



THE CHICAGO FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND ART FOR FAIR HOUSING

CHICAGO WAS A SEGREGATED CITY

Chicago's 1960s society divided people by skin color and treated them unequally. This type of segregation in the city separated schools and neighborhoods by race. African Americans in Chicago had fewer chances for high-paying jobs. Apartment buildings in predominantly African American neighborhoods were often owned by white **landlords**. Repairs were slow to come, although African Americans paid their rent on time. African Americans faced bias when they tried to buy homes in white neighborhoods.

THE COORDINATING COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS (CCCO)

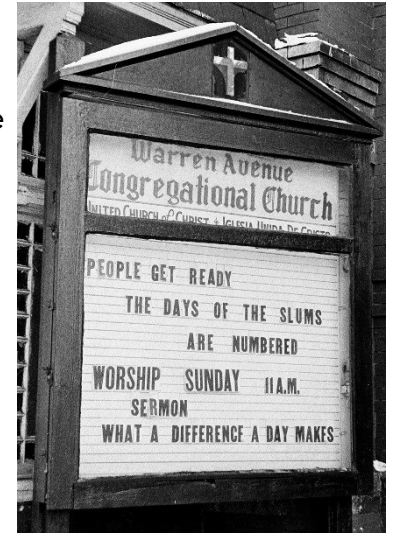
In response to the racial inequality, segregation, and poor housing, African Americans in Chicago formed **coalitions**. An important coalition was the CCCO. Different groups made up the CCCO, such as the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council and the Chicago Urban League. Albert (Al) Raby was a Chicago school teacher and **community advocate**. The members of the CCCO chose him to lead the coalition.

In 1965, Raby asked national civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to come to Chicago. Raby wanted Dr. King to join them in a nonviolent movement to end unequal housing. Dr. King knew Chicago was a deeply segregated city. He said, "If we can break the system in Chicago, it can be broken any place in the country." On January 7, 1966, Dr. King shared plans for the Chicago Freedom Movement. The movement would bring Dr. King and his Southern civil rights work to the big Northern city of Chicago.

DR. KING COMES TO CHICAGO

Dr. King and his family moved to the North Lawndale neighborhood on January 26, 1966. North Lawndale is on the West Side of Chicago. They wanted to highlight the poor housing in the area. In the late 1800s, most residents of North Lawndale were **immigrants** from countries in Central and Eastern Europe. By the 1960s, North Lawndale was almost completely African American. The apartment building had no lock on the front door and a dirt floor in the entrance.

Community groups provided important support for the movement. Warren Avenue Congregational Church provided early support for the movement. Dr. King brought a civil rights group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to Chicago. Warren Avenue Congregational Church was the Chicago headquarters for the SCLC. The church hosted meetings and fundraisers for the movement.



Sign reads "People get ready the days of the slums are numbered." Warren Avenue Congregational Church, January 19, 1966, from the Chicago Sun-Times collection, CHM, ST-19042269-0002



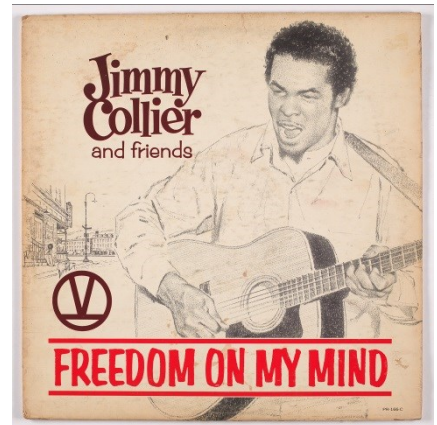
Chicago Freedom Movement button, from the collection of the Busy Beaver Button Museum, Chicago

ART FOR OPEN HOUSING

Symbols, music, and other types of art helped build support for the Chicago Freedom Movement. Ann Gillie and Bennie Luchion created the symbol for the movement. The symbol was a "V" with a circle around it. The design was simple and easy to recognize. The symbol helped media manager Don Rose write the slogan for the movement, "We're on the Move to End Slums." The symbol was added to flyers, newsletters, buttons, and banners. The symbol

made it easy for people to show their support for the movement in different ways. Some people wore buttons, carried posters, and even painted the symbol onto buildings.

Music also helped spread the word of the movement. Musician Jimmy Collier made the official musical album for the movement. He recorded the songs at Warren Avenue Congregational Church. The main song on the album was "Freedom on My Mind." The song had a strong Southern Blues music style. Many African American Chicagoans preferred a Northern sound. The Impressions, an African American band from Chicago wrote the popular song "People Get Ready." It became the movement's unofficial anthem.



Freedom on My Mind album cover, Jimmy Collier and Parish Records, Inc, Chicago, 1966, CHM, ICHI-183254-001

ART IN ACTION

The leaders of the movement held many **nonviolent** marches, rallies, and boycotts. Buttons, banners, and posters with the movement's symbol on them were displayed at these events. These events often played the official song, "Freedom on My Mind." The music and the symbol aimed to inspire action to support the movement. By the summer of 1966, the movement had thousands of supporters across the city. They wanted segregation and slum housing to end.

On August 6, 1966, the movement held a march in Chicago's all-white Marquette Park neighborhood. It was one of the movement's largest marches. White residents in the neighborhood were angry that the march was happening. They did not want segregation to end. Someone in the crowd threw a rock at Dr. King, hitting him on the head. Dr. King's wound was bandaged up and he chose to keep marching.



Chicago Freedom Movement march, photograph by Declan Haun, August 1966, CHM, ICHI-077685

The news of the march and Dr. King's injury spread across the country. In response, Chicago's mayor, Richard J. Daley, promised to build homes for African Americans in white areas. Mayor Daley also promised to make [home loans](#) available to all races to buy homes in any neighborhood. Keeping the promises was very difficult, and some people felt unhappy with the outcomes of the Chicago Freedom Movement. Segregation, racial inequality, and unequal housing were still affecting people's lives.

Although Dr. King left Chicago in 1967, the CCCO and other community organizations continued their work. In 1968, the United States made the Fair Housing Act of 1968 a national law. The Fair Housing Act was inspired by the Chicago Freedom Movement and the art that helped build support for it. Art is still an important way to share messages for change. People still use art to show their support for the changes they would like to see in the world.



VOCABULARY IN “THE CHICAGO FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND ART FOR FAIR HOUSING”

Coalition - A temporary alliance of different people or organizations for a specific action or goal.

Community Advocate - A person interested in making positive changes in a community. A community advocate often speaks on behalf of the community.

Home Loan - A loan given by a bank, mortgage company, or other financial institution for the purchase of a residence.

Immigrant - A person who has moved from one country to another country to live.

Landlord - A businessperson or company who owns buildings and earns money by charging rent to people who want to use or live in the building.

Nonviolence - A way to share beliefs publicly that rejects the use of physical violence. People who practice nonviolence when expressing their beliefs may use methods like marches or boycotts.

Symbol - A mark, sign, figure, or word that represents an idea, object, or relationship.