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INTRODUCTION

Young Cultural Stewards (YCS), an initiative of the Chicago Park District Culture Arts & Nature Unit, critically and creatively engage art, technology, and media to become advocates and caretakers of parks, public spaces, and neighborhoods. YCS engage over 2,500 youth ages 0-22 through multimedia production and cultural organizing across Chicago’s 77 community areas. Working predominantly with low-income youth of color, immigrants, refugees, and young people with disabilities, YCS fosters lifelong civic engagement through democratic participation, cultural stewardship, 21st century skill building, job training and career readiness. Our core programs (KidsMobile, Inferno, Arts XIII, and TRACE) cultivate cultural stewardship, civic engagement, and community safety and thriving quality of life with Chicago’s most disinvested youth.

History

The Chicago Park District was founded in 1934. A leader of the Recreation Movement, it’s network of green space, natural areas, and parks were a public sector solution to the dangers and exploitation faced by working class families during the Industrial Revolution. Its champions argued that leisure, exercise, cultural engagement, and play were not privileges reserved for the elite, but basic human rights and essential tenets of democracy. In today’s post-industrial Chicago, the Park District continues to provide affordable, accessible, culturally relevant, and civically engaged programming as well as opportunities for job training and career readiness for over 378,000 youth and families. The Chicago Park District’s current holdings include over 8,100 acres of green space, 580 parks, and 15 cultural centers. These public spaces provide an array of services that fill a dire need across disinvested communities, many of which experience inequitable access to cultural resources and an epidemic of poverty and “joblessness [which] disproportionately persists for young people of color. Reflecting long-term impacts of segregation, racial disparities and economic restructuring...which impacts youth, families, and neighborhoods by compounding malnutrition, disease, mental illness, and violence”.

Responding to these needs, Young Cultural Stewards provide lifelong opportunities for creative stewardship, civic engagement, and the building blocks of community safety. Urban anthropologist Dr. Alaka Wali argues that play and “informal arts practice [like those found in the parks ] … build individual and community assets … by fostering social inclusion and skills critical to civic renewal. These habits include use of innovation and creativity to solve problems, the capacity to imagine change and the willingness to work for it.” She goes on to say that informal arts bridge differences by creating community gathering spaces that feel accessible across race, class, gender, and sexuality. Parks create a “third space” between home, school and work where neighbors gather regardless of age, income level, or ability and co-create in an open and welcoming environment. Informal learning in these third spaces creates opportunities for non-violent conflict resolution, consensus building, and the ability to create positive social change.

Young Cultural Stewards uniquely speak to the power of developing parks as ecosystems for inclusive, accessible, safe, and culturally vibrant communities. Utilizing circle keeping as the foundation for non-violent conflict resolution, Young Cultural Stewards establish shared values to address community challenges through collective accountability rather than punishment. YCS fosters mechanisms for inclusion by building trust, practicing active listening, being vulnerable with one another, and learning how to share and receive constructive criticism, and build toward consensus. These skills are central to community development, as they reinforce and build social structures that empower neighbors and strangers to: collectively address challenges; learn to respect and find values in diverse lifestyles and cultures; and create opportunities to work collaboratively towards shared practices of civic engagement.


3 Young Cultural Stewards program director and teaching artists are trained as Circle Keepers by the Community Justice for Youth Institute http://cjyi.org/publishpath.com/
IMPACT
Young Cultural Stewards builds on best practices within the fields of informal arts education⁴ and creative youth development⁵ to establish an evaluative framework our assessment team utilizes to measure developmentally-appropriate outputs and impact across the following areas:

- Curiosity and passion for indigenous, local, and global cultural practices
- 21st century skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking
- Reframing public parks as sites for cultural organizing and creative capacity building

- Development of positive self-identity, community, and solidarity
- Capacity to imagine change and the willingness to work for it
- Exploration of cultural organizing as a tool for social change

- Tolerance of difference, trust and consensus building, collaborative work habits, use of innovation and creativity to solve problems
- Restorative and transformative approaches to conflict resolution
- Job training, career readiness, leadership development, and lifelong learning


⁵ National Summit on Creative Youth Development, Massachusetts Cultural Council in partnership with the National Guild for Community Arts Education and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Boston, Massachusetts, March 27-29, 2014.
CASE STUDIES

KidsMobile is a portable artmaking station which travels to 18 parks and playlots across Chicago and provides developmentally appropriate and ADA accessible workshops to 1,500 children (ages 0-12). Participants experiment with creative practices and materials, culturally specific storytelling, music and movement, and explore their role within the local ecosystem. Early childhood specialists engage kids as they develop their social emotional skills and practice democratic participation by listening with respect and compassion, asking questions, building consensus, and developing collective solutions to community challenges using the power of creative play.

KidsMobile offers programming in D facilities, or parks which do not have field houses or other types of cultural programming. Often times, these drop-in programs are the only structured creative offerings for miles around. Through consistent community presence, youth and families develop relationship with KidsMobile staff and begin occupying parks with greater regularity; shifting the perception of a park as undesirable or unsafe to one that is thriving and welcoming. In addition, KidsMobile staff are practicing artists and youth workers from the same neighborhood as the programming is offered. In this way, KidsMobile staff offer youth opportunity models – visions of who they themselves can become one day. Building positive relationships with adults who practice creative play, civic engagement, and restorative practices towards conflict, support the development of youth who may not be exposed to culturally relevant role models in mainstream media and formal institutions.

BY THE NUMBERS

- # of youth served: 1500
- # of contact hours: 1512
- # of Chicago neighborhoods: 18
- # of youth workers employed: 8
LOCATIONS

North Region
1. Aiello
2. Elston
3. Julia de Burgos
4. Broncho Billy
5. Langdon
6. North Mayfair

Central Region
1. Armstrong
2. Hoyne
3. Miami
4. Touhy-Herbert
5. Kells
6. Ohio + Harding

South Region
1. Lorraine Dixon
2. Ryan Harris
3. Hasan
4. Langley
5. Krause
6. Burnside
PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The strengths of KidsMobile include the breadth of program offerings, across 18 of Chicago’s 77 community areas. In 2017, KidsMobile staff was trained to develop curriculum inspired by Chicago-based artists whose roots and creative practice resonate within the specific neighborhoods in which the program is offered. Similarly, staff were chosen to be racially, linguistically, and culturally representative of the youth served by the program. This dual approach to creating culturally relevant curriculum and educators who had shared experiences and cultural backgrounds to the youth, created an educational environment which introduced both diversity and cohesion for youth and families participating in the program. Youth were introduced to storytelling, visual arts, and music representative of local, global, and indigenous artists and were able to produce media that allowed them to explore the themes of identity, community, and solidarity within their families, parks, and city.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Based on feedback from program facilitators, youth, and families, KidsMobile has the opportunity to expand programmatically and grow in a multitude of directions. Year-round programming with drop-in workshops throughout the fall and spring seasons would help build capacity and engage communities in deeper and more meaningful ways. In addition, creating opportunities for cross-neighborhood educational workshops, exhibitions, and performances would increase impact across the values of cultural stewardship, civic engagement, and community safety. Finally, bringing in visiting artists and building towards project-based work would increase participant investment and allow for deeper relationships to be formed amongst community members and staff.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Going forward, we are working towards a training model that offers more grounding in Chicago-based artists as well as curriculum that includes a multitude of media techniques and materials. We are also fundraising to expand our programming into the fall and spring seasons so we can offer additional programming and continue to expand our audiences. Finally, we are working on developing a curricular tool kit which incorporates lesson plans, pedagogical theory, supply lists, and community-based asset mapping techniques to guide staff and community educators. We plan to share our curricular tool kit at local and national conferences and offer it as a digital platform for youth workers and early childhood educators. In additional to sharing our pedagogical tools, we are eager to learn from colleagues in the field and build towards an institute of youth workers and cultural educators who are building towards cultural stewardship, civic engagement, and community safety throughout Chicago and beyond.
TEACHING ARTISTS

Maria Ambriz was born in Michoacán, Mexico and grew up in various parts of Illinois and Wisconsin. She is an artist and educator now working and living on Chicago’s Southwest side. Maria is engaged in social justice art education, social emotional learning, and restorative practice. She received her Masters in Arts Education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has been teaching in Chicago Public Schools for over five years.

Adam Bailey is deeply rooted, and a product of the love that exist on Chicago’s Southside. He owes his background to two distinct neighborhoods, South Shore and Roseland. His parents were separated at an early age, so he had the pleasure and embraced being introduced to multiple worlds. As a child and a student, has was brought up in the Faith community of St. Sabina. St. Sabina has played a major role in his formative years and still does to this day. That environment instilled a sense of purpose and dedication to his community. His favorite quote of Fr. Pflegher’s is, “there are no throw away lives, every life counts.” He echos those sentiments, and he has dedicated his life to making our world conducive for everyone. Adam attended Mt. Carmel High School, another pillar in the community. After a brief stint at Michigan State University, he attended Grand Canyon University and receive a bachelor’s in Educational Studies. He currently plays a mentoring role for the Troy School District, helping adolescents with special needs reach their full potential. Recently Adam made the decision to make South Shore his permanent home and is excited about the potential that comes with this community.

Asusena Martinez Balderas is a senior at the University of Illinois where she is pursuing a BFA in Art Education. She grew up in on the South Side of Chicago and experienced first hand the lack of art in some schools, which inspired her to pursue a degree in art education. As a student she spends her time volunteering and observing at local schools and youth centers in order to gain experience working with children and the community. She hopes that when she becomes an educator, she can bring a creative and diverse curriculum to her classroom.
Mallory Cheng is currently pursuing a Bachelor’s of the Arts in Anthropology/Sociology and Art History at Denison University. She is originally from Chicago and has lived in the Bridgeport neighborhood all her life. Throughout high school, she was involved in her community to help educate and inspire young learners. Whether it be working at her local tutoring/day-care center or as a volunteer at the Field Museum of Natural History, she is a constant learner and teacher.

Rory Guerra is a fourth grade teacher at the Latin School where he is dedicated to creating equitable, just, and engaging learning experience for all of his students. With a background as a Chicago-born Puerto Rican, he is dedicated to creating a welcoming, safe, and engaging learning environments for immigrant and youth of color across the city. Rory is currently pursuing his Masters in Early Childhood Education.

Teshika Silver is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer who has been working in Chicago for over 10 years. It has been her passion and pleasure to work with many non-profit organizations and small businesses providing design solutions, as well as using her illustrative work for outreach to the community. While her work is ever expanding, she is also thrilled to be working with youth at Hyde Park Art Center and hopes to offer more classes to youth and adults alike. She currently is a core member of For The People Artists Collective, a grassroots initiative that organizes and creates work that uplifts and projects struggle, resistance, liberation, and survival for marginalized communities and movements in our city and around the world.
“At Touhy-Hubert park we were able to have a great discussion on how our experiences, family, friends, and things we love/enjoy create us as a person. We talked about how our heritage is a part of that and that led to students talking about their Mexican background. We also read a book that touched on relatives who live in Mexico and one of the students suggested that they write a letter to their cousins talking about what we’re doing here in the summer.”

- Tesh Silver, KidsMobile Facilitators

“Youth compared differences and similarities they see in their community and the community that Romare Bearden depicted in his artwork about Harlem. One of the youth created a music album artwork about her community and titled it the East Side Community. In her artwork she depicted the similarities and differences that this community has with other Mexican communities in Chicago. In particular she said “soccer is something that unifies Mexicans in Chicago no matter where they live.”

- Adam Bailey, KidsMobile Facilitator

“Youth from Krause Park worked together to develop solutions to real world problems by creating models of machines, technology, and buildings that people in communities could use to address homelessness, food deserts, the environment, etc.”

- Tariq Weaver, Recreation Leader

“At Miami Park we had interesting conversations on our identities and how our Mexican heritage plays a part in shaping who we are. One student was embarrassed by his English so I made him a deal that we would work through our language barriers together and that I would practice my Spanish and he would practice his English throughout the summer.”

- Rory Guerrera, KidsMobile Facilitator

“Across all parks, I have been able to see older youth holding younger youth accountable. Whether it may be from picking up their trash and scraps to finishing up their projects, I have seen youth ask others to maintain the parks. With younger youth, often times they see something they did not intend to make in their work a “mistake” and ask to restart. Over the course of our programming, I have seen youth start to work around their “mistakes” to create something extraordinary that they are happy with in the end.”

- Asusena Martinez, KidsMobile Facilitator

“One child created a piece of art that represented herself and her unicorn in the park. She told me she likes her unicorn because its pretty and there’s a lot of ugliness around where she lives. Through this form of expression, she’s beginning to reimagine herself in relationship to the space she engages with, and at the very least, exploring alternatives to reality through fantasy.”

- Tariq Weaver, Recreation Leader
“For one of our lessons, we laid out an image from “On My Block” of a young girl in a Wonder Woman outfit and Hebru Brantley images of superhero children. One young boy said that he saw these superheroes as people he wanted to be because they were able to help others. As facilitators, we asked them to think about how they would help others in their neighborhood and park as superheroes. During clean up time, younger superheroes with their masks ran around the park helping to pick up trash and to enforce rules to create a safe park environment.”

- Tesh Silver, KidsMobile Facilitator

“At Ohio-Harding park we talked about what Black Lives Matter meant because it came up as something that is important to one of the students. We talked about why violence is a problem in the area and how students are tired of violence in that particular park. “We in the hood, people get shot over here.” We also talked about how someone was shot a week beforehand right across the street where we set up our station and how we were here to help make this park a little safer for everyone.”

- Rory Guerrera, KidsMobile Facilitator

“At Julia De Burgos, I saw many families come from different directions. Many were complete strangers to each other but at the end of the six weeks, they had developed relationships with each other. When one child did not show up for programming one day, the other would ask why they didn’t come and if they were going to show up the following day. It was very rewarding to see a community build this relationship because I saw them go from strangers to friends.”

- Mallory Chang, KidsMobile Facilitator

“A lot of the community safety growth in Ohio Harding park was a result of talking to kids and helping them work through their conflicts. We talked to them, got to know them, and offered them advice on all sorts of areas as a result of our conversations. For example, how they can help younger kids safely get home, how to look out for each other at night, and who they can contact if they aren’t feeling “unsafe.” We also helped them talk through arguments and went over conflict resolution strategies. Specifically, one time we found a child that was lost in the park and after we found their home we had a great conversation on what we could do to help someone in that same situation.”

- Rory Guerrera, KidsMobile Facilitator

“Burnside was our most challenging park. At the beginning of the summer, they were not engaged, but when they begin to see the way art can transform a space, and to be able identify with being able to take ownership of a project in their community they showed growth. The community mural called “Burnside Park Mural” in Burnside was a reflection of that change, that desire to learn more, and to participate.”

- Maria Ambriz, KidsMobile Facilitator

“At Kells park I helped kids ages 3-5 cross a major intersection to get water at the library (no water fountain at our park). I talked to them about how to cross the street correctly and ways to be safe when no adult is present. Additionally, I walked a lost child home who was walking through the alleys by himself. More conversations and discussions on safety took place during that time and I plan on having discussions on how to be safer when adults aren’t around (because clearly the children seem to be left alone in the park often).”

- Rory Guerrera, KidsMobile Facilitator
Arts XIII engages youth (ages 12-14) in afterschool and summer programming with a focus on 21st century learning skills: creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Currently offered at three parks across Chicago, Arts XIII introduces teens from hypersegregated North, West, and South sides of the city to come together and explore the intersections of identity, community, and solidarity. Working side by side with professional artists, community organizers, and restorative justice practitioners, youth develop a collective vision of community safety, wellness, and accessibility by creating multimedia campaigns and creative interventions which position them as agents of positive social change within their neighborhoods and beyond.
TULEY PARK
Located in the Chesterfield community, Tuley Park totals 20.19 acres and features a gymnasium, auditorium, and multi-purpose clubrooms. A green feature of the park includes a garden. Outside, the park offers a new playground with an interactive pool, baseball/softball diamonds, pool, gazebo, and 10 lighted tennis courts. Many of these spaces are available for rental including our gymnasium, auditorium, gazebo, fields, and multi-purpose rooms. Park-goers can participate in the Park Kids after school program, seasonal sports, cheerleading, yoga, and fitness classes. During the summer, the Chicago Park District offers its popular six-week day camp. In addition to programs, Tuley Park hosts fun special events throughout the year for the entire family.

History
In 1907, Senator Clark of the 13th District presented petitions to the South Park Commission requesting the creation of a park in Dauphin Park, now part of the Chatham neighborhood. Annexed to Chicago in 1889 as part of the Town of Lake and Village of Hyde Park, the neighborhood had much open land used for truck farming, trap shooting, and duck hunting, and some frame homes built by railroad workers. The South Park Commission was pleased with the recent success of ten revolutionary neighborhood parks which included year-round recreational facilities, educational programs, and social services. Originally known as Burnside Park for the adjacent Burnside community area, Tuley Park was officially named in honor of Murray F. Tuley (1827-1905) in 1922. Tuley was a circuit court judge who was instrumental in framing the Chicago City Charter adopted after the Great Fire of 1871.

BY THE NUMBERS
- # of youth served: 185
- # of contact hours: 3,312
- # of Chicago neighborhoods: 3
- # of youth workers employed: 8
PIOTROWSKI PARK
Located in the South Lawndale community in the area often called Little Village, Piotrowski Park Cultural Center totals 22.93 acres and features a convertible domed pool for year round use, a gymnasium, fitness center and meeting rooms. Outside, the park offers baseball fields, athletic fields for soccer or football, a playground, tennis courts and a new skate park. Many of these spaces are available for rental. Patrons can play seasonal sports, picnic or skate at the facility. After school programs are offered throughout the school year, and in the summer youth attend the Park District’s popular six-week day camp. A therapeutic recreation specialty camp is offered in the summer as well. In addition to programs, Piotrowski Park hosts fun special events throughout the year for the whole family, such as concerts, Movies in the Park and holiday events.

History
In 1946, the Chicago Park District began developing a sizable new park for the South Lawndale community as part of its Ten-Year Plan to increase recreational opportunities after World War II. By 1949, seven temporary ball diamonds filled the large tract of land. During the next few years, the park district made permanent improvements, including a playground, a comfort station, and a field house. A large outdoor swimming pool was constructed south of the fieldhouse in 1984. In recent years, the park district added a new soft surface playground. Originally known as Lawndale Park for the surrounding community, the site was renamed in 1974 to honor Lillian Piotrowski, a lifelong neighborhood resident. Piotrowski devoted much of her life to politics and public service, and served as a member of the Cook County Board of Commissioners at the time of her death.
CLARENDON PARK

Located in the Uptown community (two blocks east of Sheridan Road, two blocks south of Wilson Avenue, and just west of Lake Shore drive), Clarendon Park sits on over eight acres of land. The fieldhouse contains a fitness center, a gymnasium, and several clubrooms available for rental. Outside features two junior baseball and two softball fields, a two-hoop basketball court, new dog-friendly area and a playground with an interactive water play area.

Clarendon Park offers a variety of recreation opportunities, particularly for older children and adults. However, Tot Spot is available for toddlers. Youth can enjoy basketball, cheerleading, drop-in Junior Bears football, karate, seasonal sports—and the popular six-week, summer day camp. Programs for teens include basketball, drop-in, seasonal sports—and Teen Leadership Club during the summer. Adults can partake in basketball, dodgeball, the fitness center, soccer, and volleyball. Kuumba Lynx is the Arts Partner In Residence, KL is an urban arts youth development organization founded in 1996 by three women, Jaquanda Villegas, Leida Garcia-Mukwacha, and Jacinda Bullie. For two decades, alongside many of Chicago’s artists, activists, educators, and youth communities, KL has honed an arts making practice that presents, preserves and promotes Hip Hop as a tool to reimagine and demonstrate a more just world.

History

Clarendon Community Center takes its name from the adjoining avenue, honoring English statesman Edward Hyde (1609-1674), first Earl of Clarendon. Clarendon originated as a municipal beach. During the 19th century, Lake Michigan was rarely used for swimming because the heavily polluted Chicago River flowed into it. The new Sanitary Canal corrected the problem in 1900, and the Health Department began creating municipal beaches to provide the city’s growing population with access to swimming as well as showers and changing facilities. In 1905, the city’s Special Park Commission took over management of municipal beaches. Several years later, the commission began planning a state-of-the-art facility, visiting well-known municipal beaches throughout the nation such as Belle Isle Beach, Detroit; the New York City Beach at Coney Island; and the Atlantic City Bathhouses.
PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Arts XIII strengths include an incredibly diverse and talented staff with dynamic creative and social justice practices. Facilitated by a very intentional hiring and training process, program facilitators and coordinators were able to establish shared values, approaches to pedagogy, and evaluation methodology which was thoroughly embraced throughout the program. Much thought went into creating opportunities for youth to engage with local, indigenous, and global artists, experience cultural organizing practices in their own communities, and come together to create, resist, and build towards a more justice and creative city. In addition to staffing and curricular strength, Arts XIII benefited from a multitude of community partnerships including those with the National Museum of Mexican Art, AMFM gallery, as well as visits and workshop with local artists including Victoria Martinez, Erin Mitchell, and Ashley King. Young people were able to connect with mentors in the community doing powerful work, and were able to see possibility models for their own future as cultural leaders.
Opportunities for Growth

After four years of community-driven programming, Arts XIII is in an ideal place to expand its model. Currently situated between KidsMobile and TRACE programming, it is perfectly poised to connect these two programs through a mix of creative play, cultural stewardship and civic engagement. Arts XIII will be able to increase youth investment by offering project-based and youth-driven programming in the fall and spring seasons. In addition to youth retention, Arts XIII has an opportunity to invest in Teaching Artists by expanding our roster and focusing on professional development and training. Another opportunity for growth is the ongoing development of program curriculum and opportunities to showcase our unique approach to creative youth leadership. Arts XIII can also build on the successes of the ReCenter model currently facilitated in 15 of the Park District’s Cultural Centers by empowering youth to co-create community programming and build their investment in the cultural preservation, organizing, and creative cultural platforms within their communities.

Vision for the Future

Arts XIII will expand into a year-round program featuring a Young Cultural Steward Fellowship which will employ cohorts of 12-15 year-olds who will interrogate the practices of cultural preservation, cultural organizing, and the development of creative platforms for social change. The fellowship will culminate in a youth-created community gathering designed by young people to engage neighbors, families, and explore issues important to the community through a creative lens. In coming years we aim to build our capacity by expanding our programming and reframing the public perception of park space as a site for racially diverse and culturally dynamic arts programming. By investing in sustainable staffing, holistic program evaluation, and opportunities to scale and share our innovative approach to youth cultural stewardship, we aim to transform disinvested communities into ecosystems for cultural vibrancy and creative justice.
TEACHING ARTISTS

**Dominique Chestand** is a multimedia artist, educator, and organizer from the city of Chicago. Influenced by the works of Toni Morrison, Ai, and James Baldwin, her works explore the experiences of Black, queer, woman-identified, and otherwise marginalized bodies. The disciplines Chestand uses in her work include poetry, theater, music, video, and dance. As a poet and actress, Chestand has performed on the stages of New York, Chicago, the Republic of Panama, the United Kingdom, Holland, Denmark and Canada. Chestand recently returned to Chicago where she is working as a freelance teaching artist.

**Silvia Gonzalez** is a xicana artist in Chicago with experience in both teaching and organizing Arts Educational programming. Her visual, sound experimentation, writing, and performance work are the result of navigating nostalgia, accessing political, social and personal history, as well as the critical need for self-preservation and wellness through her work. Gonzalez has created zines, documented local resistance work, and curated workshops to address structures of power, imagination, play, confinement, and freedom. Collaborative justice based projects include work with local art groups such as the Chicago ACT (Artist Creating Transformation) Collective and the 96 Acres Project, led by the Artist Maria Gaspar. She is the organizer for the group POC (People of Color) which connects artists of color from across Chicago to resources and each other.

**Juarez Hawkins**, a native of Chicago, is an artist, performer, educator and curator. She received a B.A. from Northwestern University, and a M.A. in Interdisciplinary Art from Columbia College. A two-time Oppenheimer Award recipient, Juarez has worked with young people around the city; her residencies include Gallery 37, Little Black Pearl Workshop, Chicago Public Schools, and Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education. Her personal work examines the evolution of identity, spirituality and the body. Juarez has exhibited widely, hosting solo exhibitions at Concordia University, the 33 Collective Gallery, and the South Side Community Art Center. She is a member of Sapphire and Crystals, a collective of African American female artists. Juarez serves as Lecturer and Curator of Gallery Programs at Chicago State University. www.juarezhawkins.com
Amina Ross is an undisciplined creative who works across mediums and shapes spaces that honor darkness and love, often using language and light through video installations, sculptural work, and in their work with people. Amina has shown work at the Black Cinema House, Vox Populi, Links Hall, and Hyde Park Art Center, among several other venues. Amina has spoken on panels and taught workshops at the College Arts Association Conference, Allied Media Conference, Black Artist Retreat, Threewalls, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, among other venues. Amina attended ACRE (Artists’ Cooperative Residency and Exhibitions) in 2015 and was a part of Chicago Artist Coalition BOLT Residency 2015-2016 cohort. Amina is currently Curator-in-Residence for Links Hall’s 2017-2018 season. Amina co-runs F4F, a Black and femme centered space in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago, and is a Lead Artist of the Teen Creative Agency at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Amina’s commitment to loving, challenging spaces has manifested in the founding of 3rd Language (2011-2015), a queer arts collective.

Laura Saenz was born and raised in Mexico City, Mexico to a Mexican singer and a Danish-Australian-American educator which deeply influenced her life and her future as an artist and teacher. She studied Communications and Visual Analysis and Dance/Choreography in California at USC and Mills College in Oakland, CA—where she was exposed to modern dance and the influences of Jose Limón, Trisha Brown, Bella Lewitsky, Molissa Fenley, John Cage and Merce Cunningham. Laura lived between Chicago and Istanbul, Turkey for the next 10 years as she raised her two sons with her Turkish husband and continued to collaborate on research projects in the US. Upon her return to Chicago in 2015 she reconnected with CAPE and continues to teach youth between the ages of 5-14 and also is a Yoga teacher. The focus of her teaching lies in having her students see the body as material to create art pieces. She has integrated video into her work as a tool to record body and movement when it might be difficult to show as a live performance. As a researcher and facilitator she encourages students to research spaces and stories within the communities and realities they live in and then use movement, theater and performance art to create stories.

Natalia Smirnov is a human, writer, scholar, educator and media and experience maker. Born in Russia, Natalia was shaped in the suburbs of New Jersey, and has Philadelphia tattooed on her arm and her heart. She continues to carry the grit and glory of each of her homes as part of her deeply nomadic identity. Natalia’s current home is Chicago, where she is finishing a PhD in Learning Sciences at Northwestern University. Natalia has a Bachelor’s degree in American Culture & Media Arts and a graduate certificate in Transformative Social Therapy from Temple University. She has taught film and documentary production, magazine making, media literacy, web development, and human-centered design to youth in Philly and Chicago. As a Teaching Artist, Natalia’s goal is to help youth make friends with the weird, playful and mischievous spirit of art making while learning the difficult and often slippery skills of conceptualization, problem-solving and persistence. She does this by encouraging young artists to: (a) see everything as a resource for art-making, (b) honor their own idiosyncratic themes and obsessions, and (c) learn from experiments and mistakes.
“We discussed Hebru Brantley and the importance of communities having heroes that look like them. Students are currently developing their own heroes with missions, goals, and specific communities that they represent. After drawing first drafts, students were asked to share the messages their heroes want to give to their communities. One student said, “That you are good enough.””

- Dominique Chestand, Arts XIII Counselor

“This week I talked to youth about codex books and the history of visual narratives pre-colonization. They were really drawn to this history and one youth immediately started creating their own handmade book. Youth have also been collaborating with a muralist and have been thinking more deeply about the affect of art in communities. One student commented that murals make spaces beautiful—that if people are having a hard time or day, even if it’s rainy and gloomy, murals can be a reminder of the beautiful things in this world. It’s a youth that generally has a hard time sharing their thoughts so I was extremely proud of them.”

- Silvia Gonzalez, Arts XIII Counselor

“One of the students created a stencil that read “This hood is what I call home”. This statement defined the dynamic in which students placed themselves as actors within the community, and as a result, a sense of ownership was cultivated. The “hood” is a trope that is greatly misunderstood. This student took ownership and refashioned what many consider to be problematic as more than a place of residence.”

- Tariq Weaver, Recreation Leader
“One camper, who often complains about doing any work at all, decided to make a sign for making excuses out of the neon wire. Right away he wanted to do it the laziest and sloppiest way possible, but because of the way the wire bends, it kept not working. Actually several students struggled with how to affix the wire to a piece of paper or cardboard while also making it bend in a creative way. Over the course of a day, several strategies were tried: tape, glue gun, stapler, staple gun, and wire - some to satisfactory though none to an ideal effect. With some encouragement and help, he ended up making the most sophisticated looking neon sign, working patiently to make each letter! He took a picture of it for Instagram and showed his dad, who told him he would buy him similar supplies to make more. I see this example as “community safety” in that someone whose defense against challenge is to try to do less work actually transformed the same impulse into a beautiful art work. It wouldn’t have been possible without the experimentation and encouragement of others in the room.”

- Natalia Smirnov, Arts XIII Teaching Artist

“Youth have been focusing on identity. How they connect to themselves, each other and the spaces that inform them. There was a day when a youth had a hard time getting along with peers and someone else showed up for them in a way that helped them feel like they belonged. Students agreed that as a part of our community values, making sure people felt included and respected was important and the issue we faced together was resolved with re-aligning our commitments as a group.”

- Silvia Gonzalez, Arts XIII Counselor

“Because it was the first week of camp we were all learning about and getting to know each other. The values of the “Tuley Code” created by all established guidelines to keep everyone safe emotionally and respectfully. The projects we worked on involved discussions of body parts and recognizing our bodies as incredible vessels we live in and being vulnerable to how they speak about who we are and what we are capable of doing and not doing.”

- Juarez Hawkins, Arts XIII Counselor

YOUNG CULTURAL STEWARD FELLOWSHIP

Young Cultural Steward Fellowship is the launch of year-round Arts XIII programming within the Chicago Park District. This six week intensive engages youth (ages 12-14) with practicing artists and community organizers in a process of becoming cultural stewards. Ten youth will be selected to make up 3 cohorts: one at Clarendon Park in Uptown, one at Piotrowski Park in Little Village, and one at Tuley Park in Chatham. Each cohort will be facilitated by a Lead Teaching Artist and 3 Visiting Artists who will organize weekly workshops during which youth will interrogate the practices of cultural preservation, cultural organizing, and the development of creative platforms for social change. The fellowship will culminate in a youth-curated community gathering - each cohort will have a budget of $500 to manifest their collective visions. In addition, youth fellows will receive a $100 honorarium upon successfully completing the 6 week series and the opportunity to continue as Cultural Steward Mentors during the Spring Fellowship.
Inferno Mobile Recording Studio works in almost 90 parks each year and empowers over 2100 youth (ages 4-18) to explore sound, make music, share their voices, produce audio documentaries, and practice sonic healing. Led by experimental musicians, sound artists, and youth interns, Inferno facilitates opportunities for young people to tell their own stories, document and archive cultural and ecological landscapes, and collaborate city-wide as creative engineers. Working with youth impacted by violence and trauma, Inferno offers young people opportunities to practice self-care, mindfulness, deep listening, and conflict-resolution training in addition to critical media literacy and pathways towards creative careers.

10 years in the making, Inferno has developed the tools, methodology, and the relationships to access each of Chicago’s 77 community areas. The Chicago Park District’s mission is to enhance the quality of life in Chicago by becoming the leading provider of recreation and leisure opportunities, provide safe, inviting and beautifully maintained parks and facilities, and create a customer-focused and responsive park system that prioritizes the needs of children and families. In support of this mission, Inferno’s work helps to reshape the way that public views the parks as centers for digital arts programming, modern learning and civic engagement, community empowerment, and creative wellness. As part of its core mission, Inferno Media offers tools and resources that should be accessible to all of Chicago’s communities, not just those with socioeconomic means and privilege.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- # of youth served: 2411
- # of contact hours: 4800
- # of Chicago parks: 68 parks
- # of youth workers employed: 6
PROGRAM AREAS OF FOCUS

Arts and media education – Inferno is a digital arts learning initiative, incorporating creative approaches to sound, multiple artistic disciplines, and modern digital equipment. Our facilitators and counselors are seasoned educators, working artists, musicians and documentarians.

Empowering underserved communities – The Chicago Park District’s ubiquity is a unique advantage in reaching our target populations (low-income communities, youth of color and people with disabilities) across Chicago’s 77 neighborhoods, many of which don’t receive equal access to arts and digital media resources. The tools for empowerment that we share and practice with these communities are creative production, advocacy, critical thinking, and collaborative action.

Environmental stewardship – As we explore parks in search of sounds, we promote behaviors and create audio/visual works focused on appreciation and preservation of our environment and natural resources. In addition, many Inferno activities are based on better understanding and appreciating our roles and responsibilities regarding our natural surroundings.

Job training – Imparting hands-on technological knowledge and skills, a DIY philosophy, and passion for creative media, Inferno teaches communication, critical thinking and creative problem solving. Participants and youth staff are exposed to creative professionals from similar backgrounds as themselves, allowing young people to envision themselves in creative, industrial, technological or entrepreneurial fields.

Wellness Education – The majority of communities where Inferno works have experienced violence, trauma, and structural oppression; we provide tools for community members to resolve conflict, build self-esteem, mental health, and wellness.
"It made me feel emotional, it allowed me to move on in a way. It was a helpful activity."

- Arts XIII camper, Berger Park

"Great for our kids, music is great therapy. We were impressed by the equipment it suited our non-verbal kids as well."

- Camp Counselor, Eckhart Park

"While interviewing fellow youth about specific community topics such as violence, neighborhood diversity, and pollution, I observed participants thinking critically about the world around them and following up on questions to camp-mates in order to better understand each other. Two participants at Piotrowski Park decided to explore the topic of gender identity. The two had very different experiences with the topic and felt somewhat differently about it. I saw them spend the better part of an hour interviewing each other with sincere and committed desire to come to understanding."

- Emme Williams, Inferno Teaching Artist

“There was a group of 3 boys at Paschen Park who had disengaged from the project, from the main group. When I approached them and quickly showed them they could record and do something with the sounds they were making, they were off doing it on their own. They collected discarded bottles, used them as instruments, and recorded the sounds, before putting them in the all in the recycling bin — creative and environmental stewards at work!"

- Sean Heaney, Inferno Coordinator

“I enjoyed their visit. It was very entertaining. It helped the kids listen to one another and collaborate. I also found out that some of my kids are talented."

- Camp Counselor, Euclid Park

“It’s hard to tell how vast & diverse this city is on your own time, but this was one of the first times that I genuinely felt like a part of the city. Having these connections with children & people within the camp gives a sense of pride that I haven’t felt in any other city or job opportunity. Something as simple as finding out there is a music program in the garfield park field house run by a beautiful, loving black couple was something that gave me some gratitude towards Chicago."

- Elijah Asani, Inferno Recreation Leader
“The last two weeks were all about community. We explored how sound can change an environment and how powerful stories are in shaping community. Participants at Tuley Park took these two ideas and ran with them, combining stories and sounds to create positive relatable sound-stories that reflect them and their communities. One group of students explored the powers and pitfalls of what is and what can be called “Honesty”. Without a prompt they worked together to try to understand what honesty means for them. I witnessed them come to positive conclusions about how honesty is and can be used to change community.”

- Emme Williams, Inferno Teaching Artist

“This week participants worked together to make solidarity songs. One student whose song was about being a force against violence said, “I liked that I made an actual song that could be used in a protest or march.” I observed students taking their work very seriously and working hard to only create work they felt would be effective in bringing people together.”

- Emme Williams, Inferno Teaching Artist

“It is a great program. It gets the kids involved. They see they have skills that they did not know they had.

- Jake, Camp Counselor, Bosley Park

“Good idea to have this program for the youth. They were excited because it gave them a chance to be creative, coming up with their own music.”

- Camp Counselor, Abbott Park

“When they let the kids play around with the beat pads. It allowed them to have the hands on experience in being a part of creating the song.”

- Camp Counselor, Holstein Park
PROGRAM STRENGTHS
By the end of 2017, Inferno is set to far surpass its goals for events hosted, participant numbers, contact hours, parks served, and media produced. This is partially due to transitioning to more of a year-round programming model. In addition, the depth and quality of Inferno’s projects have expanded further than ever. The summer functions very similarly to a mobile residency for local musicians and artists, and incorporates a mentor/mentee framework. This provides training and nurtures young artists for careers and future Inferno/CPD collaborations, but also supplies the program with a wealth of documentation and social media exposure. This year, Inferno has served more diverse groups of park users than it ever has, including special recreation, TRACE teens, seniors, families, children, birds and insects. Inferno experiences have become more tactile as well with the incorporation of more physical, acoustic equipment (rather than just electronics) and more movement-based activities. Aside from garnering a bit of attention from NBC 5, Inferno also created many valuable partnerships this year with YouMedia/Chicago Public Libraries, Night Out in the Parks, the Experimental Sound Studio, the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology, and others.
OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Inferno has an opportunity to grow exponentially due to the ever-growing demand for the program. Currently, Inferno engages over 70 neighborhoods and more than 40 day camps. Each year there are wait-lists and park supervisors across the district asking for additional offerings. This need can be met with an increase in staffing. In particular, having a full-time program manager, part-time program coordinator, and 5-7 seasonal teaching artists would allow Inferno to reach its full potential. Additionally, Inferno has an opportunity to grow its marketing and outreach by strengthening its relationships with other park programs including Night Out in the Park, Arts XIII, KidsMobile, TRACE, Day Camps as well as external partners including AMFM, Elevarte, Free Street Theater, Experimental Sound Station, and Bridgeport Art Center. Seeking out new collaborations and building on those that have already been established allows for Inferno to expand its reach and deepen its impact.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Inferno will offer year-round programming including its flagship summer mobile artist residency and apprenticeship program and fall series of workshops based on sound art in public spaces. In the wintertime, sessions will be offered at field houses focused on podcast production, local history, documentary, and independent broadcasting. In the spring, Inferno will offer therapeutic recreation and collaborative sonic meditation. In addition, Inferno will offer seasonal soundwalks during warm months exploring and understanding outdoor soundscapes. Finally, Inferno will offer curatorial community music sessions at cultural centers during cold months and work with various partner projects involving audio/visual media, cultural stewardship and creative production.
TEACHING ARTISTS

**Ed Bornstein** is a media producer living and freelancing in Chicago. He has worked on production crews for clients such as Pitchfork Music Festival, Complex Magazine, The Shedd Aquarium, Mariano’s, and The Chicago Park District. Primarily, he works in the field of location sound recording, but occasionally dips into camera operating and producing. Words that can be used to describe him are documentarian, drummer, mixer, selector, musician, biker, collaborator, professional, human. He lives to collaborate and learn everyday.

**Rob Frye** was born in Cape Girardeau, Missouri 1987 and grew up in St. Louis where he began playing guitar and saxophone. He moved to Chicago in 2006 to attend DePaul University’s School of Music where he graduated in 2010. Since then he has pursued the muse of sound along with the rest of the artistic community embedded in Chicago, and alternated his summers between working as a field biologist for the Institute for Bird Populations in California and as a camp counselor/artist in residence for Chicago Park District's Culture Arts and Nature programs (one summer with Nature, and two with Inferno).

...A constant collaborator, Rob is able to give a unique voice in a variety of different kinds of ensembles... (from the Hideout)

...with synthesizer, flute, saxophone, clarinet, guitar and drum, Rob Frye from Chicago is present in bands like Bitchin Bajas, Cave, El is a Sound of Joy and more. With his own project Flux Bikes, he also uses his bicycle as an instrument. The performance begins before the concert, riding to every appearance and continuing to experiment with dynamics, poly rhythms and loops. The tires tell of the journey between melody, noise and sound intervention. His collaborative trips range from the local to the international. (from Katharina Ritter)

For archived media, collaborations and tours visit www.fluxbikes.blogspot.com

**Ben LaMar Gay** is one of Inferno Mobile Recording Studio’s talented lead artists. He has been facilitating Inferno sessions for 5 years. This year his focus is on the special recreational day camps exploring their unique relationship with sound.

Gay is a multifaceted musician who moves components of sound, color and space through folkloric filters to produce brilliant electro-acoustic collages. The unification of various styles is always in service of the narrative and never a pretentious display of technique. Gay’s true technique is giving life to an idea while transforming the idea behind the term “Americana”.

For archived media, collaborations and tours visit www.fluxbikes.blogspot.com
Elijah Jamal is a Chicago-based producer and audio-visual storyteller. Using earthly soundscapes, native drums, unorthodox samples and his own voice, Elijah Jamal creates innovative sonics as a solo artist. Elijah is also a member of renowned producer collective Push Beats Crew, in which he performs & helps to curate events. As an educator, Elijah has been a resident artist within the Chicago Park District’s Inferno Mobile Recording Studio, where he collaborates with and teaches digital production skills to youth throughout Chicago.

Brandi Lee is one of Inferno’s assisting artists. She worked with Inferno’s lead artists this summer, helping campers create great music. She started dancing when she was 4, and has now been dancing for almost 12 years. She has been a part of the dance company, Tyego Next Generation, for 4 years and performs with them in their holiday shows and dance concerts across the Chicagoland area. She enjoys listening to music, reading, and dancing. This is her first year with Inferno.

Emme Williams is a local creative who was thrilled to collaborate with youth this summer as an Inferno lead artist. For the last decade, she has been exploring ways to share stories and ideas through theater, shadow puppetry, performance art, illustration, and music. Her band, Fastness, released its first full length album earlier this year. “You Are Good” features fellow lead artist Rob Frye, as well as local talents Brian Sulpiizio, Anton Hatwich, and Ben Billington. As a puppeteer she has performed with the video collective Everything is Terrible, Rough House Theater, and was a member of the artist collective, Pup House. During the summer she worked with Arts XIII creating music for their final showcase. You can check out Fastness at: www.fastness.bandcamp.com.

Check out inferno media at: infernomedia@infernocpd.com
TRACE (Teens Re-Imagine Art, Community, and Environment) is a job readiness and civic leadership program that cultivates creative activism in youth (ages 14-22). Based in the Englewood community, TRACE employs over 60 young people whose task is to collectively re-imagine their roles as creative civic agents within their communities. For 2017, TRACE youth worked in partnership with a variety of artistic, community and environmental activists including digital archivists Sixty Inches from Center, urban agriculture specialists Growing Power, and food access advocates Grow Greater Englewood (GGE) to explore issues of environmental justice, access to healthy foods in marginalized communities, and ethical neighborhood redevelopment. TRACE will utilize the practices of oral history, photojournalism and video production to create a digital archive and public exhibitions connecting ancestral knowledge from community elders and cutting-edge technology utilized by ecological entrepreneurs.

BY THE NUMBERS

- # of youth served: 300
- # of contact hours: 10,500
- # of Chicago neighborhoods: 1 (Englewood)
- # of youth employed: 61
- # of youth workers employed: 10
HAMILTON PARK HISTORY

The South Park Commission created Hamilton Park in 1904 as part of a revolutionary system of neighborhood parks providing relief to Chicago’s congested tenement districts. The city’s existing parks were far away from the noisy, overcrowded immigrant neighborhoods in the center of the city. Superintendent J. Frank Foster envisioned a new type of park that would not only provide beautifully landscaped “breathing spaces,” but also a variety of services and educational functions. Nationally renowned landscape architects the Olmsted Brothers and architects Daniel H. Burnham and Company designed the entire system of new parks. The first ten neighborhood parks opened to the public in 1905.

Today

Located in the Englewood community, Hamilton Park & Cultural Center features two gymnasiums, an auditorium, dance studio, archery range and a multi-purpose room. Outside, the park offers a swimming pool, baseball/softball diamonds, basketball, handball, and tennis courts, playground. Many of these spaces are available for rental including our gymnasium, auditorium, fields, dance studio and multipurpose room. Park-goers can participate in Park Kids, seasonal sports, aerobics and Pilates. On the cultural side, Hamilton Park offers ballet, jazz and hip hop dance classes. After school programs are offered throughout the school year, and during the summer youth can participate in the Park District’s popular six-week day camp. In addition to programs, Hamilton Park hosts fun special events throughout the year for the entire family, such as our annual jazz concert.
Vitoria Vicko Alvarez is a Chicago based Tejana and creator and illustrator of the ScholaR Comics web series. The comic is based on her childhood as well as the lives of the students she’s had the privilege of teaching in Chicago’s southside. The stories touch on the realities of growing up poor in an immigrant home while also maintaining pride in your community. Her latest comic, “Rosita Gets Scared”, tells the story of a young undocumented girl coping with her fear of deportation. The comic also serves as an activity book to be utilized in classrooms and with youth groups as a tool to encourage culturally relevant social and emotional learning.

With just weeks into its release, the comic has been covered by Telemundo, Newsy, and Radio Vocalo, and has been ordered by activists, educators, and parents across the country. Vicko is very excited to have found community in people of color comic cons and is very happy about the growing opportunity to connect with like minded educators. With a big mouth and firm belief that “each one, teach one”, Vicko stays reppin’ for the hociconas and the off-beat nerdas who put the “chola” in “scholar.”

Alexandria Eregbu is a conceptual artist and disciplinary deviant. Her practice often takes shape in the form of maker, educator, curator, performer, and programmer. Alexandria’s concerns frequently address visibility, ontology, family, locality, and mobility. Her work tends to insert itself at the axis of personal experience and myth—usually reliant upon the collection of artifacts, material culture, and an attentiveness to current and historical events.

“Above anything else, what I love about my job is that it has really taught me (and is continuing to teach me) how to make art happen outside of the white cubes that I have been accustomed to. I’ve had to troubleshoot how to make art accessible to more audiences in unconventional settings. The knowledge that I’ve gained here while learning how to talk to folks and work with people has been extremely informative to my studio practice. The conversations that take place there and the value systems are usually pretty different than the agenda of contemporary art communities, and I find it important as an artist to be mindful of that.

Additionally, there is a vast range of resources that the Park District has which frequently go overlooked or underutilized. As I continue to spend time in the parks, it’s been really awesome thinking about how to harness those resources not only as an educator, but as an individual who is interested in seeing artwork spill over beyond the museum, gallery, or higher learning institutional spaces. As a Lead Teaching Artist with TRACE, it’s been quite exciting posing these questions to the young people I work with, who are often much more creative with their ideas and innovative in their approach.”
**IMPACT & OUTCOMES**

“TRACE taught me to encourage and believe in myself with art, which I was extremely self-conscious about. They brought out the best of me and now my photos are used city-wide. I express myself through photography and TRACE accepts me for that.”

- Myles Miller - TRACE intern

“TRACE gives youth exposure to other cultures. Art is one way for all people to be connected. TRACE offers insight on how all cultures should be expressed and respected.”

- Jane Andrews - TRACE Rec Leader, former TRACE intern

“TRACE has encouraged my tolerance of difference by surrounding me in different environments. The culture I was exposed to has only helped my success and hindered my ignorance, because of them I am very culturally diverse and equipped to handle situations that would usually make me uncomfortable.”

- Myles Miller - TRACE intern

“Trace taught me that to have a successful mindset, you’ll need to have a plan. You have to put your best foot forward and execute it to perfection. You can’t be selfish because at the end of the day, it’s all about the bigger picture and the story you’re trying to tell.”

- Jane Andrews - TRACE Rec Leader, former TRACE intern

“Before I started TRACE, I had never spent a lot of time in the Englewood neighborhood. The program gave me a deeper appreciation for Chicago and it showed me that the neighborhoods that people neglect are often the diamonds in the rough. I learned so much about myself and about the things that are important to me and I can thank TRACE for giving me that niche to want to help however and wherever I can.”

- Ajile Jean-Baptiste - TRACE Rec Leader

“TRACE is a very understanding workplace but the everyday job requirements keep things intact. Those rules being: be on time, clean up after ourselves, and respect everyone and their ideals.”

- Myles Miller - TRACE intern

“TRACE is my proudest achievement and it’s adding to my knowledge of being punctual and a leader. It teaches you that it is okay to have ideas and create them how you want. In addition, gives you a chance to explore the career that you want to do.”

- Jane Andrews - TRACE Rec Leader, former TRACE intern
PROGRAM STRENGTHS
TRACE’s commitment to centering restorative justice and collaborative learning practices remains a bedrock to the program’s success. TRACE works to create a nurturing environment that encourages both personal expression and collective accountability. 2017 saw TRACE extend the reach of its programmatic impact by fostering dynamic partnerships within Chicago’s creative, social justice and environmental advocacy communities. These partnerships exposed youth to a broad cross-section of professionals, activists and community members deploying the myriad applications of community organizing skills and curatorial practices. These interactions were amplified through field trips to places such as the Rootwork Gallery, Sweet Water Foundation, DuSable Museum and Black Oaks Center for Renewable & Sustainable Living.

Youth engage in hands-on job training using TRACE’s inventory of state of the art, professional-grade digital media equipment.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH
TRACE is a citywide program headquartered in the Englewood community. Perception issues around safety getting to and from Hamilton Park has proved a diminishing challenge for diversifying our recruitment pool and participant retention. Additionally, increasing TRACE’s profile, particularly online, to improve awareness and recruitment remains a challenge.
VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Culminating a year-long initiative centering the “environment” component of TRACE’s (Teens Re-Imagining Art, Community & Environment) mission, fall interns will participate in The Griot Project. TRACE has partnered with Grow Greater Englewood (GGE), Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF), Chicago Architecture Biennial (CAB) and StoryCorps Chicago to work on three interrelated components:

- Oral history collection from resident gardeners, environmental activists and stakeholders within the Englewood community emphasizing past traditions, present applications and future potentials of urban agriculture as a catalyst for community resilience.

- Design challenge which asks TRACE interns to re-imagine their respective neighborhoods by integrating civil engineering principles that are environmentally equitable, sustainable and empowering.

- Publishing a series of “zines” produced by TRACE interns that leverage the artmaking practice of collage to advocate for environmental justice.

These projects are supported through the leadership of the Lead Teaching Artist, field trips, and guest lecturers. Research and content produced throughout the fall will be used in the publication of an Englewood Cookbook in Spring 2018.

TRACE is currently working to implement its strategic plan for expansion to three regional hubs. A Central Region hub will established fall 2018 at Austin Town Hall Cultural Center on Chicago’s westside. Community engagement will be conducted to solicit input on what artistic focus would be most desirable among youth for this hub.

“Racial and ethnic inequities in Chicago remain pervasive, persistent, and consequential. These inequities…are embedded in our social, economic, political, and cultural institutions and they have powerful effects on the experiences and opportunities of all Chicagoans.” Young Cultural Stewards (YCS) aims to address these structural and interpersonal inequalities by facilitating culturally relevant, civically engaged, and community building programming across Chicago’s most disinvested communities.

Currently YCS engages a mere .66% of the Chicago’s Park District annual audience of 378,000 community members. In coming years we aim to build our capacity by expanding our programming and reframing the public perception of park space as a site for racially diverse and culturally dynamic arts programming. We aim to expand KidsMobile into a year-round program which engages 18 play lots and 3,000 youth. We plan to deepen the impact of Arts XIII by cultivating Young Cultural Stewards in the fall and spring and bringing and expanding to 6 locations. We will increase our Inferno impact by building long-term partnership with artists through a residency model; and we will expand our TRACE program to three locations; one in each region of the city. By investing in sustainable staffing, holistic program evaluation, and opportunities to scale and share our innovative approach to youth cultural stewardship, we work to transform disinvested communities into an ecosystems for cultural vibrancy and creative justice.

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ASSESSMENT TOOL

Young Cultural Stewards critically and creatively engage art, technology, and media to become advocates and caretakers of the parks, public spaces, and neighborhoods. Each of our five programs incorporates best practices from informal arts education and creative youth development practices to establish an evaluative framework for our lifelong programming:

- Fosters curiosity and passion for indigenous, local, and global cultural practices
- Builds 21st century skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking
- Reframes public parks as sites for cultural organizing and creative capacity building
- Fosters the development of positive self-identity, community, and solidarity
- Nurtures the capacity to imagine change and the willingness to work for it
- Recognizes and explores cultural organizing as a tool for social change
- Fosters tolerance of difference, trust and consensus building, collaborative work habits, use of innovation and creativity to solve problems
- Nurtures individual and community assets by practicing restorative approaches to conflict resolution
- Provides job training, career readiness, leadership development, and opportunities for lifelong learning

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8 National Summit on Creative Youth Development, Massachusetts Cultural Council in partnership with the National Guild for Community Arts Education and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Boston, Massachusetts, March 27-29, 2014.
### Building Blocks of Cultural Stewardship

Which of the following regularly happens in your program?

- exploration of indigenous / local / global cultural practices
- displays of creativity and collaboration
- analysis and critical thinking
- young people seeing themselves as caretakers of their community / public spaces

Other examples you can think of?

Elements you’d like to work on……

### Building Blocks of Civic Engagement

Which of the following regularly happens in your program?

- development of positive self and community identity
- practice giving and receiving constructive criticism
- envisioning possibilities for positive community change
- developing tools to impact positive change

Other examples you can think of?

Elements you’d like to work on……

### Building Blocks of Community Safety

Which of the following regularly happens in your program?

- building a culture of trust and vulnerability
- seeing a challenge or failure as an opportunity
- non-punitive approach to harm / conflict
- developing shared sense of accountability

Other examples you can think of?

Elements you’d like to work on……
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cultural Stewardship</th>
<th>Civic Engagement</th>
<th>Community Safety</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kidsmobile</strong></td>
<td>❑ Storytelling&lt;br&gt;❑ Open-ended creative exploration&lt;br&gt;❑ Building empathy&lt;br&gt;❑ Imaginative play&lt;br&gt;❑ Exposure to diverse creative and cultural practices and media&lt;br&gt;❑ Practicing artmaking as a form of community building</td>
<td>❑ Sharing&lt;br&gt;❑ Taking turns&lt;br&gt;❑ Building consensus&lt;br&gt;❑ Discussing “real life” issues&lt;br&gt;❑ Art making with neighbors and community members&lt;br&gt;❑ Discussion of role in community / neighborhood&lt;br&gt;❑ Brainstorming ways to contribute to positive social change</td>
<td>❑ Creative presence in parks&lt;br&gt;❑ Intergenerational community engagement&lt;br&gt;❑ Building trust amongst neighbors and families&lt;br&gt;❑ Practicing collaborating with community members&lt;br&gt;❑ Practicing collective decision making and problem solving&lt;br&gt;❑ Developing positive self and community identity</td>
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<td><strong>Inferno</strong></td>
<td>❑ Experience music traditions and audio practices from different cultures, times&lt;br&gt;❑ Practice critical thinking skills&lt;br&gt;❑ Experimentation&lt;br&gt;❑ Creative expression and communication skills</td>
<td>❑ Documenting community sounds / happenings&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth acting as community advocate&lt;br&gt;❑ Practicing active listening&lt;br&gt;❑ Making connecting between themselves and their larger neighborhoods/city</td>
<td>❑ Sonic healing&lt;br&gt;❑ Conflict resolution&lt;br&gt;❑ Creative career paths and employment opportunities&lt;br&gt;❑ Positive youth and adult partnerships&lt;br&gt;❑ Professional creative mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arts XIII</strong></td>
<td>❑ Experimenting with multimedia art making&lt;br&gt;❑ Storytelling&lt;br&gt;❑ Racially diverse and culturally dynamic programming&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth develop problem solving skills&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth practice creativity, imagination, collaboration, and critical thinking&lt;br&gt;❑ Practice asset-based youth development&lt;br&gt;❑ Practice asset-based community mapping</td>
<td>❑ Collaboration across their neighborhood and city&lt;br&gt;❑ Exploring local issues of social justice&lt;br&gt;❑ Creating art with and about neighbors and community members&lt;br&gt;❑ Practice cultural and community organizing&lt;br&gt;❑ Fostering mechanisms for inclusion including patience, humor &amp; consensus building&lt;br&gt;❑ Development of shared values and guidelines</td>
<td>❑ Changing perception of parks as “unsafe” or “unwelcoming”&lt;br&gt;❑ Feeling seen as heard as valuable community members&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth practice creative problem solving&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth practice creating community-based art&lt;br&gt;❑ You are able to give and take criticism&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth work collectively to address community challenges</td>
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<td><strong>TRACE</strong></td>
<td>❑ Youth engage in critical analysis of contemporary, historic, or global culture&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth create media, artifacts, cultural products&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth practice digital and social media skills&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth engage with practicing artists&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth see themselves as cultural producers&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth practice critical decision making about their art&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth practice critical decision making about their role in community</td>
<td>❑ Youth develop trust and vulnerability amongst themselves and each other&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth engage rituals of relationship building&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth ask for and give each other feedback and constructive criticism&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth advocate for themselves and their communities&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth document and archive their community’s cultural products&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth explore their roles within a thriving community</td>
<td>❑ Youth are employed as creative cultural producers&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth engage in positive loitering&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth explore their park as a cultural site&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth explore other parts of the city/state as cultural producers and curators&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth explore what community safety means and how they can contribute to it&lt;br&gt;❑ Youth explore what community accountability looks like and how to practice it</td>
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This guide is a publication of the Chicago Park District’s Arts & Culture Unit in the Culture Arts & Nature Department. The Arts & Culture Unit envisions parks and cultural centers as vital spaces that encourage all Chicagoans to explore the arts and their power to enhance quality of life, neighborhood development, and community dialogue. The Arts & Culture Unit connects Chicagoans to arts experiences in their local parks through events and programs that help develop understanding, knowledge and appreciation of a wide variety of art forms and processes, and their diverse and unique cultural expressions. By integrating arts and culture into all Chicago neighborhoods we strive to encourage a life-long commitment to arts learning, neighborhood expression, and cultural advocacy.