

YWCA RACIAL JUSTICE: AN OVERVIEW

YWCA is committed to eliminating racism and empowering women. We firmly believe that women's empowerment work must include racial justice. YWCA has worked across lines of difference to bring social change and social services to communities across the country for more than 160 years.

YWCA'S RACIAL JUSTICE WORK

- Over 155,000 community members participate and are engaged in YWCA racial justice and civil rights programs nationwide.
- YWCA's annual racial justice campaign, Stand Against Racism, is designed to build community among those who work for racial justice, raise awareness about the negative impact of institutional and structural racism in our communities, and encourage community members to take action for change. Founded by YWCA Trenton and YWCA Princeton in 2007, Stand Against Racism now takes place in locations across the United States every year, and includes the participation of YWCAs, local governments, schools, small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and more.
 - Each year, YWCA selects a theme for Stand Against Racism. In 2016, our theme was "On A Mission for Girls of Color"; in 2017, it was "Women of Color Leading Change"; and in 2018, it was "Our Power, Our Mission, Our Future."
 - In 2019, the theme is "No Hate. No Fear." As civil rights and human rights continue to be eroded for immigrant communities and people of color, YWCA stands united in solidarity with all immigrants and communities of color facing the very real threat of racist and xenophobic attacks.
- We fight for real change by advocating for legislation that breaks down systemic racism, as well as by mobilizing against unjust policies through our legislative action center, meetings with legislators, Hill briefings, and policy publications.
 - We continue to address racial profiling and police violence as it impacts women and girls of color, and to push for passage of legislation that addresses this, such as the End Racial and Religious Profiling Act. We know that stereotypes, biases, and racial power dynamics are too often embedded in our laws and public policies, and they are also reflected in the use of racial profiling, heightened surveillance tactics, targeted enforcement strategies, and other practices that increase policing of certain racial and ethnic communities (but not others) and criminalize people of color. In 2017, we released a policy brief, "We Deserve Safety: Ending the Criminalization of Women and Girls of Color."

- We routinely identify new advocacy priorities based on need, insight from local YWCAs, and the legislative landscape. Past priorities have included hate crimes, immigration reform, voting rights, and fair housing. We support the elimination of policies and practices that criminalize people of color, including ending mass incarceration and ending school discipline disparities and the school-to-prison pipeline.
- We have briefed Congress on the immigration crisis for families at the southern border, the impact of racial profiling on women and girls of color, the critical need for trauma-informed care across education and other sectors, and more.
- We continue to energize our network in support of building safe, healthy, empowered futures for women and girls of color, and to mobilize against unjust policies and practices. In the 2017 and 2018, we activated and served as partners for the March for Racial Justice and the March for Black Women, the Women’s March, the March For Our Lives, the United State of Women summits, and the #EndFamilyDetention and Families Belong Together rallies.
- We take a multifaceted approach to racial justice. We not only talk with Congress about policy and legislation that impacts our communities, but we also create specialized tools, resources, and initiatives to help YWCAs and our community members advocate for change and fight for racial justice.
 - We are building power in our network at the state level in California, Michigan, and North Carolina through our state advocacy initiative. With YWCA USA’s support, these YWCAs are engaging in state-level organizing and coalition-building, and implementing statewide advocacy campaigns to end racial profiling and the criminalization of people of color.
 - YWCA developed a new tool, the Racial Justice Training Manual, in response to our national state of race and to support YWCA’s concerted focus on women and girls of color. The manual provides YWCAs with guidance for racial justice training in their communities and radically reimagines standard approaches to racial justice work.
- YWCA has a Mission Impact Framework that includes three main platforms. In each of these platforms we have a specific focus on women and girls of color. Organizing our work in this way ensures that racial justice stays at the center of the YWCA movement.

THEORY OF CHANGE

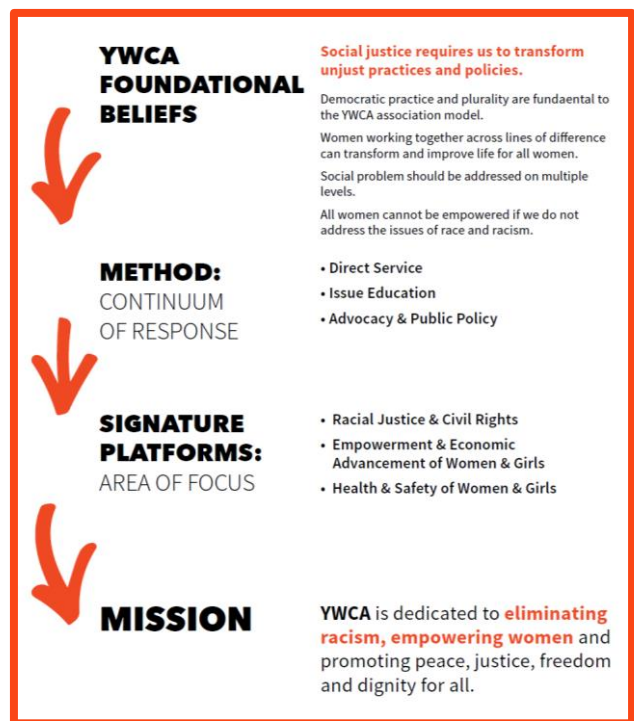
- Our goal is to make real progress as we work to realize our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women. We know that to achieve racial justice we must go beyond the work of changing hearts and minds and work to change communities, systems, and our country. The YWCA Theory of Change guides this work.

- YWCA holds five foundational beliefs about creating change:

- Social justice work requires us to transform unjust practices and policies.
- Democratic practice and plurality are fundamental to the YWCA association model.
- Women working together across lines of difference can transform and improve life for all women.
- Social problems should be addressed on multiple levels.
- All women cannot be empowered if we do not address the issues of race and racism.

- We address social issues with a continuum of response:

- Direct Service: We go where we're needed most through direct service programs that meet community needs.
- Issue Education: We educate and inform policy makers, community members, law enforcement, partnering organizations, and others on the issues that matter most to YWCA and the women we serve. Issue education often inspires others to take action.
- Advocacy & Public Policy: We work for public policy change at the local, state, and federal levels to address structural and systemic inequality.



OUR LEGACY

- YWCA has been at the forefront of nearly every major social movement since our founding over 160 years ago.
- YWCA knows that in order to lead the charge against racism, we must also consistently address internal issues of race head on. This is a challenging, self-reflective task that we have taken seriously for over 160 years.
- We do not allow historical shame to erase the incredible accomplishments of women of color during historical periods of segregation in the United States. Black and Native women have been providing leadership in the YWCA movement since the 1800s, and because of the leadership of women of color, in 1946 YWCA began working for integration throughout the entire organization and launched an internal “interracial education” campaign that culminated in adding the “elimination of racism” to our mission statement in 1970.
- Through democratic process and a commitment to mission, YWCA has passed a number of forward-thinking initiatives to galvanize our racial justice work throughout our history:
 - 1946: YWCA adopted the Interracial Charter, establishing that “wherever there is injustice on the basis of race, whether in the community, the nation, or the world, our protest must be clear and our labor for its removal, vigorous and steady.”
 - 1970: YWCA adopted the One Imperative: “To thrust our collective power towards the elimination of racism, wherever it exists, by any means necessary.”
 - 1992: The YWCA National Day of Commitment to Eliminate Racism began in response to the beating of Rodney King by law enforcement and their subsequent acquittal.
 - 2008: YWCA Trenton and YWCA Princeton came together for the very first Stand Against Racism, a campaign now led by YWCA USA.
 - 2015 and beyond: YWCA continues to fight for racial justice both within our own movement — by centering our work on women and girls of color, and assessing our progress through internal benchmarks, briefing papers, and data collection — and externally, through legislative advocacy, issue education, and direct service.