



HEALING THROUGH JUSTICE:

Racial Equity 2030 Challenge

THE OPPORTUNITY



At a time when we are facing a world-wide youth mental health crisis, Chicago youth are leading a first-of-its kind partnership between Communities United and Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital to advance *Healing Through Justice* (HTJ), a community-led, youth leadership and trauma recovery strategy aimed at transforming mental health outcomes for young people across the city.

Healing Through Justice is based on the premise that if communities invest in the leadership of young people, communities intentionally enhance opportunities for posttraumatic growth. By providing youth the opportunity to recreate their story, HtJ shifts youth's perspective and orientation towards the world around them. It also strengthens a feeling of control and ownership in mapping, shaping, and reconfiguring new pathways for new narratives to take hold – transforming experiences that build hope and optimism into civic action, empowerment and positive psychological growth for youth, their families, and communities. Recognizing the impact this model had on the mental health of youth in their communities, Communities United formed a close partnership with leaders at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago (Lurie Children's). Both organizations shared the goals of addressing the shortcomings of dominant mental health systems for communities of color, and the need to move upstream by using population health, community-driven, healing-centered strategies to reduce mental health disparities.

Through the *Healing Through Justice* initiative, this partnership is creating a new ecology of youth-led and community-centered healing. Tired of hearing that they are the broken ones, young leaders are turning the tables and transforming systems to become more racially just through their personal narratives, lived experiences and collective power.

This innovative idea was recognized by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Racial Equity 2030 initiative, which named *Healing Through Justice* a top 10 finalist in the global competition to advance equity.



"We need to look at breakthrough ideas such as Healing Through Justice that will develop bold new leaders with new ideas that can sustainably address the current mental health crisis. Our mental health system will never go far enough to provide the needed long-term solutions to address this tragic health disparity."

– John T Walkup, MD, Chair, Pritzker Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health

OUR STRATEGY

Healing Through Justice builds on 20 years of successful youth and community organizing led by Communities United. This bold new phase of the initiative will:

- Support the development of more than 3,000 young people as leaders and healing practitioners.
- Carry out youth-led community research to learn more about wellness needs and develop healing-centered approaches.
- Convene a network of community-based partners to support youth leaders, engage thousands of community residents in systems advocacy, and support implementation of new mental wellness strategies.
- Hold open Learning Labs twice a year to document lessons learned, expand alliances, and gather feedback.
- Prioritize narrative change through which youth-led storytelling will uplift young people as powerful community leaders and show how communities most impacted by racial injustice can lead systems transformation.

Healing Through Justice has the potential to become a regional and national model for transforming systems to be racially just through centering the people the systems are intended to serve. The initiative will include a *Roadmap for Change* with stories, findings and lessons learned that will be shared broadly in the fields of youth development, mental health and community organizing.



"The Healing Through Justice Initiative is based on the premise that racial equity is not just an outcome, it is a process through which individuals and communities most directly impacted by the harms of structural racism are at the center of developing and advancing solutions."—**Meyiya Coleman, Youth Leader and Organizer**
