

# FY15 AFT Education Impact Report



**About Face Theatre  
Education Staff**

**Education & Outreach Director**

Ali Hoefnagel

**Education Associate**

Kieran Kredell

**About Face Theatre Staff**

**Artistic Director**

Andrew Volkoff

**Managing Director**

Dean Carpenter

**Associate Producer**

Biz Wells

**Development Director**

Benjamin Sprunger

**Marketing Coordinator**

Shea Coffman

# About Face Youth Theatre



*"...the conversations  
launched on this stage are  
meant to continue."*

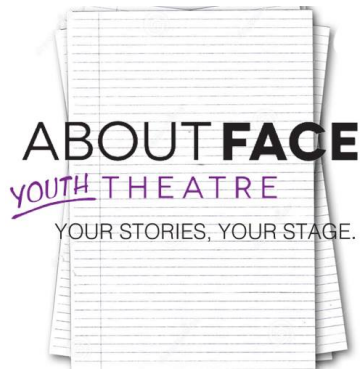
**-LAWRENCE BOMMER,  
STAGE & CINEMA**

# About Face Theatre: Education

*About Face Theatre creates exceptional, innovative, and adventurous plays to advance the national dialogue on gender and sexual identity, and to challenge and entertain audiences in Chicago, across the country, and around the world.*



To further AFT's mission and advance dialogues regarding sexual and gender identities, About Face Theatre's Education Department offers four main programs: **Outreach, Interaction, Youth Task Force & About Face Youth Theatre.**



# AFYT BY THE NUMBERS

About Face Youth Theatre is an identity-affirming theatre activism program. LGBTQIA youth and their allies ages 14-23 explore and expand the boxes we use to define our intricate intersections of race, nationality, gender, and sexuality.

21

**Number of youth participants in 2015**

19

**Average age of participants**

67

**% of participants that identify as POC**

38

**% of participants that identify as transgender/gender non-conforming**

46

**% of participants that are current high school students**

31

**% of participants that are current college students**

## What does AFYT mean to you *as an artist/activist?*

94

% of participants agreed/strongly agreed they have a stronger sense of their own point of view as an artist and activist after working with AFYT this year, and feel they can more confidently make artistic choices that reflect this point of view and their own unique voice.

100

% of participants strongly agreed they will continue to make choices outside of AFYT that express their own artistic and activist point of view.



“I can honestly say that being a member of this ensemble has shaped me into the performing artist I am today. If it wasn't for AFYT, I would be lost.”  
-Donny, AFYT member, age 23

“I had questions about my gender identity and being part of a queer youth theatre has helped me discover who I am, and my calling, therefore making me a better actor in the process”  
-Isis, AFYT member, age 18

“I learned about queer history, something I wasn't consciously aware of before and now I find myself an activist in my everyday life. I'm much more aware now about topics in the queer community and have spoken out about it whether it be at home or at school”  
-Sandy, AFYT member, age 16





“I have learned to love myself, be open about who I am, and have given my family a window to learn to respect and love me and folks of all kinds.”

-Liam, AFYT member, age 20

“[Before AFYT] I didn’t have any space where I could connect with other queer people. AFYT is more than a community or safe space; it is a family based on acceptance and respect. There’s nothing more empowering.

-Jac, AFYT member, age 17

“I’ve made family here and my own family isn’t supportive of me so having them has helped me a lot. I love it here.”

-Elliott, AFYT member, age 17



## What does AFYT mean to you *as an individual?*

73

% of participants agreed or strongly agreed they have improved their self management skills after working with AFYT.

82

% of participants strongly agreed the self management skills they gained though AFYT will carry over into life at school, work, and home.

82

% of participants agreed or strongly agreed they have developed and maintained positive and supportive relationships with their fellow ensemble members.

100

% of participants strongly agreed the relationship-building skills they developed with AFYT will carry over into their relationships at school, work, and home.

# FIFTEEN BREATHS

## 15TH ANNIVERSARY YOUTH ENSEMBLE SHOW

AFYT's 15th anniversary show followed the stories of two queer strangers: one older, one younger, both isolated within their own communities. *Fifteen Breaths* is a poignant, radical, and relevant tale about finding connections across generations, and the importance of safe, brave spaces.



Chicago neighborhoods reached: **Lincoln Park, Humboldt Park, Ravenswood and Uptown**

Number of performances: **8**

Number of audience members reached: **452**

### *The Press*

"A vibrant piece that celebrates the identities of those who too often are pushed into the margins"

-Loy Webb, *Newcity Chicago*

"*Fifteen Breaths* stands out for its incredible use of beat poetry, witty dialogue, and unconventional structure."

-Andrea Pikscher, *Buzz On Stage*

"Truly a brave venture...Edgy and artful, boundary pushing, but with one foot firmly planted on the ground, *Fifteen Breaths* took my breath away."

-Stephen Best, *T2COnline*



“The student's comments made me realize how important the topics in the play were and that we need to have more dialogue with our students to stop bullying and create tolerance...I'm not sure all teachers feel comfortable starting this dialogue, and this is where I see you guys playing a huge role in schools with the emphasis on Social {and} Emotional skills being built”

-Farragut Career Academy Visual Arts Teacher



# Outreach

## Outreach

The Education Outreach Program at About Face Theatre provides touring plays and workshops to schools as an entertaining, compelling, and necessary approach to starting dialogue about bullying, diversity, and intersecting identities.

Our standard format includes a performance followed by a talk-back; however we do offer more in-depth break-out discussion sessions or hands-on storytelling workshops with the audience following the performance.



## The Shows

### **It's For Real**

*25 min play & interactive discussion*

IT'S FOR REAL is a collection of stories that connects issues around race, class, sexuality, age, gender, self-esteem, and family. Based on the true experiences of the performers in the show, the audience is encouraged to ask the actors about their stories and share experiences.

### **Checking Boxes**

*30 min play & interactive discussion*

In CHECKING BOXES, an original play devised by the About Face Youth Theatre, characters explore the often overlooked intersections of immigration, undocumented status, and the LGBTQIA experience. Through storytelling, spoken word, and slam poetry, these talented young people share experiences of coming out, growing up, and pursuing the American dream.

## Outreach Numbers

**19** Number of schools reached in FY15 (up from 16 in FY14)

**10** Number of CPS schools reached in FY15 (up from 8 in FY14)

**6,920** Number of student, teachers, and community members reached in FY15 (up from 6,149 in FY14)

**30** Number of workshops conducted in CPS schools

**32** Number of performances in FY15 (up from 28 in FY14)

**18** Number of CPS performances in FY15 (up from 12 in FY14)

*Of the 355 students surveyed following an Outreach performance at Schurz High School, over 70% said that they learned or were curious about something new after seeing the play, were comfortable talking to others about what they saw or learned, and actually planned on speaking to others about their discoveries.*



# Interaction

"I can tell they are feeling more confident and that they really appreciated this experience. And I would like to thank you for that."

*-Tlam Foster, CPS Teacher at  
INTERACTION School*

## Interaction

Interaction is AFT Education's after-school residency program. Drawing from AFYT's traditions of ensemble-devised theater and group storytelling, Interaction is a week-long workshop series for middle-to-high school aged students.

The week's sessions are spent sharing stories and building an original theatrical piece based on the participants' true experiences. About Face Theatre teaching artists use storytelling and devised theatre vocabularies to craft exercises specifically suited to the needs and experience levels of each group of students.



Interaction was piloted in a one-week format at Schurz High School in FY15.

AFT aims to reach 4-5 schools in FY16.

### *In their words...*



"What I will always have from this is confidence in being me."

*-Interaction student*

"I felt great sharing my story. I honestly never had the chance to, so I'm very excited to have shared."

*-Interaction student*

"It's been lots of fun to actually do this and tell what's been on my chest and receive positive feedback and support. I also have a new view on others and my friendships with them are stronger."

*-Interaction student*

# Youth Task Force



## Youth Task Force

The **Youth Task Force** (YTF) is AFYT's youth leadership committee, comprised of 4-5 ensemble members who are committed to the group's work. The YTF leads the AFYT ensemble by selecting show topics/themes, facilitating workshop activities, and curating a special event each year.

### Youth Artivism Symposium

For FY15's special event, the YTF designed and facilitated the **Youth Artivism Symposium** (YAS). This was a first-of-its-kind event bringing young and socially engaged artists of diverse mediums and backgrounds together to share practices and celebrate artmaking for social justice.



*Participants of YTF's Youth Artivism Symposium*

### Collaborations

This year, the YTF also spearheaded a number of artistic collaborations with local youth-driven arts organizations, including:

\*Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP)

\*MCA's Teen Creative Agency (TCA)

\*Goodman Theatre's "Good Eddie"

\*{she crew}

\*Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (ICAH)



*YTF member Donny Acosta performing with the MCA's TCA.*

A group of approximately 15 diverse young people are posing together in a room. They are smiling and some are making hand gestures. In the background, there is a whiteboard with some papers pinned to it and a green shelving unit with various items on it. The overall atmosphere is positive and collaborative.

# Thank You!

Your ongoing support makes our critical work possible.

[www.aboutface theatre.org](http://www.aboutface theatre.org)

(773) 784-8565

<https://www.facebook.com/aboutfaceyouththeatre>

Photo Credits:

Cat Bezark

Emily Schwartz

Timmy Samuels

Ali Hoefnagel

Kieran Kredell

©About Face Theatre 2015