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New University of Chicago Podcast, *Frankly.*, Amplifies the Voices and Experiences of Young People From Chicago’s South and West Sides

(Chicago, IL) Today, the University of Chicago’s [Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health \(Ci3\)](#) announced the launch of *Frankly.*, a new, seven-episode podcast exploring the health and wellbeing of adolescents from the perspectives and lived experiences of Black and Latinx young people from Chicago’s South and West sides.

Research has shown that mass media can significantly influence the development of adolescents. Dominant narratives often position young people, particularly young people of color, negatively and focus on risk and deficits. This messaging and positioning can play a role in the way families, friends, and society-at-large view young people as they develop into young adults.

Produced in collaboration with young people, this podcast series centers the voices of young people marginalized by race, gender, and/or sexual orientation as they navigate various social environments, develop their identities, and understand the world around them. It features candid conversations with young people about their experiences with consent, healthy relationships, over-policing, sexual harassment, sexuality education, and health. *Frankly.* aims to contextualize the stories of young people by examining the barriers and institutions that impede their health and wellbeing.

“Adolescence is a pivotal moment in a person’s life,” said Melissa Gilliam, MD, MPH Ci3 founder. “We produced this podcast because parents, teachers, doctors, friends, and families need to hear young people’s perspectives, understand their experiences, and learn more about what they need to thrive.”

This podcast builds on the findings from Ci3’s [Adolescent X Study](#), a research project that used narrative methods to explore the messages that young people receive about their bodies, identities, and sexual health. Launched in 2017, Adolescent X examined how cisgender and transgender young people experience messages about contraception, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy, and also how these messages impact their attitudes and behaviors about gender, sexuality, body image, pleasure, and romantic relationships.

“*Frankly.* is honest and illuminating,” said Ireashia Bennett, audio visual manager for Ci3’s Transmedia Story Lab and *Frankly.* co-host and executive producer. “We tackle a number of issues and topics directly impacting young people today. We’re excited for everyone to hear these authentic and thoughtful conversations with young people from Chicago and adolescent health experts.”

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The podcast published its first two episodes today and will release weekly episodes featuring experts from various disciplines of adolescent health discussing thought-provoking topics on the healthy development of young people. Episode descriptions are included below:

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- **Episode 1 (Release Date: Monday, April 19, 2021): Homecoming: The Importance of Community** features the experiences of a youth organizer as they navigated their sexual identity while growing up in a religious and traditional Latinx household.
- **Episode 2 (Release Date: Monday, April 19, 2021): Reimagining Relationships** highlights the types of messages that our co-host, Kaya, learned as a child regarding romantic and platonic relationships. It also describes her process of unlearning them.
- **Episode 3 (Release Date: Monday, April 26, 2021): Filling the Gaps in Sex Ed** includes stories from young people about their experiences with high school sexual education curricula and features the work of community organizations practicing comprehensive, innovative sex ed-approaches.
- **Episode 4 (Release Date: Monday, May 3, 2021): Unpacking the Miseducation of Consent** highlights the mixed messages that young people receive about consent and how issues regarding consent can play out in romantic relationships.
- **Episode 5: Freedom to Move, Freedom to Be? (Release Date: Monday, May 10, 2021): Describes how the** adultification of Black teens can impact their mobility, safety, and bodily autonomy.
- **Episode 6: Honoring Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy (Release Date: Monday, May 17, 2021):** explores the history surrounding experimentation on the bodies of Black women, and current disparities within reproductive healthcare.
- **Bonus Episode (Release Date: Monday, May 24, 2021):** Includes a candid discussion between podcast co-producers about what it was like to produce a podcast during the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest.

To listen to the *Frankly.* podcast, visit www.frankly-podcast.com. Listeners can also subscribe to or download *Frankly.* from iTunes and Spotify.

Frankly. was funded by the Ford Foundation and the Chicago Learning Exchange.

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About Ci3

Ci3 is an award-winning research center at the University of Chicago that addresses the social and structural determinants of adolescent sexual and reproductive health. At Ci3, we envision a world in which all youth emerge into adulthood with agency over their bodies and futures. Ci3 houses three labs: The Game Changer Chicago Design Lab; The Transmedia Story Lab; and The Design Thinking Lab. Within these labs, we create games and digital narratives and design interventions with and for youth. Ci3 is committed to empowering young people, conducting innovative research, and uncovering opportunities for policy and systemic change.