



FREEDOM PROJECT

NETWORK



The **Freedom Project Network** announced that **Ki Harris** has been named its new Executive Director. A former teacher and football coach in Greenwood, MS, Harris served as the Director of College Access and Experiential Learning at the Network's oldest program, the Sunflower County Freedom Project from 2016 to 2018. Harris returns to the Freedom Projects to lead the development of the Network's three program sites, the Sunflower County Freedom Project, the Meridian Freedom Project, and the Rosedale Freedom Project, and to oversee the Network's two programmatic initiatives Freedom Summer Collegiate and the Alumni College Success Program.

"I'm honored to be charged with leading the Freedom Project Network into the future as we work to expand opportunities for the students we currently serve and build capacity to serve more

students across the state of Mississippi," Harris said. "Leveraging the individual strengths and spirits of our programmatic arms to improve our collective impact is a powerful opportunity."

An alumnus of Grinnell College, Harris taught middle school English in Greenwood, Mississippi as a Teach For America corps member. While in Greenwood, Harris also served as the head coach of the Amanda Elzy Junior High School football team. In 2016, Harris joined the staff of the Sunflower County Freedom Project, where he led the program's college preparation programming, organized and led all educational travel, and directed the Freedom Project's drama troupe. In 2018, Harris returned to his hometown of Atlanta, and has spent the last few years as a staff member on Teach For America's national recruitment team.

"We are thrilled to have Ki take charge of the Freedom Project Network," said Freedom Project co-founder Chris Myers Asch. "His passion for our program is infectious, and he has the talent, experience, and vision we need to build the Network into a strong, sustainable organization."

As the Freedom Projects enter their third decade as part of the Mississippi educational landscape, Harris takes the helm at a crucial juncture. The first site at [Sunflower](#) was founded in 1998, with sister sites at [Meridian](#) and [Rosedale](#) founded in 2013 and 2014. [Freedom Summer Collegiate](#), through which PhD candidates and university faculty teach college-bridge courses at the Freedom Projects was founded as an independent program in 2015 and joined the Freedom Project Network last year. Most recently, the

Freedom Projects saw the expansion of the [Alumni College Success Program](#), which follows Freedom Project alumni with community, academic, and financial support, from college matriculation to graduation. Harris replaces the Network's Interim Executive Director, Freedom Summer Collegiate founder Andrew Donnelly, who will join the *National Book Foundation* as a Mellon/ACLS Public Fellow.



Harris's first order of business will be planning strategically for the Freedom Projects' future during and after the covid-19 pandemic. With students' lives facing the uncertainty and risks of school openings and closings this fall, the impact of programs like the Freedom Project and the continuity they provide in academic and social development are even more pronounced in students' lives. "Because this pandemic has only exacerbated the digital divide between communities based on wealth," Harris said, "our top priorities must include not just ensuring access to our programs, but also ensuring access to technological resources that help our students, families, and communities thrive." At the same time, the Freedom Projects' curricular focus on the history of the Civil Rights Movement and Black youth empowerment has found new resonance in a summer of anti-racist protest and organizing. "We're excited to see national conversations about justice and white supremacy joining those that our students have been having for more than two decades. These conversations have been the bedrock of our anti-racist curriculum and our students are well positioned to lead these conversations."

Freedom Project alumnus Omar Washington, who attended the Sunflower County program when Harris was a Director there, remembers Mr. Harris as someone "who knew how to have fun when it was time for that and handle business when it was time for that. It was amazing watching Mr. Harris gracefully do outreach to the parents and supporters of the SCFP. His constant support and networking within and outside of the Freedom Project building allowed Fellows to reap the benefits of amazing trips and an awesome staff!"