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THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND FREEDOM SCHOOLS® PROGRAM AND TEACH FOR AMERICA PARTNER TO PROVIDE UNIQUE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR BLACK EDUCATORS

Ten Black Educator Promise Fellows From the American South Will Advance Their Leadership Through New, Best-in-Class Trainings

NEW YORK, October 13, 2021 — The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools® program and Teach for America's (TFA) Black Educators Promise program are collaborating on a new initiative, the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute Professional Development Seminar, to bring high-quality professional development programming to Black educators in the American South.

Studies, stories, and student experience all show the immense impact [having a Black teacher](#) has on the lives of Black students and all students, including increased graduation rates, greater social-emotional development, and improved social mobility. And yet, only 7 percent of teachers in U.S. public schools are Black. This new partnership between CDF and TFA aims to not only attract Black educators to the teaching profession, but also to ensure that they have the support and professional development needed to sustain and advance their careers as they pursue educational equity and inspire the next generation of Black youth. In focusing efforts on meeting the needs of Black teachers - who are concentrated heavily in the South - the partnership also grounds itself in the original vision and commitment of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program.

“Historian Daniel Perlstein reminds us the original Freedom Schools movement was to support Black people's ‘capacity to make a demand’. This notion of ‘capacity’ meant empowering people to demand an egalitarian society governed by justice and love,” said Dr. Kristal Moore Clemons, National Director, *CDF Freedom Schools*. “The original Freedom Schools movement included academic enrichment, cultural programs, and political and social studies. The new iteration of this work, encapsulated in our partnership with TFA, gives the *CDF Freedom Schools* program the ability to share new pedagogical possibilities that get teachers to articulate their own desires, demands, and questions. From there, we hope teachers will create spaces where students can link issues in their daily life to both practical skills and to issues of political power that will eventually equip them to participate in all phases of public life.”

The Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute Professional Development Seminar will provide wholly unique, high-quality, literacy-rich, and engaging teacher training seminars to ten TFA Black Educators Promise (BEP) fellows over a year-long program. The six seminars will be based around *CDF Freedom Schools'* six foundational teaching principles of “I can make a difference in myself, my family, my community, my country, and the world, with hope, education, and action”. The partnership will draw on the powerful pedagogy of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program to both support students and decenter whiteness within teacher education and professional development.

“Both TFA and CDF know and understand how vital a critically conscious teacher is—a teacher who utilizes culturally relevant pedagogy and sees the humanity and worth of each child—and work to recruit more of these educators to place them, not just in the classroom, but in the lives of students who need and deserve them,” said Tamila Gresham, Senior Managing Director of Black Community Alliances at Teach For America. “The alignment of our missions and work is clear and I am excited that we are bringing to the table what we each do best to provide tangible support and professional development to Black educators so that they can stay the course and remain in the classrooms where they are most needed.”

Together with former *CDF Freedom Schools* [Ella Baker Trainers \(EBTs\)](#), Dr. Lauren Lefty - *CDF Freedom Schools*' American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellow - will be creating a signature *CDF Freedom Schools* teacher training pedagogy in tandem with the piloting of this seminar. The program will cover a historical overview of teaching during the Civil Rights Movement and Movement for Black Lives; culturally relevant curriculum development; *CDF Freedom Schools*' Integrated Reading Curriculum; social-emotional learning and trauma-informed care; parent and family engagement; and Black futures and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Through the partnership with Teach For America, Dr. Lefty and the team of EBTs will be able to test the modules, collect feedback from the TFA fellows, and ultimately create a robust teacher training curriculum which will serve as the foundation for [CDF Freedom Schools' Teacher Training Institute](#).

“Research shows that Black educators leave the profession at higher rates than any other group, often due to added responsibilities, lack of support, and professional learning that too often caters to a presumed White teacher,” said Dr. Lefty. “The *CDF Freedom Schools* are excited to offer a new kind of teacher education, one that is itself critically engaged, culturally relevant, and liberatory—with deep roots in the Black freedom struggle. This pilot program with TFA’s BEP fellows will allow us to collaboratively build this curriculum, drawing insight from experienced Freedom School educators, cutting edge scholarship, and the funds of knowledge Black teachers and communities bring to the table.”

While the partnership represents a new approach to recruiting, engaging, and sustaining Black educators, it honors and builds upon the long history of Black teaching for liberation.

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About the Children’s Defense Fund

[The Children’s Defense Fund](#) is a 501(c)3 non-profit child advocacy organization that has worked relentlessly for nearly 50 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. We champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to health care, quality education and a moral and spiritual foundation. Supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations, CDF advocates nationwide on behalf of children to ensure children are always a priority.

About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with 350 urban and rural communities across the country to expand educational opportunity for children. Founded in 1990, Teach For America recruits and develops a diverse corps of outstanding leaders who make an initial two-year commitment to teach in high-need schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to end educational inequity. Today, Teach For America is a force of over 64,000 alumni and corps members working in over 9,000 schools nationwide in pursuit of profound systemic change. From classrooms to districts to state houses across America, they are reimagining education to realize the day when every child has an equal opportunity to learn, lead, thrive, and co-create a future filled with possibility. Teach For America is a proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).