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developed by the NATIONAL CENTER FOR MEDIA ENGAGEMENT



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Engaging At-Risk Youth Through Digital Media Production

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[Illinois Public Media \(WILL\)](#)
Urbana, IL

Programs such as Sesame Street, Electric Company and Zoom taught me about media and community, but lost me in my teen years. The Illinois Youth Media Workshop is my opportunity to close that gap with a station that gave me so much.

Dr. William Patterson, founder and co-director of the IYMW

GENRE:

Arts & Culture, History, Diversity, Education, Children

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Since 2004, Illinois Public Media (IPM) has committed to helping African-American students in the Champagne-Urbana area improve their academic performance by getting them more engaged in their communities. The idea: teach kids (who are already tech-savvy) to produce high quality digital media content that speaks to their own experiences, and those of their families and neighborhoods. Says Kimberlie Kranich, IPM's Community Engagement Director and co-director of the Illinois Youth Media Workshop, "We're trying to give young people a sense of what's out there and how you go about figuring out this place where you live. You're not just a student who has to go to school because you're of a certain age, but someone who can make a difference in your community. Media can be one of the most powerful ways to make that difference."

Kranich's Workshop co-director is its founder William Patterson, Ph.D. In 2003, Patterson – then an educational consultant – was responding to a request for proposals from the University of Illinois for projects that would examine the legacy of the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 ruling in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which deemed racially-segregated schools to be unconstitutional. He was "looking for an institutional home for his efforts and the timing was right for Illinois Public Media to work with him," Kranich says. The result was Our Journey: Stories of School Desegregation and Community in Champaign-Urbana, an hour-long radio documentary produced by seven students from Franklin Middle School, quickly followed by IPM's decision to establish the Illinois Youth Media Workshop.

Since then, the Workshop has generated and sustained ten separate projects with more than 80 middle and high school students. Participants learn to conduct library research; interview their families, peers and community members; professionally edit audio and video into radio and TV programs; present their findings at public events and conferences; think analytically, problem solve and lead group discussions with their peers; contribute research to the field of youth media and community-based archiving.

The Workshop often provides a base camp for IPM's engagement projects around national productions, such as Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes, and The National Parks: America's Best Idea. Finally, in order to "teach the teachers," IPM recently established the Youth Media Workshop Summer Institute, an intensive three-day program for educators.

PARTNERS: University of Illinois (FCC license holder for IPM), Illinois Humanities Council, Adobe Youth Voices (via the PBS Foundation)

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