

# RECAP – GENERATION ALL YOUTH CONFERENCE 2017

JUNE 30, 2017



“Neighborhood schools are the cornerstone of what that [community] is,” said Phenom, a Hip Hop Activist, to start off the first ever Youth Conference held by Generation All.

Generation All’s executive director Beatriz Ponce De Leon explained to the audience the root cause of Generation All’s purpose: “In our city we’ve put emphasis on more school choices, instead of bettering the schools we already have. We need to improve the existing neighborhood schools.”

Many organizations and students came together on June 16 for the inaugural Generation All Youth Conference at Columbia College’s Film Row. to recollect their communal voice, celebrate the end of a successful school year, and most importantly to learn new skills on how to make their schools and communities better for the following year.

The Youth Conference included a number of interesting workshop sessions that instructed the students on how to further improve their schools. A variety of organizations presented information about their movements and ideas:

- Generation All's Youth Council: *How to Change the Stigma of Your Neighborhood High School*
- Fighting Youth Shouting Out for Humanity: *Decolonizing the CPS Curriculum*
- Heather van Benthuisen, CPS Dept. of Social Science & Civic Engagement: *Don't talk about it, be about: How to Build Student Voice at your School*
- Communities United: *Know Your Rights*
- Uplift Community High School: *From Columbus Day (Miseducation) to Indigenous Peoples Day (Liberation)*

## Workshop Sessions

### 1.5 Hour Workshop Titles

#### **How to Change the Climate of Your Neighborhood High School** Generation All Youth Council

##### **Breakout Room 026 - (Blue)**

Generation All Youth will discuss their work as a youth council and talk about the strategies they have used to combat negative stereotypes surrounding Chicago's neighborhood public high schools.

#### **Decoding the CPS Curriculum**

##### **PSAC Fighting Youth Shooting Out for Humans**

##### **Breakout Room 027 - (Green)**

Students will discuss the importance of understanding power dynamics in terms of dominant culture and provide an overview of how they are bringing awareness to the issue.

#### **Don't talk about it, do about. How to build activist voice at your school.**

##### **Northwest Youth Leadership, CPA Dept. of Social Science and Civic Engagement**

##### **Breakout Room 028 - (Orange)**

Student voice and leadership is an essential part of any successful school. This workshop will help you learn tools for how you can ensure that students are at the table in decision-making at your high school.

### 1.5 Hour Workshop Titles

#### **Know Your Rights**

##### **Communities United**

##### **Breakout Room 029 - (Yellow)**

Students will participate in an interactive workshop that will empower their relationship building skills using a powerful tool known as the Know-Your-Body. This tool will allow students to enhance the relationships that they have with each other to create a campaign or strategy for starting a campaign inside their schools and communities.

#### **Are you an Identity and Power**

##### **Chicago CPS Youth Art Teacher**

##### **Breakout Room 030 - (Purple)**

Students will engage in a discussion about their identity within a system of power. They will learn to identify the difference between identity and social identity and the impact of how they are perceived.

#### **From Columbus Day (Mis)education to Indigenous Peoples Day (Liberation) Day** UPHS Community High School

##### **Breakout Room 031 (Red)**

We will present how we launched a campaign to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day in Chicago Public Schools - including reversing the miseducating curriculum full of stereotypes, lies, and violence!



Students came out of the workshop with new insights and enthusiasm to implement what they had just learned. Tamia Kidd, Bronzeville Scholastic Academy student, said she “always knew there were problems in CPS and that many schools had faced inequality, but I didn’t understand [just how]those problems affected our community so much. Now, I know and have a complete understanding as to what kids like the youth council are fighting for.” After the workshops, Tamia came out wanting “to improve the school environment and the community” by attending “school meetings, talking to the principal, and finding new ways to improve the school system.” Tamia was just one of the many students that left the Conference with a renewed drive to improve the existing system.



Workshop facilitators were also very pleased with the responsiveness of the students. Donald Davis, CPS graduate, parent, and teacher, praised the Youth Conference for “encouraging youth to be advocates for change by ‘raising their voices’ and being leaders.” Heather van Benthuyzen’s message of creating a communal student voice for schools resonated well with students as they came out of her workshop convinced every school needed a student voice committee. Van Benthuyzen was excited to attend and host more workshops in cooperation with Generation All.

Throughout the Conference attendees were invited to write on a gallery chalk -wall describing what they loved about their schools and what Chicago could do to improve their neighborhood schools. Common answers to what students loved were unsurprising inspiring: students love the human-aspect of their schools. Students adore their teachers, the diversity of their schools, their sense of community and school spirit, and also their specialized IB-programs. When asked how the city can further improve their education, students replied with a multitude of answers. From the students’ responses, it was clear that they felt a lack of mutual understanding and communication with administrators. Many students wrote in bold letters “Listen to the Students!” on the chalk wall. Even more students felt the absence of resources. Some responses included: “Fund our school please!”, “Fund restorative justice programs!” and “#FREEFARE [from the C.T.A.]”.



Guests were also treated to dinner from Taqueria Los Comales and performances by Phenom and DJ Clent. Following the break, guests were invited into the auditorium to watch a video from Generation All's Youth Council on the perceptions of neighborhood public high schools in Chicago. The program then concluded with more dessert and refreshments and a dance party hosted by DJ Clent and Phenom.



Nayla Hale, a Generation All Youth Council Member, summed up the conference best when she said, "We want to promote loving your school," a sentiment confirmed and echoed by many attendees.



