

May 4th, 2017
ICA GreenRise
4750 N. Sheridan Rd
Chicago, IL

My Soul Cries Out: Stop! **A New Community Play & Tool for Social Change**

5PM: Community & Culturally Centered Development Discussion

This moderated discussion will provide context to the Fifth City neighborhood where Denise Gathings has her roots. One motivating question is "*What kind of impact can community driven cultural initiatives have when combating issues like Chicago violence?*"

Opening speakers will include:

- Denise Gathings, Writer, Director, Producer, *My Soul Cries Out: Stop!*
- Lillie Fox, Co-Founder, 5th City Redevelopment Corporation
- Michael (MJ) Johnson, UIC College of Urban Planning & Public Affairs student
- Ralph Edwards, Program Manager & Community Organizer, ONE Northside and Cease Fire of Uptown-Rogers Park

Moderator: Terry Bergdall

6PM to 7PM Dinner Break
Food for Purchase Available in Lumumba Room

7PM: *My Soul Cries Out: Stop!* One Hour Preview Performance

My Soul Cries Out: Stop! is a grassroots initiative that seeks to spark community transformation throughout Chicago. This play was written, directed and produced by Denise Gathings, a Chicago Police Officer and lifelong resident of the Fifth City neighborhood in East Garfield Park.

The stories in Gathings' play draw directly from her day-to-day interactions with local youth as a community police officer. The raw, powerful scenes authentically capture the pressures on the street that too often build to violence and painful aftermath.

A short group dialogue will follow the performance.

ICA and the Fifth City Community

In the early 1960s, the ICA moved into the Fifth City neighborhood of Chicago in order to facilitate 'a model community' in which all members cared for each other, regardless of economic circumstances.

The Fifth City Project set out to reconceive the nature of community organization and development. From the start, the project aimed to be a replicable demonstration of the capacity of local people to transform their own communities.

In the decades that followed, it would become the basis for thousands of grassroots initiatives in community transformation around the world.

The following is an excerpt, written in 2000 by Ruth Carter, the dynamic former director of the Fifth City Preschool, from the book *The Circle of Life*.

Who Would Have Gessed

In the early 1960s, I was a mother with small children, and I was eager for them to have the best chance in life. I shared that concern with others in my neighborhood, and we decided to do something about it. We heard that there was an idea to organize some kind of day care in our neighborhood, and we were invited to be a part of it.



Ruth Carter and Fifth City Preschoolers

I had never done planning and I was surprised when I was asked to be on the organizing team. It was a big job. We interviewed many of our neighbors, asking if they were interested in having a day care. Many people said yes, and we signed their kids up. We asked several of the parents to help us.

We worked with the staff of the Ecumenical Institute to develop the curriculum. We knew that our kids were smart and that with help, we could be teachers. In those days, there were no books to tell us how to set up a school for infants and toddlers. This was all before Headstart and there were not even guidelines for care for three and four year olds. We wanted to care for all the children, so we created our own road map.

We had curriculum planning sessions, we wrote songs, we designed a playground, we asked for donations, and we decided to have uniforms. We were creating all of this from scratch! It was great to have community people and volunteers from outside the neighborhood working together to do all this.

We did amazing things with those kids! We gave them lots of love and attention. We read to them, sang with them, did role plays, and finger painted with chocolate pudding. We took them on field trips. One day we went to O'Hare Airport and toured a plane!

One of our favorite songs was about our own neighborhood and the world:

I love Fifth City,
I love the planet Earth,
I love this day in time,
I love the universe,
I'm always ready, to see this world of ours,
I tell you man, I like it here, I tell you man, I like it here.
(Boom Di Yada, Boom Di Yada, Boom Di Yada,
Boom Di Yada,)

After all this hard work and fun focused on our own kids, you can imagine how surprised we were when we were asked to come to New York City to give our advice to a group that was planning a new television show. We went and had a wonderful time telling those folks what we had done with small kids and how we had done it. Their show became "Sesame Street."

Sesame Street has just celebrated twenty-five years and our preschool is about to be thirty-five years old. The kids still keep us young and eager to learn.

— Ruth Carter



In 2014 Ruth Carter (1936 - 2013) was honored with a portion of Trumbull Ave being named after her.

CHICAGO IS A WONDERFUL PLACE

Tune: Washington Square

Chicago is a wonderful place,
The West Side's where we live;
Chicago is a wonderful place,
The South Side's where we live.

So sing all you people, life is here to love;
So sing all you people, life is here to live.

Chicago is a wonderful place,
The North Side's where we live;
Chicago is a wonderful place,
The City's where we live. (3 times)

A Special Thanks from ICA to Denise Gathings and U.B.U. Theater Production!

★ U.B.U. Theater Production
Presents



My Soul Cries Out Stop!