

UNIVERSITY OF
UNSILENCE
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prospectus 2018



95% of Unsilence workshop participants report that they are more comfortable engaging in difficult conversations about injustice.

**we spark dialogue,
support critical thinking,
and build empathy
to inspire healing and social change**

Unsilence is

a non-profit service organization that fills a critical gap in civic education. We *unsilence* hidden injustices and marginalized voices. Our work lays a crucial foundation for educators, change-makers, and community leaders, **giving them key tools to succeed in their civic and social change efforts.**

Unsilence's unique method leverages the power of storytelling, the arts, and game design to engage participants as "Unsilencers"—their mission: to identify root causes of silencing and engage in difficult conversations.

Through our highly-interactive, research-based learning experiences, Unsilencers learn to bridge perspectives, break down engrained stigmas, and build collective empathy and understanding.

our vision

a just society that values all voices

why is it so
hard to talk
about the
things that
matter most?

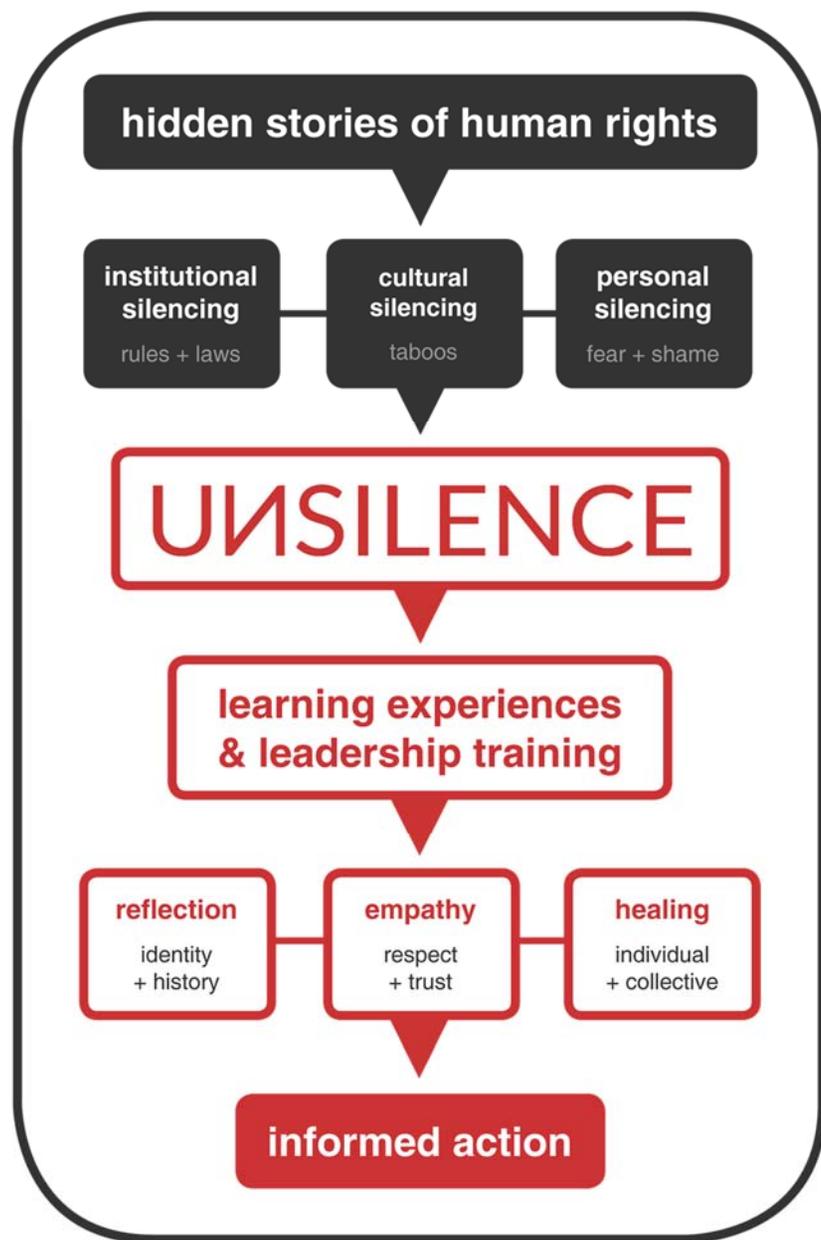
Shame, trauma, fear of public ridicule, social norms, and even school and government policies keep people silent and stories hidden.

If we can't talk about injustice, then we can't find solutions.

"There are so many excuses why not to talk about tough issues. We need more reasons for people to go for it and if we can break down some barriers and get people thinking about things differently [...] that makes conditions better for everyone."

- Zach Borders
CEO, CivicArtworks

3 forms of silencing



Institutional Silencing

“Our friend died by suicide, but our school doesn’t let us talk about that.”

Cultural Silencing

“It’s hard to open up about my experience as a rape survivor. Talking about it makes my friends uncomfortable.”

Personal Silencing

“My family doesn’t know I’m transgender. I’m afraid to tell them but I know I need support.”

the tools we use

Storytelling

stories build empathy; stories give voice to marginalized, lived experiences and allow us to bear witness

The Arts

art challenges us to see the world through a different point of view; art helps us communicate in ways that words alone cannot

Games

“serious games” are serious learning¹; puzzles and innovative problem solving can help us navigate the complexities of social justice

Human Rights

human rights do not exist in isolation; they are a social contract and intersect with our daily lives in many ways, big and small

¹International Journal of Serious Games, 2018

grounded in

Racial Equity

investigating how existing disparities of race—and the forces perpetuating those disparities—impede individual and community advancement

Intersectionality & Historical Context

exploring how systems of power and oppression are deeply intertwined in historical events, systems, and structures, and collectively impact all members of society

Inclusion

examining how individuals with marginalized identities are valued, welcomed, and provided growth opportunities within a community

Mental Health & Wellness

reflecting on human emotion, discomfort, and vulnerability, as well as the psychological and social well-being of individuals within a community



"It is challenging to have rigorous and deep discussions around the tough issues that communities face which can leave students unsure of how to authentically tackle social change."

- Heather Van Benthuisen
Director, Department of Social Science and
Civic Engagement at Chicago Public Schools

**capacity,
reach,
& programs**

who we serve

schools

neighborhood communities

non-profit organizations

cultural institutions

businesses & corporations



**Unsilence
programs have
reached more than
10,000 individuals
across 10 states in
more than 100
communities.**

“There are so many things we should talk about but don’t because we’re afraid or we don’t know how. The fact that we have a voice here, it matters because we don’t always have a voice.”

- Chicago Public School Student, age 17

“A safe space doesn’t silence people, it empowers people to speak up. If a school is going to educate someone, educate them culturally, socially, and academically.”

- Chicago Public School Student, age 16

programs

UNSILENCE_{here}

OVERLAPPING TRIANGLES

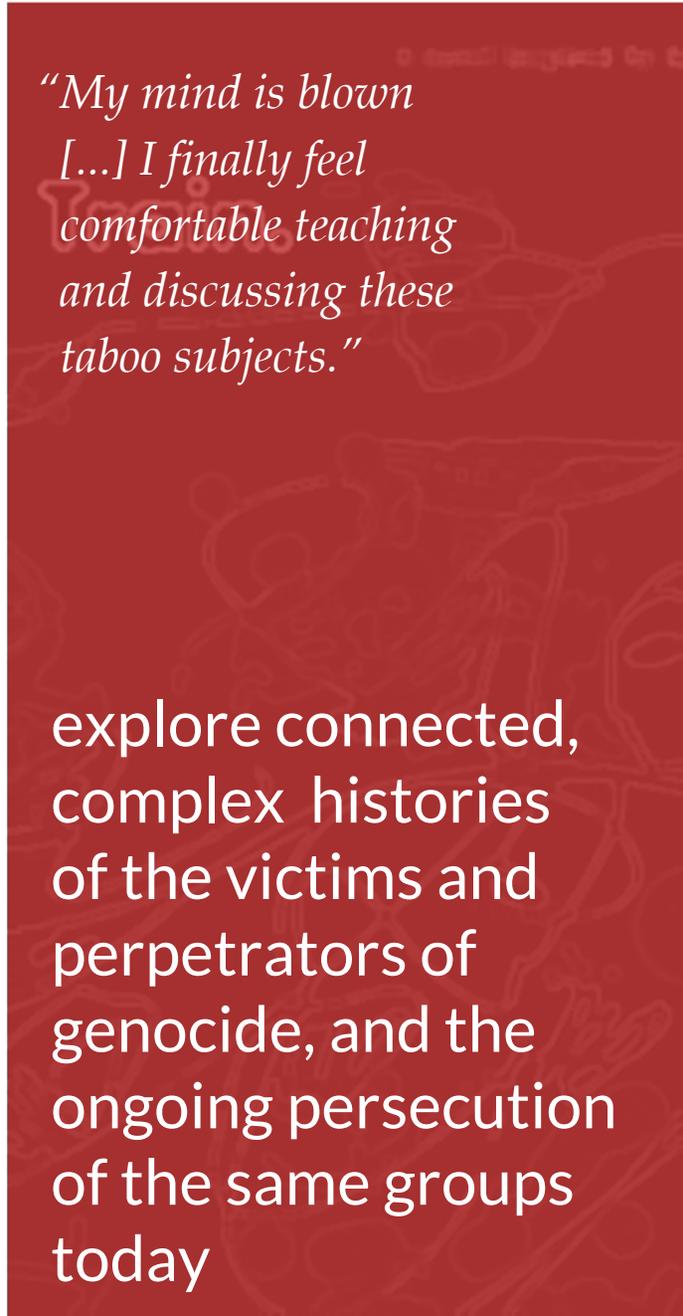
shameless

songwriting
beats shame



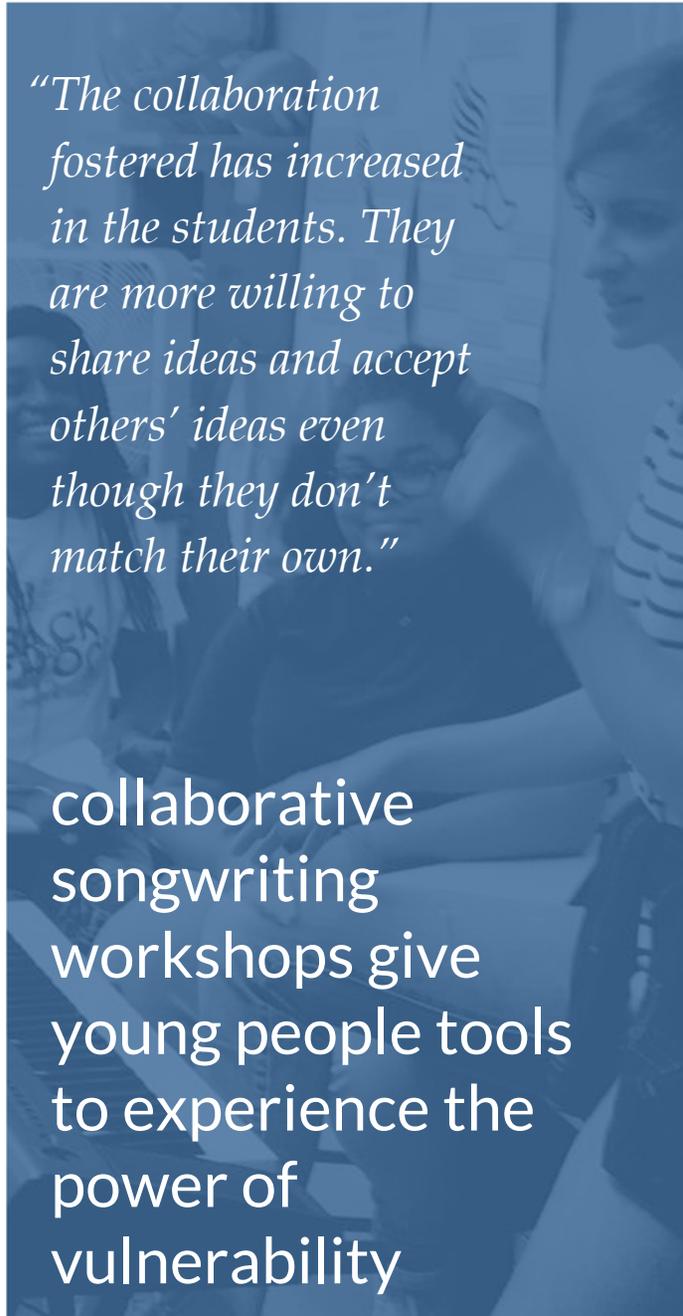
"[W]e can have this respectful and open dialogue with one another where we can share and see ourselves in someone else's story which often times can help you."

break down barriers to open dialogue with an in-depth unpacking of the fundamentals of institutional, cultural, and personal silencing



"My mind is blown [...] I finally feel comfortable teaching and discussing these taboo subjects."

explore connected, complex histories of the victims and perpetrators of genocide, and the ongoing persecution of the same groups today



"The collaboration fostered has increased in the students. They are more willing to share ideas and accept others' ideas even though they don't match their own."

collaborative songwriting workshops give young people tools to experience the power of vulnerability

events, content, & special initiatives

SHADOWS

a human rights treasure hunt

DIGITAL FEATURES

UNSILENCEvoices

"I used to think that human rights abuses were more of the outliers in their frequency, but now I think it's more the norm and everyone has a related story."

a dynamic quest-based learning experience designed to shine light on injustices hidden in plain sight and spark individual and collective action

"You showed me how to turn a sensitive issue into a positive, meaningful discussion with students."

web-based stories, interactives, and educator resources create entry-points to learning about hidden atrocities, stigmas, personal struggles, and perseverance

"You know, a lot of people don't even see us as humans."

partnering artists with communities to deeply investigate, document, and publicly amplify marginalized voices through live and digital interactive exhibitions

major funders & partners

- Chicago Public Schools
- Civic Artworks
- Cradles 2 Crayons
- Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center
- Lush Charitable Cosmetic Foundation
- Daniel & Susan Asher Family Foundation
- Woods Fund of Chicago
- Young Leaders Fund of Chicago Community Trust

Impact Goal #1

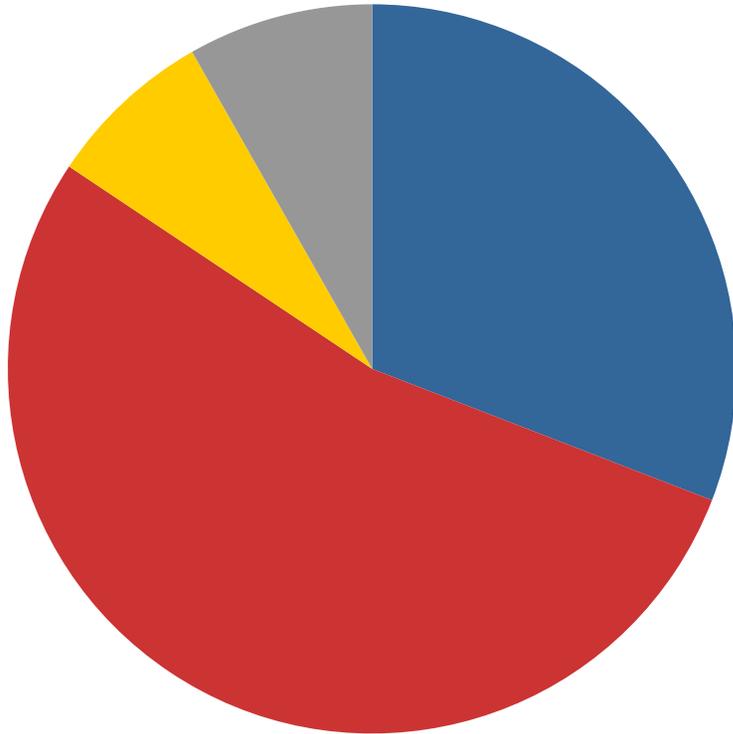
Increase and sustain Unsilence reach to more than 5,000 young people, educators, business leaders, and members of the public per year

Impact Goal #2

90% of Unsilence program participants will demonstrate increased understanding of the root causes that silence injustice in their communities

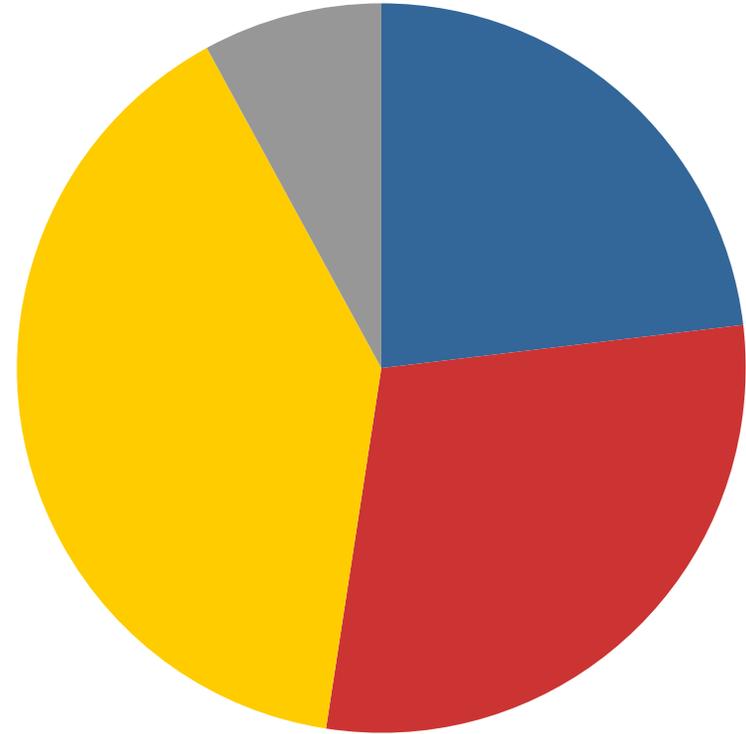
financial snapshot

Expenses

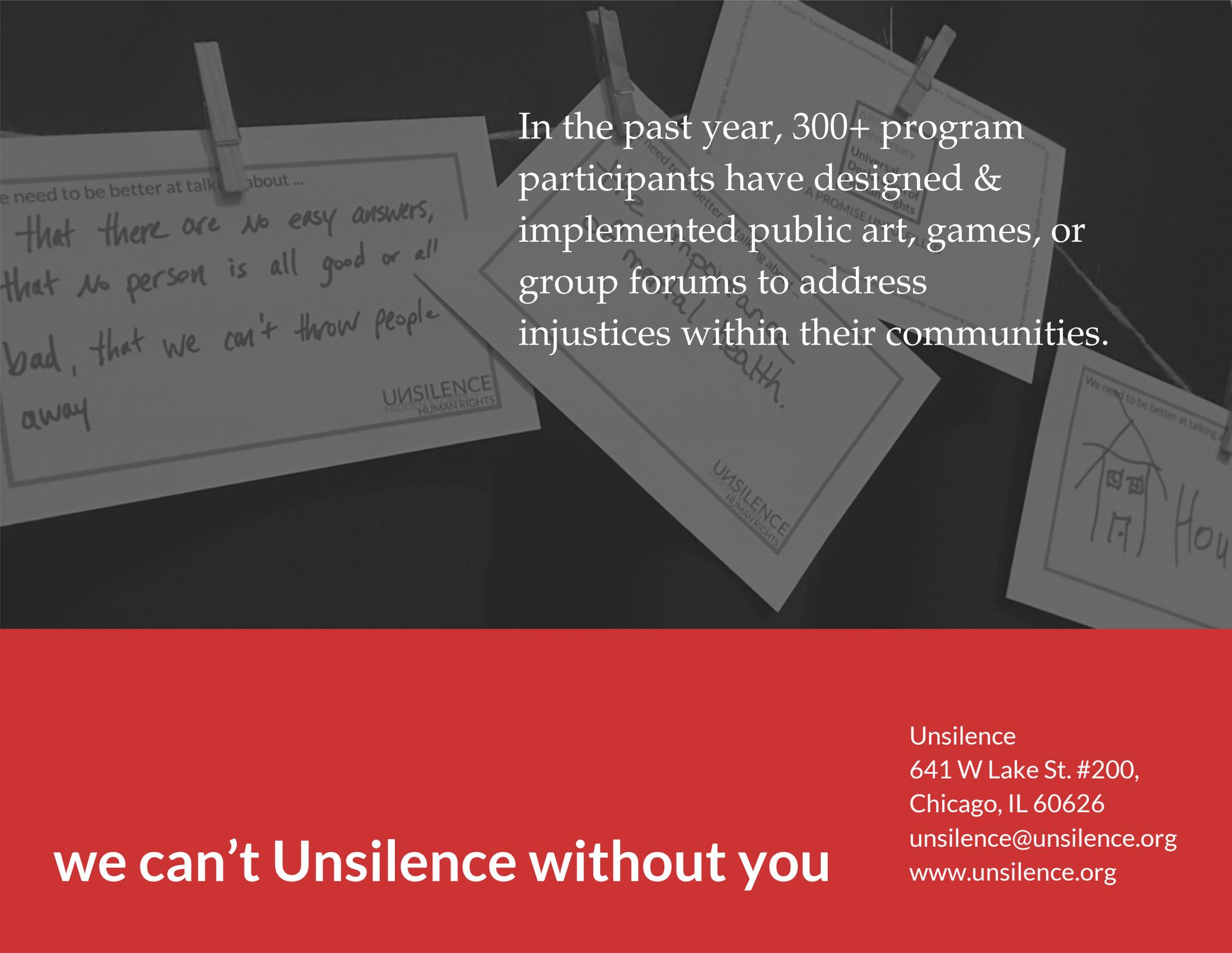


- Administration
- Programs
- Fundraising
- Technology & Design

Income



- Program Fees
- Individual Donors
- Foundation Support
- Corporate Sponsorship

The image features a dark background with several handwritten notes pinned to it with wooden clothespins. The notes are on light-colored paper and contain various messages and drawings. One prominent note on the left reads: "We need to be better at talking about... that there are no easy answers, that no person is all good or all bad, that we can't throw people away". Another note in the center has the word "mental" written vertically. A note on the right shows a simple drawing of a house with the word "How" written next to it. The Unsilence logo is visible on the bottom right of several notes. A solid red horizontal bar spans the bottom of the image, containing the text "we can't Unsilence without you" and contact information for Unsilence.

In the past year, 300+ program participants have designed & implemented public art, games, or group forums to address injustices within their communities.

we can't Unsilence without you

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