ANNUAL REPORT

2016
When a young person shares a poem they have written at one of YCA’s workshops or at the Louder Than A Bomb Chicago Youth Poetry Festival, the audience will often snap in response to lines in the piece that resonate in a profound and personal way. These are the beautiful moments in a poem when, with an economy of words, the poet is so powerful. Reflecting upon Young Chicago Authors’ busy 2015-2016 year, I am struck by the moments that encapsulate the organization’s strength and vitality, where the organization has come from and where it is going.

YCA’s programming is youth focused. There is also an intention at the heart of the organization to support and foster leadership development as we consider what tomorrow might look and sound like. YCA creates initiatives around that idea in a number of different ways, including investing in artist educators through professional and artistic development programs and a summer artistic intensive internship for 12 aspiring young writers.

This year it was inspiring to watch a new leadership development program in action at YCA’s first convening of the Louder Than A Bomb Chicago Youth Poetry Festival team captains. YCA’s seminal celebration of youth voices turned 16 this past year and we continue to build on the festival’s celebration of young people’s contribution to civic discourse.

Another incredible and surreal occurrence marked a sort of coming-of-age for Louder Than A Bomb. Attending the festival and performing on stage alongside Chicago’s youth poets were Chuck D and DJ Lord of Public Enemy, the pioneering hip-hop group that recorded the 1988 song which would, in 2001, become the title of YCA’s festival. Chuck D and DJ Lord not only performed “Louder Than a Bomb”, but they shared with YCA’s community a unique perspective of hip-hop’s history and its cultural impact during a workshop session and panel discussion.

We were too shocked and full of joy to snap at the time, but when the call came that YCA would be the recipient of a 2016 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, thousands of fingers should have been popping all over the city. This prestigious award honored the important work of cultivating the stories young people have to tell. It also recognized the work YCA has done internally to build a sustainable organization. YCA is grateful to the MacArthur Foundation for selecting YCA as a grantee.

At the end of 2016, YCA is well-positioned to serve growing numbers of young people in the years ahead. Without a doubt, there is much work to do to ensure that YCA achieves its goals. Our inspiration remains the understanding that the possibility for creating a more just and equitable world lives within the stories of young people.

Rebecca J. Hunter
Executive Director
INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE CITY AND THE WORLD

YCA's pedagogy is grounded in the belief that all people have important stories to tell. YCA is particularly interested in presenting students with the voices of artists who represent marginalized communities, engaging students in conversations about inequity and injustice.

BUILD CRITICAL THINKING, READING, WRITING, AND PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

YCA reframes education for young people by using a fresh new approach to the literary arts in classroom settings, sparking achievement in language arts and social and emotional learning areas. YCA connects students to school-based poetry clubs, which strengthens the student-school relationship and provides direction for out-of-school hours.

SUPPORT EARLY-CAREER TEACHING ARTISTS AS THEY BECOME CULTURAL EDUCATORS

YCA is an incubator for talented writers who have chosen to pursue a living in arts education. As members of YCA’s Teaching Artist Corps, these artists develop their identities as educators and mentors while simultaneously developing their craft.

GOALS

FOSTER YOUTH CREATIVITY AND EXPRESSION

All of YCA’s workshops ask students to approach writing as experts of their own experiences. Asking a simple question—“Where are you from?”—elicits profound stories that, in their telling, empower the writer and enlighten their audience.

ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN CROSS-CITY DIALOGUE

YCA brings young people from diverse backgrounds together, surmounting geographic and cultural boundaries that serve to segregate Chicago. Every week, students from all over the city gather at YCA to listen to one another’s narratives. Each year at the Louder Than A Bomb Chicago Youth Poetry Festival, young people from more than 120 zip codes bring their stories to the stage to share with a wider audience. Together, young people are starting a new conversation about art, unity, and social justice.

PROVIDE SPACES FOR A YOUTH COMMUNITY ROOTED IN POETRY

Relationships begin at YCA based on a shared love of creative expression through the written and spoken word. Young people from different neighborhoods, who would otherwise have no way to connect, form enduring bonds.

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YCA served over 10,000 students between the ages of 12 and 25 from many different backgrounds.

**Students by Gender**
- 44% Male
- 53% Female
- 3% Nonbinary

**Students by Race/Ethnicity**
- 39% Black/African American
- 22% Latino/Latina
- 17% White/White Ethnic
- 4% Asian American
- 15% Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic
- 3% Other

**Median Household Income in Neighborhoods Where YCA Students Live**
- 84% Below $40K
- 34% $40K to $80K
- 14% $80K to $120K
- 5% $120K and up

84% of students realized gains in artistic, social, or emotional skills in post-assessment scores.

That’s more than *five out of six students* in YCA’s Education Partnerships program!
YCA brought together students from 129 zip codes throughout the Chicago area at the 2016 Louder Than A Bomb Chicago Youth Poetry Festival.

YCA's artist educators received high praise from students and teachers alike. YCA's Teaching Artist Corps members in aggregate received 96% of all possible points on both student and teacher surveys, respectively.

Above survey responses from YCA’s Public Workshops and Education Partnerships programs.

STUDENTS DESCRIBING LOUDER THAN A BOMB

Asked to describe the opening day all-participant event, students were not at a loss for words.
The Louder Than A Bomb Chicago Youth Poetry Festival (LTAB) is an annual event that hosts 900 youth poets throughout five weeks of bouts, workshops, and special events. Students representing schools and community groups in the Chicago area perform original solo and group poems in a tournament-style competition. Prior to the city-wide festival, many poetry teams compete in regional slams organized by YCA in different corners of Chicago. YCA also helps organizers of sister LTAB festivals outside of Chicago bring YCA’s successful model for youth engagement in the arts to communities throughout North America.

Chuck D, legendary rapper and member of the seminal Hip-hop group Public Enemy, was a special guest at LTAB 2016. Chuck D joined Kevin Coval on stage at LTAB’s benefit party to discuss his career as a rapper, MC, author, and producer and the importance of Hip-hop as a social movement. Later, he and DJ Lord, also of Public Enemy, thrilled the audience by performing several songs. Chuck D has a special place in YCA history, having co-wrote “Louder Than a Bomb,” the song that inspired the name of YCA’s Louder Than A Bomb Chicago Youth Poetry Festival.

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Organizations from across the country currently producing or interested in starting LTAB festivals in their own communities came together at YCA’s four-day National Symposium. During the Symposium, which took place during LTAB Chicago, partners observed up close and in real time how YCA organizes its festival. Participants also engaged in workshops and breakouts featuring YCA staff and personnel from partner sites.
In 2015-2016, YCA conducted long-term residencies in 19 public high schools in Chicago, delivering in-class and after-school workshops in partnership with the schools’ instructional staffs. YCA worked directly with over 600 Chicago public school students through its Education Partnerships program in 2015-2016.

**2015-2016 EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS**

- Albert G. Lane Technical High School
- Chicago Academy
- Frederick A. Douglass Academy High School
- Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy
- Instituto Justice - Rudy Lozano Leadership Academy High School
- Nancy B. Jefferson Alternative High School
- Neal F. Simeon Career Academy High School
- Noble Street Charter
- Noble Street Charter - Muchin College Prep
- Northside College Preparatory High School
- Phoenix Military Academy High School
- Prologue Early College High School
- Robert Lindblom Math & Science Academy High School
- Sarah Goode STEM Academy
- TEAM Englewood Community Academy High School
- Urban Prep - Englewood Campus
- Walter Payton College Preparatory High School
- William Jones College Preparatory High School
- YCCS - Innovations High School of Arts Integration
PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

YCA offered at least seven hours of free Public Workshops in its offices each week of the academic-year catering to the interests of more than 900 students from the age of 12 to 25. Free public workshops included the Tuesday night workshop, WordPlay, a weekly open-mic, writing workshop, and performance series that invites students to write, perform, and listen to their peers from all over the city. YCA’s Saturday poetry writing workshop, Check The Method, offers instruction in a variety of styles and forms of poetry, exposing participants to the work of world-renowned poets. YCA’s Saturday rap clinic, Emcee Wreckshop, is dedicated to the craft of writing, emceeing, and beat-making. In addition, YCA completed its first year of a monthly salon, Queeriosity, a poetry-focused space for young people interested in exploring issues facing LGBTQ teens and young adults.

INTENSIVES

Beyond its largest programs, YCA has a number of other offerings that provide immersive development experiences for young writers. During the summer, YCA selected 12 of its most driven students to participate in a six-week apprenticeship program called Bomb Squad. The students engaged in a rigorous writing practice guided by YCA’s senior artistic staff. Also during the summer, YCA held its week-long Write To The City Summer Camp. More than 100 young writers experienced the ways in which literature informs and is informed by other genres of art. Among the participants were representatives of Louder Than A Bomb partner sites in Tulsa; South Florida; and Hamilton, Ontario. A third intensive program, Chicago Beat, occurs both over the summer and throughout the academic year. Chicago Beat is a journalism inquiry grounded in non-fiction creative writing and verse journalism. Students engage in research, fieldwork, and writing that shed light on an overarching issue relevant to young people in the city.
TEACHING ARTIST CORPS

YCA’s Teaching Artist Corps is the artistic heart of the organization. In addition to working with students through all of YCA’s programming channels, the seven-member Teaching Artist Corps is immersed in a specialized artistic and professional development program called the Artist Cultivation Program. In 2015-2016, the group met in weekly critique meetings under the mentorship of accomplished visual and literary artist, Krista Franklin, to workshop their poems. Throughout the year, the Teaching Artist Corps also participated in professional development seminars aimed at increasing their effectiveness as instructors and success as freelancers.

Fatima Asghar

RJ Eldridge
Dianna Harris
Tim “Toaster” Henderson

Britteney “Black Rose” Kapri
Kush Thompson
Keith “Blu” Warfield
Through YCA’s School and Community Resources work, teaching artists provide a variety of fee-for-services. Many of these 90-plus engagements take the form of a reading or a workshop. In 2015-2016, YCA was also involved in several deeper partnership projects.

**CHICAGO JAZZ FEST**
A four-month collaboration with the Jazz Institute of Chicago brought visiting artist groups and Jazz Institute staff to Wordplay, Write To The City Summer Camp, Check The Method, Bomb Squad and Chicago Beat programs as featured artists. The collaboration culminated with six Bomb Squad students attending and performing at the Chicago Jazz Fest.

**HALLOWEEN GATHERING FESTIVAL & PARADE**
YCA students participated in Chicago’s second annual Halloween Gathering Festival & Parade, sponsored by the Chicago Cultural Mile Association. YCA students attended workshops and participated in this city-wide festival with some of Chicago’s most influential creative leaders.

**XQ INSTITUTE**
On June 9th, 2016, three Bomb Squad members helped launch the XQ Institute Super School project in Chicago at Buckingham Fountain. This national project is working to create a new model for America’s high schools. The audience included educators, entrepreneurs, parents, students and leaders in the education field.

**THE CHICAGO TRACK**
The Chicago Track is free-admission professional development and networking series designed for aspiring film, media, and music artists from diverse, under-resourced communities. The Chicago Track participants connect with peers, industry experts, potential employers and other professional resources in the regional arts and creative industry sector. YCA produced this program in partnership with Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

**SHEBOYGAN ODE PROJECT**
Over eight months, entailing 48 separate events, YCA Artistic Director Kevin Coval and YCA Associate Artistic Director Jamila Woods worked with over 400 participants from the Sheboygan, Wisconsin area exploring the poetry of everyday speech and creating original writing in praise or critique of the place the participants called home. This eight-month-long project was sponsored by the Connecting Communities project of the Kohler Arts Center of Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
## UNRESTRICTED ACTIVITY

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<th>FY 2014</th>
<th>FY 2015</th>
<th>FY 2016</th>
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<td><strong>Operating Revenue</strong></td>
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<td>Earned revenue</td>
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<td><strong>Operating Expenses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Net temporarily restricted activity</strong></td>
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FUNDERS

$50,000+
Allstate
Bloomberg Philanthropies
The Chicago Community Trust
Chicago Teachers Union Foundation
Columbia College Chicago*
The Joseph & Bessie Feinberg Foundation
Lannan Foundation
The Reva & David Logan Foundation
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
McCormick Foundation
Surdna Foundation
Youth Speaks

$20,000 - $49,999
The Albert & Anne Mansfield Foundation
Alphawood Foundation Chicago
The Crown Family
The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince
The Metro*
National Recreation Foundation
Poetry Foundation
Polk Bros. Foundation
Southwest Airlines*
WBEZ 91.5/Vocalo 91.1*

$5,000 - $19,999
The Boeing Company
HighTower Holding LLC
Illinois Arts Council Agency
The Leo S. Guthman Fund
National Endowment for the Arts
Pattishall, McAuliffe, Newbury, Hilliard and Geraldson LLP*

TEACHING ARTIST CIRCLE
The Malkin Family
Joseph & Debbi Welch

*In-kind contribution

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