



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

CITY OF CHICAGO LAUNCHES "TOGETHER WE HEAL" INITIATIVE

CHICAGO - Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice today launched a new citywide initiative – "Together We Heal" – a campaign aimed at building racial healing across Chicago. The goals of the initiative are to empower all Chicagoans to engage in activities fostering connection, restoration and learning at this time of racial reckoning for both the city and the nation. Alongside six anchor partners, Together We Heal announced a community challenge to activate residents from every neighborhood in Chicago to participate in candid conversations, healing circles, and other activities. The initiative culminates at the end of January with a virtual healing summit that will reflect on progress made and envision a path forward for the coming year.

"Whether it be the on-going health crisis or protests that have erupted in response to racial inequality, the events of this year have urged us to fully acknowledge how racism continues to drive systemic inequity both in our city and across our country," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Through the 'Together We Heal' initiative, we will turn this acknowledgement into action—constructing discursive spaces for our residents to listen to one another, heal and work together to create a Chicago free from the scourges of racial injustice. By building bridges to one another through this racial healing work, we will not only be more united as a city but develop the empathy we need in order to holistically recover from the challenges of this unprecedented year."

The "Together We Heal" (TWH) initiative is an all-encompassing project to address the nation's current racial climate – exacerbated by COVID-19; the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others; and the civic unrest that followed, loss of jobs and businesses, and destruction of community assets – as well as the decades of racial inequities in Chicago.

"This past year has shown us that we cannot afford to ignore historical trauma, racism, and inequality," said Candace Moore, Chief Equity Officer for the City of Chicago. "We must take steps forward in communion with one another, in



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recognition of our mutual humanity. We must commit to heal ourselves, our communities and our city."

A key component of the new initiative is the community challenge, calling on Chicagoans from now until the end of January to:

- Organize a virtual healing event with friends, neighbors, colleagues, family members, and other social networks,
- Share their experience through an online form that populates an interactive "Healing Map" that showcases reported events throughout the city; and
- Champion efforts throughout the next several weeks through community and social media activations.

Residents are encouraged to visit www.chi.gov/togetherweheal to share their experiences, follow the map and learn more about the initiative.

Together We Heal syncs up to a number of existing efforts that are already underway in Chicago, including those of our anchor partners: Truth Racial Healing and Transformation Chicago, Chicago Community Trust, American Jewish Committee, YWCA of Chicago, the Racial Equity Rapid Response Team, and the Equity Advisory Committee. This moment is an opportunity for residents to support these efforts, develop their own creative engagements, and encourage broader civic unity that will advance racial healing across Chicago.

Hear what community partners are saying about the Together We Heal initiative.

"Far too often we don't take the time to listen to each other. As a community we must do more, we must do better, and we must be there for our neighbors," said Laurence Bolotin, executive Director of American Jewish Committee Chicago. "The 'Together We Heal' initiative is a critical step in creating the type of city we all deserve to live in."

"While racism is used to oppress people of color, it impacts our entire society in ways big and small," said Dorri McWhorter, CEO of YWCA Metropolitan Chicago. "It's important that we all take part in the healing process so that we can be stronger as a community, a city, and a country. YWCA Metropolitan Chicago has been committed to the elimination of racism for nearly one hundred years and is proud to be an anchor partner with the City of Chicago on the Together We Heal initiative."

"As we advance racial healing in our city, it is important to remember that healing is a gift;" said Glenance Green, Co-Founder of Black Researchers Collective. "one that must first be given to ourselves before we can authentically, vulnerably, and deeply engage in collective efforts with others to the greatest extent possible."



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“Our great city of Chicago has endured significant challenges and adversities that have spotlighted trauma caused by racial injustices, but our resilience and commitment to each other and our communities will allow us to weather these severe storms,” said Bela Motè, CEO of Carole Robertson Center for Learning. “We are proud to support Together We Heal, as it will allow us to begin the journey of racial healing as a collective. Our shared commitment will strengthen the fabric of Chicago and further unite us as Chicagoans.”

“Racial inequalities for Black and Brown people have been debilitating and life altering,” said Kim Jay, Senior CHW Consultant and Trainer at Sinai Urban Health Institute. “Understanding that it is a problem is the right step, having inclusive dialogue to share those experiences creates a roadmap which then becomes the building blocks for solutions and healing becomes the byproduct. We need to heal to thrive.”

“TRHT is building a workforce and capacity for collective healing,” said Pilar Audain-Reed, Associate Director of TRHT Greater Chicago. “That means healing those that have been most impacted first, so that we can heal and repair collectively. We are committed to the cause of racial healing within neighborhood institutions, and our movement amplifies the call for neighborhood investments and equitable government services.”

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