

# LESSONS FROM THE 1963 BOYCOTT

The Struggle For Quality Education In Chicago Then And Now



## Lessons from the 1963 Boycott: The Struggle for Quality Education in Chicago Then and Now

On October 22, 1963, more than 200,000 Chicago Public Schools students boycotted school to protest segregation and inequality, in one of the largest civil rights demonstrations in Chicago's history. Thank you for joining us to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 Boycott of Chicago Public Schools and examine it in light of the contemporary fight for public education.

Tuesday, October 22nd, 6-8 p.m.  
The DuSable Museum of African American History

### Schedule

6:00pm - Reception

6:30pm - Introductory remarks and welcome by Pemon Rami

6:35pm - Introduction of film by Gordon Quinn

6:40pm - '63 *Boycott* Work in Progress Screening

7:00pm - Panel moderated by Tracye Matthews

7:45pm - Q and A

8:05pm - "High School Training Ground" performed by Malcolm London

8:10pm - Closing remarks by Tracye Matthews

THE PROGRAM

## The Film

'63 *Boycott* chronicles the Chicago School boycott of 1963 when more than 200,000 students protested segregation and inequality in Chicago Public Schools. The Kartemquin film features then and now interviews with organizers and participants of the boycott and never-released 16mm footage of the march and student interviews. '63 *Boycott* and its companion website, [63boycott.com](http://63boycott.com), will provide a modern perspective on the impact and legacy of this forgotten history 50 years later as it reconnects the participants to each other and the event itself. Directed by [Gordon Quinn](#). Produced by [Tracye Matthews](#) and [Zak Piper](#) and [Gordon Quinn](#). Edited by [Matt Lauterbach](#) Associate Producers [Rachel Dickson](#) and [John Fecile](#).

[Did you or a family member participate in the 1963 Chicago Public School Boycott?](#) Boycotters are being located through the film's interactive website [www.63boycott.com](http://www.63boycott.com), where they can identify and tag themselves in over 500 stills pulled from the film, as well as upload their own images and stories for possible inclusion in the documentary film now in production. Kartemquin invites those that participated in the 1963 Chicago Public School boycott to contact us through the website, by sending an email to [63boycott@kartemquin.com](mailto:63boycott@kartemquin.com), or calling us at 773-413-9263.



## Speakers

**Pemon Rami** is the Director of Educational Services and Public Programs at the DuSable Museum of African American History. Rami is a producer, director, actor and the first African American film casting director in Chicago. Pemon was a high school student leader of the 1968 Chicago student boycott.

**Gordon Quinn** is the Artistic Director and founder of Kartemquin Films, a 47-year-old media organization, and the 2007 recipient of the MacArthur award for Creative and Effective Institutions. His documentaries include *Home for Life*, *Golub*, *Hoop Dreams*, *The New Americans*, *Five Girls*, *In the Family*, *Typeface*, *Milking the Rhino*, *At the Death House Door*, and *The Interrupters*. Recently he directed *Prisoner of Her Past* and *A Good Man*, a film about Bill T. Jones for *American Masters*. He has been producing documentaries and mentoring filmmakers for five decades. A passionate advocate for independent media makers, he is a noted expert on issues of fair use, ethics and storytelling in documentary. He was 21 years old when he filmed the 16mm footage upon which *'63 Boycott* is based.

**Tracye Matthews** is a historian, curator, and documentary filmmaker. She is currently the associate director of the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago, where she served as a Mellon Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in 2004-2005. Matthews is the co-producer of *'63 Boycott*.

**Malcolm London**, called the Gil-Scott Heron of this generation by Cornel West, is a young Chicago poet, activist & educator. Winner of Louder Than A Bomb Youth Poetry Festival 2011 and member of UCAN's National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention. Malcolm is a teaching artist through Northwestern Bluhm Legal Clinic & Young Chicago Authors introducing poetry workshops and performances linked to juvenile & social justice to hundreds of youth.



## Panel

In 1963, [Rosie Simpson](#) was the mother of six young children and a leader in education reform in Chicago. She is believed to have coined the phrase “Willis Wagons” to describe the trailers that then-superintendent of schools Benjamin Willis set up for black children instead of sending them to white schools. She was one of the lead organizers of the 1963 Boycott and went on to work for the Packing House Workers Union, The Woodlawn Organization and the Urban League.

[Fannie Rushing](#) served as a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) field secretary and Freedom School teacher from 1962 to 1966. Rushing is currently an associate professor in the Department of History at Benedictine University and the Co-Chair of the Chicago SNCC History Project.

[Timuel Black](#) is a revered educator, political activist, community leader, oral historian, and philosopher, born in the south and raised in Chicago. He is a pioneer in the independent black political movement and coined the phrase “plantation politics.” Timuel Black is among the original organizers of the 1963 Boycott of the Chicago Public Schools. He was chosen to organize the Chicago contingent of the two “Freedom Trains” for the 1963 March on Washington For Jobs and Freedom.



**Elizabeth Todd-Breland** is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her teaching and research focuses on 20<sup>th</sup>-century U.S. urban and social life, African American history, and the history of education. Her book manuscript, tentatively titled *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Post-Civil Rights Chicago*, analyzes transformations in Black politics, shifts in modes of education organizing, and the racial politics of education reform from the late 1960s to the present.

**Karen Lewis** was elected president of the 30,000-member Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) in 2010. A member of CTU since 1988, Lewis taught high school chemistry in the Chicago Public Schools for 22 years. The only National Board Certified Teacher to lead a U.S. labor union, she also serves as executive vice president to the Illinois Federation of Teachers and as vice president of the American Federation of Teachers. In 2012, Lewis led the CTU in the first Chicago teachers strike in 25 years.

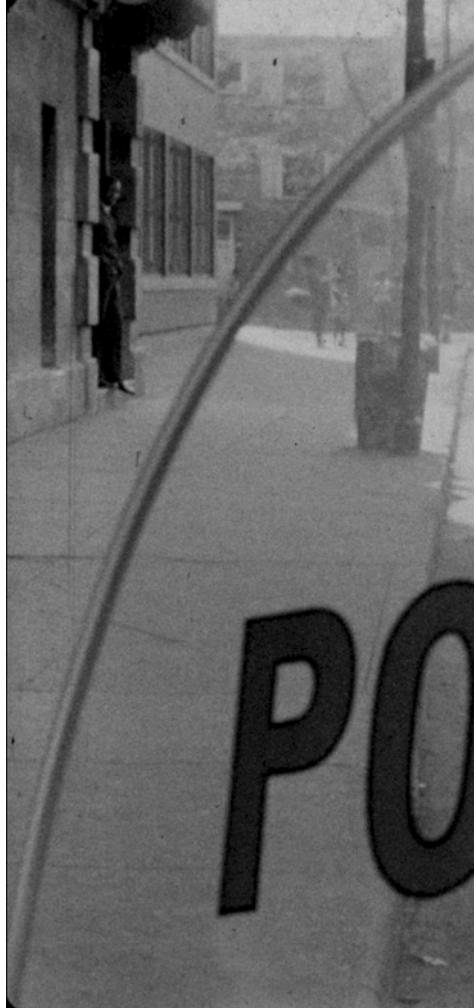
**Jasson Perez** is a Chicago-born organizer and former student of Chicago Public Schools. As a high school dropout and formerly incarcerated youth, Perez discovered on a personal level what's at stake when schools become a pipeline to prison. Perez worked as a labor organizer with SEIU Local 73, working with the support staff at Chicago Public Schools in the fight against school closings since 2004 when CPS announced Renaissance 2010. He currently serves as Co-Chair of BYP100, Black Youth Project's nationwide network of one hundred young black activists working to build a transformative justice movement that centers on a feminist, queer, differently-abled, and decolonial praxis.





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## Lessons From the 1963 Boycott Event Sponsors

Event sponsored by Black Star Project, the Center for the Study of Race, Politics & Culture at the University of Chicago, Chicago Area Women's History Council, Chicago Teachers Union, Crossroads Fund, the DuSable Museum of African American History, Empathy Educates, Human Rights Program at University of Chicago, Kartemquin Films, Parents for Teachers, and Save Our Schools

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[63boycott.com](http://63boycott.com)





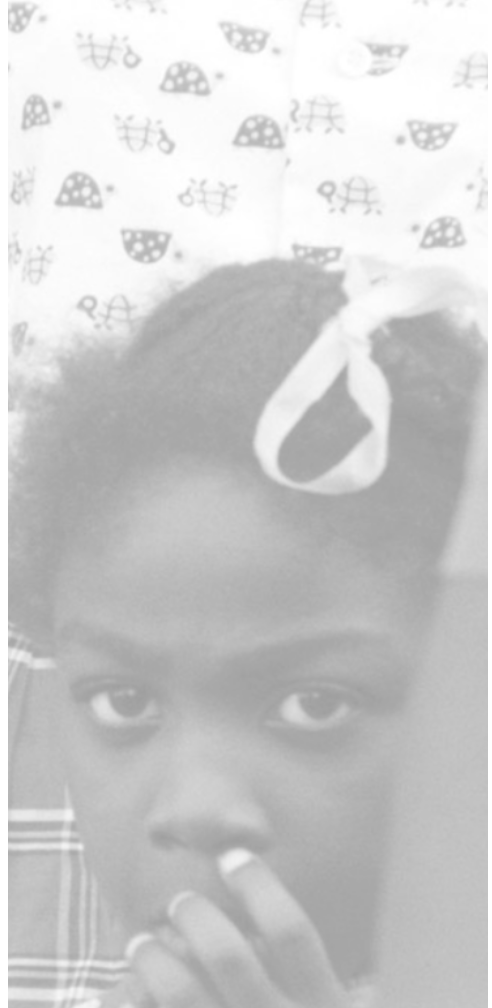
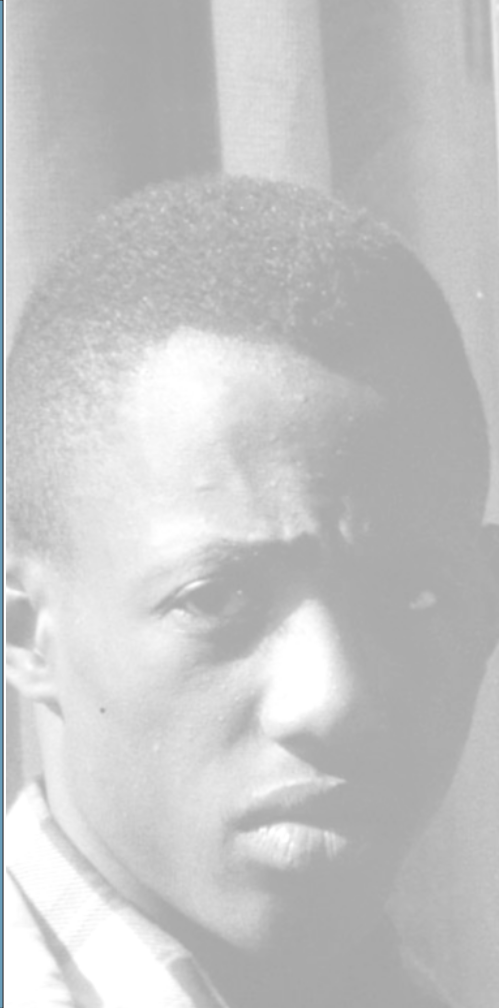


50 Years Later  
We March On

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## Credits and Acknowledgements

The anniversary event is presented by

Kartemquin Films, the DuSable Museum of African American History,  
The Center for the Study of Race, Politics & Culture at the University of Chicago

### 1963 Boycott Organizers and Participants

#### Event Coordination

Rachel Dickson

Associate Producer and Outreach Coordinator of *'63 Boycott*

#### Special Thanks to Tireless Volunteers

Bob George and Sarah Simmons

#### Also Kartemquin Interns

Arpita Aneja, Alexandra Cox, Dain Evans, Kazuko Golden,  
Marriah Kern, Stacy Moon, Alexander Skalomenos, William Thwaites

#### Program Design and Production

Betsy L. Angert

AngertAesthetics

#### Kartemquin Films

Kartemquin Films is a home for independent media makers who seek to create social change through film,  
with a noted tradition of nurturing emerging talent. Kartemquin is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization.