

# YOUTH UNITED FOR CHANGE



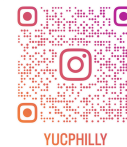
**MAY 2025**

Check Us Out On Our Socials

[www.youthunitedforchange.org](http://www.youthunitedforchange.org)

## In the Garden

**Earth is constantly teaching us, if we pay attention.  
Seasons teach us about cycles of growth, decay,  
and renewal.**



YUCPHILLY



“Observing the harmony of creatures can provide examples of how we as humans can organize ourselves to meet our needs. I love the summer for the sunlight and activity. People host events and gatherings to enjoy themselves outdoors. Summer teaches me about expression and connection. Autumn is a time of change and release. The colors of leaves show us the beauty of change. We huddle against the cold in winter and draw closer to quiet and warmth. The quiet of winter can be a time for reflection and planning. We enter spring, with the pollen, bugs, birds, and sneezes. In spring, the earth shows us that the dormancy of winter holds the promise of tomorrow in the form of seeds. Seeds lie deep in darkness, and when the conditions are correct, the sun calls that little life inside to reach beyond the dark in which it finds itself. With time, light, and water, the seeds sprout to express their nature and are renewed as plants, flowers, and foods.

At YUC, we see our different program offerings as a garden. In this garden of varied flowers and elements, I see myself as the earthworm who works to ensure the soil can sustain roots. I see myself as a gardener who tends to the plants and makes sure there are no bugs or problems causing harm. I see myself as a tool that youth gardeners can use to make space for what they want to grow. There is a saying, “They tried to bury us; they didn’t know we are seeds.” I’m so glad to know that **WE KNOW** we are seeds. In this time of political darkness, the Earth is still the Earth, YUC continues our mission, and we seeds continue to reach for the Light and bring forth good fruit. Stay with us to be part of the bounty.”-Toni Mack



## The Earth, The Wind, The Fire

Patterns: **receive, mend, give, repeat.**



### Water is within and around

Water is a fundamental component of Earth's environment, covering 71% of its surface and existing in various forms like oceans, lakes, rivers, ice, and water vapor in the atmosphere, as well as being essential for life. All of the different forms of water **surrounding us has been, is, and will be—**

When we are born our bodies consist of the most water that we will ever obtain at 78% as we age, that percentage lessens. That water is provided for us for the duration of our lives. Everything from **within has been, is and will be;**

Rest in knowing that everything you need, you have in your possession; despite the circumstances, you have everything that you need.

### The pressure of water and dirt above seeds

The process of planting:

Preparing the soil creates an optimal environment for germination and seedling growth by loosening the soil, improving drainage, adding nutrients, and removing weeds and debris. It is **after we make the choice to accept that we are experiencing hardship that we identify the need for time to adjust to a newer environment. We begin the digging and taking up space for a metaphysical seed. Sowing the seeds in the bed of soil that will mean not going too far under but also not just existing on the surface of this “hardship” we are referring to as “the dirt”, watering, and providing appropriate conditions for germination, including light, warmth, and moisture. Including words of affirmation, removing the known and unknown triggers by loving self and doing specific things that make you happy—allowing the sun to dance across your face. Drinking water, believing in something so that you don’t fall for anything.**

### Trees that share fruit and trees

Fruit is developed beginning with light from the sun, the sun transfers photons and the plants **receives** that energy **mending** with the seed of the leaves of plants called chlorophyll creating sugar. The extra sugar left over is **given** to us as fruit and the cycle continues.

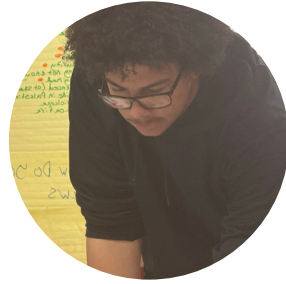
You see the pattern **receive, mend, give, repeat.**





## **Watering Our Flowers Kaylee and Anthony**

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**We spoke with our Youth Leaders, Kaylee and Anthony, about the significance of water and mental health in their lives. These conversations made it clear that we cannot pour from an empty cup. The Youth Leaders emphasized how we each must take care of our mental health and wellness for the betterment of our community overall. They also noted how we need to embody a spirit of fluidity to adapt to new environments, particularly for our seniors preparing for their next stage in life. As they leap into these unfamiliar waters, they will need to keep an eye on their North Star.**

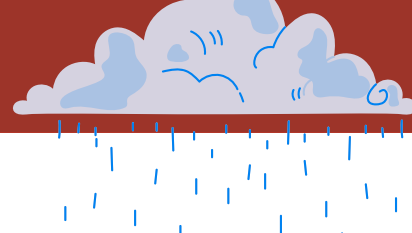
**Kaylee shared the following on preparing to attend the University of Pittsburgh: “There’s a different type of cultural shift compared to Philadelphia. So I just have to maintain who I am, and my morals, and my black excellence that I was raised in, and bring it over there and still manage to understand different cultural shifts, but remain strong in who I am in my own authentic sense. For example, I know there are a lot of white people and they have their events and I’m able to participate in their events, but I don’t have to participate in everything they do.”**

**Focusing on the topic of mental health and wellness within the Black community, Kaylee noted the prevalence of generational trauma and how we are doomed to repeat harmful cycles unless we take accountability and work to do better.**

**“Mental health as a black person is very important; there’s a bunch of generational trauma from my ancestors that’s just carried down into our bloodline that we had to heal from, like, each black household. One thing I’ve been talking about a lot is how black mothers don’t apologize. They’ll do certain things as an apology instead of just taking accountability and saying it; they don’t do that. Generations grow into thinking, I don’t have to apologize, just give me something, that’s unacceptable. That’s a big thing because it lets generations know what’s acceptable or not, and how to express themselves, because we feel big emotions but don’t know how to express them, or knowing how to put them into certain things without the right direction, is kinda like what are we gonna do?”**

**Life’s waters can be tumultuous, but our Youth Leaders are here with a life raft. A reminder, to be fluid like water, remember the importance of empathy, and being true to ourselves. It is through nurturing these qualities that we can blossom in any environment.**



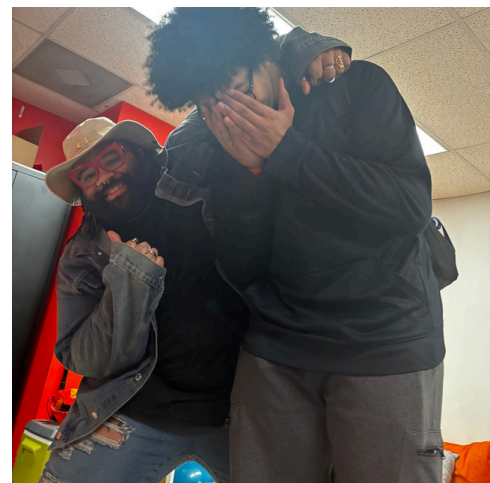
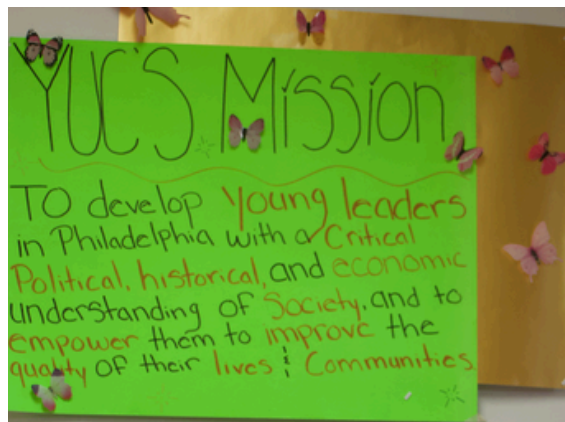


## Watering Our Flowers Kaylee and Anthony



Anthony, YUC senior and burgeoning psych major recounts that “All water is important, to bathe, to drink. Water is important for all people, all animals and all life.” “Water is the most basic level of human necessity. A water bill is almost inhumane because you’re putting a price on something that all life needs to survive.” Anthony, calling in the system of capitalism taxing all humans who utilize water. Furthermore, Sunday, Oct. 27, 2024, marked Philadelphia's 29th-straight day without any measurable rainfall (sprinkles don't count), NBC10 First Alert Weather meteorologist Bill Henley said. That streak of 29 rainless days tied the record -- set way back in 1874 (Stamm, 2024). The impact of rainless days has a trickle down effect on vegetation and water access in the long run for people who do not have access to genetically modified water source. A resource that persists as an anomaly globally.

Anthony goes on to state that “It’s very important to take care of your body and mind because it can affect you in the long run and those around you.” Leaning in further to how the weather and resource conditions within the city of Philadelphia does not only affect climate but those who exist within the sphere of existence. Anthony, reiterates that “It's important that you're capable of being around people and understanding empathy and sympathy. If you aren’t taking care of yourself, you may not show the level of empathy for others that you should.” It is clear here that the YUC youth take hydration and water access serious. The adage that suggests “You must drink water and mind your business” goes beyond a saying people say to be cool or to look hip. It is a real life necessity to have access to water. Some do not know that drinking water alone is considered a privilege.





## SEPTA Route Changes and Budget Requests

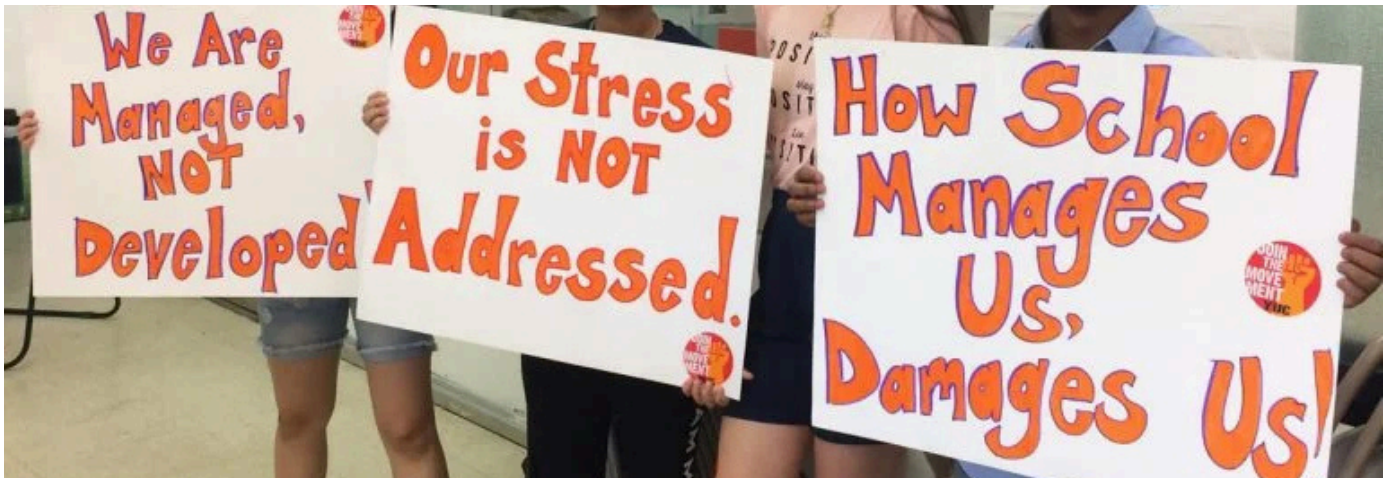


In recent years, SEPTA has made increasingly frequent and expensive funding requests. One notable example was the controversial proposal to support the Sixers' downtown stadium, at an additional cost of \$20–25 million, even though the city had only allocated \$60 million to address the displacement the project would cause. SEPTA also recently spent \$211 million to rename all of its routes, a move that surprised many riders and led to confusion among long-time users trying to locate their usual routes under unfamiliar names.

On top of that, SEPTA received \$643 million in COVID-related relief funding, which has now been cut since the official emergency has ended. With that funding gone, SEPTA is looking to fill the gap through fare hikes and reduced service.

Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives has voted multiple times on SEPTA funding during the current legislative session. Another vote is expected in the coming weeks. However, the Senate did not support the House's previous efforts, according to the Pennsylvania House Democratic Caucus. As this debate continues, the SEPTA Board is scheduled to vote on its budget proposal on June 26, which, if approved, will go into effect on July 1.

## Creating Safer Schools Starts With Us



A new study from the School District of Philadelphia shows what many of us already know: not all students feel safe at school, and the ones who feel least safe are often the ones whose voices go unheard. The Philly School Experience Survey (PSES) collected input from over 50,000 students, and the results were clear. **Safety isn't just about metal detectors or security guards. It's about clean bathrooms, trusted adults, fair rules, and feeling like you belong. Students talked about feeling unsafe in places like bathrooms, hallways, and schoolyards—especially when there aren't enough staff around. They also shared how important it is to have teachers and staff who listen, care, and treat students with respect.**

What stood out the most? Black students, LGBTQ+ students, English Learners, and students with IEPs all reported feeling less safe at school. Schools with older buildings and fewer resources also had lower safety scores. These aren't just numbers—these are real experiences reflecting systemic inequality.

So, what can we do? A lot.

We can amplify the voices of students who are too often ignored. We can organize listening sessions, Create space for storytelling, and make sure the district knows exactly how we feel. We can push for justice, not more policing. That means training for teachers on de-escalation, more mental health support, and rules that are fair and consistently enforced.

We can also fight for better funding for schools that are falling apart. If we want safe schools, we need buildings that aren't crumbling and staff who want to stay. YUC can lead the charge by pushing for investment where it's needed most.

**And maybe most importantly, we can build the kind of community we want to see—through peer support, mentorship, and organizing. Safety starts with belonging, and belonging starts with us.**

**Let's keep speaking out, showing up, and demanding the schools we deserve.**



## Catch The Fire

**Written By:  
Sonia Sanchez**

### Catch the Fire

(Sometimes I wonder:  
What to say to you now  
in the soft afternoon air as you  
hold us all in a single death?)  
I say—  
Where is your fire?  
I say—  
Where is your fire?  
You got to find it and pass it on.  
You got to find it and pass it on  
from you to me from me to her from her  
to him from the son to the father from the  
brother to the sister from the daughter to  
the mother from the mother to the child.  
Where is your fire? I say where is your fire?  
Can't you smell it coming out of our past?  
The fire of living...not dying  
The fire of loving...not killing  
The fire of Blackness...not gangster shadows.  
Where is our beautiful fire that gave light  
to the world?  
The fire of pyramids;  
The fire that burned through the holes of  
slavships and made us breathe;  
Advertisement

The fire that made guts into chitterlings;  
The fire that took rhythms and made jazz;  
The fire of sit-ins and marches that made  
us jump boundaries and barriers;  
The fire that took street talk sounds  
and made righteous imhotep raps.  
Where is your fire, the torch of life  
full of Nzingha and Nat Turner and Garvey  
and DuBois and Fannie Lou Hamer and Martin  
and Malcolm and Mandela.

Sister/Sistah Brother/Brotha Come/Come

CATCH YOUR FIRE...DON'T KILL  
HOLD YOUR FIRE...DON'T KILL  
LEARN YOUR FIRE...DON'T KILL  
BE THE FIRE...DON'T KILL

Catch the fire and burn with eyes  
that see our souls:

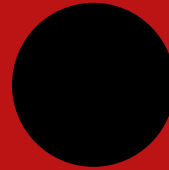
WALKING.  
SINGING.  
BUILDING.  
LAUGHING.  
LEARNING.  
LOVING.  
TEACHING.  
BEING.

Hey, Brother/Brotha.  
Sister/Sista.  
Here is my hand.  
Catch the fire...and live.  
live.  
livelive.  
livelive.  
live.  
live.





...Check Out YUC Events and follow the YUC Instagram and FB page for new and upcoming events. Events will be added and updated each newsletter.





## Logo Painting Workshop

YUC and The Young Artist Program collaborated on a 3 part series painting the new YUC logo. The logo painting workshops became a space where we painted the new YUC logo, creating safety and belonging while learning a new skill. All in attendance, talked, and celebrated joy. There was painting, music, food, conversation and cinematography centering overcoming oppressive realities; The room was a buzz!!!! Join us for future collaborations with The Young Artist Program and more. We have nothing to lose but our chains.





## Generational Conversations

05/15/25

4:00PM

@YUC 520 N Columbus  
Blvd Suite 205  
Philadelphia, PA, United  
States, Pennsylvania  
19123



Bohiti has explored a variety of art mediums throughout his lifetime, which has enabled him to be connected to a multitude of organizers, artists, and community organizations throughout the world.

Stephanie Renee is a witty wordslinger, melodic alchemist, lens crafter, molder of young minds and a voice that moved units.

Black Ice is an internationally acclaimed, Emmy, TONY & Peabody award-winning Poet/creative writer

Generational Conversations is a way to create a safe space for our youth to work intergenerationally in order to discuss uplifting themselves, as they build cultural movements. This month, we will discuss the Power of the Pen. The Power of the Pen is your voice. An object to release, for all inner turmoil, and a tool to fight against those who would harm you.



@YUCPhilly



@Youth United For Change



yucyouth@gmail.com



<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1353893434709?aff=oddtcreator>

**YOUTH  
UNITED FOR CHANGE**





## OUR PARTNERS

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# galaei

## Featured Artist: Gabby Rodriguez

Gabby Rodriguez (they/them) is a young Latinx multimedia creator and artist based in Philadelphia. Their journey began at the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), now enrolled at Drexel University as a Liberty Scholar.



### **Education:**

First Year Student at Drexel University  
Expected Graduation Date: 2029  
Major: Psychology  
Minor: Fine Arts

### **To purchase:**

Email: [rodriguezkaitlyn016@gmail.com](mailto:rodriguezkaitlyn016@gmail.com)  
Or Text: 2155314676

Tote Bags: Sliding Scale \$35 - \$45

Large Prints (11x14): Sliding Scale \$20 - \$30



## YAP! Philly

The Young Artist Program is a free arts and social justice program centering BIPOC lgbtq+ people ages 14-25 in Philly. We offer a safe and nurturing youth-led space for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ identifying youth, ages 14-25, to learn and grow with community-building art workshops, access to art supplies and resources, snacks, and opportunities to engage with activism.



### Get Connected:



[LinkTree](#)



[@theyoungartistprogram](#)



[theyoungartistprogram@gmail.com](mailto:theyoungartistprogram@gmail.com)

**YAP!YAP!YAP!YAP!**

**YAP!YAP!YAP!YAP!**

**YAP!YAP!YAP!YAP!**

**YAP!YAP!YAP!YAP!**

**YAP!YAP!YAP!YAP!**

**YAP!YAP!YAP!YAP!**

**YAP!YAP!YAP!YAP!**

**Kris Hill** They/she (Co-founder, Co-director, Lead Teaching Artist)

Artist Mediums: Acrylic painting, Jewelry making & Digital arts

**Ivy-yon Jackson** She/they (Co-founder, Co-director, Lead Teaching Artist)

Artist Mediums: Embroidery, sewing, digital art, acrylic painting, collage

**Gabby Rodriguez** They/them (Lead Teaching Artist)

Artist Mediums: Ceramics, photography, filmmaking acrylic and oil painting



## The GALAEI Organization: FLUID programming



**Our goal is simple—we wish to help our community become more resilient while navigating health disparities caused by systemic conditions by guiding a youth-centered space to intimately grieve, heal, create, and grow.**

Project **FLUID** youth is a youth/young adult-directed, youth and young adult-centered advisory committee for Galaei's **SPLAT** Program. **FLUID Youth Project** uplifts queer and trans, black, latine, and POC advocacy, expression, art, and representation as a way to navigate challenges faced by our LGBTQIA+ communities. **FLUID** is an acronym that creates, facilitates, and collaborates on groups "For Learning Understanding In Development."

### Mindfulness Mondays

A calming peer-led space for young adults to practice self-care, connect with others, and build emotional resilience.

📅 3rd Mondays, 6–8 PM | Facilitator: Gaia Smith

### Wednesday Wellness

A wellness-focused group for young adults to set health goals and explore topics like smoking cessation, HIV advocacy, fitness, and nutrition.

📅 3rd Wednesdays, 12–3 PM | Facilitator: Mars

### Upcoming: FLUID Launch Brunch

Celebrate the launch of FLUID with brunch, drag, poetry, art, and free resources—part of the Free Library's PRIDE series!

📍 Parkway Central Library,  
Skyline Room (4th Floor)

📅 May 3, 12–4 PM

🔗 Sign up: [linktr.ee/FLUIDPhilly](https://linktr.ee/FLUIDPhilly)



### Facing Grief Fridays

A peer support circle using art, writing, and open discussion to help young adults process grief and build community.

📅 3rd Fridays, 3:30–6 PM | Facilitator: Ava Campbell

## The Mastermind Cooperative



@themastermindcoop  
\*/themastermindcoop

The **Mastermind Cooperative (TMC)** is a grassroots organization leading innovative programs for healing, justice, and sustainability.

TMC's **Project Phoenix** tackles cycles of trauma and incarceration through healing-centered workshops, violence prevention, workforce development, and access to mental wellness resources. Their **Urban Green Resilience Hubs**, created in partnership with the Office of Sustainability and the TTF Watershed Partnership, bring climate justice, green jobs, and food sovereignty to underserved neighborhoods, especially engaging youth and returning citizens in hands-on environmental work.

TMC also runs the **ReHuman Podcast**, elevating the voices of justice-impacted individuals to challenge stigma and drive systemic change, and hosts youth leadership and entrepreneurship programs at Lonnie Young Recreation Center.

In addition to these core initiatives, TMC provides **free meals, digital skills training, and pro-bono support for community groups** led by formerly incarcerated organizers. From tech certifications to mutual aid to climate resilience, TMC shows how bottom-up leadership can build lasting transformation.

Learn more at [themastermindcoop.com](http://themastermindcoop.com) and join us in celebrating community-led power!



# yuc PROGRAMMING



**TUESDAYS  
4P-6P**  
**POLITICAL  
EDUCATION &  
TEEN OUTREACH  
PROGRAM**

**WEDNESDAYS  
4P-6P**  
**TEEN  
OUTREACH  
PROGRAM &  
GREAT MINDS  
THINK**

**THURSDAYS  
4P-6P**  
**POLITICAL STUDY  
& OPEN OFFICE  
HOURS**



## Mission

Youth United for Change (YUC) develops young leaders in Philadelphia with a critical political, historical, and economic understanding of society, and empowers them to improve the quality of their lives and communities.





## Wyman's Teen Outreach Program® TOP®

Wyman's evidence-based Teen Outreach Program® (TOP®) is a positive youth development program designed to help teens build educational success, and leadership skills.

Teens are better able to have healthy behaviors and relationships as they navigate challenges during the teenage years—a time when decisions matter.



### YUC'S MISSION :

To develop young leaders in Philadelphia with a critical political, historical, and economic understanding of society, and to empower them to improve the quality of their lives and communities.

**CONTACT CELESTE,  
TOP® COORDINATOR  
TO BRING TOP® TO  
YOUR YOUTH**

[CELESTE@YUCYOUTH.ORG](mailto:CELESTE@YUCYOUTH.ORG)

**TOP** Teen  
Outreach  
W Y M A N Program

"YUC HAS HELPED ME GROW AS A PERSON  
SO I GET EXCITED TO BE HERE AND FEEL  
REAL COMFORTABLE HERE"

- MIYA



"THIS IS A SAFE COMMUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
TO MAKE A CHANGE IN THE WORLD BY SPEAKING  
UP AND MAKING SURE MY THOUGHTS AND  
FEELINGS ARE HEARD,"

- NYMIRA







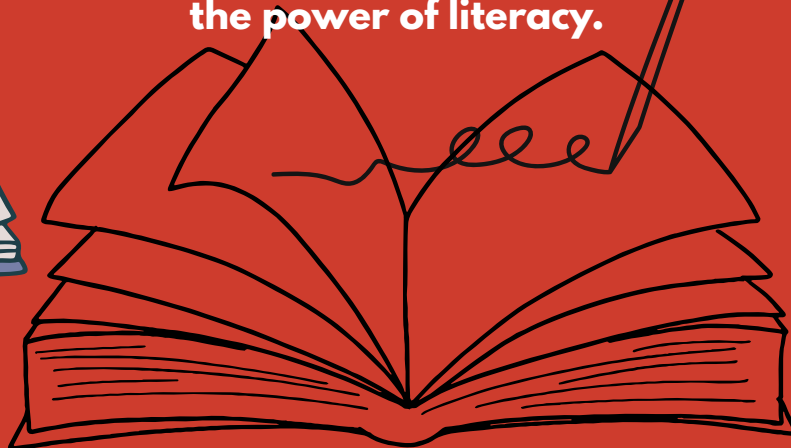
# Liberty In Literacy



The Liberty In Literacy Program continues to accept youth who want to build power on a rolling basis. For more information on the Liberty In Literacy Program, please contact Jaelyn Holland at [jaelyn@yucyouth.org](mailto:jaelyn@yucyouth.org).



The "Liberty in Literacy" curriculum has been developed to assist students with reading comprehension, developmental reading, listening, decrypting, writing, and effective communication. Literacy, competence, and knowledge to articulate and advocate for the truth are liberating. It is mentally and physically freeing to comprehend the power of literacy.





JOIN NOW!!!



**YOUTH  
UNITED FOR CHANGE**

Mental Health Professional

**Jai Thompson, M.F.A**

**For Booking: 215-910-0425**

- Healing justice aims to transform, intervene, and respond to generational trauma and violence

#### Practices

- Healing justice practices include collective care and healing, memory work, and ancestral technologies.

visit our website: [youthunitedforchange.org](http://youthunitedforchange.org)

**HEALING  
JUSTICE**





## Great Minds Think: Youth Reflections

YUC Youth Leadership Team members initiated a youth participatory action research project to learn about attitudes and feelings toward the perceived impact of social systems in their lives. Social systems were defined as the network of institutions, individuals, and group thoughts, concepts, and practices that determine social structure, and social norms.

**How does learning how to conduct research help young people build the power to make change in their schools/communities?**



**If young people know how to conduct research, then they will be able to look into specific struggles or disparities in their community or others.**

- Christopher

**I believe that if we can ask the right questions, we can get to know the issues that young people face in their schools and communities, which can inform the YUC campaigns and create change that way.**

- Luis



**Why did you Join This Data Project?**

**I've been wanting to make a change, and the school I go to is too far away to be able to stay at every other club, so now, from home, I know I can be useful; it's just a lot more flexible for me.**

- Isabela/Olivia



**I just wanted to get back involved with YUC, and when I saw this opportunity was available, I jumped into it.**

- Kaylee

Youth United for Change (YUC) wants to learn what African American and Latino youth aged 15-24 living in Philadelphia think about their strengths and needs related to civic engagement, education, employment, housing, mental health, and public safety. This "Great Minds Think" survey was designed to help the YUC know more about your thoughts and opinions. The responses you provide to this survey will be anonymous and will be used to inform and strengthen YUC programming and campaigns. Some of the questions in this survey may touch on sensitive topics. Your comfort and privacy are very important to us. Please know that you are not required to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. You can skip any questions at any time without it affecting your participation. Your responses, whether partial or complete, will remain confidential.

The survey should take 10-20 minutes. Please contact [yucyouth@gmail.com](mailto:yucyouth@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

Thank you for taking time to share your thoughts on YUC's "Great Minds Think" survey. Please take your time. Your opinions matter! Your thoughtful response helps us know what our peers are thinking about our lives and about the systems that impact our lives.




## The Team




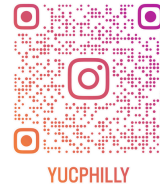
**Toni Mack (She/Her), Celeste, Jai Thompson (They/Them)**  
**Jaelyn Neal-Holland, Emmanuel Jones, Naila Mattison**

## Check Us Out On Our Socials

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 (215) 423-9588

 [yucyouth@gmail.com](mailto:yucyouth@gmail.com)



## Mission

Youth United for Change (YUC) develops young leaders in Philadelphia with a critical political, historical, and economic understanding of society, and empowers them to improve the quality of their lives and communities.

## Our Vision

To develop the leadership of youth from communities of color who are capable of leading and governing all of society, using grassroots organizing as the training vehicle. To build an organization powerful enough to help create community-based power focused on maintaining the right of Black and Brown people to control their own lives. To produce leaders who can organize their communities to change the structure of society toward justice for all people.



## One Shared Drop

by Emmanuel Jones



Water sustains life. It has shaped civilizations and geography alike. Yet when abundant, we take it for granted; when scarce, it becomes priceless.

In that way, water mirrors other essential resources—land, healthcare, food, and rights. In the U.S., many of us have grown up with easy access to clean water, affordable groceries, and basic freedoms. But that comfort breeds complacency. Often times we forget how fragile these systems of access are—until they begin to fail.

Today, we're facing rising living costs, stagnant wages, and shrinking safety nets. Hope can be hard to find at the metaphysical top—but I see it growing at the grassroots. Youth are organizing, learning, and sharing resource with one another. Much like water flowing around obstacles, communities are adapting and responding with resilience.

When one system fails, others emerge: pop-up markets replace faltering stores, co-ops fill healthcare gaps, and mutual-aid groups offer child care or food distribution. Every shared ride, loaned tool, or gifted meal is a thread in the fabric that turns survival into solidarity.

These bottom-up solutions may not make headlines, but they carry a quiet power. They remind us that collective action isn't theory—it's daily practice. A community garden, a pantry shelf, a neighborhood teach-in—all signal a refusal to let crisis define us.

So how do we nurture this movement? First, by recognizing it—lifting up the neighbor running a seed exchange or the teen hosting a community class. Second, by investing—offering time, tools, or a few dollars to local efforts. And third, by building bridges across divides—rural and urban, old and young, left and right.

Water sustains the body. Relationships sustain our society. When rights and resources ebb, it is our solidarity that must surge.

Together, we shape the future—one shared drop at a time.

*Thank You*