



Music Division  
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# Walt Whitman & The Soul Children of Chicago



“Educate, Elevate, and Illuminate”

Organized in October 1981, the Soul Children of Chicago, under the leadership of Walt W. Whitman, Jr., was created as an alternative program for African American at risk youth in the community to creatively express themselves and their exuberant energy

through music. It is a non-profit organization whose membership mix is 50-75 male and female voices ranging from 7-17 years of age. Since its inception, the Soul Children of Chicago has remained a positive force through which at risk youth have an opportunity to learn cooperative interaction with their peers in an environment that fosters support, cultural enlightenment, academic achievement, and self-discipline.

From the beginning, the mission of the Soul Children of Chicago has been “to serve as a laboratory and demonstrational workshop for young adults, where their talents may be perfected, but more importantly, avail as opportunity to espouse discipline, professionalism, socialization, and responsibility,” and this is still true today. The success in the program of The Soul Children of Chicago can be found in its ability to “Educate the Minds, Elevate the Spirits, and Illuminate the Soul’s of our Youth.”

Through the music program, the children are taught discipline, dedication, and responsibility. For example, each academic semester the children are required to submit a copy of their grades, and a “c” average must be maintained. Enrollment in the tutorial program is mandatory if at any time a grade lower than “c” is received in any subject. If grades are not on file or enrollment in a tutorial program has not been completed, then disciplinary action is taken. This



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requirement in the Soul Children program has the result of more than 95% of the Soul Children graduating from high school and continuing their education in college, which compares to less than 30% of African American children nationally.

Likewise it has been estimated that more than 70% of African American youth have criminal records, yet none of the Soul Children have ever been in trouble with the law. The Soul Children are encouraged to help each other and to help the community- they are motivated to use their music to reach out and to inspire others. Their experience in the choir requires them to be self-motivated and to strive for excellence in everything that they aspire to do.

Additionally, the Soul Children are personally challenged and encouraged to refrain from gangs, drugs, and premarital sex. They are charged, through their participation in the program, to minister to every person they come in contact with, and to particularly touch the youth of our nation, leading by example, and daring to be different. Over the last 25 years, the Soul Children of Chicago has provided a vehicle for which at risk youth have been afforded opportunities to meet people and perform in places that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Some of their noteworthy appearances include:

Featured artist for the Chicago 90th Birthday celebration for Nelson Mandela with Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra in Millennium Park

Featured on nationally televised NBC special singing the National Anthem for the Olympic Hall Of Fame Awards

Featured at the International Film Festival honoring Sidney Poitier

Featured with Globe Awards and Oscar Winner Jennifer Hudson

Featured with own nationally television special with "Feed The Children" entitled "Praise and Shout"

Featured on "Feed The Children" Television special with Mavis Staples & Vickie Winans

Featured at the Zimriya World Assembly of Choirs-Jerusalem Israel.

Featured with world renown motivator and author Les Brown, Bruce Wilkerson, Jesse Duplantis, Creflo Dollar, Tim Storey, Bishop Tudor Bismarck

Tour of Sweden and Denmark with the Stockholm Gospel Choir Music Festival;

Tour of Switzerland and Israel with the Israel Kibbutz Orchestra for a Christmas Concert;

Performance at the Chicago Symphony Center Inaugural Celebration;



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Performance at the 1997 Season Premiere of the Oprah Winfrey Show;  
Performed for the Ronald Mc Donald's Children Charities National Television Special with Celine Dion, Dave Foster, Josh Groban and Yolanda Adams,  
Performance at the internationally televised World Cup Opening Ceremonies hosted by Oprah Winfrey with Diana Ross and Sounds of Blackness;  
Performed at the Democratic National Convention held in Chicago, Illinois;  
Performed for the Motown 30th Anniversary Celebration;  
Performed for Opryland USA "Country Christmas" television program;  
Performed for Walt Disney's "The Lion King" premiere with the Young Symphony Musicians in Chicago, Illinois;

Credits for The Soul Children of Chicago also include recording with:

Grammy award winner "Lupe Fiasco" on "Superstar"  
Featured on upcoming gospel collaboration with rock group "Three Doors Down"  
8 Recording Projects. We Are One, Live and Blessed, This is The Day, Growing Up, Generation X Celebration, Reaching The Nations, The Legacy,  
Highly anticipated 2008 Release of "My Time, My Favor"  
Public Announcement  
R. Kelly (World's Greatest); Ali Movie  
Century Men, Cherie Keggy, Neil Diamond (Christmas album) and  
Mother Theresa's (Tribute album);  
Commercial work with Toys R Us (Leo Burnett 2002) and The Silver Burdett New Music Book project (2000);  
Performed in Walt Whitman's production "From Generation to Generation" at the Arie Crown Theatre in Chicago, Illinois;  
Stellar Award: Children's Performance of the Year, Two Time Stellar Award  
Nomination for Best Group and Duo of the Year.

The Soul Children of Chicago is a strong and proven program that keeps at risk youth off the streets and out of gangs by providing them with an alternative support network that emphasizes academic excellence, mutual support, and social responsibility. The Soul Children are catalyst for hope and a part of a trend wherein partnerships within the community are being created with the expressed interest of fostering positive socialization and are in support of a solid foundation



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for the education of African American at risk youth who, through this program, are nurtured to their fullest potential in every area of their lives.

For more information about Walt Whitman and The Soul Children of Chicago you may visit their website at [www.soulchildrenchicago.com](http://www.soulchildrenchicago.com)

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