

CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION FOUNDATION MAGAZINE

# LEGACY

FALL 2022

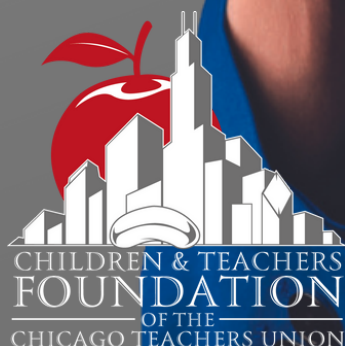
## THE IMPACT ACROSS CHICAGO

*The inspiring stories of the real impact CTUF partnerships are making in our community.*

## ANNUAL REPORT

## BELOVED BY PARENTS AND TEACHERS ALIKE

*"Karen's presence was amazing. She was a really strong woman, and she was standing up for what she believed."- Chicago Public Schools Parent*



THE WORK, LIFE, AND LEGACY OF A COMMUNITY LEGEND.

# KAREN LEWIS

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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As I entered the conference room for my job interview with the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation, I encountered Karen Lewis, and I was immediately intimidated by her presence. I was unaware that she would be attending as she was in the midst of her recovery. But to my surprise, I encountered a delightful individual. She was laughing with her peers already sitting at the conference room table.

When it was my turn to introduce myself, I mentioned that I felt I was entering the principal's office when I entered the room. She laughed and made me feel very at ease in her presence. I took from that interview that her power lay in her ability to connect with people and make them feel like they matter. She asked how I felt about people who curse and swear and whether I am offended by foul language. I said no because I curse like a sailor! We talked about the CTU's mission, her commitment to this work, her peers, and the city of Chicago.

After I was hired, she always treated me with kindness as a mentor and a colleague. We discussed leadership traits, and how black and brown women would always be judged harshly; so, just do you.

She would share some of the funniest stories about finding her way in life. I felt she wanted me to see her as a person, not the character created by the media and other naysayers. I appreciated Karen's openness and honesty. Karen told me I would have a tough time as an outsider and not to be afraid to give as good as I get.

One evening we went out to dinner with a group of people, and it was the first time I saw her rock star status with my own eyes. People would approach her and thank her for her work and service, and all requested an opportunity to take a photo. She didn't turn anyone away and connected with each one personally. It was magic!! A woman with so much clout, power, and authority was humble, engaging, and curious about people.

Karen's transition is still being felt by the many individuals she touched both directly and indirectly. Her reach is limitless and will live on for generations to come. It is an honor to be part of her vision and legacy through the Foundation's commitment to giving, and building relationships and partnerships with local community organizations. The Foundation's continual commitment to supporting teachers through the Nurturing Teacher Leadership and Professional Development training and workshops, and ensuring that families in our communities have their basic needs met through the Student Special Assistance Fund are the direct impact of Karen's legacy. I am also confident that Karen is exceptionally proud of the Chicago Teachers Union Center and the community it has created as the home of CTU.

I often wonder whether Karen ever thought about her legacy and the impact she would have on so many people by simply being true to herself.

May her memory be a blessing to all.

Carmen Curet, CTU Foundation Executive Director

*Carmen Curet*

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## A PARTING MESSAGE FROM OUR OUTGOING PRESIDENT

The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation is the charitable wing of the Chicago Teachers Union, but it is more than simply that. From its start, the CTUF's mission has been to promote public education in the city of Chicago, and it does so in ways specially tailored to advance the CTUF's vision of social justice unionism.

Sometimes this looks like working with community partners to organize around progressive values and to build grassroots movements to demand education justice. Sometimes this looks like offering rich and cutting-edge professional development courses to train a new generation of educators committed to these same values in the classroom and beyond. And sometimes this looks like engaging directly with CPS students to give them more and better opportunities to grow and learn, such as the Karen GJ Lewis Scholarship Fund.

Indeed, the reimagination of the CTUF was a personal and professional dream that Karen and I shared. The CTUF was first set up by the CTU in the 1960s, but over the years its role in the life of the union became marginal at best. Its main purpose had become owning a building that was designed to be a subsidized residential option for retired teachers, but by 2014 only seven of the building's 224 apartments were occupied by teachers.

After spending a significant amount of time considering the options, Karen and I decided that a different use of these resources would do a far better job of advancing the cause of public education and social justice in Chicago than being a landlord to retired teachers who, it turns out, didn't opt to live in the CTUF's building.

So the CTUF sold Fewkes Tower, and the proceeds were used to build a beautiful new headquarters that teachers could use for union meetings, classes, events, and movement gatherings. And these resources also helped to nourish the Chicago ecosystem of organizations that, like the CTU, treasure public education and understand that strong schools anchor strong school communities.

And while this transformation has already delivered impressive results, we have yet more that we wish to accomplish. Imagine the impact of a CTE (Career Technical Education) training program that actually doubles the number of trade apprenticeships for our Black and Brown students. Imagine a professional development program that inspires our members to teach the truth about race and reflect upon their own practice and unconscious bias to better address the needs of our students and their families.

And imagine if Sustainable Community Schools were expanded throughout the district, transforming education for Black and Brown students by leveraging community assets and adopting a "whole student" approach to education. Our union understands that a quality education must acknowledge and respect our students' lived experiences. Imagine if our students had more educators who looked like them and lived in their communities.

This is the kind of transformative impact that the CTUF aims to unleash.

I am so proud of what the CTUF has accomplished in the years since we began this transition. As my tenure at the CTU and the CTUF comes to an end, I know this is a vision that President Stacy Davis Gates shares, and I know she will bring new energy and enthusiasm to these efforts.

There's hardly anything more noble than the pursuit of charitable work on behalf of public education. But I also ask that you consider that what CTUF does is more than simply charity. Charity is usually about doing something for someone else. And while the CTUF definitely does work on behalf of others, one of its most unique qualities is its goal of helping others to fight on their own behalf.

That's what building a social justice union and a social-justice movement are all about. So that's why we also hope that CTU members, other union members, and other organizations who share our vision of advancing the struggle for the schools Chicago's students deserve will step forward to contribute to the CTUF's coffers.

Solidarity,

Jesse Sharkey

# REMEMBERING A COMMUNITY LEGEND



## KAREN GJ LEWIS

Teacher. Leader. Advocate. Friend. Those are a few of the words people use to describe Karen Lewis, who was elected president of the Chicago Teachers Union in 2010. Through her bold leadership, Karen changed the narrative around public education in Chicago and the United States.

Karen left a legacy that people are still talking about. Just ask grantees of the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation, who carry Karen's vision forward in their work every day. In this annual report, the Foundation celebrates Karen's impact through stories about the continuing work of people and organizations who strive to meet the challenge of improving our schools and communities.

As a leader and educator, Karen had deep roots in the world of teaching. She was a longtime high school chemistry teacher, the wife of a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) teacher and coach, and the daughter of two CPS educators.

Karen's story, leadership, and passion remain as relevant today as they've ever been. During her tenure as CTU president, the union created a model for organizing and fighting for education justice, and build strong and lasting relationships with parents and community organizations around the city.

Under Karen's dynamic vision, Chicago Public School educators launched the city's first strike in more than 25 years, after which teachers returned to classrooms with fair wages, a new path centered on social justice unionism, and increased engagement of rank-and-file members. Karen and her team also fought to end school privatization and the influence of high-stakes, standardized testing, empowered educators to take on positions in city and state leadership, and amplified support for professional learning and teacher leadership.

Karen often came back to asking three questions of people fighting to improve our schools: "Does it unite us? Does it build our power? Does it make us stronger?"

Within these pages, we share how schools and communities are honoring Karen's legacy by finding many ways to answer those questions with a resounding "Yes!"

*Karen often asked three questions of people fighting to improve our schools:*

*"Does it unite us?  
Does it build our power?  
Does it make us stronger?"*

# KAREN GJ LEWIS SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

The Chicago Teachers Union and the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation are pleased to announce David Juan Crain as the recipient of the annual Karen GJ Lewis NBCT Scholarship Award, a \$10,000 scholarship for the 2022-2023 academic year. (NBCT stands for National Board Certified Teacher). The award honors Karen GJ Lewis's immense contributions to labor, education, social justice and community engagement.

David is a graduate of Multicultural Arts High School in Chicago and is enrolled in the Teacher Preparation program at Illinois State University. Through his essay submissions, David explained his plans to return to the West Side of Chicago to teach, understanding the potential community impact of a Black/Latinx male teacher. In his application, David demonstrated his passion for social justice by having difficult conversations with his biracial family in the volatile time following the murder of George Floyd. In navigating the pitfalls of colorism and prejudice that exist for him as an Afro-Latinx man, David expressed his desire to be seen for all he is in his future role as an educator - and to help others embrace all parts of themselves without shame or fear.

In addition to the financial support, Walter Taylor, Director of Professional Development for the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation, will provide academic and socio-emotional support to David as a mentor while our scholarship recipient is in college, to help him achieve his goal of becoming a teacher. One of our goals as a Foundation is to provide a mentor to the winner of this scholarship each year to do our part to retain more Black teachers in the profession.



***"I refuse to see myself as a victim of society's racial oppression. I will not allow institutional racism to continue to feel empowered and unchallenged, therefore I am choosing to become an Educator. I have come to realize that to make a change in society we need to empower Black and Brown communities to exercise the political power that we have."***

***– David Crain, Recipient,  
Karen GJ Lewis Scholarship  
NBCT Scholarship Award  
for 2022-2023 academic year***



# CTU FOUNDATION QUEST CENTER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Chicago Teachers Foundation Union (CTUF) Quest Center Professional Learning (PL) Department is the premier place for educators in Chicago and beyond to engage in restorative, relevant, and reflective professional learning. The PL Department is tasked with keeping teachers abreast with best practices. Educators with master's degrees can earn lane placement credits through PLs that count toward pay increases. In Illinois, educators can also earn PD hours that can go towards renewal of their teaching license with the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Quest Center concentrates on a variety of topics and interests based on what its members want and need. Professional development (PD) offerings have a social justice lens in some fashion. Topics include cultural responsiveness, restorative practices, LGBTQIA+ students, trauma-informed practice, special needs, and antiracism, among others. One example is Setting the Stage for Anti-Racist and Culturally Responsive Classrooms. During this PD, educators begin to explore and incorporate what it means to teach using the Illinois Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards. Teachers increase their awareness of the impact of trauma, racism, and inequity on students.

Some academic topics are differentiated instruction, classroom management, Spanish, writing, STEM/STEAM, and Google apps – just to name a few. One such course is Creative Journaling for Self Care & Renewal. With this course, teachers have the benefit of learning from both an academic perspective as well as from a social-emotional perspective. In the four-week class, participants explore how creative journaling bridges the wellness gaps within our post-pandemic world.

The PD offerings provide the opportunity for participants to collaborate and network to improve their teaching practice. For example, in two opportunities, attendees read excerpts from the many writings of bell hooks and discuss their findings and thoughts, share their insights, and reflect on the life and work of the author and social activist.

The Quest Center partners with various to better serve its members and many educators throughout the state of Illinois. Partnerships include:

**Schlechty Center:** The Center partners with Schlechty Center, a private non-profit organization committed to partnering with education leaders who are interested in nurturing a culture of engagement.

**Office of Social and Emotional Learning, Chicago Public Schools:** This very new partnership is centered on restorative practices.

**Sustainable Community Schools:** The CTUF Quest Center PL Dept. also collaborates with CPS on their Sustainable Community Schools program. One example: Educators learn how to create curriculum circles by listening to and taking the lead from their students, their students' families, and community members – while teaching and learning about the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.

**Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center:** An example of a recent PD that aims to deepen understanding about genocide that they collaborated on most recently is Teaching About Genocide & Human Rights: Virtual Summer Institute 2022.

The Quest Center has been thriving for nearly three decades now. The CTUF Quest Center PL Dept. has its ear to the ground. The Center continues to grow and stay relevant because it has the interest of its members at heart. The Quest Center is continuously cultivating relationships with community members: educators, students, and parents.

*The CTUF Quest Center PL Dept. is a state-approved provider for professional development with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and is also an approved vendor with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The Center offers professional development options that are both local and statewide.*



# NURTURING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

## Supporting National Board Certification Initiatives

### National Board Certification

Developed by teachers, for teachers, in 1987, certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is the most respected advanced professional certification available in education. To earn National Board Certification (NBC), teachers immerse themselves in a core body of knowledge for accomplished teaching, then demonstrate their ability as they advance and document student learning and growth. Challenging, yet rewarding, the NBC process causes candidates to question and improve the instructional choices they make in their classrooms every day and has a transformative impact on their teaching pedagogy and content knowledge.

More than 2,400 Chicago Public Schools teachers, counselors, and librarians have achieved NBC – earning CPS the status of being the district with the 3rd highest number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in the nation. Working to reflect the composition of our district, more than 30% of our NBCTs are Teachers of Color.

### Nurturing Teacher Leadership

The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation is home to Nurturing Teacher Leadership (NTL), the sole Chicago Teachers Union/Chicago Public Schools joint program of candidate support for CPS teachers, librarians and counselors as they pursue NBC through the Quest Center. NTL, in its 27th year of operation, supports first-time and retake candidates as well as NBCTs who renew and maintain their certification every five years.

The NTL program offers a supportive group setting in which NBC candidates work collaboratively in certificate-alike cohorts in which they are mentored and coached by CPS NBCTs. Candidates read, study and discuss literature and research on current issues and concepts in education, developing and applying new or refined insights to their teaching practice. NTL provides multiple resources, support, and incentives. Our focus is on developing, improving, and validating teaching, thereby increasing student achievement. During weekly after-school and Saturday classes and cohort meetings, successful teaching practices are recognized and shared.

NTL facilitates all aspects of the intensive 2-year NBC process. We assist teachers with descriptive, analytical, interpretative, and reflective writing required for the National Board portfolio. We provide technical assistance for required documentation of candidate work, facilitation with both student work analysis and analysis of videotaped evidence demonstrating how the candidates meet the NBPTS standards. NTL provides professional development on hundreds of topics that range from differentiation of instruction to alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Our support system also includes individual coaching and mentoring, and preparation for the rigorous Content Knowledge Assessment exercises. NTL supports all CPS teachers, librarians and counselors throughout the entire certification process, providing technical, professional, intellectual and moral support. NTL is proud to boast more than a 90% achievement rate while the national average hovers around 70%. This past year our process garnered a 100% success rate, even during the pandemic when both teaching and learning was tenuous in our district.

# NURTURING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

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Through the NTL program, candidates can earn a Masters' degree and/or move to Lane 5 on the CPS salary scale. NBC is recognized in the CTU/CPS Bargaining Agreement in several articles. After achieving National Board Certification, CPS NBCTs receive a contractually recognized annual stipend. Opportunities are available for NBCTs to support others—at a professional wage. Nurturing Teacher Leadership is teachers working for teachers to improve the achievement of Chicago's children.

## Impact on Students and Schools

Through reflection and improvement of their practice, the candidates' two years of authentic weekly professional development and cohort meetings enables them to identify and demonstrate how their activities, inside and outside of the classroom, impact student learning. With NTL support, this work is grounded in candidates' teaching practice and content knowledge, is job-embedded and translates into improved student learning. More than a decade of research confirms students taught by NBCTs learn more than students taught by other teachers. Student work samples reflect deeper learning in NBCTs' classrooms compared to those of non-NBCTs, and students of NBCTs gain one to two months of additional learning compared to their peers in other classrooms. This positive impact is even greater for low-income and high-need students.

Research shows kindergarten and third-grade students with a National Board Certified reading teacher perform at a significantly higher level on literacy assessments than peers on average; students gain the equivalent of two months of additional instruction in Math and one month in English Language Arts. National Board Certification is identified as an effective signal of teacher quality, a finding which held across locales, including Chicago, and across test types and subject areas. Research also shows that districts that have a high number of NBCTs see improvements not just in student performance but also in collaboration between teachers and the culture of their schools.

### Karen GJ Lewis,

Enthusiastically embracing the NBC challenge, Karen Lewis achieved National Board Certification in 2002 in Adolescent and Young Adulthood Science. Valuing this achievement and the connection to the classroom it represented, she renewed her certificate in 2012 in the very months she was preparing to lead the CTU in the 2012 strike. At the ceremony honoring new and renewing NBCTs (including herself), Karen Lewis spoke to current candidates working toward achieving their certification, *"National Board accreditation is something I take great pride in, and you should feel the same and know that you have the support of the union and our members, especially our new and newly renewed NBCTs here this evening, in living out their passion and desire for a lifetime commitment to education . . . What I hope we all continue to do is to advance our profession by being strong professionals and strong union teachers. That is what National Board Certification can help you achieve."*



# BUILDING A WELCOMING SPACE



“Our company does a lot of not-for-profit projects throughout the city, helping to shepherd organizations through the construction project and making sure it’s transparent and cost-effective,” says Chad Correll, Executive Vice President of ECI.

Visit the home of the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation (CTUF) at 1901 W. Carroll Ave. in Chicago, and you’ll see a building that has been transformed into an open and collaborative space that is more than just a building – it is the physical manifestation of the Foundation’s work and legacy of Karen Lewis. For tenants and visitors, it’s a welcoming space with a neighborhood feel.

CTUF moved into the building in 2016. The building has a range of tenants, with the Chicago Teachers Union being the largest.

The three-story building sits on a 37,000 square footprint. Construction and renovation of the building emphasized sustainability through the LEED standard. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, and focuses on encouraging a more sustainable approach to the ways buildings are designed and operated. The building’s LEED Silver Standard includes high efficient lighting and mechanicals as well as reusing or recycling 75% of the building materials. Overall, the building has 12 different meeting spaces, not including the main hall, which can accommodate up to 1,000 people at one time and has been rented out for numerous events, including weddings. The building also includes meeting spaces for 12, 16, 40, and 120 people.

Renovation of the building cost \$25 million, according to CTUF. Executive Construction, Inc. (ECI) which is based in Hillside, IL and has a Chicago office, served as general contractor for the renovation project.

“Our company does a lot of not-for-profit projects throughout the city, helping to shepherd organizations through the construction project and making sure it’s transparent and cost-effective,” says Chad Correll, Executive Vice President of ECI.

Correll also shares a personal story about how he initially connected to the Foundation. “The Foundation wants to bring back trades into school systems, to give kids options,” he recalls. “They initiated this program to do pilot schools.” In 2019, Correll and his wife ran “A Race for the Trades,” a 155-mile, 7-day run in Namibia to raise funds for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs benefiting Chicago Public School students. “These races are kind of a passion for me and my wife, and we wanted to support kids who go to and from trade schools.”

What sets the building apart? “As the city has been pushing west,” Correll says, “I think the Foundation was very much a visionary in how they wanted to be centrally located in the city, have a facility in a location that was accessible, and be a welcoming space that reflects the Foundation’s work.”

Correll adds that inclusion was a key theme during the renovation. “You have to be proactive and forward-thinking when engaging communities on these projects,” he says. He notes the company’s effort to hire employees who were city residents and working with women-owned and minority contractors.

Grantees of CTUF emphasize the importance of relationships in their work – with teachers, parents, students, and the community. Correll says that relationships have been key to this renovation as well. “Our relationship with CTUF transcended the business relationship. Yes, we have a job, but when the job is over the friendship doesn’t have to end.”



CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION FOUNDATION

# RENOVATION, CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION FOUNDATION BUILDING

1901 W. Carroll Avenue, Chicago, IL

**General Contractor, Executive Construction,  
Inc. (ECI), Hillside, IL**

Owners Representative – Arcadis US, Chicago

Architect – Risinger + Associates, Chicago, IL

**ENGINEERS**

dbHMS Engineering, Chicago, IL

K-Plus Engineering, Hinsdale, IL

Goodfriend Magruder Structure LLC, Chicago, IL

Interior Designer – Gary Lee Partners, Chicago, IL

Masonry – A. Horn Inc., Barrington, IL

Structural Steel Contractor – Sturdi Iron Inc.,

Frankfort, IL

Millwork – Merkel Woodworking, Addison, IL

R.C. / Drywall / ACT – Escarpita Construction Co.,  
Chicago, IL

HVAC – CT Mechanical LLC, Addison, IL

Electrical / Low Voltage – Candor Electric. Inc.,  
Chicago, IL

## 1901 W. Carroll St. Building Tenants

Chicago Teachers Union

Kaleidoscope

United Credit Union

Grow Your Own

Illinois Federation of Teachers

American Federation of Teachers

Cook County College Teachers Union

University Professionals of Illinois

Grow Your Own

Action Now Institute



# COOK COUNTY COLLEGE TEACHERS UNION LOCAL 1600

The Cook County College Teachers Union, Local 1600, is a union representing nearly 5,000 community college faculty, professionals, and clericals at the seven City Colleges of Chicago and seven suburban colleges. We are a member-driven organization committed to fighting for our students and our communities. We negotiate contracts, defend our rights, provide training to members, and engage in political activism to defend public education.

We are pleased to share an office with the Illinois Federation of Teachers and UPI 4100 in the Chicago Teachers Union Federation building. Working in the same building as the Chicago Teachers Union and other progressive unions has provided immense value to our organization. It's allowed us to bounce ideas off of fellow activists for building power in our colleges and provided inspiration for how to best affect change. The physical building also meets our needs well. We utilize the main hall and meeting spaces regularly for leadership meetings and union events including a strike rally in January of 2019.





# GROW YOUR OWN CHICAGO

## GRANTEE STORY

Former CTU President Karen Lewis understood that when we talk about education, we are definitely not just talking about schools. We are talking about students, parents, teachers, community members – everyone who plays a role in the education of our children. In these pages, we share the stories of Chicago Teachers Union Foundation grantees. They are a diverse group and work on many different issues that have an impact on education in our communities. What they share is a passion for social justice – and faith in the idea that if we work together, we can and will make a positive difference.

At Grow Your Own Illinois, teachers and communities are partners.

Jen Johnson, Board President for GYO, Chief of Staff for the Chicago Teachers Union and a licensed educator, says that GYO “offers a “an authentic grassroots approach to teaching with a social justice perspective.” For Johnson, that belief is also grounded in her own personal community: Her father and grandfather were teachers.

GYO strives to address the systemic need for community-grounded and focused teachers; for GYO that also means focusing on the need for more teachers of color – who have typically been markedly underrepresented in the classroom.

In recent years, grants from the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation to GYO Chicago have contributed to the recruitment and retention of men – and particularly men of color – to be teachers.

During the pandemic, the foundation’s support also complemented GYO’s state grant funding by extending additional dollars for much-needed wraparound supports for aspiring teachers, such as child care, transportation stipends, and other needs.

GYO Illinois' office is located in the home of the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation. It's a good fit: GYO is very much aligned with Karen Lewis, former Chicago Teachers Union president, and her work around education equity. That work encourages schools be part of larger movements that address key socio-political challenges facing our education system.

"GYO's work is about transformative justice and movement-building," says Johnson. "Karen Lewis and the Chicago Teachers Union were very intentional that teaching was not just a vehicle for people to earn salaries and benefits – but a vehicle for social change."

GYO Illinois, Johnson adds, tries to remove barriers for aspiring teachers and have educators of color feel supported. Teaching, Johnson adds, "can not only be a great career but one that can make a social impact. The job of teachers is to be on the side of students and families."

Just ask David Shields, who says that GYO and its support for aspiring teachers "gave him an opportunity." Shields, who graduated from Northeastern Illinois University's secondary education program, started teaching freshman biology at Michele Clark High School in Garfield Park on the city's west side in August of 2021. Before that, he worked for 17 years as a special education classroom assistant at Tilton Elementary School, also on the city's west side.

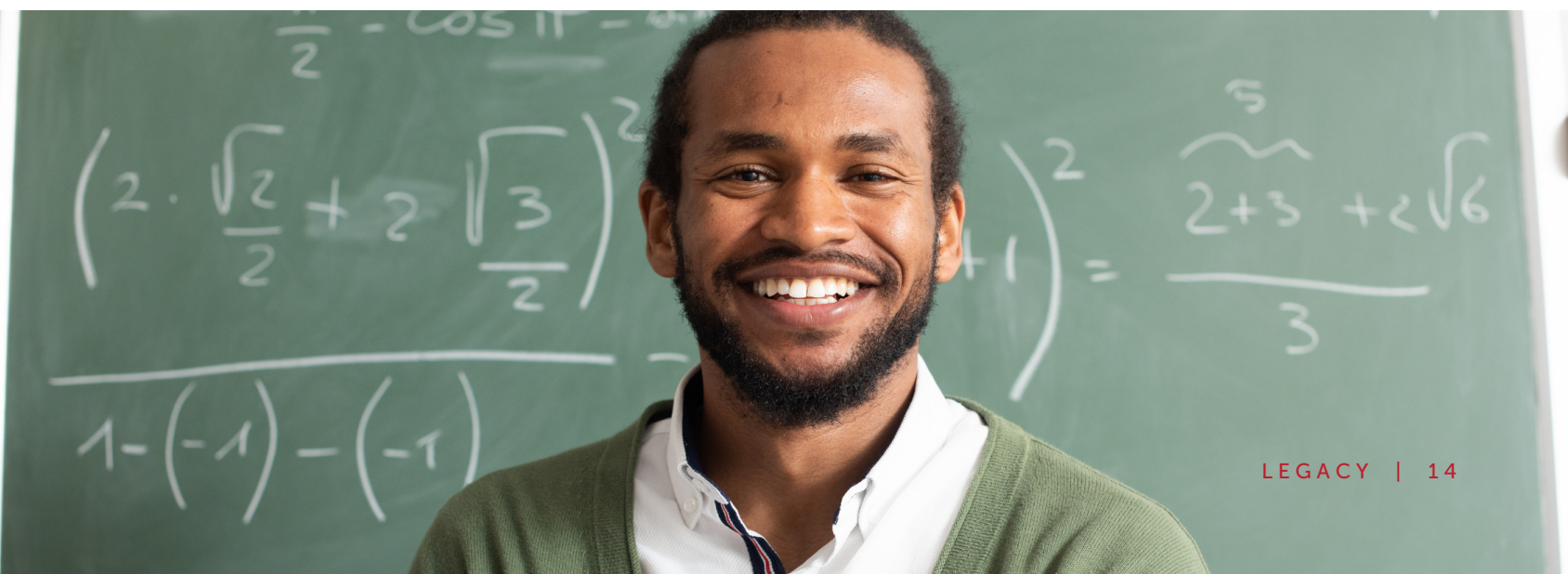
"In 2018, I saw a flyer for Grow Your Own," he says. "GYO showed me how important it is to build relationships. Plus, they were not saying to people who wanted to be teachers that they were too young or too old – they wanted to know if you were interested in kids."

Participants in GYO's program, he adds, come from a wide range of backgrounds – and are linked by the opportunity to teach and passion for learning and social justice. "I have had kids in front of me that have been told they have no value because of their skin color, the same things I have been told," he says. "I try to lift up every human being in the classroom and tell them you are cared for and valued and we're going to throw the negatives out the window."

Shields says that Karen Lewis (who was also a science teacher) "inspired me to be a science teacher. "She understood – like GYO - that to be a teacher, you have to be a people person."



David Shields, biology teacher at Michele Clark High School in Chicago. He says Grow Your Own and its support for aspiring teachers "gave him an opportunity."



# COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND FAMILY ISSUES (COFI)

## GRANTEE STORY

For Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), improving schools must involve parents who advocate for kids, teachers, and schools.

COFI Executive Director Ellen Schumer says it's often a given for middle-class or professional people that they are expected to think about their personal goals, but for parents in underserved communities, that is not always the case. "From the way children are taught in schools, to the messages people hear, too often there is not the same value extended to people in underserved communities. But their voices need to be heard."

For COFI, that means recognizing that parents are leaders who can and do play a pivotal role on issues and policies impacting their communities.

Prominent issues that parent leaders working with COFI often focus on include education equity and the necessity of strong parent voices to catalyze change in schools and communities. The organization's work sprouted in the early and mid-1990s from the movement for local school councils in Chicago. It's not just that parents played a key role in that movement – but that their growing presence reflected the close connection between schools and their community. That became a central part of COFI's work and grants it has received from the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation.

One issue that emerged from COFI parent meetings on the city's south and west side centered on school discipline policies. A parent's story about how their child was suspended after a pushing match led to a larger discussion about what many families have experienced in schools that serve many students of color. One mother shared that she had older sons who were in prison. Issues that could easily lead outsiders to make uninformed judgments about a school or community suddenly took on a different meaning: Challenges faced by COFI parents informed a parent-led campaign to address overly punitive discipline practices.

Within a couple of years, COFI parents played a pivotal role in striking down zero tolerance policies from Chicago Public Schools' code of conduct and replacing them with restorative justice as a core philosophy in that code. Length of suspension was reduced and most suspending of younger children ended.

Over the years, COFI's work has focused on a range of prominent issues affecting families, including early childhood education, universal child care, and other issues related to economic, racial, and social justice for families.

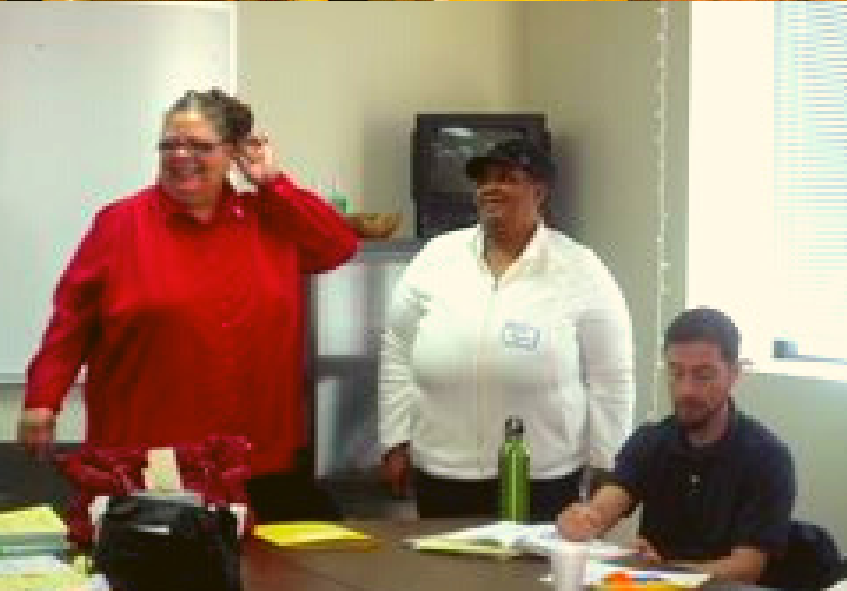
One campaign focused on the need for Chicago Public Schools to restore recess for students. "What parents were saying – and what science said – is that kids need a physical outlet and social time," says Schumer. "Karen Lewis [former CTU President] spoke at a citywide recess gathering and shared how much she loved working with active parents."

In 2012, the campaign led CPS to reinstate recess for all 260,000 elementary students.

"I really loved what Karen did and how she embraced parent voices," adds parent leader Karen Lynn Morton. "She was so parent-friendly. She lended herself to strategy meetings, she would come and speak on panels. Not just on what CTU was doing – but CTU in partnership with parents."

Meanwhile, the COFI model is impacting other communities. COFI has presented its model on the national level, emphasizing child-focused advocacy initiatives to communities around the country.

COFI's locally-driven approach also became a national story earlier this year. In March, COFI received a \$2 million gift from MacKenzie Scott, a billionaire philanthropist and ex-wife of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.





# ACTION NOW

## GRANTEE STORY

The message on the first day of school in August of this year was clear: Chicago communities have the power to impact their schools. The grassroots organization Action Now asked on its Facebook page “Do you know the power the LSC [Local School Council] has?” The post encouraged people to get involved and learn about opportunities to run for seats on their LSC.

Action Now is a grassroots community organization fighting for change for black people on the south and west sides of Chicago. The organization has also created the Action Now Institute, which strengthens the voices of people in black communities through leadership development, civic engagement, and direct outreach.

The Institute’s mission is to educate, inspire, and engage community residents in low-and-moderate-income communities to take a public stance on the issues that affect their neighborhoods, city, and state. The Action Now Institute was founded in 2010.

Action Now’s wide-ranging work in Chicago communities has included educational workshops on civic engagement, community-listening sessions as well as online conversations, and door-to-door organizing to inform residents about policies, including public education.

The organization has also provided mutual aid services, with the understanding that many people – including seniors, homeless youth, and families – have had to address basic needs first, especially during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, Action Now Executive Director Deborah Harris and others with Action Now have been outspoken about how COVID has disproportionately impacted black communities in the city. “The spread of COVID-19 to the heart of Chicago, which is the black community, has shown and uncovered every dark and ugly disparity that my community faces daily,” she told the Chicago Sun-Times less than a month after the pandemic started.

Action Now’s work has also included mobilizing people and support work around removing Chicago Police Department personnel from the Chicago Public Schools.

In March of 2021, Action Now Executive Director Deborah Harris was moderator for “HERstory in the Making: Behind the Curtain of Black and WOC [Women of Color] Leadership and the Sacrifices of Building Power.” This event was held by the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation and its Quest Center for Professional Learning and Teacher Leadership during Women’s History Month. The event delved into the highs and lows of building power, focusing on stories shared by a panel of women leaders on growth, advancement, and challenges they face.

On another – and related - front, Action Now also focuses on elections, working with Indivisible Illinois as part of voter security actions in Wisconsin and Michigan. Action Now has played an important role in educating people on mail-in voting, registering voters, and signing up poll workers and volunteers.

Action Now, like many Chicago organizations, has paid tribute to former CTU President Karen Lewis. In July of 2022, the organization marked her birthday on its Facebook page with a message that stated “Forever in our hearts, forever inspiring us.” Action Now’s Facebook post stated: “Our beloved Karen Lewis would have been 68 this week. Rest in power, Karen. Thank you for continuing to inspire educators, students, parents, and residents across Chicago and throughout the nation in the fight for the public schools our students deserve.”



# KALEIDOSCOPE

## GRANTEE STORY

For nearly 50 years, Kaleidoscope has been impacting the lives of children, youth and families through individualized, innovative case management and clinical services. The organization believes that children and youth healing from trauma stemming from abuse and neglect will be best served in a family setting in the communities that they are familiar with.

These issues continue to be acutely important in Illinois. According to data on child maltreatment in Illinois compiled by Child Trends, a national nonprofit organization, more than 35,000 children were found to be victims of maltreatment in Illinois in 2020.

Kaleidoscope's programs include family preservation, foster care, clinical services and independent living.

The goals of Kaleidoscope can also be appreciated by considering what the experience of children who come to the organization for services could have been like before 1973, when Kaleidoscope was founded. Kids who experienced complex traumas and had emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges were often sent to locked facilities in other states. These programs were often ineffective – and could lead to even greater trauma for children.

The impact and work of Kaleidoscope has been felt in many ways in the last year. The organization, like many grantees of the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation, has taken new steps toward greater diversity, equity and inclusion by designing and implementing systems for transparency and accountability. In the fall of 2021, Kaleidoscope co-hosted a successful foster parent recruitment event with six other agencies as part of the Chicagoland Foster Care Collaborative. This event was especially timely, as the COVID-19 pandemic had greatly impacted foster care recruitment across the state of Illinois. Then, in the summer of 2022, a development and communications intern with the organization who related her story of being born alone and later adopted. At Kaleidoscope, she learned new skills and gained experience as part of the organization's continuing efforts to reach children, youth and families.



Kaleidoscope is one of numerous whose office is located in the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation's home at 1901 West Carroll Street in Chicago. "We are grateful to be a part of the CTUF because it allows us to be connected directly to the communities we serve," says Executive Director Kathy Grzelak, who is also a licensed clinical professional counselor. She notes that being in the CTUF space created a venue for the organization to hold family-focused and fundraising events, flexibility for collaboration amongst its teams, and spaces for families to utilize for visits. "We have been able to utilize our offices and the event space here in countless ways to support our mission."

In the coming year, Kaleidoscope will highlight its history and the teams and people that have made an impact on its work as it shares its vision for the future. On June 6, 2023, Kaleidoscope will officially mark its 50th anniversary of impacting children, youth and families in the community. As the organization moves forward it continue to affirm its commitment: Children and youth are best served in community-based settings by responsive adults.

Kaleidoscope's office is located at 1901 W. Carroll St. in Chicago, the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation's home. Being in this space has created a venue created a venue for the organization to hold family-focused and fundraising events.



# PALENQUE LSNA

## GRANTEE STORY

In the spring of 2022, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association, a 60-year-old community organization that has long fought gentrification, renamed itself Palenque LSNA. At a time when black and brown people continue to be impacted by a wide range of social issues, Palenque LSNA recalls a history that brings together Lantinx and Black people in the world.

Palenques are spaces in the Americas created by escaped Africans to reclaim, remember, and strategize for freedom, liberation, and abolition. Those themes, says Juliet de Jesus Alejandre, Executive Director of Palenque LSNA, remain relevant today as community members face key challenges – including how to provide the best education for their children. (Alejandre has also worked as a youth and education organizer, and started working with the organization in 2006).

The organization's work continues to be tied to the mission of the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation. Early on, CTUF funded LSNA's work to build a group of parent mentors in the community's schools. Parent mentors have been critical over the years, helping build a social and emotional connection between families and teachers. That's been especially important in Logan Square, because as working families struggle to afford to live in the community, the budget cuts in Chicago Public Schools have hit public schools especially hard.

"We've seen the dwindling of our student population in this community, and many people of wealth who are not sending their children to public schools," Alejandre says. "And then there was the pandemic."

Organizing during this time is not only about addressing persisting challenges, but creating opportunities. "Together, we [black and brown peoples] are the majority of the city," Alejandre says. "We need to realize this is a long-term struggle."



We want schools and a community where children can fall in love with the community and its history. That should be the guiding light of teaching and learning – not tests."

This vision, she adds, reflects how former CTU President Karen Lewis viewed education and communities. "Karen knew it should be bout love," says Alejandre. "At the same time, it's about making sure that the most vulnerable people in the community have access to education."

During the pandemic, the "mamas and grandmas" who were parent mentors (97 percent of mentors were women) for Palenque LSNA "became the epicenter in their communities for mutual aid, groceries, and medicine to the point where teachers and administrators were turning to them for resources," Alejandre says. Parent mentors spent two hours a day in various schools, four days a week, and received tutoring and political education on Fridays.

The challenges are great, but the message and work is spreading. Palenque LSNA (in partnership with the Southwest Organizing Project), is now building transformative parent engagement in schools across Illinois and around the country through its Parent Engagement Institute. Overall, there are more than 1,200 parent mentors impacting over 200 schools and 25,000 students.

"Mentors start from their own personal experience," Alejandre says. "They offer what they do as a gift to all of us as a way to understand how we can move forward."



"Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be." ~ Rita Pierson, educator

# MANUFACTURING RENAISSANCE

## GRANTEE STORY

Research conducted by the University of Illinois Chicago's Great Cities Institute in 2017 showed that there are more than 58,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector in Chicago that remained unfilled. These jobs offer a path to a career that supports a family. But for thousands of students who live in underserved communities, there's often nowhere for them to go to train for jobs in manufacturing.

Manufacturing Renaissance aims to help close that gap between the lack of training opportunities – and the skills young people need to succeed. The organization works to advance inclusive sustainable development anchored in manufacturing.

The organization reaches young people through its Career Pathways Services: Manufacturing Connect, its nationally recognized program for teens, and the Young Manufacturers Association, a network and program for young adults (ages 18-29) who are pursuing careers in manufacturing, are in between jobs, in training, or are interested in starting a career in manufacturing.

The Renaissance's partnership with the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation has included a manufacturing training program at Austin Polytechnical High School on the city's west side in 2007. In the college and career prep program, students learned real-world skills in all aspects of the sector – from skilled production and engineering to management and company ownership.



“The Foundation knows that our kids need access to high-quality jobs that can help them break out of poverty,” says Erica Staley, Executive Director of Manufacturing Renaissance. “Many students are in survival mode, because of trauma in their neighborhoods.”

Staley says that “our organization sees that what we do is 100 percent eye-to-eye with what the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation does – benefiting schools as a way to improve communities. Teachers are our most effective ambassadors in leading this work and a powerful ally.”

#### Strong connection to Karen Lewis

Staley recalls when former Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis visited the program. “Karen really got it – she saw that teachers are not just educators, but leaders in the community who can help create a sustainable future.”

Today, the Renaissance is broadening its work in a way that continues to honor Karen Lewis’ legacy. In the last year, it has partnered with a coalition of organizations to advance the sector on the national scale while working locally to expand its reach in the city of Chicago and its public schools.

The work of the Renaissance reflects a story about manufacturing and its vital role in Chicago communities. While the story of a sector that has largely left the region remains, it’s also an old story. The sector today can build a future that partners with schools and communities, embraces new technology and a green economy, and emphasizes equitable opportunities for people in underserved communities who have long been overlooked.

Consider the experience of Marla Sanders, who graduated in the second class at Austin Polytechnical in 2012 and has worked in the manufacturing sector for nearly a decade while raising two boys. “I learned that I can do this,” she says. “And I did.”



# BRIGHTON PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

## GRANTEE STORY

"It is important to fight for worker rights but also the communities and identities they represent."

~Andrea Ortiz-Landin, Director of Organizing,  
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council

The Brighton Park Neighborhood Council was founded in 1997 at a time, says Executive Director Patrick Brosnan, when there was "no representation for a community that was changing to a predominantly Latino community." Public institutions, including schools, were not keeping pace with that change, and community leaders created the organization to meet emerging needs and address systemic policies around social, racial, and economic justice issues.

All of the schools that BPNC works in serve a predominantly immigrant population. Programs provide resources that train teachers and school personnel around what is a sanctuary school. Brosnan recalls how there have been ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids in the city. "We needed to make sure that schools understood the threat that our community was facing," he says.

Brosnan shares the context of the organization's programs. "We live in a society that is replete with systemic racism and institutional racism. That's a fundamental part of our society, and that's what we work to address."

The Chicago Teachers Union has funded a range of programs at the organization, including various organizing initiatives, programs that have supported school-based services, supplemental supports for the community, teacher-engagement strategies, trauma-informed classrooms, and building a racial justice analysis in the community's schools.

Over the years, BPNC has also engaged young leaders, some of whom later became staff for the organization. It's part of a multigenerational approach to community organizing through which young people do not just build skills and campaigns, but ultimately can educate parents as well.

One of the organization's campaigns focused on removing police from schools, which Brosnan calls "a really tough, very controversial campaign. Some students," he says, "were being harassed. Organizing that initiative was transformative. It not only ensured that students felt safe in their buildings, but gave them autonomy and power and authority that these are their schools. These buildings should reflect the kind of values they have."

At BPNC, the organization highlights a seemingly obvious though often overlooked perspective – when organizing on education issues, you have to include young people who are directly impacted by a school's policies. "Youth in our community," Brosnan adds, "have been 'a moral compass' that helps guide how we learn about, approach, and respond to issues. There's a three-legged stool in our community – youth, parents, and teachers."

Brosnan relates the work of BPNC to how Karen Lewis has impacted the city's schools. "Before Karen came and transformed the union and politics in the city of Chicago, there was a much more narrow understanding of what we could accomplish together," he says. "Her being such a clear-eyed and powerful voice for racial justice and educational equity really articulated in so many different ways the relationship between successful schools and successful communities."

"It's all one community," Brosnan says. "Schools are an indicator of the problems in a community, and an important part of the solution."

BPNC Director of Organizing Andrea Ortiz-Landin adds that "I have seen our community be more energized for fight for rights and freedoms in ways we haven't really seen before. It's been great to witness and to be in spaces with the community."

# CHICAGO CREATIVE REUSE EXCHANGE

## GRANTEE STORY

It's a ritual for so many public school teachers in Chicago: They have to find supplies for their classrooms, and often wind up paying for them out-of-pocket. Schools in wealthier communities are less likely to have this issue.

That's where the Creative Chicago Reuse Exchange (CCRx) comes in. The organization, launched in 2017, redistributes donations of clean, safe, and working materials, supplies, and equipment to Chicago teachers, nonprofits, arts and community groups, and sparks creativity through programs, partnerships, and creative reuse products and kits.

It all started with a visit to New York City's Materials for the Arts, a city-run program that redistributes donations of materials to public school teachers. Barbara Koenen, then a project manager for Chicago's Dept of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, was so inspired by what she saw that she came back to Chicago, set up a 501(c)(3) organization, and the Creative Chicago Reuse Exchange (CCRx) was born.

"Our focus is a unique combination of creativity, sustainability and education, and we didn't fall neatly into existing grant categories," Koenen says. "But when we met with Carmen (Curet) and Charise (Bennett) at

the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation (CTUF), we saw that they fully understood this project – and they immediately asked, 'What do you need?' CTUF gave us our first grant and first venue."

CCRx reached out to businesses and individuals for donations, from the Lyric Opera to design and architecture firms, schools and universities, and held its first "Swap Circle for Teachers" at the CTU Center in Fall, 2017. "Hundreds of teachers came and got all sorts of stuff," says Koenen. "We even got uniforms for an entire marching band from a suburban high school. A CTU high school teacher saw them and said 'We want them all -- those are our colors!'"

CCRx held pop-ups in different parts of the city. One freezing winter day in January, 2019, 300 teachers showed up for a pop-up Swap Circle in a warehouse in Auburn Gresham, and several commented that they liked the convenience of a South Side location. So CCRx negotiated with the owner, Envision Unlimited, to open up a year-round facility there, sharing the space with one of Envision's day program centers that supports adults with special needs. CCRx is now open three days a week by appointment.

While many items are still free, like books, CCRx created a unique process to cover its costs. The organization gives teachers a shopping cart and say "put whatever you want in it." Then whether it is flashcards, fabric, construction paper, copy paper, toys, furniture, paint, and much more that teachers can use in so many ways, CCRx will pack everything up for about \$20 a box. Items like projectors and laptops, are listed at [www.creativechirx.org](http://www.creativechirx.org) as "Special Finds" that have special, way-below-market prices. "I'll always remember what Carmen said in our first meeting," adds Koenen. "Copy paper is gold for teachers."

Koenen reflects on how the organization honors the legacy of former CTU president Karen Lewis. "Karen was such a fighter for social justice and equity for all of Chicago, and especially those in need. She would love something like this, which supports a circular economy that uses and reuses materials. Our project shares Karen's commitment to teachers. They are at the front line doing the work and engaging the next generation of the city. They are the ones who should be supported, and they know what they need."



# ARISE CHICAGO

## GRANTEE STORY

Arise Chicago belongs to a longstanding and vital Chicago tradition of clergy who are deeply involved in social justice issues. Arise builds partnerships between faith communities and workers to fight workplace injustice through education, organizing, and advocating for public policy change.

The vision of the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation (and former CTU President Karen Lewis) emphasizes the close relationship between schools and communities. These communities are often filled with workers who are members of Arise. These workers play a major role in building the region's economy – and are heads of households that include students who attend public schools in the city.

In its first decade, Arise conducted union-related campaigns, supporting unionized workers who were trying to leave poverty. In 2002, Arise opened the Arise Chicago Worker Center, a membership-based community resource for immigrant and U.S-born workers. Over the years, the Center has recovered over \$9 million in wages for low-wage workers.

Over the years, Arise has also helped pass seven laws at the city, county and state levels and protected many more.

"We do everything on the spectrum that impacts workers, and our worker members lead these campaigns," says Executive Director Rev. C.J. Hawking. "These campaigns have included successful fights for paid sick days and the establishment of the city's Office of Labor Standards, which enforces a variety of laws impacting workers."





**"When teachers succeed, that helps families succeed."**

**~ Rev. C.J. Hawking, Executive Director, Arise Chicago**

Rev. Hawking shares one example among many: Two workers who worked at a restaurant in the city's Wrigleyville neighborhood were owed money for their last paycheck from an employer. (It turned out, research showed, that they were actually owed a total of \$35,000 because they hadn't been paid a proper minimum wage or overtime pay).

With faith leaders standing behind them, they went back to their former employer. Within a week, they were paid.

Arise cites University of Illinois Chicago data that shows \$7.3 million is stolen from low-wage workers in Cook County every week.

"When bad-actor employers exploit their workers, they are putting families at risk - whether it's because conditions aren't safe, wages are not being paid, sexual harassment, or other reasons," says Hawking.

The organization has also conducted worker rights trainings that sprung from issues identified by parents at Chicago schools.

Rev. Hawking says there's a close link between the organization's work and Karen Lewis' legacy. "As a Jewish woman, Karen was deeply dedicated to her faith, and she understood how faith impacts how we build the common good together," says Hawking.

Rev. Hawking adds that Arise understands that low-wage workers – and especially immigrant workers – "operate in a system that is set up to exploit them. Karen understood that, and she cared about what was happening to the parents of the students."

Arise Chicago also recognizes the important role of teachers. One Labor Day weekend a number of years ago, the group held a "Teacher in the Pulpit" event during which teachers talked about the sacred link between faith and working as a teacher. "About thirty teachers spoke," says Rev. Hawking. "That was when the union was under Karen's leadership. The message was clear: When teachers and families support each other, the quality of life rises for the entire community."

# PARENTS 4 TEACHERS

## GRANTEE STORY

Before the Chicago Public Schools strike in 2012, a group of parents got together to address pressing education issues and build solidarity between parents, teachers, and their union.

The organization that resulted was Parents 4 Teachers. “Parents understood that somebody had to step up and be in solidarity with teachers,” says Cynthia Ok, executive director of the organization. “We knew, and know, that teachers understand what is going on in the classrooms and can speak for what is needed for students.”

In many cases, parents with the organization have advocated for teachers and schools on longstanding issues like systemic racism, an unelected school board, and a test-based system of accountability for schools and teachers.

Over the years, parents have also gone to schools and learned about and advocated on an array of other issues affecting their kids, including oversized classrooms and the lack of early childhood programs.

Classroom size has been an especially prominent issue, and it’s not going away. Ok says parents and teachers are united on this issue. “Nobody can teach in a classroom when the desks are in the hallway or more than 40 kids are in a classroom,” Ok says. “At that point, teachers are doing classroom management.”

Parents with the organization have played a leading role in advocating for mental health supports for students. Another key issue over the years has been focusing on students who are diverse learners and need resources related to special education, including instruction, intervention, and legal and compliance supports. The group’s work has helped put parent and teacher efforts to address the CPS program for special

needs students at the center of public attention about the district. In 2018, Parents 4 Teachers and other organizations released a survey that revealed how Chicago schools have been denied services, including various therapies, busing, and classroom aides. Advocacy for special needs students continues.

Another key effort of Parents 4 Teachers is providing bilingual trainings from parent mentors for parents (and often teachers) in schools on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. “There’s no way parents will get that training from their schools,” says Ok. “In so many cases, parents don’t know their rights on issues like timelines, outside evaluations for their kids, and other issues.”

One project of the organization during the pandemic involved distributing a family COVID safety questionnaire that asked specific questions about the safety of students, classrooms, and schools – and what kinds of supports were needed to help ensure safety. Results from the questionnaire, which was created in both English and Spanish, were shared with teachers.

Though Ok says she didn’t know former Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis personally, she does recall being a student teacher at Peterson Elementary on the city’s northwest side when Lewis visited the school. “It was great for teachers to have that kind of leader there,” says Ok. “She had our backs.”

“Karen knew that schools should be the most easily accessed public institution for everyone,” Ok adds. “Parents and teachers working together help make that happen.”



A portrait of Karen Lewis, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a red fedora hat, black-rimmed glasses, a red top, and a red beaded necklace. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a solid dark blue.

# KAREN LEWIS' LEGACY LIVES ON

"Karen continued to speak truth to power and question whether things we are doing are bringing us together or dividing us further. These words continue to be true. It's up to us to continue to move forward."

# LIST OF GRANTEES

- A Just Chicago 2018, 2017
- Access Living 2018, 2017, 2015, 2014
- Action Center on Race and the Economy Institute 2020/21
- Action Now Institute 2020/21, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014
- Adjoin Fund 2018, 2016
- Albany Park Neighborhood Council/Communities United 2015, 2014
- Albany Park Theater Project 2017, 2016, 2015
- Alternatives 2019, 2017, 2016
- ARISE 2020/21, 2018, 2017, 2016
- Art Helps Heal 2019, 2017
- Brighton Park Neighborhood Council 2020/2021, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014
- Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth 2018, 2017, 2016
- Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth 2016
- Centro de Trabajadores Unidos 2017
- Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 2020/21
- Chicago Federation of Labor Workforce & Community Initiative 2018, 2017
- Chicago Federation of Labor/CFL-WAC 2016
- Chicago Freedom School 2017, 2016
- Chicago Housing Initiative 2020/21, 2019, 2016
- Chicago Jobs with Justice 2017
- Chicagoland Laborers Union 2018
- Communities United 2019, 2016
- Communities United 2016
- Community Organizing and Families Issues (COFI) 2020/2021, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014
- Community United 2016
- Creative Chicago Reuse Exchange 2020/21, 2019, 2018
- Crossroads Fund 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014
- CTU Women Rights Committee 2017
- Dainty Warrior Project 2016, 2015
- DuSable Museum of African American History 2017, 2016
- Empowerment Through Education and Exposure 2017, 2016
- Enlace Chicago 2020/21, 2018, 2017, 2015, 2014
- Equip for Equality 2019, 2017, 2016
- eta Creative Arts Foundation 2018, 2017
- Fair Test 2018
- FCHN Program 2016
- First Book 2016
- Grassroots Collaborative 2020/21, 2019, 2018, 2017
- Grow Your Own 2020/21, 2018, 2017, 2016
- Health and Medicine Policy Research Group 2015
- Illinois Collaboration on Youth 2017
- Illinois Humanities 2019
- Infinite Scholars 2016
- Institute for Positive Living 2019
- Journey for Justice Alliance 2019, 2017
- Kaleidoscope Inc. 2020/2021
- KEEN (KIDS ENJOY EXERCISE NOW) Chicago 2019, 2016
- Kenwood Oakland Community Organization 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016
- La Casa Norte 2018, 2017, 2016
- Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago 2017, 2016
- Legal Council for Health Justice 2019
- Local Motions 2018, 2017
- Logan Square Neighborhood Association 2020/2021, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016
- Lugenia Burns Hope Center 2020/21, 2019, 2017
- Manufacturing Renaissance 2019, 2018
- Mikva Challenge 2018
- Mini Medical Program of North Lawndale 2019
- Network for Public Education 2017, 2016
- New Moms 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016
- New Sector Alliance 2016
- Night Ministry 2016
- Northeastern Illinois University 2018, 2017
- Northside Action for Justice 2020/21, 2019
- ONE Northside 2016
- Parents 4 Teachers 2020/21, 2019, 2018, 2017
- Parents Across America 2016
- Pilsen Alliance 2020/2021, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016
- Profound Gentlemen 2020/21, 2018, 2017, 2016
- Project Fierce Chicago 2018, 2017, 2016
- Rainbow PUSH Coalition 2017
- Rainbows for All Children 2019
- Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education 2020/21, 2018, 2017, 2015, 2016
- ReFund America Project 2018, 2017, 2016
- ROLFE Foundation 2017
- Sacred Ground 2019
- Save Our Schools 2017
- SkyArt 2017
- Sojourner Scholars 2018
- Southside Together Organizing for Power 2020/21, 2019, 2017, 2016
- Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) 2020/21, 2017
- Special Education Committee 2018
- Special Olympics 2016
- St Paul Church of God in Christ Community Development Ministries (SPCDM) 2018, 2017, 2016
- Story Catchers Theater 2019, 2018
- Telpochcalli Community Education Project 2018
- The Adjoin Fund, Inc. 2019
- The Night Ministry 2018, 2017
- The Well of Mercy 2018
- Trauma Circle for Teachers 2018
- UIC Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy 2019
- United States Hispanic Leadership Institute 2018
- University of Illinois Foundation 2017
- Veterans for Peace 2015
- YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago (Urban Warriors Program) 2017, 2016
- Young Chicago Authors 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016



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Moving forward, we honor the legacy of Karen Lewis by repeating three questions she asked of all people fighting to improve our schools:

“Does it unite us?  
Does it build our power?  
Does it make us stronger?”

- Karen GJ Lewis,  
July 20, 1953 - February 7, 2021