



CHA's sixteen young documentary filmmakers joined by DePaul student mentors and program director and teacher at DePaul, Liliame Calfee.

CHA Filmmakers: Aisha Horns, Christiana Jackson, Rose Straight, Kenyada Sims, Kamiya Sims, Johnnetta Walker, Shaniah Cruz, Zaria Clark, Tay'rece Wise, Franshay Lopez, Deja Flanagan, Shawntel Smitherman, Paris Black, Amaya Woods, Tiondra Vinson, and Cynthia Greenwood



Young CHA filmmakers Deja Flanagan, Tiondra Vinson and Aisha Horns (l-r) joined by Cinematographer and DePaul Alumni Aaron Johnson (background), to learn process of documentary film making

Filmmaking is a means of personal expression that this summer allowed 16 young women who are Chicago Housing Authority residents to document the realities that surround their lives. Ranging from the impacts of teen pregnancy to the devastation caused by neighborhood violence, these women learned to use film as a tool in a collaborative documentary filmmaking program offered by CHA and DePaul University's School of Cinematic Arts.

"When I first heard about this summer film program, I didn't think I'd be the one behind the camera filming," said 16-year-old Aisha Horns, one of the young women selected to participate in the program. "But I'm actually learning how to use the camera, set up the equipment and, most challenging for me, speak with people in the community I've never met before."

Horns is growing up in Dearborn Homes, a public housing community in Bronzeville, and she decided to tell the story of teen pregnancy in her film called **'Babies Having Babies.'** "So many teens were getting pregnant," Horns said. "I wanted to show people what that was like."

This program is part of an expanded partnership between CHA and DePaul's College of Computing and Digital Media (CDM) that in CHA's Year of the Youth, is ensuring CHA's young people have access to boundless opportunities. For these young filmmakers, their goal was to create films that give a voice to the voiceless while developing professional skills as they look to future career paths.

Tiondra Vinson, one of the young filmmakers in the program, chose to focus on community violence.

"I chose to pitch violence in Chicago neighborhoods because I wanted to get into detail about why it is happening. If I could do any documentary in the world, I would choose violence in Chicago. I would go into different neighborhoods and talk to different people to see their perspective of why violence is happening."

Paris Black, another program participant, chose to focus on household dynamics. "The team I'm in is called **'Flourishing Families.'** It's about how single and dual parent homes affect the child and also how families are compared to a garden. It's basically focusing on how some people were affected by dual and single parent homes positively and it doesn't matter if you are raised in a single or dual parent home. It just matters if people that are your guardians love you and care about you and take care of you while raising you in a healthy environment. That is what really matters."

Throughout the filming experience, these young filmmakers had access to six award-winning cinematographers and directors, a cohort of DePaul student mentors, and an abundance of professional filming and recording equipment. Earlier this year the teens debuted their films for the first time, and in response to popular demand, the films for a second time were shown at the DePaul CDM Theatre for over 100 viewers. More screenings are to come, and the films can be viewed anytime online:

[Watch Films Here](#)