



# CHAngemakers

Frank Lawrence Jr. first saw his potential in college. He'd hovered around a 2.8 GPA his entire high school career. Then, his first semester at Morehouse College, he scored a 3.7. And he was off.

It gave the Bronzeville native and former CHA resident the confidence he needed to realize his dreams. He became the first person in his family to graduate from college. And, today, Lawrence is the US Senior Coordinator for Common Purpose, a global nonprofit devoted to developing team leaders at work and in society.

“That 3.7 GPA was a shock, it was the highest GPA I'd ever had in my life,” he said. “It was an awakening to my potential. I thought that if I went to Morehouse, I could change the world somehow. Now, I thought, ‘What can I do to impact youth?’”

Coming out of high school, Lawrence had little money and few resources. Even his counselors were skeptical of his ability to get to Morehouse financially. But he applied for scholarships, including a CHA scholarship, and wound up with a full ride his first year at the Atlanta-based school.

At one point, he lost his primary scholarship. He was sleeping on couches. But things turned around, and he graduated. It is a mental fortitude that has served him well.

At Common Purpose, Lawrence has found his purpose. It connects emerging youth with stakeholders and focuses on cultural intelligence, diversity and the development of leadership qualities. A talented public speaker, his job is to help identify funding and resources for the organization and deliver the program to young people in Chicago, Boston and New York. His primary role is centered around business development.

“It's an opportunity for me to give back to the community in a different way,” said Lawrence, who was part of the inaugural Chicago Common Purpose cohort program in 2019. “I don't see a lot of leadership programs that target both the employed and unemployed; a program that takes inclusivity and diversity to the next level. It's free too, so if you want to add something to a resume or if you are serious about being a grass roots advocate for a cause, they can come together in this one group.”

He also has a passion for psychology, as tragedies in his life have inspired him to research projects centered around mental health.

