

UP CEO Statement on the Tragic Killing of Adam Toledo

Dear members of the UP community,

It pains me to write another email like this following the horrific footage released in the death of yet another young person of color, thirteen year old Adam Toledo, in Chicago. I'm dismayed, heartbroken and like so many of you, questioning what needs to be done for law enforcement to see the humanity in Black and Brown lives. No one deserves to have their life taken for the color of their skin, their ethnicity or their culture. And no one person is a judge, jury and executioner.

I found UAB Principal Rashidah Lawson's words to be especially poignant during this challenging week:

"It's a hard week to be a citizen of this country and it's a hard week to be an educator. I know that you are taking care of students. I know some of them might have questions. I know some of you are terrified to have those conversations, while others of you are ready. If you find yourself paralyzed with fear, let me say this: you are not alone and you need to let the kids know where you stand. That even if you don't know what it's like to be in their skin, you ought to say that you stand by them and support them.

For those of you who know all too well the fear that swells in your belly when a Black man, woman, or child you love has to ever interact with police, I say this to you: it is okay to not be okay. It is okay to be exhausted. It is okay to never adjust to this. It isn't normal and it isn't right."

I know this week has not been easy, and it's tough to escape the trauma as it is played and replayed on the news and social media. As we shortly begin spring break, I hope each of you take the time and space you need to recharge, reconnect and heal with loved ones. Our work is hard and it's compounded by what's going on in our lives and the world around us. But, we do this for the kids. And our kids and families feel the passion, the energy and dedication you bring to the classroom every day.

In solidarity and partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Conforme'.

Veronica Conforme, CEO