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## **CDF Freedom Schools® Will Create Signature Teacher Training Pedagogy with the Help of American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellow**

*CDF's new ACLS Fellow will reimagine what a culturally responsive teacher training looks like from the Freedom Schools' perspective*

**Washington, D.C. September 14, 2021** – The *CDF Freedom Schools* program has received the opportunity to create its own Teacher Training Institute through the leadership of its ACLS Leading Edge Fellow, Dr. Lauren Lefty, who will build out this newest facet of the *CDF Freedom Schools* program.

The *CDF Freedom Schools* Teacher Training Institute will build on the valuable learnings *Freedom Schools* has cultivated through over 25 years of training servant leaders – both young adults and community leaders – and implementing a research-based, high-quality, and multicultural educational model. The Teacher Training Institute will offer new audiences culturally relevant and inclusive training models on anti-racist and culturally relevant program operation.

“Dr. Lefty's skillset and passion for teacher education and civil rights will support us in reimagining quality professional development opportunities for teachers,” said Dr. Kristal Moore Clemons, National Director of *CDF Freedom Schools*, Children's Defense Fund. “Her wealth of scholarly research, experience doing archival research, and ability to connect the dots for teachers made her the ideal candidate. I look forward to all she will contribute to the team and to the development of the teacher training institute.”

ACLS Leading Edge Fellow Dr. Lauren Lefty holds a PhD from New York University in the History of Education. Her background spans a multitude of experiences including K-12 educator, education policymaker, and Mellon Fellow at the Museum of the City of New York. Dr. Lefty will be responsible for carrying out research and strategic planning to create this new initiative, engaging education stakeholders in utilizing the *CDF Freedom Schools* model as a culturally relevant pedagogical practice for teachers and leaders in various school districts, and creating and publishing teacher training materials. Her work to build out this new program will ultimately contribute to *CDF Freedom Schools*' wide-scale efforts to advance literacy learning grounded in culturally relevant and anti-racist pedagogies; provide spaces for affirming children and families' histories and racial and ethnic affiliations; develop sociopolitical consciousness among the nation's children and teachers; engage in social action aimed at improving communities; and increase the cultural proficiency of the nation's workforce.

“I am honored to be part of the effort to bring the wisdom and spirit of the *CDF Freedom Schools* to educators across the country, especially at this moment when social justice curriculums are coming under renewed attack,” said Dr. Lefty. “Giving teachers the tools to provide our nation's students with the culturally responsive, enriching, and anti-racist curriculums they deserve is crucial to the ongoing effort to achieve a more equitable society. This fellowship also offers a unique space to connect academic scholarship with everyday classroom practice, reflecting the kind of public humanities work I aspire to in my career as a scholar in the public service.”

Dr. Lefty is the second fellow sponsored by ACLS to work on special projects at CDF. Dr. Loy Azalia joined CDF's policy team in August 2020 as a Mellon-ACLS Public Fellow. As a Senior Research Associate, Dr. Azalia is responsible for a portfolio of research activities, statistical analyses and presentation of data on children and families, as well as spearheading the production of flagship publications – including [CDF's annual State of America's Children report](#) – and developing new research

products related to CDF's policy priorities. Her work touches a multitude of the issue areas our policy team focuses on including child poverty, child health, early childhood care and development, education, child welfare and mental health, juvenile justice, immigration, and gun violence prevention. Dr. Azalia holds a PhD in Development and Public Policy from Howard University.

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[The Children's Defense Fund \(CDF\)](#) 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.