

Mikva
Challenge

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16



★ SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO JUDGE ABNER MIKVA (1926-2016) ★

mikvachallenge.org



Engage. Connect. Trust. Participate.

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It has been a tough year for Chicago, for our democracy and, with the passing of our co-founder, Abner J. Mikva, it has been a tough year for Mikva Challenge.

Yet 2016 has inspired a new kind of hope, passion and commitment in me as I saw our young people, teachers, board members and stakeholders work to keep our democracy vibrant and responsive by promoting peace in their communities, bridging youth-police relations, and modeling civil discourse. We can do this because our programs are built upon learning how to have empathy for one another. In fact, a recent study conducted by DePaul University of our Project Soapbox public speaking program found just that—empathy was the primary skill youth participants developed.

This is urgent, and challenging, work. But through this report you'll see just how much we've accomplished. I invite you to stand with us as we double down on our commitment to young people, and work with renewed urgency to strengthen our democracy.

We **ENGAGE** and support teachers to use action civics practices that they may have been hesitant to try. In doing so, we provide strategies and structures to cultivate youth voice and authentic democratic experiences in classrooms.

We **CONNECT** youth by providing essential employment and employability skills through our Summer Fellows and Youth Council programs, hiring over 200 youth annually.

Our phenomenal Mikva staff builds **TRUST** every day with youth, not only through intensive youth leadership development, but also by brokering access and relationships between youth and the adults in power within our institutions.

And our current youth participants and alumni will tell you that they **PARTICIPATE** because Mikva Challenge takes them and their concerns seriously, acknowledging them as the leaders they are NOW. This investment has encouraged Mikva youth to embark on lives of civic engagement, identifying as critical lovers of their surroundings and committed to providing solutions.

We need more Mikva youth in the world. Thank you always for your support of Mikva Challenge.

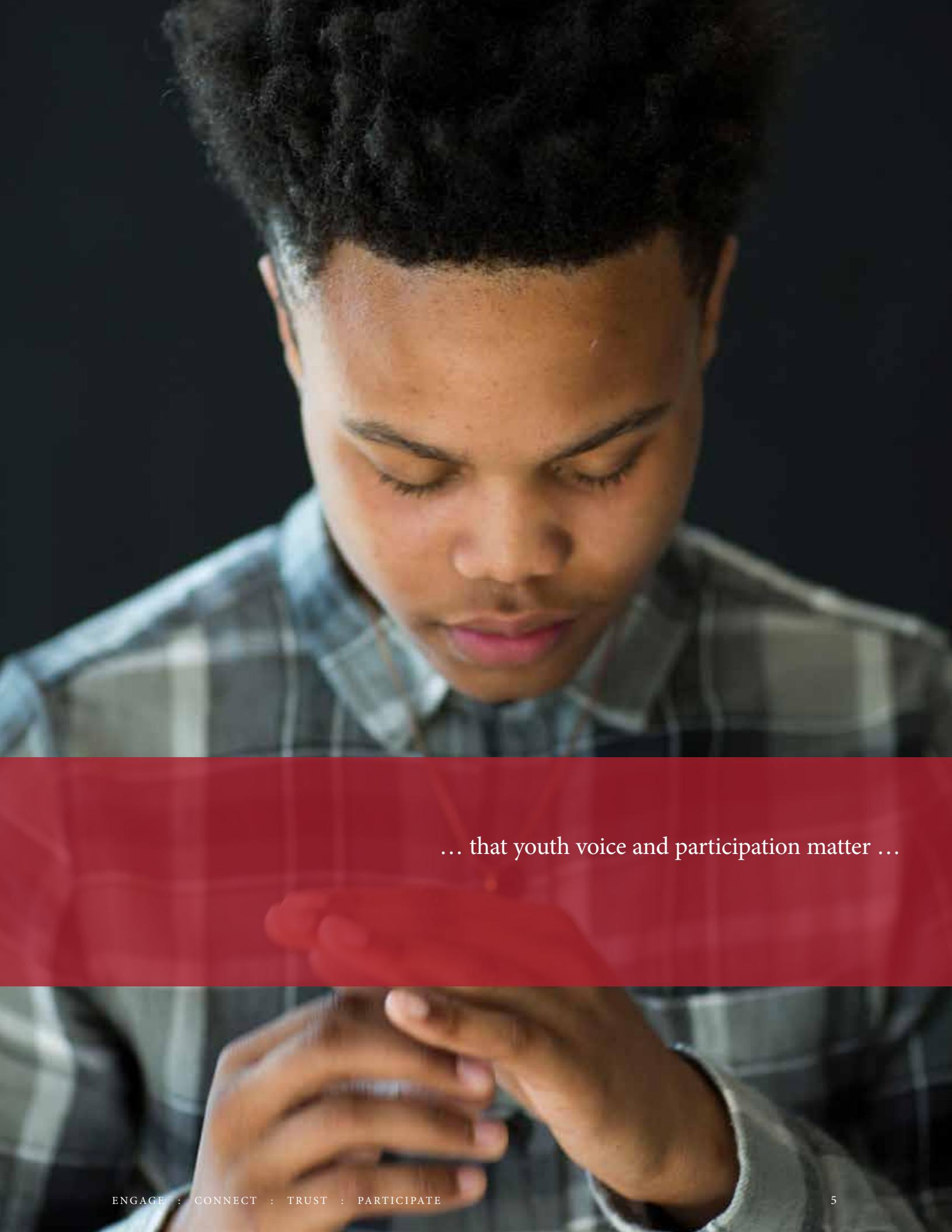
Warmly,



Michelle Morales, *Chief Executive Officer*



Mikva Challenge was founded on the premise ...



... that youth voice and participation matter ...



... and that our democracy will be stronger when youth participate in our civic and political life and help shape their own destinies.



9,506

YOUNG PEOPLE served in the **CHICAGOLAND** area, **CALIFORNIA** and **WASHINGTON DC**.

WE EMPOWER YOUTH who are otherwise left out of the democratic process, to become active participants of our democracy.

WE REMOVE BARRIERS for minority youth to access elected officials and other key decision makers.



students nationwide **ENGAGED IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS** last year and **1,211** Chicagoland students served as **ELECTION JUDGES** for the 2016 IL Primary Election Day.



number of times students in our youth policymaking program **MET WITH DECISION-MAKERS** (principals, community and city leaders).

WE EXPOSE YOUTH to an extensive leadership development process.

WE VALUE YOUTH VOICE and actively seek to provide youth a platform to amplify issues they care about.



of youth participants could analyze data and evidence from their research to create **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION** vs. 56% before joining our citywide youth council program.



students from 117 schools nationwide presented speeches and/or **WORKED ON CIVIC ACTION PROJECTS**.

engage



Traditional schooling emphasizes adult lectures and students as passive learners. We believe that the best way to learn democracy is to do democracy.

57%

of full-time K-12 teachers in the U.S. are “not engaged.”

35%

of students said they never followed the news as part of a class assignment.

707

Teachers received professional development in the principles of action civics to increase student engagement in the classroom.

We believe that by providing high quality programming in under-resourced communities and schools, we can eliminate the civic achievement gap.



Stormie McNeal is an inspiration to her students at the Peace and Education Alternative High School located in the Back of the Yards, a neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. As a Mikva Challenge student in high school at North Lawndale College Prep, she personally experienced the transformation that happens when youth realize they have the power to make a positive difference in their communities.

Tell us about your experience with Mikva Challenge as a young person.

Even though it sounds really cliché, Ms. Bass, my AP Government teacher, really changed our lives when she introduced us to Mikva Challenge. It was like, “Wait, we really have power?” Because it’s easy to feel powerless when you’re coming from an area that just seems hopeless. After being part of Mikva programs, I began to believe that we didn’t have to just accept the hand that we were dealt, that we can change it. When I see inequality in schools, or with crime—I’m not quiet and I’m not desensitized. I think to myself, Mikva taught us better.

It was through Mikva that I, along with my friends, started a sex education program at our school. I also campaigned for President Obama who was running for U.S. Senate at the time, and interned for State Senator Jacqueline Collins. I remember that [my Mikva job] was my first paid internship, and it was awesome because I wasn’t on the streets that summer. I was working and learning about things that were going on in the neighborhood I lived in.

“How does this affect my life? When I talk to students, we have conversations about what’s going on. So many of my students are going to college and are thinking beyond their immediate circumstances, it’s pretty amazing.”

STORMIE MCNEAL

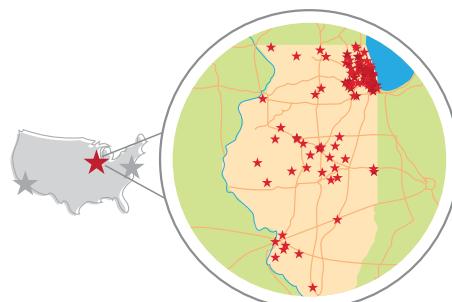
As a teacher, how has Mikva impacted your students?

When I first started working at this alternative high school, it felt like a desert. There were no sports programs or after school activities of any kind. It didn’t even have a library. Through the Mikva curricula and all the programs it offers, I’ve seen my students voice out their thoughts and take action to bring resources to this school. In the three years I’ve been here, my students have organized a fashion show, hosted a basketball game with police in the community, and you won’t believe this—but they have even built a library here all on their own. I see my students having a sense of ownership. A lot of my students come from extreme poverty, and they don’t always feel a sense of security and belonging with anything. But when they create things like the library in the school, it’s like, “I did this.” They’re more confident when they come into the school, like, “This is my school.” It’s funny how something like building a library makes you feel connected to everything else around you.

What has been the most rewarding experience for you so far?

One of the most rewarding experiences is seeing my students experience how I felt when I was in high school. My students are not just going with the flow, they’re questioning things and thinking about, “How does this affect my life?” When I talk to them, we have conversations about what’s going on in politics, and what’s going on with the candidates. So many of my students are going to college and are thinking beyond their immediate circumstances, it’s pretty amazing.

MIKVA CHALLENGE (ILLINOIS)



97%



of teachers in Mikva programs reported that using Mikva curricula led to their students increasing their civic knowledge.

A close-up photograph of a young woman with dark hair, smiling broadly. She is wearing a white t-shirt. In the background, other people are visible, though out of focus, suggesting a diverse group of individuals.

We envision a world where:

3,000,000

**Youth ages (16-24) across the US
who are not in school or at work.**

47%

**of young black men in Chicago
out of work and out of school.**

connect

- More youth are connected with high quality job opportunities.
- Civic leaders reflect the nation's diversity.
- Youth voice is valued in decision making.

281

Young people have gotten their first paid job through
Mikva Challenge and 92% are youth of color.



A paid summer job keeps young people positively engaged and sets them up on a path to future success.

"Mikva was my first paid job. I had applied to 20 different positions and heard nothing back because nobody wants to hire a 16-year-old youth with no job experience," said Divine Miner, a 16-year old young woman who's part of Mikva Challenge's Chicago Housing Authority Youth Council.

To say jobs are hard to come by for young people would be an understatement.

Divine was one of 983 applicants who applied for just the 244 spots available for a Mikva Challenge job this summer. Almost 60% of the youth applicants were black and 24% were Latino, demographics that have the highest rates of unemployment according to a report by the Alternative Schools Network (88% of all black young men and 84% of Latino young men are jobless).

Mikva alumnus, Merita Bushi, talks about how her Mikva job interning at an elected official's office changed the trajectory of her life.

"Seven years ago, I was that young person who needed a job to support my family. The year before I interned in an elected official's office, I worked at my high school cleaning the upholstered chairs in the auditorium. If I had not applied to Mikva, I would have been in that auditorium for another year and would have never been exposed to such opportunities that created a spark in me," she said.

"I have grown personally because I learned how to get out of my comfort zone and work with people who are different from me. I have grown professionally because I have learned how to network successfully."

MATTHEW BAILEY | Mikva DC youth who interned for the DC City Councilmember Brandon Todd

For some youth like Miguel Berarra, a job as part of Mikva's Juvenile Justice Council meant being part of a community that cared about youth voice and youth experiences. Through Mikva, Miguel had a paid job where he was able to use his experience being part of the juvenile justice system to inform Cook County Board President, Toni Preckwinkle, on ways to improve it.

"A job at Mikva kept me off the streets, made me responsible for my actions and kept me distracted," said Mike. "I learned (at Mikva) not to let people define who you are, and not let people keep you from becoming who you could be," Miguel added.

Through Mikva Challenge programs, getting a paycheck is only a small part of the story. Our action civics process pushes youth to find their voice, explore their passions, and become their own best advocates. Miguel wants to pursue Engineering in college and travel the world. Divine wants to double major in business and Pre-Med, and Merita is now a first generation college graduate from Macalester College currently working at a technology firm in Chicago.

83%



of **Mikva Summer Fellows** report intention to **contact and interact** with their elected officials in the future.

MIKVA CHALLENGE DC



200%



Growth in the number of **schools served** in Washington, DC since the pilot year.

82%



of students completing **Mikva DC's Democracy in Action** program can **analyze an issue** to figure out the root cause of a problem (**vs. 48% beforehand**).

50%

of young people in the United States believe the justice system is racially and ethnically biased.

66%

of African Americans youth have little or no confidence in police across the U.S.

138

Youth worked on building trust with police officers in their communities, and all of our programs focused on fostering authentic youth-adult partnerships to bring about change.



trust

We believe that if youth voice is included in decision-making
that policy makers will make more informed decisions.

When middle schoolers at Marquette Elementary surveyed their peers on the top issues facing their school community, police-youth relations quickly surfaced to the top.

"We felt disrespected by the police officers in our community," said Corey Rashad, 5th grader at Marquette and a member of the Mikva Peace and Leadership Council (PLC) there. "There's too many misunderstandings and racial profiling happening, and the problem just keeps getting bigger and bigger, and we felt something had to be done about it," Corey added.

In the Mikva Challenge PLC program, young people survey their school body to identify the most pressing issues, then advocate recommendations and an action plan to address their concerns. In this case, youth leaders did a root cause analysis on the issue of police-youth relations and discovered that lack of trust was at the heart of the problem. They brainstormed ways to build trust and decided to host a basketball game between Marquette students and local officers.

"There's too many misunderstandings and racial profiling happening, and the problem just keeps getting bigger and bigger, and we felt something had to be done about it."

COREY RASHAD | 5TH grader at Marquette Elementary and a member of the Peace and Leadership Council (PLC)

Corey and two of his Council peers then attended a Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) meeting in their neighborhood to present their idea to the officers in their district. To their surprise, the officers agreed to participate!

"I was so nervous at the beginning, I didn't think they would show up, but they did and it was really fun," said Corey. "I think we all learned from it. It helped us connect with the police officers, and hear what they were thinking. It also helped us connect on things we have in common."

Aside from Marquette, six other youth teams took up the issue of improving youth-police relations. Youth from Peace and Education Alternative High School also played a basketball game with the officers in their district, and youth leaders from Harper and Sullivan high schools hosted panel discussions between students and officers in their school.

This summer, youth leaders on the Mikva Mayoral Youth Commission took these efforts one step further when they chose improving police-youth relations as the topic of their year-long research and advocacy project. They presented recommendations to Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson and Mayor Rahm Emanuel and as a result are now working with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of Civic Engagement and Service Learning to create a curriculum that informs youth of their rights and responsibilities in police interactions. They're also developing youth-informed trainings for police officers in high schools to help officers understand the perspectives of young people.

92%



of Peace and Leadership Council participants reported improved ability to collaborate with youth and adults (vs. 65% before the program).

72%



of principals reported that the Mikva program made a valuable impact on the school by contributing to creating a more peaceful school community.

420

youth participated in our Youth Congress in Chicago, where young people across the city convened to discuss issues, ideas, and solutions to the problems they face in their communities.

We believe that action civics is an essential tool to help young people.



Youth from Peace and Education Alternative High School played a basketball game with the 9th district police officers.

We believe youth are not apathetic, and that by inviting them into the political process they will become powerful and thoughtful citizens.



23%

of all youth are almost completely disengaged from civic and political life.

25%

of young voters were poorly informed about the campaign's issues, and young people who did not vote were generally uninformed.

participate



91%

of Mikva youth participants reported improved ability to analyze political issues and candidates' stances on issues (vs. 46% before the program).

Where else could I find such openness, excitement and hope? I was hooked. And I've stayed hooked on campaigns to this day. Despite all their faults, campaigns are based on the fact that every vote counts, and therefore every person counts. As free standing societies, they are more open than academia, more idealistic than corporations, more unifying than religions, and more accessible than government itself. Campaign season is the only time of public debate about what we want for the future. It can change consciousness even more than who gets elected. In short, campaigns may be the closest thing we have to democracy itself.

—Gloria Steinem, author of *My Life on the Road*

Defying stereotypes of apathy, nearly 200 teens from all around the country headed to Iowa in January 2016 to campaign for the candidates of their choice and to discuss how to encourage candidates to talk more about issues they care about such as education, immigration and police brutality. For the first time, Mikva Challenge had students from not just Chicago, but also from other parts of Illinois, Los Angeles, Washington DC, Milwaukee and Houston, to come together and knock on doors, phone bank and rally support for the candidates they align most strongly with in the 2016 Presidential race.

"I was speaking and interacting with total strangers from hundreds of miles away as if we were best friends. Calling and doorknocking for candidates was something new. I hated politics, but with this trip ... I have faith candidates actually want a better world."

DARIUS SMITH | Luke C Moore High School

"Meeting Marco Rubio and interacting with numerous other students including those in my van was the best part of this trip. It made me feel like I had become part of a movement that is extremely significant, and that I too can have an influence on the outcome of the election through my campaigning," said one youth leader from Amudsen High School in Chicago.

Youth also participated in Mikva Challenge's Youth Issues Summit at Drake University to caucus for issues they cared most about and collectively discuss solutions to them.

"The one thing that I will remember the most about this trip would be the importance of getting involved as teens for our country. It was awesome to see all of us excited for politics," remarked a youth leader from Nova Academy High School in Coachella, CA.

ACTION CIVICS LA



1,200

students participated in Southern California

96%



of Action Civics LA Project Soapbox participants believe their voice was heard on an issue they care about.



We believe that Mikva Challenge always needs to be nonpartisan
to allow young people to formulate their own opinions and
choose the candidates and issues they want to support.

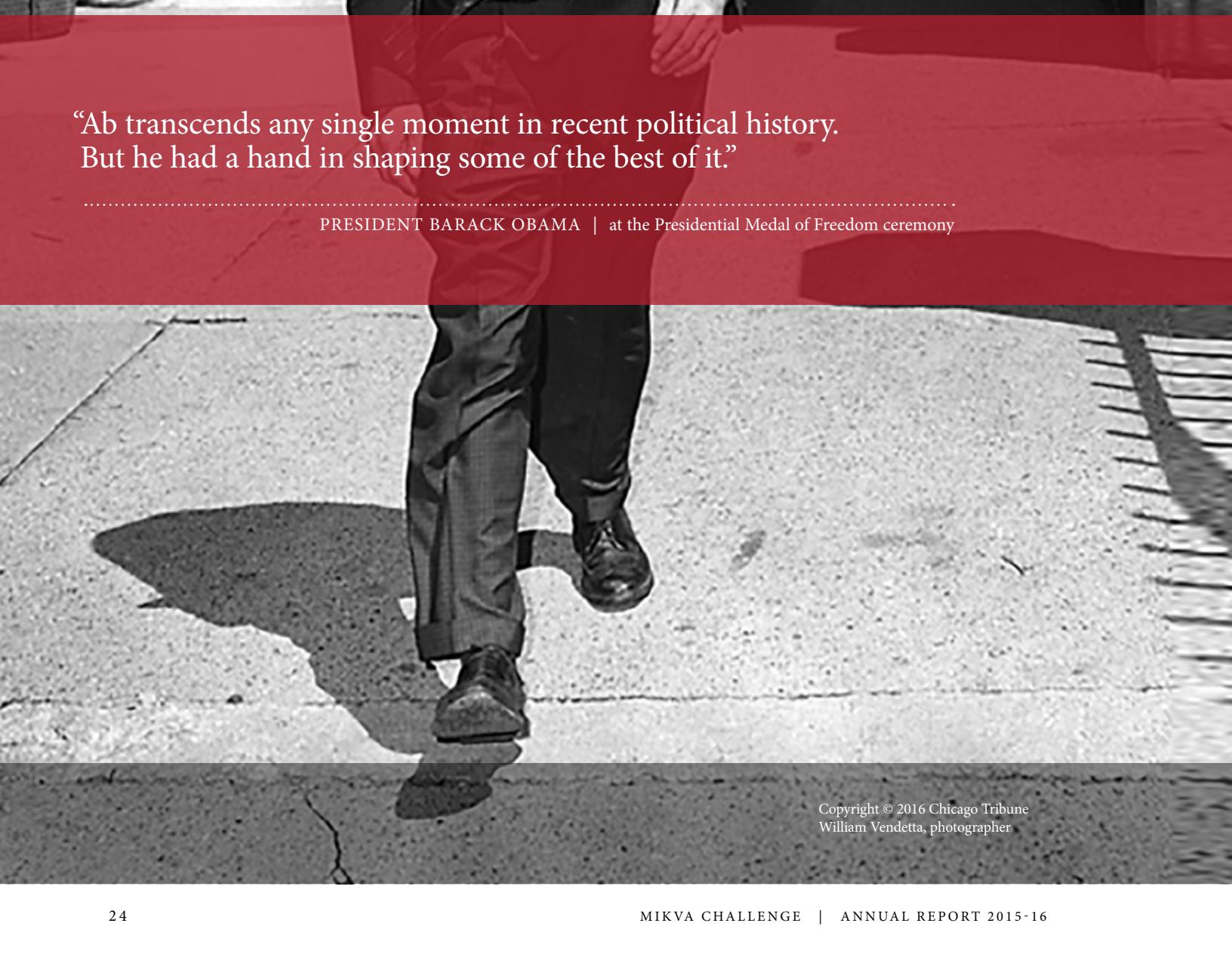


Abner Mikva

(Jan. 21, 1926 - Jul. 4, 2016)

“Ab transcends any single moment in recent political history.
But he had a hand in shaping some of the best of it.”

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA | at the Presidential Medal of Freedom ceremony



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William Vendetta, photographer

Somebody nobody sent: The legacy of Abner Mikva

Abner J. Mikva was truly a great American, maybe one of the greatest politicians I've ever known. He was an impactful state legislator in Illinois in the 50s and 60s, a leading progressive member of Congress in the 1970s, and a respected member of the federal bench in the 80s and 90s before he left to be President Bill Clinton's White House counsel.

Even though he is now gone, Ab is going to continue to be an impact player in the public arena because he was an inspiration to so many campaign volunteers, staff members, law clerks, and colleagues, the ranks of which include State Senator Jeff Schoenberg, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan and President Barack Obama. Ab's spirit will be urging them on whenever they fight for a reform, whenever they battle for more transparency in government, whenever they insist on more fairness in a law, whenever they work for meaningful gun control.

Ab always had an army of young people behind him who believed in him and believed that a life of public service was one of the best ways to do good and make a positive difference in their communities and the country. His decency and the sheer force of his personality made me admire him, his work, and politics so much.

I think Ab's greatest legacy, however, are the thousands of high schoolers in Chicago, Washington, DC and Los Angeles whose participation in the Mikva Challenge's nonpartisan electoral, policy-making, and community problem solving programs has opened their eyes to the potential, importance, and rewards of public service and civic engagement. Ab was a difference maker in the public arena and those young people from the Mikva Challenge are going to continue to make a difference there into the 22nd Century.

David Axelrod

David Axelrod

Director, University of Chicago Institute of Politics



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The Abner and Zoe Mikva Legacy Fund was established to sustain Mikva Challenge's funding program – *Elections in Action* – and to honor the profound impact of Ab and Zoe Mikva on our lives. We gratefully acknowledge the following supporters of this campaign.

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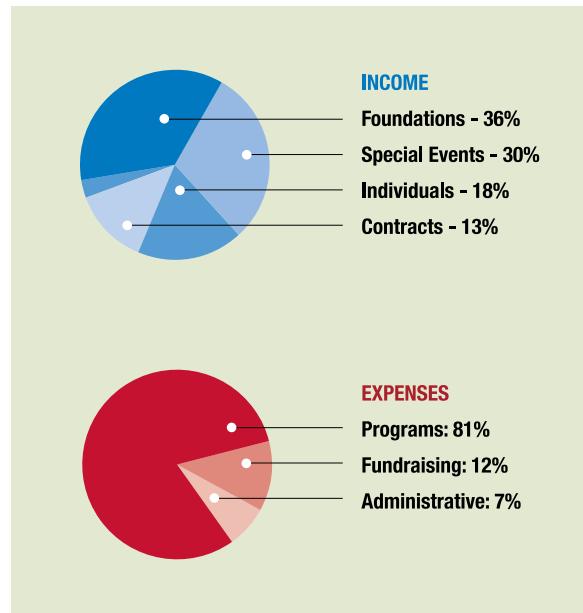
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★ MIKVA CHALLENGE FINANCIALS ★



Mikva Challenge is proud to report a strong financial position at the end of our FY16. We expanded programming beyond our HQ of Chicago, broadening our work to other Illinois cities and throughout Southern California, and launching our Washington, D.C. office while devoting 81% of our expenditures directly to mission-focused programs for youth, teachers, and schools. We ended FY16 with a budget surplus, due to strong foundation grant partnerships and successful special events. Our generous corporate and individual donors provided critical general operating support for our youth voice programming. We also grew our Abner and Zoe Mikva Legacy Fund, which is designed to sustain our founding program, Elections in Action. We are excited about the Mikva model taking root in more communities and schools across the country. Thank you for your support of Mikva Challenge.



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

| Years ended June 30 | UNRESTRICTED | 2016 TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED | TOTAL | UNRESTRICTED | 2015 TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED | TOTAL |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Revenue and Support | | | | | | |
| Foundation and corporate grants | \$ 276,000 | \$ 940,295 | \$ 1,216,295 | \$ 200,200 | \$ 959,312 | \$ 1,159,512 |
| Individual contributions | 405,680 | 204,000 | 609,680 | 215,072 | 50,000 | 265,072 |
| Special events: | | | | | | |
| Gross proceeds | 1,093,364 | | 1,093,364 | 1,004,013 | 30,000 | 1,034,013 |
| Expenses | (88,948) | | (88,948) | (64,079) | | (64,079) |
| Contract services revenue | 438,961 | | 438,961 | 603,740 | | 603,740 |
| Interest and dividends | 28,394 | | 28,394 | 28,495 | | 28,495 |
| Net unrealized gain (loss) on investments | 48,801 | | 48,801 | (4,035) | | (4,035) |
| Other income | 8,036 | | 8,036 | 4,850 | | 4,850 |
| Net assets released from restrictions: | | | | — | | |
| Satisfaction of restrictions | 906,256 | (906,256) | | 1,131,504 | (1,131,504) | |
| Total revenue and support | 3,116,544 | 238,039 | 3,354,583 | 3,119,760 | (92,192) | 3,027,568 |
| Expenses | | | | | | |
| Program services | 2,619,243 | | 2,619,243 | 2,311,670 | | 2,311,670 |
| Management and general | 242,263 | | 242,263 | 208,403 | | 208,403 |
| Fundraising | 375,351 | | 375,351 | 336,234 | | 336,234 |
| Total expenses | 3,236,857 | | 3,236,857 | 2,856,307 | | 2,856,307 |
| Change in net assets | (120,313) | 238,039 | 117,726 | 263,453 | (92,192) | 171,261 |
| Net assets, beginning of year | 1,818,895 | 331,239 | 2,150,134 | 1,555,442 | 423,431 | 1,978,873 |
| Net assets, end of year | \$ 1,698,582 | \$ 569,278 | \$ 2,267,860 | \$ 1,818,895 | \$ 331,239 | \$ 2,150,134 |

These statements are an excerpt from the Mikva Challenge's annual audited financial statements. For a complete copy of those financial statements, please contact Mikva Challenge.



"Nobody had sent him, but Abner Mikva was not a 'nobody.' At Mikva Challenge, we help young people—like we were in high school—to realize that they ARE somebody, that they do have a voice and a place in our democracy. But at the end of the day, life really is just easier when somebody sends you. We can dream bigger, and reach higher, all because we are now somebody who Abner Mikva sent."

CHRIS AND AZIZA BUTLER | Mikva alumni



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CONTENT Maliha Sadiq, Mikva Challenge

DESIGN Henry McGill, hmcdesign.com

PRINTING Bob Walsh, Sommers & Fahrenbach

AGENDA

- ~~1. Mood Check in~~
- ~~2. Props~~
- ~~3. Prep for Field Trip~~
- ~~4. Group A - Dual Map~~
- ~~Group B - Backwards Clump~~
5. Start Recommendations

6. Lunch (Group A return)
7. Surprise:
8. Group A Debrief
9. Who am I?
10. Group A - Staff Re
Group B -) Def Pe



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Los Angeles CA 90012

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Washington DC 20005