



THE “HOW TO **FREE** U”

an invitation to free education

Before planning a Free University for your community, you may want to ask yourself a few initial questions:

How can you identify yourself or your community as in need of Free Education?

Who is a student?

Who is an educator?



How are they interchangeable, and what does that substitution do to the processes of teaching and learning?

And... What are the benefits of free

education?

Perhaps—an option for free education helps students to realize that education is **NOT** something



which can simply be acquired by the exchange of services and certification for money.

OKAY!

Ready to have your own free education event? Putting on an event may seem like a big task, but when you break it down it's actually pretty simple. This doesn't mean you won't work hard; but it can be absolutely manageable if you follow our little recipe:

- 1) Be clear about the goals or themes of your event. Why are you holding a Free University, and what is important to your community?
 - **Keep it Simple!** This helps you to manage your time and energy better, and it also means your event will be more inclusive to anyone who wants to participate!
- 2) Find your collaborators and organizers
 - Organizing is all about **people power**. Consider reaching out to local organizations, community groups, and educators. Who else would be interested in a public, free education event? Reach out to your immediate circles first.
- 3) Find a space, date, and time
 - Space: consider **accessibility** and the **political act** of deliberately using public space for free education. What is a community space? Is it possible to use **public space**? Would outdoor be best? What creates the greatest inclusivity?
 - Date: think about connecting to other movements, historically significant dates, and timely responses to issues.
 - Time and Place: consider your audience in selecting a time and place. Will people be available at that time? Is it centrally located? How long will your Free University be? (Just one day, a week, a month, etc.)
- 4) Find your "educators"
 - Consider asking local professors and other institutional educators to move their classes to your location!
 - What kinds of education are you interested in? Skill shares, discussions, lectures, reading groups? Are there formats or subjects that fit your **goals**?
- 5) Find your "students"
 - What might your students need in order to participate in free education? A guaranteed **safe space**? Ramps/accessibility? Babysitting? Nourishment? Transportation to the event?
- 6) Decide how to make an all-call or invitation
 - Do you want to suggest themes? Are there themes or goals that are important to your community? Do you want it to be just a free-for-all?
- 7) Networking and outreach
 - Start at your most inner circles, and consider how to take advantage of and maximize connections within your networks.
 - Consider who represents or resides within your **community**. Are we thinking geographically or otherwise?
 - Utilize the web to network and get people to come to your events. **Reach out to Free University of New York** or other allies for help!
- 8) Organize your event
 - What kind of infrastructure will you provide? Will there be a schedule? How will the schedule be distributed and made available?

- In the past, the Free University of New York has organized through simple web registration, combined with impromptu classes for educators who just showed up the day of our event. We both had spaces assigned for scheduled classes and spaces set aside for last minute additions.

9) Archiving!

- **PLEASE** do send pictures and archive materials to us!! We love to see that organizers everywhere are holding free education events, and want to help you show off all of your hard work!

10) Press?

- Press is a tricky one. Remember to **Keep it Simple**, and only spend your resources reaching out to press if current events mean that reporters and editors would definitely be interested in your event (or if for some other reason your event will make a big splash).

11) Index (check out these resources for past example models of collective organizing and pedagogy)

Free Resources:

- **Free University September 18-22 2012:**
<http://opencuny.org/gcadvocate/2012/10/11/the-free-you-niversity-making-education-public-again/>
- **An Example of the Free U schedule from September 18-22 2012:**
<http://freeuniversitynyc.org/schedule/>
- **Radical Education Theory:** <http://occupytheory.org/read/on-the-city-as-university-occupy-and-the-future-of-public-education.html>
- **How Grassroots Free Education Enfranchised People of Color in the South:** www.jstor.org/stable/20456898
- **The Freedom Schools of the Mississippi Summer Project:**
www.jstor.org/stable/368691
- **Paulo Freire's classic text on critical, libertarian and emancipatory education:** www.libcom.org/library/pedagogy-oppressed-paulo-freire
- **Facilitating Participation Beyond NYC: A Short Guide to Regional Organizing:** <http://freeuniversitynyc.org/2012/09/09/facilitating-participation-beyond-nyc-a-short-guide-to-regional-organizing/>

Not-so-Free-Resources:

- **Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom:**
<http://www.amazon.com/Teaching-Transgress-Education-Practice-Freedom/dp/0415908086>
- **We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change:** <http://www.amazon.com/Make-Road-Walking-Conversations-Education/dp/0877227756>
- **Deschooling Society (Open Forum) :** <http://www.amazon.com/Deschooling-Society-Open-Forum-Illich/dp/0714508799>