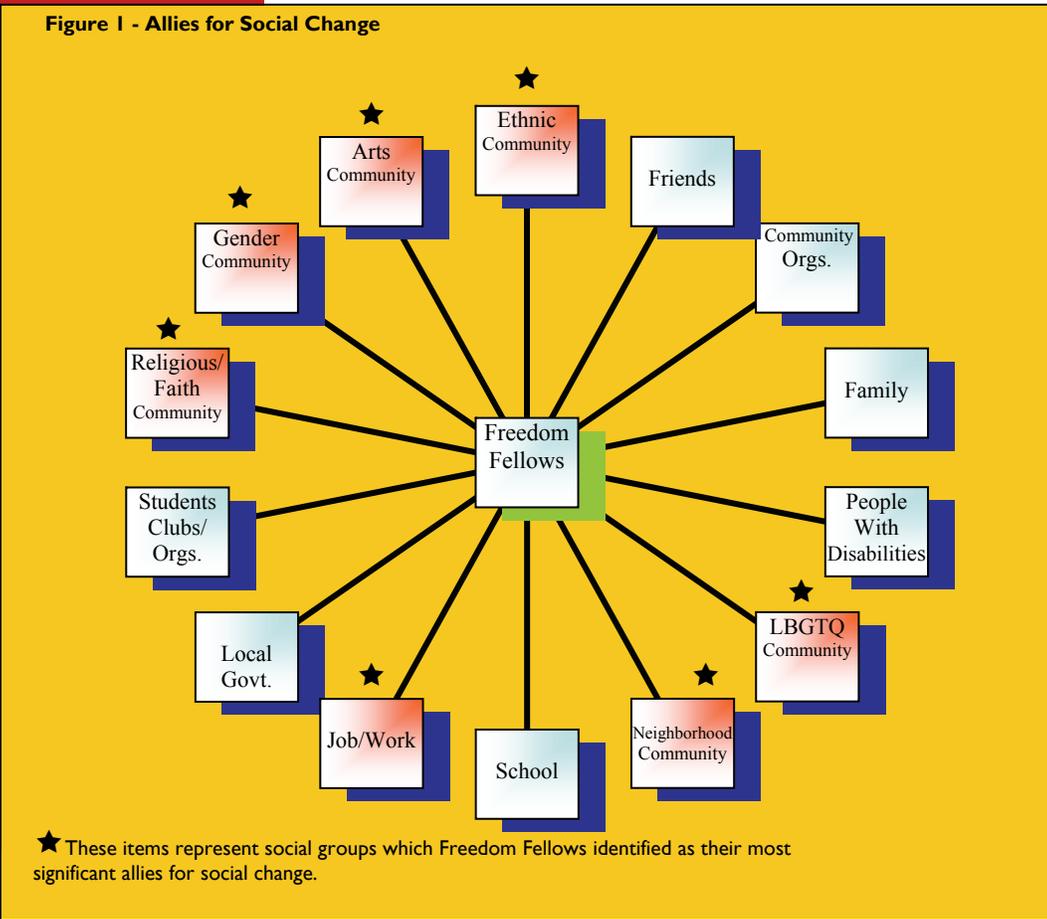
Who Do the Freedom Fellows View as Allies for Social Change?

The CFS Summer Leadership Institute encourages Freedom Fellows to think critically about how social systems affect their identity development. It is hoped that, through their exploration of social issues like oppression and privilege, the Freedom Fellows will be able to reflect upon their own cultural history and understand how it affects their identities. Ultimately through their participation in CFS, Freedom Fellows are reflecting on the need to build coalitions and establishing allies for social change. This critical thinking has inspired them to identify their personal allies which is essential to movement building.

As seen in **Figure 1**, participation in the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute may have encouraged Freedom Fellows to become more equipped to build coalitions and create allies for social change. This may further demonstrate how Freedom Fellows are taking initial steps toward movement building. Thus, through these established ongoing connections it is hoped that Freedom Fellows will utilize their knowledge to take action in influencing social systems.



Figure 1 - Allies for Social Change



“Being at the Freedom School helped me shape my views on people and society. The school’s spotlight on social activism prepared me for my future as a social activist.”
-A Freedom Fellow when asked what he/she most enjoyed.

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CHICAGO FREEDOM SCHOOL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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“The diversity of the subjects. Being trusted. Having responsibilities. Having a good time.”

-A Freedom Fellow’s description of the CFS Experience.



Youth Development: Becoming Agents of Change

The CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute provided Freedom Fellows with the opportunity to better understand that, as members of several communities, they too could be Agents of Social Change.

In a participatory evaluation with The Center for Urban Research and Learning at Loyola University Chicago, CFS examined various areas of youth development throughout the 2007 Summer Leadership Institute.

Compared to when they first entered the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, Freedom Fellows indicated having a stronger identity with more social groups at the end of the program.

These groups are the following:

- Their own Ethnic and Gender Groups
- The Arts Community
- Their Neighborhoods
- The Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, and Queer Community

“I was able to take what I learned and incorporate it into my neighborhood’s organization.”

“I had a lot of doing something I love like performing and drawing.”

The responses obtained from the Freedom Fellows suggest that CFS participation could help youth form stronger connections to the social groups that they personally identify with, and also help youth identify the social groups in which they could create social change.

“Everything. It was a great learning experience and it has changed my life forever. Thanks to everyone in CFS! ”

-A Freedom Fellow when asked what he/she most enjoyed.





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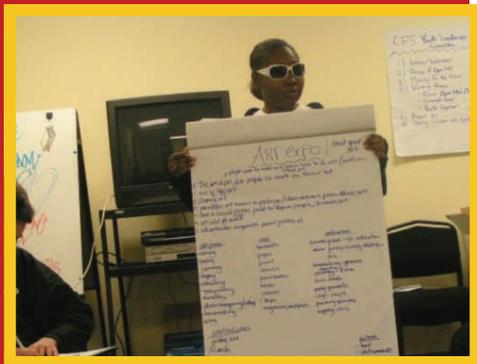
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Freedom Fellows define *Leaders* as individuals who...

- Inspire others.
- Bring people together.
- Listen to other people's ideas.
- Help people to achieve their goals.
- Encourage others to speak for themselves.

The Freedom Fellows Define *Activists* as...

- Leaders
- Determined
- Important
- Strong
- Involved
- Courageous
- Exciting



At the conclusion of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, the Freedom Fellows were also asked what they enjoyed most about the summer:

- *The opportunity to meet new people and make friends.*
- *The retreat and how it impacted them personally.*
- *Learning the history of movements at the presentations on Civil Rights Fridays.*
- *Attending CFS trainings, meetings, and workshops.*



Staying involved after the program

The evaluation team followed up with some of the Freedom Fellows 6 months after the program ended. The following are ways some youth have remained engaged:

- Worked closely with a CFS Mentor to create an Action Plan.
- Joined a CFS Board or Committee.
- Kept in contact with CFS Teachers, Staff, and other Freedom Fellows.
- Talked about CFS to friends and community members.

Youth View of the CFS Experience

At the conclusion of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, Freedom Fellows indicated high rates of satisfaction with the program. (Freedom Fellows were asked to rate their satisfaction with the following items on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being most satisfied):

Overall Summer Institute	4.75
Morning Institute	4.25
Afternoon Institute	4.31

“Being at the Freedom School helped me shape my views on people and society. The school's spotlight on social activism prepared me for my future as a social activist.”
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STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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movements happen and how individual action and historical forces combine to create change.



"I look forward to seeing the youth become passionate about social justice issues and to see them take action they see fit."

-A teacher, when asked what he/she was looking forward to most prior to the start of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute.

Pedagogy & The Classroom

The CFS teachers and staff strive to raise awareness about social issues and encourage youth to develop as activists. This is achieved by utilizing:

- Curriculum infused with social justice;
- Popular education techniques;
- And group-based collaborative learning.

How did the CFS Teachers & Staff Facilitate Freedom Fellows to Become Agents of Change?

Prior to the start of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, CFS Teachers were asked to describe their teaching philosophy. The most predominant teaching philosophy theme was the emphasis on the collaborative student-teacher relationship and specifically the Freedom Fellows' contribution to the learning environment.

CFS Teachers & Staff viewed Freedom Fellows as creative, honest, and intelligent and they believed that the students had a great deal to offer. Freedom Fellows were perceived to be as equals by the CFS Teachers & Staff and thus, were encouraged to contribute to the curriculum by sharing personal experiences in a safe and respectful environment.

Prior to the beginning of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, CFS Teachers & Staff indicated that a main reason for joining the CFS Team was to facilitate youth empowerment:

- *"...to empower youth to create change in their community."*
- *"...to facilitate youth in finding their voice and their power."*

In addition to coursework and participation in Civil Rights Institutes, Freedom Fellows work closely with adult allies (CFS Teachers, Staff, and Volunteers) to create and implement an Activism Goal Plan to serve as an outgrowth of their work in the Summer Leadership Institute. The Activism Goal Plan has five components:

- (1) Personal Mission Statement;
- (2) Issues of Focus;
- (3) Personal Action Goal;
- (4) Set of Strategies; and
- (5) Action and Reflection.

"Learning more about the world and its ways and experiencing the intelligence of the freedom school staff."

-A Freedom Fellow, when asked what he/she most enjoyed about the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute.

“...increase students’ awareness of social justice because when given the proper tools they can avoid some of the social negatives that are in the world and see that they do have power and choice.”

-A teacher’s goal for the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute.

How Did CFS Teachers & Staff Evolve as Agents of Change?

Prior to the beginning of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, CFS Teachers & Staff indicated the following reasons for wanting to join the CFS Team:

- More than half the teachers mentioned CFS’s philosophy, including a deeply rooted interest in social justice and strong desire for being part of a community working for social change.
- With a primary intent to develop and empower Freedom Fellows to become Agents of Change, CFS Teachers & Staff also indicated secondary reasons such as personal and professional development.

Top Goals for CFS Teachers:	Top Goals for CFS Staff:
Increase student consciousness about social justice.	Increase student consciousness about social justice.
Increase own consciousness about social justice.	Increase own consciousness about social justice.
Learn from my students.	Learn about issues affecting Chicago communities.

The Teacher & Staff View of the CFS Experience:

Overall, the CFS Teachers & Staff expressed high rates of satisfaction with the CFS Experience. At the conclusion of the CFS 2007 Summer Leadership Institute, teachers were asked to rank their agreement with the following items on a scale of 1 to 5, with a score of 5 indicating strong agreement:

I felt this job was personally fulfilling.	4.8
I enjoyed my job this summer.	4.6
I enjoyed the CFS experience this summer.	4.6
I learned a lot from my students this summer.	4.5
I increased my own consciousness about social justice this summer.	4.4
I had a strong connection with my students.	4.2

When CFS Teachers & Staff were asked if they would return to CFS if given the opportunity next summer, 19 of the 22 said yes, they would return to CFS. Another 2 said yes, if they remained in Chicago.

The majority of CFS Teachers & Staff were very positive:

- *“Yes because this is where I found new hope.”*
- *Definitely yes. The CFS is a phenomenal social change organization. I hope to stay involved for many years!”*



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