

A HISTORY OF THE YWCA MISSION

This YWCA Organizational and Mission History courtesy of Ruth Irving-Carroll

History of the YWCA Mission and Membership: The mission statement describes the overall purpose of the organization: what we do, who we do it for, and how and why we do it. The mission of the YWCA has changed as times have changed. At a Mission Committee meeting in the mid-1960s, one member stated that “the mission is not written in stone.” However, one phrase has remained in the YWCA mission throughout the years: **“peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people.”**

Initially, the YWCA’s mission reflected an emphasis on “Mind, Spirit and Body” and its members were Protestant women. However, during the first half of the twentieth century, the mission statement was changed. In the mid-1960s, the YWCA became “Christian but open.” As a result, women who were not Christian were welcomed as members and in all leadership positions. The YWCA of the USA and the YWCA Canada are unique in the World YWCA in this respect.

In 1970, the following statement was adopted: *The Association will thrust its collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary.* Commonly abbreviated to the name One Imperative, that statement has been reaffirmed at many conventions. At times, the mission has been divided into Purpose and One Imperative, and at other times, it has been included as one mission. In either case, it is an essential part of who the YWCA is and what the YWCA and all its components do.

In 1991, a mission statement was adopted, including a statement of the Christian roots, and acknowledging the richness derived from the diversity of many beliefs and values. Included here are examples of our evolving YWCA mission statements.

In 2009, the current mission was adopted with input from local associations to make it more concise and relevant to the work we do today by incorporating “eliminating racism,” “empowering women,” and “peace, justice, freedom, and dignity.”

The YWCA Mission Statement Has Evolved Over Time

An early mission statement:

Young Women’s Christian Association’s purpose is to build a fellowship of women and girls devoted to the task of realizing in our common lives those ideals of personal social living to which we are committed by our faith as Christians. In this endeavor we seek to

understand Jesus, to share his love for all people and to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

Another earlier mission statement:

Fourfold purpose to associate young women in personal loyalty to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; to lead them into membership and service in the Christian Church; to promote growth in Christian character and service through physical, social, mental, and spiritual training; to become a social force for the extension of the Kingdom of God.

Another mission statement

MISSION = PURPOSE AND OUR ONE IMPERATIVE

Our Purpose

Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America, a movement rooted in the Christian faith as known in Jesus and nourished by the resources of that faith, seeks to respond to the barrier-breaking love of God in this day.

The Association draws together into responsible membership women and girls of diverse experiences and faiths, that their lives may be open to new understanding and deeper relationships, and that together they may join in the struggle for peace and justice, freedom and dignity for all people.

Our One Imperative

The Imperative: To thrust our collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists.

The mission statement prior to our current statement

Adopted at the 1991 YWCA Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America is a women's membership movement nourished by its roots in the Christian faith and sustained by the richness of many beliefs and values. Strengthened by diversity, the Association draws together members who strive to create opportunities for women's growth, leadership and power in order to attain a common vision:

Peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people.

**YWCA IS ON
A MISSION**

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

The association will thrust its collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary.

Our current mission statement

Adopted at the 2009 YWCA General Assembly

YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

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YWCA HISTORY

From its inception, the YWCA has been a movement dedicated to empowering women. In later years, the YWCA moved into other arenas of discrimination, working to eliminate racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary. This pre-reading summarizes the history of our movement as we work toward achieving that mission.

The YWCA is unique in its work as it combines advocacy and programs to achieve its mission and goals. What follows in this reading is information on the YWCA's:

- General History
- Program and Advocacy History
- Recent Organizational Change History (Change Initiative)
- Logo and Brand History
- Historic Dates

It is impossible to cover almost 150 years and the work of millions of women in a few pages. Our foremothers were truly pioneers. Where possible, names of some of these pioneer women have been included. Undoubtedly, as you learn more about the YWCA and the Association in your own community, you will learn new facts and possibly new names of outstanding women. Be sure to hold onto this information for your Association.

GENERAL HISTORY

The Early Years/Industrial Revolution

The YWCA literally began as a movement; its name came later. The pulse of the movement was felt first in England in 1855 and in the United States in 1858:

- In each country, a small group of caring and perceptive women began the task of making life better for other women.
- This small group of women sensed the anxiety of young women who came to cities from a supportive home base in rural areas in search of work to become self-supporting. Factories were replacing at-home occupations like weaving, sewing and laundry.
- These concerned women addressed issues like unsanitary conditions, long hours, lack of rest periods and poor ventilation in the factory workplace.
- The search for an affordable, decent place to live and the task of handling financial matters related to living away from home were new and difficult for young women. The first Association in New York City provided a boarding house for young girls as early as 1860. In Boston, a residence was opened for students and young workers under age 25.

- On college campuses in the late 1800s, young women also had unmet needs, especially for furnished meeting rooms where students could exchange ideas, conduct Bible classes and hold parties.

The Religious Revival

In the 1850s a religious revival was sweeping through the northeastern states. The original group of concerned women grew rapidly and attracted others whose religious backgrounds and convictions were such that one should help others, thereby motivating them to respond to young women's needs:

- These were Protestant women, from various denominations, who became a well-knit group concerned for the worth of all human beings.
- This was not a church group, but women committed to helping others.
- This commitment was reflected in the use of the term "association," which was later incorporated in the full name, Young Women's Christian Association.
- A phrase from the mission describes the goal of these early small groups as they sought a common vision: "peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people."

First Associations

- Boston was the first to use YWCA as the name for its Association in 1859, even though it opened a year later than what is now the YWCA New York City.
- After Boston and New York, Associations appeared in Hartford, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Cincinnati in 1867; St. Louis followed in 1868; and in 1870 Dayton, Washington, D.C., Buffalo and Philadelphia.
- By 1875, there were 28 Young Women's Christian Associations in U.S. cities.
- The first student Association began its work in 1873 at Illinois State Normal University (now known as Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois); by 1890, there were a total of 106 student Associations.
- As the number of Associations increased in the U.S. there was a need to centralize information and programs. As a result, in 1907, the National Board of the YWCA of the USA was incorporated in New York. The first President of the National Board was Grace Dodge, daughter of a wealthy New York financier. With a talent for drawing people together for a common cause, Ms. Dodge united more than 600 small groups into one national organization. J.P. Morgan paid tribute to her great organizational skill by declaring, "She had the finest business brain in the United States, not excepting that of any man."
- 1911, the national office was headquartered in a facility in New York City built as a result of the generosity and foresight of six YWCA women. The Victorian building provided for training, national offices and a research center for girls and women.

Membership Policies

Source: 2004 Gender Task Force Report.

The YWCA is a women's membership movement and has been described this way throughout our 150 plus year history. Between 1855 and 1915, membership in a Protestant evangelical church was a requirement for all YWCA voting members. Protestant evangelical churches were defined as those that were affiliated or eligible for affiliation with the Federal Council of Churches in Christ in America. "There were members committed to the Christian purpose but who under the church membership test were not eligible for voting power and office holding."

In the 1920s, both student and community associations were authorized to use a "personal test" of commitment to the Christian purpose of the YWCA as the requirement for voting membership. "Not until 1949, however, more than 20 years after the authorization of the personal test for membership, did the YWCA officially recognize that for the health of the organization and for better community understanding, those who took part in characteristic programs of the YWCA should be enrolled as members."

In 1949, voting membership was open to women and girls who were personally committed to the YWCA's Christian purpose, which reads as follows: "To build fellowship of women and girls devoted to the task of realizing our common life whose ideals of personal and social living to which we are committed by our faith as Christians. In this endeavor we seek to understand Jesus, to share his love for all people, and to grow in the knowledge and love of God."

When the personal test of commitment to the Christian faith was adopted officially in 1949, a woman could be a voting member of the YWCA if her church membership was Protestant, Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, but voting membership was not available to women who were not Christian. The YWCA limited its leadership to those personally committed to its Christian purpose, but its programs and services were available to all who needed and wanted to participate.

Today, voting membership in the YWCA is open to women of all faiths and with no religious affiliation. The current mission statement for the YWCA was adopted at the 2009 Annual Meeting.

Toward Racial Justice

At the core of the YWCA's work over the decades has been the recognition that not all women, or all people, have been treated equally. The Young Women's Christian Association pioneered in the task of working against racial discrimination toward full integration, fighting obvious

segregation practices and exposing hidden patterns of discrimination in legislation, institutions and systems:

- The **first YWCA among American Indian** young women was organized in 1890 at the Haworth Academy (Chillico, Oklahoma) Indian School. This was undertaken by the Student Division of the National Board, as it became aware of discrimination against American Indians.
- The **first interracial conference** ever held in southern states was in the Louisville, Kentucky YWCA in 1915.
- In 1936, the first **co-ed, intercollegiate, interracial seminar** was held at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina.
- In 1942, during World War II, **discrimination against Japanese Americans** saw thousands forced out of their homes and into Relocation Centers (where quarters like army barracks were surrounded by barbed wire). It was during this time that the YWCA extended its services to the Relocation Centers; many YWCAs helped prepare Japanese-Americans for resettlement after the war ended (the Midwest Associations of Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit and Minnesota were among those that opened their facilities to Japanese-American women as they faced a new life). One of the young children forced into a Relocation Center was Lillian Kimura, who later turned her gratitude to the YWCA into a lifetime of work and dedication to the organization. Ms. Kimura eventually became Associate Executive Director of the YWCA of the USA and a leader in molding the YWCA for many years.
- In 1936 the national convention agreed that their objective was “to create a fellowship in which barriers of race, nationality, education and social status are broken down in the pursuit of a better life for all.” In 1946, the **Interracial Charter was adopted** by the YWCA of the USA stating 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.”
- In 1965, an **Office of Racial Justice** was established at the National Board offices to direct a massive campaign against discrimination with an extensive effort to break barriers preventing integration.
- In 1970, the **Convention voted on the One Imperative:** To thrust our collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists by any means necessary. The One Imperative was reaffirmed at the 1973, 1976 and 1982 Conventions.
- In 1988 the constitution was amended to add the One Imperative to the purpose statement, to create a statement of mission.

During the latter part of the twentieth century, the YWCA created an educational resource on homophobia, and provided opportunities for women and girls to discuss sexual orientation free of prejudice and scorn.

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PIONEERS IN PROGRAMMING AND ADVOCACY

The YWCA has always had a penchant for looking ahead and initiating needed action. It digs at the roots of a problem to discover long-term solutions. A unique aspect of the YWCA's service is the coupling of program and advocacy work as fundamental to generating the institutional changes necessary to better the lives of women.

- In 1864, the Philadelphia YWCA organized the first day care center in the U.S. because its leaders saw children left alone at home, and sometimes left to wander in the streets or placed permanently in orphanages so that mothers could work; soon other YWCAs followed. In 1893, more than 11,000 children were cared for by the YWCA of Cleveland, Ohio alone. Among the YWCAs providing child care in the nineteenth century were Memphis, Tennessee; Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio; Springfield, Massachusetts; St. Louis, Missouri; Richmond, Virginia; and Lincoln, Nebraska. The YWCA child care centers in St. Louis, Dayton, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Springfield were decades ahead of others, their programs were interracial. YWCA child care programs in the nineteenth century included overnight child care, a crib room for infants, weekly baths, and emergency care during measles epidemics.
- Since YWCAs of New York City and Boston began providing housing in the 1860s, housing has continued as a major program for many YWCAs. Extended from the original concept of boarding housing for women moving from farms to cities, YWCAs now offer housing for women and children, battered women's shelters; apartment buildings for women in transition, and full-service complexes that include job preparation and training, clothing closets, and counseling.
- In 1911, delegates at the YWCA convention were concerned that women coming to cities to work, away from friends and family, might be lured into prostitution. The convention delegates voted to work for a new minimum wage law for women in order to keep them from prostitution. This was the beginning of the YWCA's work on public policy positions.

As far back as 1906, the YWCA introduced the concept of positive health, which included sex education:

- In 1918, the YWCA programs on social morality became the official Lecture Bureau of the Division of Social Hygiene of the War Department.

- In 1934, delegates went on record to support birth control services under authorized medical direction and to work for the control of venereal diseases.
- Seventeen years of YWCA study and action on abortion resulted in the adoption of this statement at the 1967 convention: “A women has the right to choose in the matter of abortion based on her own religious and ethical beliefs and her physician’s guidance.”
- In the 1990s the YWCA of the USA initiated the Institute for Public Leadership to prepare women for public leadership positions, recognizing that women will be fully empowered only through the use of political power. The campaign skills workshops are taught by a diverse group of women - political professionals and trainers from both parties.
- In the 1990s, the YWCA offered one of the country’s most comprehensive breast health education outreach, screening and referral programs through ENCORE. Thousands of women across the country have been screened for breast and cervical cancer through this program.
- Also in the 1990s, the YWCA pioneered health awareness and programs addressing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Again in the 1990s, the YWCA offered technology programming for young girls through YWCA TechGYRLS and through Net Prep for high school students. Both pioneering programs are designed to provide leadership opportunities through technology.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE HISTORY

The Change Initiative began when Local Associations voiced concern about the movement at the July 1998 convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The alarm expressed at the meeting acknowledged that the national movement was losing momentum, and YWCA leaders overwhelmingly expressed a need for “dramatic” change, thus the beginning of the Change Initiative.

With the resulting reorganization, Local Associations remained members of the Young Women’s Christian Association of the United States of America, Inc. The National Coordinating Board, with representation from each of the newly established Regions, served as the Board of Directors. The reorganized YWCA resulted in differing and discrete roles for Local Associations, Regional Councils and the National Coordinating Board:

❖ Local Associations

Each Local Association belonged to a Region, , elected two representatives to the Regional Council, met affiliation requirements as established by the Region, involved women under age 30, offered hallmark programs (economic empowerment of women and racial justice), and participated in mission-driven advocacy.

❖ Regional Councils

Regional Councils were representative governing bodies for groups of Local Associations. Regions facilitated peer reviews, coordinated training, provided triage services, implemented brand requirements and supported advocacy efforts.

❖ National Coordinating Board (NCB)

The National Coordinating Board's representatives were chosen by the Regions. NCB ensured a national presence and coordinated national advocacy efforts. The NCB was responsible for branding, internal communications and endowment growth.

Strong Foundation. Fearless Future. grew out of the conviction that the combination of the strength of the local associations together with a strong, unified national organization would be a powerful force to tackle fearlessly both the challenges and opportunities we have before us.

In 2011, ten years had lapsed since the Change Initiative. Some things were working well in the Change Initiative structure and others still had not been realized. In the fall of 2011 the YWCA recognized the need to analyze the current structure to determine if there were ways to improve its effectiveness. The Alford Group was hired to conduct an assessment by engaging leaders at different levels of the organization in thoughtful conversation. A group comprised of regional leadership and the national coordinating board met in Chicago in November 2011 to hear the Alford Group's recommendations which included: 1) changing the National Board to include women of influence and affluence; and 2) discontinuing regions as separate organizations in order to build strength and capacity at the national level.

In 2012, the year was spent taking those recommendations and turning them into reality. Led by a team of local, regional and national YWCA leaders, the Strong Foundation. Fearless Future. process worked to build the new structure, and the concept was approved at the May, 2012 annual meeting. The next step was to revise the bylaws to incorporate the recommendations. The revised bylaws were approved by membership via written consent in November, 2012. The new bylaws became effective on January 1, 2013. The new structure includes:

❖ Networks

Initially geographically configured, networks are groupings of local associations that have a national staff person who will serve as their initial point of contact for YWCA questions and services.

❖ National Board

The National Board is the governing body of the YWCA and will be transitioning to include leaders from local associations while adding women who can bring valuable influence, affluence, and/or expertise to the board.

Once again, the YWCA has fearlessly adjusted our structure to position us to move us forward with our important work of eliminating racism and empowering women.

HISTORIC YWCA DATES

- 1858 First town Association is founded, Ladies Christian Association in New York City.
- 1859 YWCA name first used in Boston.
- 1860 First boarding house for female students, teachers and factory workers opened in New York City.
- 1864 First child care center in the U.S. opened in the YWCA of Philadelphia.
- 1866 First travelers' aid initiative opened in the Boston YWCA. It later separated to become the Travelers' Aid Society.
- 1869 In the face of "unreasonable prejudice and misinterpretation", Cleveland opens The Retreat, a residence for unwed mothers.
- 1870 First typewriting instruction for women opened in the New York City YWCA (typewriting was considered a man's job).
- 1872 First sewing machine classes and first employment bureau opened in the New York City YWCA.
- 1873 First Student YWCA organized at Normal University in Normal, Illinois.
- 1874 First (and only) low-cost summer "resort" for employed women opened in the YWCA of Philadelphia; it was dedicated by President Ulysses S. Grant.
- 1882 YWCA of Pittsburgh opened and operated for many years a home for Negro orphans and children seeking foster parents.
- 1887 Convention report states, "When the little one enters the Kindergarten at three years, a new world opens to him (sic). Immediately his heart, head, and hands are enlisted in his everyday work. The little one plays and sweet songs are fun of meaning and a part of the whole plan of education."

- 1889 First Negro branch organized in Dayton, Ohio.
- 1890 First YWCA among American Indian young women organized at Haworth Institute (Chilocco, Oklahoma).
- 1891 First public cafeteria opened in the YWCA of Kansas City, Kansas.
- 1893 First training school for practical nursing opened in the YWCA of Brooklyn, New York.
- 1894 National organization of mostly student Associations joins with Great Britain, Sweden and Norway to found the World YWCA.
- 1898 YWCA has seven African-American Student Associations affiliated with it.
- 1906 American Committee (composed primarily of Student Associations) and the International Board (composed of primarily city and town Associations) joined together to form one organization, the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States of America.
First organization to introduce "positive health" sex education in all health programming.
- 1909 First Secretary (director) works with African-American colleges; in under a year, such student YWCAs double.
- 1910 Fifty-seven branches are created to help immigrant women.
- 1911 First Public Policy Resolution was passed: support passage of minimum wage law for women.
Bi-lingual instruction for immigrant families is featured in the YWCA International Institute.
- 1913 YWCA National Board creates a Commission on Sex Education (Social Morality).
First national conference grounds for women: 30-acre YWCA Asilomar Conference Grounds opens in Pacific Grove, California, designed by architect Julia Morgan.
Eva Bowles is the first black staff member to work with Local Associations.
- 1915 YWCA organizes the first interracial conference in the south, held in Louisville, Kentucky.

- Hollywood Studio Club, YWCA residence for aspiring actresses, opens in Los Angeles, California.
- 1916 First English-as-a-Second-Language classes open at YWCA of New York City.
- 1917 Extensive work with women of all races is expanded through the War Work Council. First women's organization permitted in a U.S. Army camp. First group to send professionals (433) overseas to provide administrative support for U.S. armed forces.
- 1918-1919 Woman's Press, a YWCA publishing house, is established to "cultivate an attitude of honest, open, scientific interest in the subject of sex"; YWCA's Social Morality program becomes the official Lecture Bureau of the Division on Social Hygiene, U.S. Department of War. Seventeen hostess' houses operate as centers for recreation and service to segregated Negro troops. U.S. Ordinance Department invites YWCA to help 1.5 million women working in war plants; 20 service centers set up near ammunitions factories. International Conference of Women Physicians, financed and convened by the YWCA is the first gathering of female doctors. For six weeks, these physicians from 32 countries considered women's physical conditions, emotional health and immature attitude toward sex.
- 1920 YWCA works for wages and hour laws that affect women. First National Student Assembly held. Racially integrated student conferences are held in the south. Delegates representing 30,000 YWCA industrial members at the 1st National Industrial Conference in Washington, D.C., agree to work for "an eight-hour law, prohibition of night work and the right of labor to organize."
- 1921 Grace Dodge Hotel is completed; a Washington, D.C. residence initially designed to house women war workers.
- 1922 Bi-lingual instruction for immigrant families is featured at the YWCA International Institute's First National Assembly of Industrial Women in Hot Springs, Arkansas.
- 1923 National Student YWCA organized its field councils on an interracial basis, adopting the principle of inclusion of representation of all parts of the membership in Regional Councils.

- 1924 National Student Assembly takes program stands on “race relationships,” “We, the National Student Assembly ...pledge ourselves to seek anew to know the mind of Jesus in regard to our race relationships and to know students of other races, that we may rid ourselves of prejudices and may promote justice and understanding.”
First women’s pension fund established, the YWCA Retirement Fund.
First African-American woman elected to the YWCA National Board.
First National Conference on Unemployment held in NY.
- 1932 Local YWCAs are urged by convention action “to foster right public opinion which shall be effective against the menace of lynching and mob violence in every form.”
- 1933 National Board sends a board member to Decatur, Alabama, to monitor and assess the administration of justice in the Scottsboro case, a famous court case that dramatized the inequities of the southern judicial system in relation to blacks.
- 1934 YWCAs are urged by convention action to encourage and support the federal government in policies of interracial cooperation rather than of segregation, and to support efforts to assure Negroes protection in the exercise of their basic civil rights.
YWCA calls for legislation to provide for dissemination of birth control information under authorized medical direction.
- 1936 Interracial seminar marks the first intercollegiate, interracial, co-ed conference in the south, held at Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina.
National Student Assembly brings to convention floor a resolution that the YWCA re-affirms its support of an anti-lynching Bill in Congress.
- 1940 National Convention endorses the Geyer Bill to abolish the poll tax. The National Student Assembly of the YWCA brings to the convention floor a resolution calling for a committee to “study interracial practices in Association and community life” and report back at the next convention. Many people support this, resulting in the Interracial Charter in 1946.
- 1942 YWCA extends its services and personnel to Japanese women and girls who were evacuated to 10 Relocation Centers. The National Student Assembly takes a stand on the relocation of Japanese-Americans, calling it “a basic negation of civil liberties and one of the most flagrant cases of color

- discrimination in the history of our democratic procedure,” and urges release and resettlement of these citizens.
- 1944 National Board appears at both House and Senate hearings in support of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee. National Board sends to both the Republican and Democratic Conventions the following proposed plank: “The interests of democracy and national unity demand that there must be full integration of racial minorities into the armed forces and that racial discrimination and segregation in interstate travel be abolished by federal action.”
- 1946 Interracial Charter is adopted by the 17th National Convention and accepts the 35 recommendations of the Interracial Study Commission based on two years of intensive examination of interracial policies and practices. The basic recommendation is “That the implications of the YWCA Purpose be recognized as involving the inclusion of Negro women and girls in the main stream of Association life and that such inclusion be adopted as a conscious goal.” Convention of the YWCA of the USA unanimously adopts the Interracial Charter, in which the YWCA committed itself to work for an end to racial injustice.
- 1949 In Grand Rapids Michigan, and Princeton, New Jersey, the city-wide YWCAs elect a Negro woman as president. National Convention pledges that the YWCA will work for the integration and full participation of minority groups in all phases of community and national life. National Convention, recognizing the need for racial justice to establish a just and stable peace, pledges as a participating member of the World YWCA “to seek deeper insight into the international implications of the Interracial Charter and to exert greater effort to realize its religious and ethical goals on a world-wide scale.” Sharing common problems, (business and industrial) women form National Employed Women’s Coordinating Assembly.
- 1954 Dissemination actions taken on Supreme Court decision. A booklet was written and distributed in 1953 and 1954 on “Our Schools and Our Democracy.” Pamphlets, magazine articles and program aids on desegregation are sent to Local Associations at the request of the National Board. A Southern Regional Conference is held in Atlanta, Georgia to discuss “Desegregation: Problems and Opportunities.”

- 1955 National Convention commits local Associations and the National Board to review its progress toward inclusiveness and decide on “concrete forward steps” to be taken before the 1958 Convention.
National Student Assembly votes to “...try to persuade their college administrations to outlaw those fraternities and sororities which have racial discriminatory clauses...”
In Texas, a city USO operated by the YWCA becomes interracial in staff, volunteers and participants.
In Louisiana, a large city, YWCA is the first organization to open its doors for interracial meetings.
- 1954-1957 There begins a series of foundation grants to the National Board for special projects in human relations in the National Student YWCA to work specifically in the area of race. A workshop format is developed for local and intercollegiate events. These workshops begin in the southwest region, then in the total south and finally national workshops are included.
- 1958 As an “imperative requirement of these times,” the 21st National Convention votes to concentrate on a “greater degree of progress toward inclusiveness in respect to leadership, membership, program and services.”
- 1960 On April 6, the National Board takes action affirming its support of the non-violent civil rights movement and thereby offers encouragement to Student Christian Associations across the country.
Opening of the YWCA cafeteria to Negroes in Atlanta in December, the first desegregated public dining facility in that city. This is a direct result of a student sit-in. The National Board cites this significant action in wide publicity throughout Associations and urges similar action.
YWCA of Buffalo employs a Negro as executive director.
National Board votes support of members of Student YWCAs involved in “sit-in” demonstrations by statements and collection of funds for those needing bail.
National Student YWCA chairwoman, Olga Seastrom (Mrs. R.E. Jarrett), and other YWCA leaders are jailed during a peaceful demonstration.
- 1961 The Convention votes in its National Public Affairs Program for continued effort to secure and maintain basic individual rights and liberties inherent in our democratic institutions, including equal opportunities for housing, jobs, education and citizenship responsibilities.
- 1962 YWCA Conference on Child Care calls for “cooperation with professional day care agencies assessment of the needs of working women and their children

and acceptance of children of all racial, religious, and economic backgrounds at a cost parents can afford.”

- 1963 At the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation and the height of the civil rights movement, the National Board launches a two-year Action Program to develop a strategy to achieve, within a given time span, real integration within YWCA programs, membership, all levels of volunteer and employed leadership and in the use of all YWCA facilities and equipment; provide more active leadership with other community groups in the areas of fair housing, voter registration and literacy programs; and provide within its regular budget the underwriting of a special two-year project on desegregation of community YWCAs with two staff members and supporting services.
YWCA participates in a March on Washington, D.C., for Jobs and Freedom.
- 1964 National Student Council of the YWCA approves a National leadership Conference for training student leaders, establishes a voter registration and education program, supports federal civil rights legislation, and urges the establishment of a Human Relations Council by each Association on its campus. National Student YWCA leaders focus on “challenge to affluence,” with the concern for revolutions in Latin American countries and poverty in the United States.
- 1965 Office of Racial Justice is established. Dr. Dorothy Height, director, leads a massive campaign against discrimination against minorities in the YWCA and society. National Board votes \$200,000 in support.
Student YWCA votes to oppose apartheid in South Africa and urges National Board to investigate its investments.
- 1966 SPECTRUM, a summer project in understanding the urban revolution, is held to prepare for the NASY in December. This project, in which students worked in the city with the community, established a different model for student summer projects. In a New York Times ad, the National Board issues a “Call to Women Who Care” to work for open housing.
- 1967 National YWCA elects first black woman, Mrs. Helen W. Claytor, as President. Convention adopts Constitutional amendment stating that any Association not “fully integrated in policy and practice and thereby living up to the “Statement of Purpose” would be disaffiliated.
World YWCA Council meeting in Australia adopts a policy on discrimination against racial and ethnic groups.

- Convention adopts first of three abortion resolutions leading to freedom of choice. Convention votes to support “appropriate measures and adequate appropriations for child care services for children who need them” and to make child care a public policy priority.”
- 1968 Community and Student YWCAs, under direction of the Office of Racial Justice, examine the subtleties of racism in America, using the continued lack of understanding of “liberal minds,” both black and white. The National Board adopts “YWCA Project Equality,” pledging to purchase goods and services from equal opportunity employers, to review its own employment practices and to recruit women leaders from minority groups. Associations work on a grape boycott, Operation Breadbasket in support of black businesses, university divestiture in South Africa and boycotting war machine companies. Guidelines are written to implement the following, “today there is an increasing awareness of the importance of early education for the healthy growth and development of children. One cannot make a valid distinction between care and education.”
- 1970 A pre-convention meeting of 500 black women in the YWCA is held. Convention votes on the One Imperative: “To thrust our collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary.” Convention adopts a Statement of Reaffirmation, Renewal and Relevance - a direction for the 1970s. Action Audit for Change is introduced. Convention votes to “give special emphasis to the immediate establishment of an extensive network of adequate child care services.
- 1971 The One Imperative packet is disseminated and workshops added. A web of Racism Institutes is held in 15 cities in consultation with Asian-American Women, Honolulu, Hawaii and La Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza, in Houston, Texas. World YWCA Council meeting in Ghana adopts Policy on racism and racial discrimination.
- 1972 YWCA National Convocation on Racial Justice, Consultation of Asian-American Women in Honolulu, Hawaii; Consultation of White Women of the YWCA in Forest Beach Camp, Michigan; Third World Coalition Workshop in Asilomar, California. YWCA publishes a book, Child Care: A Plan That Works, providing YWCAs with suggestions for strengthening child care at the local level and guidance on how

to effectively avoid racism and sexism in child care programs. The basic premise underlying the YWCA's approach to child care is reflected in this statement from this cutting-edge publication: "When group care is needed, as it is for many children at this time, it must be available to all who need it and it must be quality care."

- 1973 National Student YWCA experiments in pluralistic governance to support ethnic caucuses and develop local model-building programs to eliminate racism. Convention in San Diego, California reaffirms the One Imperative.
- 1974 Conferencia para Mujeres de Puertorriquenas held in Greenwich, Connecticut. Affirmative Action Institutes held. Initiatives include Asian Focus, International Study Program, with an audio-visual presentation to interpret international dimensions on racism.
- 1975-1976 Affirmative Action incorporated into Management Training. YWCA starts ENCORE program: exercise and support for women who have undergone breast cancer surgery. World YWCA Council meeting in Canada adopts policy on discrimination. 27th Triennial Convention in South Bend, Indiana reaffirms the One Imperative. Action Audit for Change, through convention action, becomes a requirement for continued affiliation with the National YWCA.
- 1977 Action Audit Kit revised as Action Audit for Change Process. National Student Leadership called for the passage of the ERA in three more states by March 1979. Dr. Dorothy Height, Director, Center for Racial Justice, retires. She is universally acknowledged as the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement," often being the only woman present at meetings with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other national leaders.
- 1978 Affirmative Action Guide for Equal Opportunity revised. Action Audit for Change Process training incorporated into Learning Centers. December 31 deadline for member Associations to submit evidence of movement on the Action Audit for Change Process during the current triennium.
- 1979 First grant given to a voluntary agency by U.S. Department of Commerce enables 250 YWCAs in 44 states to form network publicizing jobs for women in local public works projects.

- 28th Triennial Convention in Dallas, Texas approves key programs for the 1980s, including multicultural, affirmative action and societal conditions affecting women and third world persons.
National Board recommends to Board of Trustees divestiture of investments in corporations doing business in South Africa that the National Board on Ethical Investments Subcommittee targets.
More than 400 leaders meet in Indiana to develop skills and knowledge in specific areas, including affirmative action.
Public Policy Center addresses affirmative action, civil rights, busing and fair housing.
Center for Racial Justice continues to train YWCA leaders and members to eliminate racism.
- 1980
- YWCA continues to work for passage of Voting Rights Act and for preservation of federal, state and local affirmative action programs.
YWCA presidents and executive directors meet on the theme, “Third World Leadership Looks to the Future,” to examine the impact of institutional racism on women of color in leadership roles and to identify opportunities for the YWCA to eliminate racism. The Racial Justice Committee of the National Board holds first three-day retreat in Memphis, Tennessee, to develop long-range plans.
Ethical Investments Committee established to educate National Board and Associations.
The One Imperative is featured in Common Concern, a World YWCA publication.
National Student Assembly passes resolutions calling on all YWCA Member Associations to provide support services for Native Americans and Latinos/Latinas for their increased representation at future sessions and for preservation of higher education programs for blacks.
- 1981
- National Board sponsors a meeting of Third World Executives and Presidents. The 41 leaders representing 25 Associations discuss race-related stress, share skills and techniques for dealing with racism and establish a network.
YWCA takes the lead in a three-year service advocacy project for “endangered” teen women, involving six other youth-serving agencies and more than 20 YWCAs.
- 1982
- 29th Triennial Convention in Washington, D.C., reaffirms the One Imperative and adopts priorities, including reauthorization of the Civil Rights Commission, dissemination of educational material on affirmative action, opposition to racist organizations and use of investor power to encourage greater corporate social responsibility.

Boston YWCA becomes first YWCA in the nation to divest itself of investments in companies doing business in South Africa.

- 1983 National Board members endorse a March on Washington, D.C. for “Jobs, Peace and Freedom.” Policy statement and guidelines are adopted for relations with commercial enterprises.
National Board submits comments on proposed rules changes to the Securities and Exchange Commission, supporting the rights of shareholders to have access to company proxy statements and opposing any changes which would make it more difficult for social responsibility resolutions to reach the proxy statement.
National Board sends letter to Congress to urge support of legislation that opposes the South African policy of apartheid.
YWCA Leadership Development Center is constructed in Phoenix, Arizona, with nearly 30 percent of the contractors and work crews being people of color.
World YWCA Council meeting in Singapore reaffirms policy against racial discrimination and urges national Associations whose governments have diplomatic links with South Africa to urge them to bring pressure on the South African government to eliminate apartheid.
- 1984 Racial Justice Institute conducted during National Program Conferences.
National Board announces the first Racial Justice Award Program to recognize work of Associations toward the elimination of racism.
National Board sends a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State urging the U.S. Administration to voice its outrage at the arrest and detention of the six leaders of the United Democratic Front, without charge who were involved in the boycott of South Africa’s recent election, and to seek official assurance from the government of South Africa of their protection and safety.
- 1985 National Board passes resolution to support efforts to increase public awareness of racist systems enforced by the government of the Republic of South Africa, reduce use of U.S. resources that support apartheid and express concern to federal agencies responsible for U.S. policy and its implementation.
National Board participates in non-violent demonstration against apartheid outside the South African Embassy, in a candlelight vigil in front of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. and in front of the Consulate of the Republic of South Africa in New York City.
- 1986 National Student YWCA rejects Sullivan Principles as an inadequate and thoroughly ineffective instrument for changing the fundamental structure of apartheid; recommends that the National Board of the YWCA encourage the

Board of Trustees to present an annual investment portfolio report to the full National Board and member Associations of the YWCA of the USA which lists the National Board's holdings in U.S. corporations with South African subsidiaries; and encourages them to target a 50 percent divestment of funds from companies with South African subsidiaries by 1988.

30th Triennial Convention in San Jose, California overwhelmingly reaffirms priority of racial justice and commitment to the One Imperative and receives a major report on ethical investment. During the convention, the YWCA of the USA presents its first Racial Justice Awards.

Convention votes for resources and assistance to support public measures to prevent unwanted adolescent pregnancy and childbirth among women of all ages and economic levels.

- 1987 World YWCA Council meets at the YWCA of the USA Leadership Development Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Jewel Graham, former National President, is elected World YWCA President.
- 1988 A newsletter, "On the Cutting Edge," comes periodically from the national office to keep YWCAs informed about latest developments, events and programs in the area of racial justice.
YWCA is first women's organization invited to join U.S. Olympic Committee, Multi-Sport Division.
- 1989 YWCA leads "pro-choice" demonstration, "March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives."
- 1990 Key civil rights leaders, public officials, and university and college representatives develop a blueprint for racial justice training at YWCA of the USA Racial Justice Convocation.
- 1992 First Annual Day of Commitment to the Elimination of Racism is held in Washington, D.C. and in many Member Associations in response to the Rodney King beating and race riots in Los Angeles, California.
YWCA organizes a National Day of Commitment to the Eliminate Racism in response to the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles, California. The kick-off is held during a Washington, D.C. press conference; YWCAs nationwide took part. YWCA is the first women's organization chosen by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to launch a breast cancer partnership. Expanded ENCORE Plus program begins to make quarterly detection available to medically undeserved and minority women in some communities served by the YWCA.

- 1993 Second Annual National Day of Commitment to Eliminate Racism is observed with a Washington D.C./Capitol Hill press conference and activities by YWCAs nationwide. First Race Against Racism is held.
- 1994 YWCA of the USA, Avon Products, Inc. and the Centers for Disease Control form an unprecedented collaboration of a not-for-profit organization, for-profit enterprise and a government agency to deliver ENCORE^{plus} a breast and cervical cancer early detection program to medically underserved women. Third Annual National Day of Commitment to Eliminate Racism attracts prominent speakers, including nearly a dozen members of Congress and leaders of civil rights, women's and other community organizations.
- 1996 Delegates to the National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, voted to "support the right of Native Hawaiians to sovereignty and self-determination." Convention summons the YWCA to "continue its active advocacy for public policies that ensure economic security for women, including (1) welfare reform that provides access to comprehensive health care, child care, education, job training, jobs and nutrition for all recipients; and (2) adoption of comprehensive public policy that places a high priority on adequate child care and dependent care. First national meeting of state/regional council presidents held following the National Convention, co-chaired by the President of the Pennsylvania Council of YWCAs and national president.
- 1997 YWCAs of the USA in Atlanta and Brunswick, Georgia and Birmingham, Alabama receive Goizueta Grant to create and pilot YWCA child care standards.
- 1998 YWCA of the USA is one of the founding organizations of the first Stand for Children March in Washington, D.C. A YWCA teen from San Diego, California is one of only seven speakers addressing hundreds of thousands of people from the Lincoln Memorial.
- 2004 Igniting the collective power of the YWCA to eliminate racism, the YWCA USA's Summit on Eliminating Racism, was held in Birmingham, Ala.
- 2005 YWCA of Trenton, N.J. and YWCA Princeton, N.J. establish the "Stand Against Racism" campaign, which spreads to 39 states with over a quarter million participants.

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

- 2008 The YWCA celebrated its Sesquicentennial Anniversary, 150 years of service, with the launch of the “Own It” campaign. The campaign focused on igniting a new generation of 22 million young women aged 18 to 34, inspiring them to get involved with important issues facing women and the country today.
- 2013 Today over 2 million people participate in YWCA programs at more than 1,300 sites across the United States.