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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2016

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## PRESS RELEASE

### CHICAGO LEADS NATIONAL AVERAGE, NEW YORK CITY AND LOS ANGELES IN OUT OF WORK, OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH *New Report Details a Crisis of Disconnected Youth in Chicago*

CHICAGO -- A new report, [\*Lost: The Crisis Of Jobless and Out Of School Teens and Young Adults In Chicago, Los Angeles, New York Illinois and the U.S.\*](#), commissioned by the Alternative Schools Network (ASN) and developed by the University of Illinois Chicago's Great Cities Institute (GCI) shows that teens and young adults in Chicago aren't keeping up with the rest of the nation, or even with other major cities.

Even as the death toll mounts and gang battles escalate in the same neighborhoods where youth unemployment is at its highest, funding for employment programs is on increasingly shaky ground, with politics overriding policy at both the state and federal levels. The GCI report shows that despite a national economic recovery, Chicago remains one of the nation's leaders in youth joblessness. **Blacks and Hispanics continue to be significantly behind with 47 percent of young Black men (20-24) and 20 percent of young Hispanic men jobless and out of school in Chicago. This is compared to 32 percent nationwide and 31 percent in both New York and Los Angeles for Black men and 18 percent nationwide and in New York 27 percent and Los Angeles 14 percent for Hispanics.**

The situation is even worse for **Chicago's Black and Hispanic teens (16-19) with 88 percent of Blacks and 85 percent of Hispanic's in that group not working, compared to 71 percent nationwide.**

"We are seeing the results of this monumental policy failure every day, as the shootings mount up and the funerals multiply," said Jack Wuest, Alternative Schools Network executive director. "The new data that's being presented draws a straight line between the unemployment crisis for youth and the escalating violence in Chicago's hardest hit neighborhoods. I've said it before, but it is worth repeating: Investments in creating meaningful work for these youth will pay dividends immediately and for years to come. A failure to do so has had and will continue to have dire consequences for our city and our state."

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT

### **CHICAGO'S BLACK YOUTH FALLING FARTHER BEHIND THOSE IN OTHER MAJOR CITIES**

Employment among young people across the nation has not recovered to pre-recession levels, **the percentage of 16-19 year olds who were employed had dropped to 26 percent in 2011, from 37 percent in 2005 and had only climbed to 29 percent by 2014.** But Chicago youth lag behind not only the national average, but also behind those living in the major cities of New York and Los Angeles. And while Black and Hispanic youth are struggling disproportionately across the board, their access to jobs in Chicago is at desperation levels.

- **Nationwide, 18.2 percent of youth 20-24 were out of school and out of work in 2014, compared to 17.1 percent in Illinois, 22.9 percent in Chicago, 21.1 percent in New York City and 16.4 percent in Los Angeles.**
- **For Chicago's white youth, 20-24, 6.7 percent were out of school and out of work.**
- **The situation was particularly acute for Blacks 20-24, 40.9 percent of who were out of school and out of work, compared to 27.3 percent in New York City and 29.3 percent in Los Angeles.**

### **CHICAGO COMMUNITIES TELL A STORY OF A RACIAL EMPLOYMENT DIVIDE**

The report breaks down the racial demographics and employment levels by Chicago community areas, illustrating the strong connection between segregation and employment opportunities.

- **Areas with high concentrations of White (non-Hispanic or Latino) population on the North Side including Lincoln Park (67.2 percent), Lakeview (73.6 percent), Forest Glen (76.8 percent) and Norwood Park (70.1 percent) had some of the lowest rates of jobless individuals ages 16 to 19.**
- **Jobless rates for those ages 20 to 24 are highest on the South and West Sides of the city and are lowest in on the North, Northwest and Southwest sides of the City.**
- **Areas with 40.1 percent to 60.0 percent and 60.1 percent to 80.0 percent ranges of jobless individuals are remarkably similar to the areas where over 90 percent of 18 to 24 year olds are Black.**

"In the process of assembling, organizing and analyzing this data, one thing became very clear to us," said Teresa Córdova, director of the Great Cities Institute. "We are losing a generation of youth who have no opportunity to work in their neighborhoods.

It is a tragedy for those youth and it is a tragedy for the communities they live in and the city as a whole."

A group comprised of youth, legislators, public officials and key agency leaders tackled the problem at a public hearing, ***Solution to the CRISIS: Youth Employment***, where former out-of-school high school students who now attend ASN schools presented testimony to the panel of federal, state and local public officials regarding the impact of youth joblessness.

“Nowadays, people will challenge you in a heartbeat,” Richard Wooten, a newly retired Chicago police officer in a September 2015 Chicago Sun-Times interview. “Communities are so economically destroyed that people are much more agitated, aggressive. People don’t care about going to jail any more. More mentally ill are walking the streets. There’s no athletic or other programs to involve kids in. That’s what the streets offer them.”

The hearing conveners, **the Alternative Schools Network, Chicago Urban League, Westside Health Authority, Chicago Area Project, Black United Fund of Illinois and Youth Connection Charter School**, put forth a **platform of policy steps** at the Chicago Urban League hearing, urging the panel’s lawmakers to expedite action or lose yet another generation of young people to hopelessness, violence and dependency on taxpayers.

“The federal and state governments are leaving our inner-city youth behind,” said Chicago Urban League President and CEO Shari Runner. “The platform we are putting forward today is meant to correct that unconscionable omission. Without immediate and adequate government support for bringing inner-city youth into the employment mainstream, the hopelessness that leads to poverty, drug abuse, homelessness and violence will continue to plague our youth and our communities.”

**Youth Hearing Panelists included:**

- **IL State Sens. Mattie Hunter, Dist. 3; Kimberly Lightford, Dist. 4; and Napoleon Harris III, Dist. 15;**
- **IL State Reps. Monique Davis, Dist. 27; Will Davis, Dist. 30; Ken Dunkin, Dist. 5; Marcus Evans Jr., Dist. 33; Mary Flowers, Dist. 31; La Shawn Ford, Dist. 8; Robyn Gabel, Dist. 18; Elizabeth Hernandez, Dist. 24; Camille Lilly, Dist. 78; Elgie R. Sims Jr., Dist. 34; Cynthia Soto, Dist. 4; and Arthur Turner, Dist. 9;**
- **Chicago’s Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler and Deputy Commissioner Mary Ellen Messner;**
- **City of Chicago Aldermen Walter Burnett Jr., Ward 27; George Cardenas, Ward 12; Willie Cochran, Ward 20; Harry Osterman, Ward 48; and Christopher Taliaferro, Ward 29;**
- **Cook County Commissioners Richard R. Boykin, Dist. 1; Bridget Gainer, Dist. 10; Jesus G. Garcia, Dist. 7; and Karen Chavers, Dist. Director for Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin; and**
- **Audra Wilson, Deputy Chief of Staff for U.S. Congresswoman Robin Kelly.**

**Presenters include:**

- **Quiwana Bell, Chief Operating Officer, Westside Health Authority**
- **Teresa Córdova, Director, University of Illinois Chicago Great Cities Institute**
- **Henry English, President & CEO, Black United Fund of Illinois**
- **Jesse Ruiz, Chairman, Chicago Park Dist.**
- **Shari Runner, President & CEO, The Chicago Urban League**
- **David Whittaker, Executive Director, Chicago Area Project**
- **Jack Wuest, Executive Director, Alternative Schools Network**

**ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK**

The Alternative Schools Network (ASN) is a not-for-profit organization in Chicago working to provide quality education with a specific emphasis on inner-city children, youth and adults. Since 1973, ASN has been supporting community based and community-run programs to develop and expand training and other educational services in Chicago’s inner-city neighborhoods. In addition to supporting direct services, ASN has been a consistent and effective advocate for community-based services whereby the people involved are active participants in developing and running programs – not passive recipients of services. To shape policies and programs, ASN has built an impressive track record of operating successful education, employment and support service programs. For more information please visit [www.asnchicago.org](http://www.asnchicago.org).

**ABOUT THE GREAT CITIES INSTITUTE**

UIC Great Cities Institute is to link its academic resources with a range of partners to address urban issues by providing research, policy analysis and program development. Tied to the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Commitment, GCI seeks to improve quality of life in Chicago, its metropolitan region and cities throughout the world. <https://greatcities.uic.edu>

**ABOUT THE CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE**

Established in 1916, the Chicago Urban League is a civil rights organization that empowers and inspires individuals to reach and exceed their economic potential. The Chicago Urban League supports and advocates for economic, educational and social progress for African-Americans through our agenda focused exclusively on economic empowerment as the key driver for social change. For more information, visit [www.thechicagourbanleague.org](http://www.thechicagourbanleague.org).

**CLICK ON THE URL BELOW FOR LIVE STREAMING OF THE EVENT, THE FULL REPORT AND MORE INFORMATION:**

<http://www.ASNChicago.org/Youth-Employment-Hearing-2016>