



The Ci3 Spotlight highlights a staff member from our interdisciplinary team of researchers, designers, storytellers, and policy experts.

Name: Ireashia M Bennett

Pronouns: (they/them)

Title/Role at Ci3: Audio-Visual Production Manager; Visual Storytelling Extraordinaire!

Tell us about what you do at Ci3, and how it connects to your career dreams and aspirations (past and present).

Within this role, I contribute to Ci3's visual, media and storytelling portfolio by creating content that disseminates the mission, vision, and values of Ci3's research projects. At the center of this role is to translate complex issues into accessible formats by way of short instructional videos, podcasts, digital publications, and other engaging transmedia content. I also support the Ci3 research portfolio as an emerging expert on three narrative-based research methods: body mapping, story circles, and digital storytelling. Some projects I've contributed are: [Transmedia Collage](#), [Kissa Kahani](#), [Adolescent X](#). Most recently, I have served TSL as the Executive Producer of [Frankly. Podcast](#), a seven-episode series that contextualizes the findings from the 2018-2019 Adolescent X research study that explored the messages young people receive from various sources about their bodies, sexuality, and overall well being.

I also love collaborating with others across Ci3 to problem solve how to co-create, center, and build with young people of color that we engage with in our initiatives. This role supports my career endeavors becoming an empathetic and intentional filmmaker that uses film, media, and storytelling to accurately depict the lived experiences of BIPOC, disabled, and queer folks.



Frankly.

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What did you do before you joined Ci3? How has it influenced your work?

I worked as a multimedia journalist for Chicago-wide arts and cultural publications. Doing so, gave me the opportunity to see the various realities of Chicago communities as well as the rich cultural landscape this city has. By being immersed in various community spaces, I gathered so much meaningful information about how to engage with others from different backgrounds as well as witnessing how systemic oppression has impacted us all.

What prompted you to pursue a career in media-making?

I recognize media and storytelling as witness, as evidence, as memory, as narrative, and as a vehicle for activism and social change. As such, I use lens-based art to magnify experiences and connect them to larger socio-cultural issues related to race, disability, gender, and sexual identity.

What is unique about your approach to media making and storytelling?

At the center of my interdisciplinary practice are my devotion to using storytelling to shift and expand narratives and my commitment to preserving Black history, culture, and memory through multiple media, platforms, and disciplines.

What impact do you hope you and/or your research will have on the queer community of color - in Chicago and nationwide?

I hope to co-create spaces with other queer folks of color where we can be our fullest selves and not worry about judgement, belittlement, or being disposed of. I believe we all work within a system that encourages divisiveness, overproduction, and isolation. So, by creating these spaces with others I aim to dismantle the impact systemic and social has on our bodies and minds.

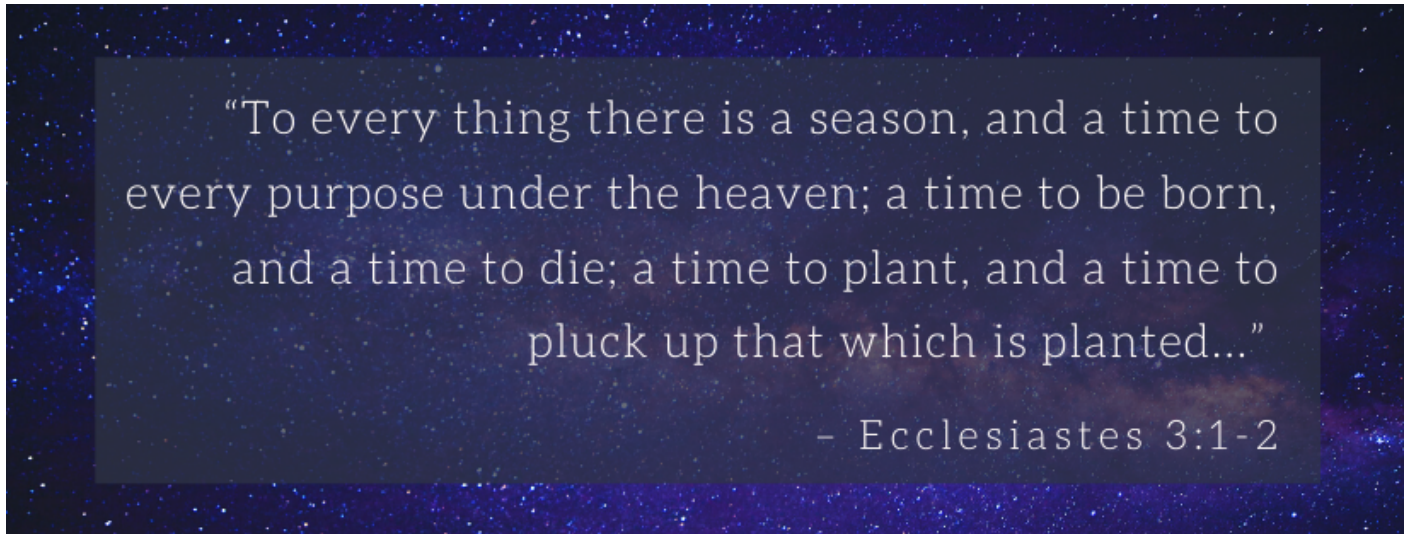
Last month we launched Frankly. A podcast that....Tell us about your role on podcast production and what you hope will come

out of these broader conversations with young people marginalized by race, gender, or sexuality?

My role on Frankly was Executive Producer of the podcast. I worked on every stage of the podcast from interviewing, scripting, recording voice overs, and post editing. I collaborated with Kaya and Alizha as well as the Ci3 communications team to shape the narratives of each episode as well as incorporate our findings from AX study into an accessible format. I hope that this project reaches the ears of young folks who want to feel seen and understood. I hope that this podcast can provide the language that helps them to better understand the ways systemic and structural violence impact aspects of their lives so that they can use that knowledge to combat it in whatever way they want.

What's your favorite quote, and how does it inspire your work?

My favorite quote is actually a Bible verse from Ecclesiastes 3:



"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted..."

This verse reminds me that we have to honor the stages we are in by showing up as authentic as we possibly can. I work to embody this scripture in how I collaborate with others to ensure I am patient in each stage of a project, because they are each valuable.

Who inspires you in your everyday life?

I'm inspired by my chosen family, my friendships where the love is deep and wide, who inspire me to take up space and enjoy my life.