



A Message to Our Community

Last week, our nation bore witness to the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man. This comes on the heels of the killings of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. Now, our nation and country have been galvanized into action. We see the outrage generated by the systemic racism that plagues our country. The University of Chicago's Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation (Ci3) in Sexual and Reproductive Health stands with the Black community and all people who are working toward a more just society.

Traditional and social media have been ablaze with these injustices, and the news cycle reminds us daily how COVID-19 is disproportionately claiming the lives of people in Black, Brown, and indigenous communities. This moment is reminiscent of how our nation's eyes were opened 65 years ago when Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black boy from the South Side of Chicago, was murdered. Photos of Emmett's maimed body were published in national newspapers and magazines to illustrate what racism in this country truly looks like. This time, our young people are watching, and we cannot shield them from the atrocities of our nation. As they see it unfolding, young people are seeking direction and trying to be heard.

Ci3 envisions a world in which *all* youth emerge into adulthood with agency over their bodies and futures. We work toward this vision by addressing the systemic and structural barriers that create disparities in the health and well-being of young people of color. Unfortunately, these barriers include racism and police brutality. Since our inception eight years ago, Ci3 has centered urban youth using games as an educational tool; storytelling to portray their lived experiences; and human-centered design to collaborate and create solutions to improve health outcomes.

As our nation and our young people begin emerging from stay-at-home orders and moving forward through shared grief over Black lives lost, we remain committed to empowering youth, conducting research through innovative programming, and uncovering opportunities for policy and systemic change.

Photo Credit: Daniel Arauz