



THE MOUNT SINAI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & THE BLAVATNIK FAMILY
WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE

PUBLIC HEALTH AND RACIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM

SUMMER 2023 REPORT



ABOUT

The Public Health and Racial Justice Program (PHRJP) is an innovative education and empowerment program for girls of color, ages 15-18 years. Designed in the spring of 2020 as a direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement, this program provides a supportive and affirming space in which participants can safely learn about the impact of racism on public health, and about the work being done to address inequities and disparities.

This year, with partnership from the Blavatnik Family Women's Health Research Institute and funding support from the Helen Gurley Brown Foundation, we expanded the program to reach a greater number of youth, offer in-person programming, and provide stipends to our participants to offset the cost of participation.



Over the course of six weeks, participants met daily at Mount Sinai Hospital to explore a variety of public health issues through a racial justice lens. Emphasizing the power and importance of civic engagement, community organizing, and youth activism, we aimed to build knowledge and skills, foster pride, and nurture community connection so that all our participants see themselves as invested and powerful agents of change.

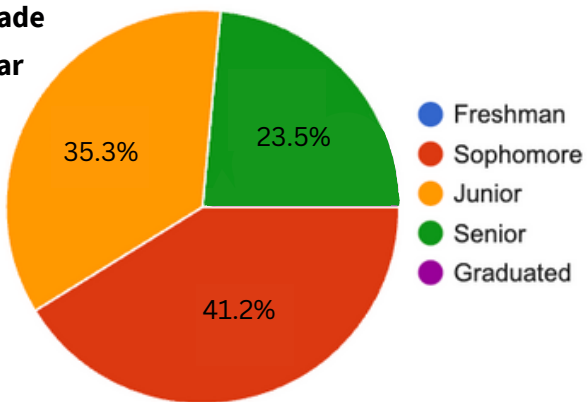


We encourage participants to become active and engaged citizens around issues that matter to them, recognizing their power and potential as lifelong stakeholders invested in shaping the policies, institutions, and structures that impact the health and well-being of their families and their communities.

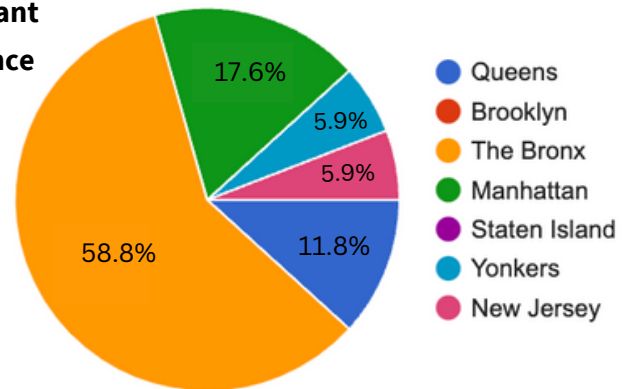


15 YOUTH

**Participant Grade
Academic Year
2022-2023**



**Participant
Residence**





80+ GUEST SPEAKERS

Our program aims to broaden participants' understanding of the many different pathways one can follow into health and justice work. We emphasize the impact of women of color and BIPOC-led movements in advocating for an intersectional and liberation-based approach to advancing towards greater health equity.

Throughout the course of this program, we featured:

- Clinicians, Scientists, and Researchers from across the health system
- Leadership from Mount Sinai's Office for Diversity and Inclusion
- Members of the Mount Sinai Institute for Health Equity Research
- Labor Organizers and Union Activists
- Certified Nurse Midwives, Ob/Gyns, and Doulas
- City Officials from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the New York City Public Advocate Office
- IT Leadership, Data Analysts, Marketing and Communications Staff
- Reproductive Justice and Youth Activists
- Sexuality Educators
- Survivors of Commercial Sex Trafficking
- Members of East Harlem's Community Board 11



DOZENS OF ISSUES

- Introduction to Public Health, Systemic Racism, Advocacy, and Activism
- Identity, Intersectionality, and Belonging
- Reproductive Justice
- Sexuality
- HIV and STIs
- LGBTQ Health, Activism, and Advocacy
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
- Arts, Culture, and Narrative in Public Health
- Mental Health
- Addiction
- Workers' Health and Labor Organizing
- Nutrition
- Homelessness
- Environmental Justice
- Incarceration
- Maternal Health
- Healthy Relationships and Consent
- Unpacking Imposter Syndrome
- Immigrant Health
- Gun Violence and Strategies for Prevention
- Climate Justice
- Civic Engagement and Health Justice in New York City
- Photography as a Tool for Social Change

PHOTOVOICE

Photovoice is a community-based engagement and empowerment approach to driving social change through photography and narrative. Participants selected a public health issue that mattered to them and applied their unique experience, knowledge, and perspective to educate their community, facilitate critical dialogue, and promote opportunities for action.



Throughout the process, participants engaged in dialogue-based activities with peers and program facilitators to further examine their issue and ideas for actionable solutions. They also received feedback from members of East Harlem's Community Board 11.

Participants shared their Photovoice projects at a celebratory presentation on the final day of programming. This event was open to the community and was attended by Mount Sinai staff, community partners, and participant family and friends.



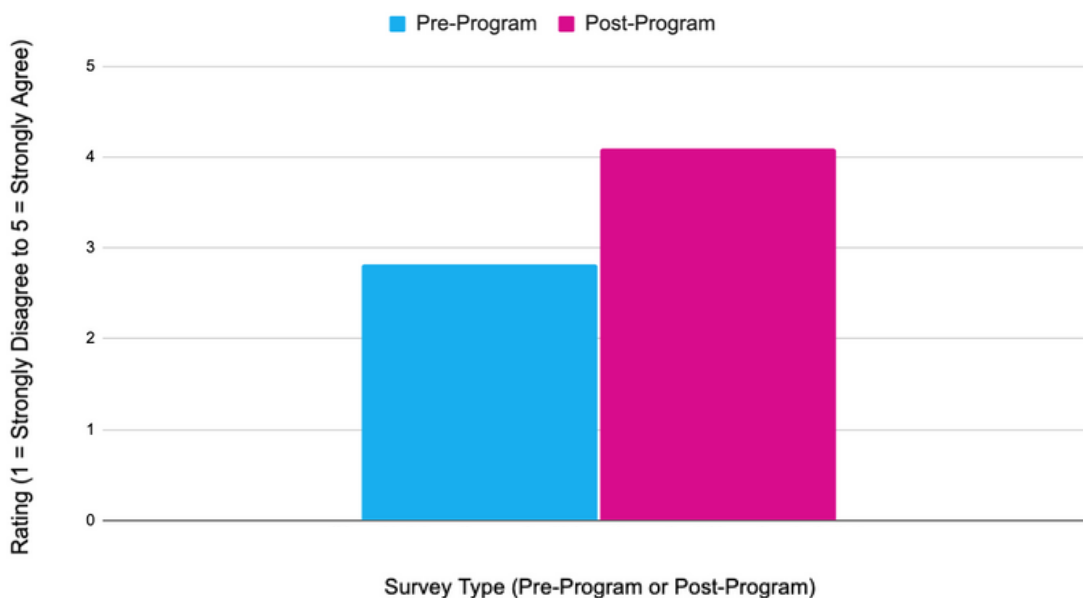
Their projects were also featured in a gallery for guests to explore.



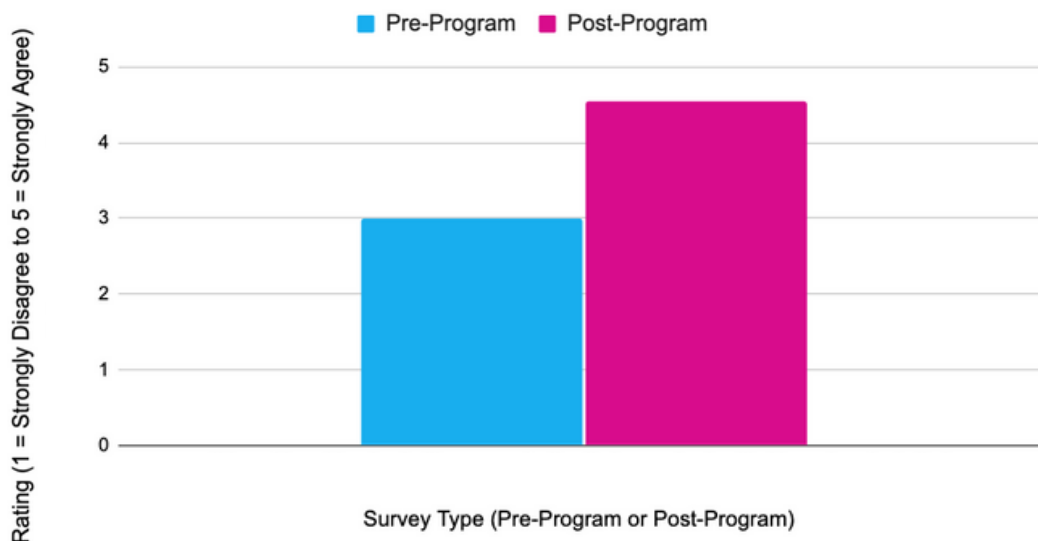
EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

We surveyed student knowledge, self-efficacy, attitudes and beliefs related to structural racism, health equity, and racial justice before the program start and after program completion. The endline survey also included open-ended questions to elicit personal feedback on the program itself. Surveys were anonymous and administered online using Google Forms.

If I want to take action on a health issue I care about, I know how to do that.

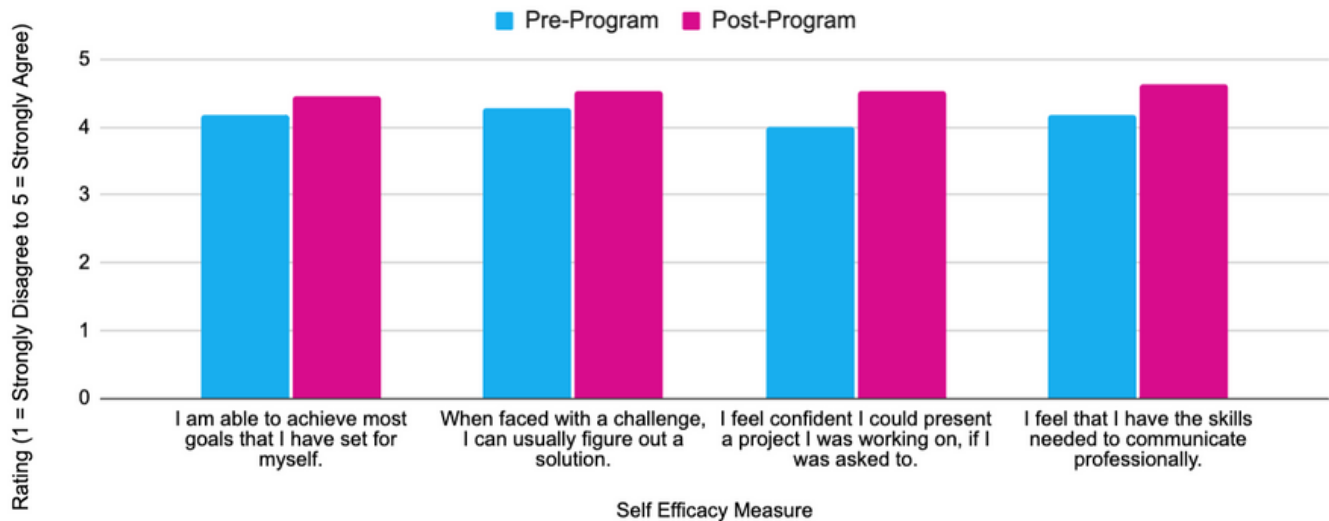


If I want to get involved with an organization that promotes health, I know how to do that.



EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Average Pre- and Post-Program Self Efficacy Ratings



Participants' proposed improvements to the program included: shadowing opportunities at Mount Sinai, local field trips, and designated time each week to reach out to guest speakers for networking purposes.

Participants most enjoyed learning about:

- Mental Health
- Reproductive Justice
- Maternal Health



EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

THE MOST MEANINGFUL PART OF THIS PROGRAM WAS...

- *“Having that space to be myself and being able to express what I am thinking at the moment. Being vulnerable and having that respect that most of the time adults don't give to teenagers. I loved the relationships that were built in such a short amount of time.”*
- *“The new relationships I made and learning more about how to help my community.”*
- *“Feeling comfortable and welcomed into this space and meeting all these wonderful and intelligent people who inspire me to embrace who I am.”*
- *“Getting to know other people of color that are around my age and listening to everyone’s different opinions and perspectives.”*

WHAT SURPRISED ME WAS...

- *“Learning about the systemic racism that people deal with everyday.”*
- *“How generational trauma can affect mental health and physical health.”*
- *“The amount of Black maternity deaths the Black community has endured.”*
- *“All the things we talked about and learned about in the program were all new information to me so everything surprised me. It surprised me that we aren't taught these things in school but if wanna to gain more knowledge on these topics we have to learn it on our own or from a program like this.”*

“Hearing from both younger people and people who were actively involved in their communities and making a difference really was inspiring and presented tangible ways for me to get involved in the community.”



EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

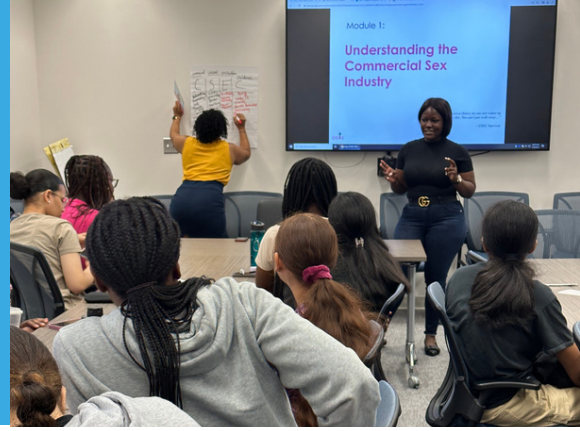
ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS...

- *“I know I’m always an outspoken person but there’s no amount of words that would be able to explain how much appreciation and love I have for you all. I struggled to grasp certain subjects and sometimes I just didn't understand anything. It was because of all you that I was able to speak my mind every time, you all made a comfortable space for me and I’m sure the rest of the [participants] would 100% agree with me on that. I loved every minute I spent at this program.”*
- *“My favorite part about the program was getting to learn about different professions in the medical field from the guest speakers. I also liked learning about the different disparities in public health that I didn’t know of.”*
- *“In my family, there is this belief that mental health is fake or that it is made up and it causes them to ignore our problems. Mental health is a real issue that human beings deal with daily. It’s normal.”*
- *“At first I thought I knew what career I wanted to be but I met really nice people in the program who talked about their careers, and that gave me more options to be open to my opportunities. I also thought that many professionals had one path and that they knew they were going to be where they are now, but I learned that there is nothing wrong with switching to a different field and it's all about being happy that you're doing that job.”*



“Being able to interact and talk with Mount Sinai employees from all different fields in healthcare allowed us to see different careers that aren't always the norm.”

FEEDBACK FROM OUR PARTNERS



"The brilliance and open heartedness of the participants and staff inspired hope. Programs like the Public Health and Racial Justice Program are exactly the type of community building and consciousness raising spaces we need to make ourselves strong, develop new leaders, and build a better future." -Julian Watkins, MD, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Health Equity Capacity Building, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



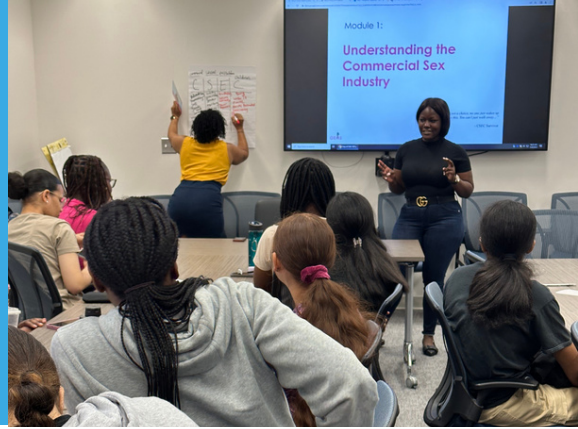
"It was such a pleasure to talk about LGBTQ+ activism with the girls in the Public Health and Racial Justice Program. Historically most of the advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights started with youth of color and teaching today's girls in this program about the history is paramount to the future actions they will take as activists in the communities and the system overall." -Nadia Swanson, LCSW, Director of Technical Assistance and Advocacy, The Ali Forney Center

"I believe The Public Health and Racial Justice Program is a powerful way to empower youth to be engaged in social justice and advocacy. Having them spend the summer together learning about various topics is also a good way to build community and friendship in a positive and impactful environment." -Micaela E. Martinez, PhD, Director of Environmental Health, WE ACT for Environmental Justice



"These young women were incredibly engaged, curious, and demonstrated growth mindsets with an orientation toward justice. Through collective action activities, they drew apt connections between their work in the PHRJP and the climate justice subject matter we presented. We were thrilled to contribute to a program that elevates the skills and leadership of these impressive students." -Prisca Dognon, Youth & Public Programs Coordinator, The Climate Museum

FEEDBACK FROM OUR PARTNERS



"The Public Health and Racial Justice Program is such a gift to young people who are passionate about impacting health and well-being in their communities. This program provides a wonderful learning and leadership experience for the public health leaders of today and tomorrow. Regardless of where the program participants land in the future, the world needs more thoughtful, intentional, and analytical leaders to lead us down the path to health equity, and this program plants the seeds for that." -Adjoa Sankofia Tetteh, MA, CLC, Educator, Activist: Sexual/Reproductive Health, Rights & Justice



"It was a highlight of my summer to meet and talk with the young women involved in The Mount Sinai Public Health and Racial Justice Program. They had such thoughtful questions and were so engaged in our topic. I'm excited to see all the ways that they change their communities with their increased knowledge and sense of agency about the topics most relevant to their lives today."

-Elise Schuster, Executive Director, OkaySo

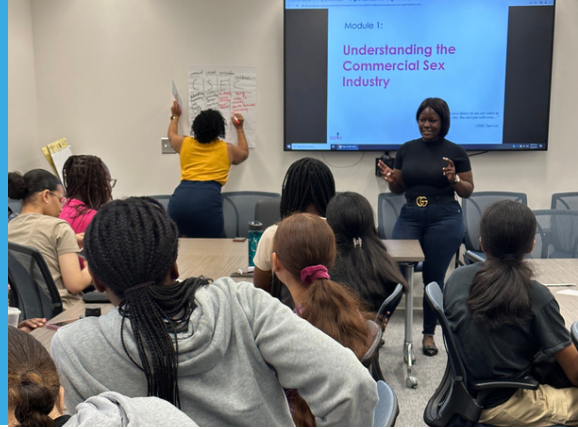


"Leading a full-day workshop for 15 girls of color was an extraordinary and deeply meaningful experience, both on a personal level and for the vital cause of birth justice. What adds even greater satisfaction to this experience is the knowledge that these young minds are receiving unwavering support as they embark on their journeys in public health and perhaps, in the realm of birth justice. We are not just grateful; we are profoundly honored to collaborate with this exceptional program." -Nicole JeanBaptiste, Co-Founder of Sese Birthing Freedom, Doula, Birth Justice Advocate

"Creating space in communities where young girls of color are safe to discuss and learn about issues impacting their communities and shedding light on the vulnerabilities they face as young girls of color is incredibly important to their development and growth as young women." -Shaquana Blount, Empowerment Manager, GEMS



FEEDBACK FROM OUR PARTNERS



“I was moved by the students' compassion, critical thinking skills, and motivation to promote health equity in their communities. By facilitating thoughtful discussions on challenging topics like structural racism and health disparities, the program enables participants to find their voices as agents of social change. Programs like this give students the knowledge and confidence to analyze systemic factors impacting health, find their voices, and drive change to develop our next generation of leaders in public health and racial justice.”

-Cardinale Smith, MD, PhD, Chief Medical Officer, Tisch Cancer Hospital, The Mount Sinai Hospital, Vice President and Chief Quality Officer, Tisch Cancer Center, Mount Sinai Health System

“The opportunity to spend time with and be in dialogue with the students about personal and social identity formation, how to deal with interpersonal and systemic racism, and what does it mean to live a life with purpose was special for me personally and professionally as a woman of color working in public health, medical education, and diversity affairs for over two decades.”

-Ann-Gel S. Palermo, DrPH, MPH, Senior Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer for Education and Research, MSHS Office for Diversity & Inclusion, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai



“I was so excited to be invited to meet the young girls participating in the Public Health and Racial Justice Program. My lunch session reminded me of the power of knowledge, the strength of community, and the inspiration provided by our youth. These young girls had a strength and pride of who they are and what they represented that was beautiful to bear witness to.”

-Michelle Sainté Willis, Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education Administration, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai





**Mount
Sinai**

We are endlessly grateful to our health system colleagues and community partners for their support of this program.

If you are interested in learning about how to get involved, please reach out to The Mount Sinai Department of Health Education's Director:
Alyssa Gale, MPH, at alyssa.gale@mountsinai.org