

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

Central Carolinas

3420 Park Road
Charlotte, NC 28209

704-525-5770
www.ywcacentralcarolinas.org

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Central Carolinas

Spring 2023

yworks



**MEET
MOCHA**

A New Chapter for Mocha

When Mocha first came to Charlotte in 2018, she quickly decided it was her home. The warm weather was welcoming to nature lover and avid walker Mocha, who is originally from Minneapolis. She rented an apartment with a family member and had a steady job nannying. She loved living in Charlotte and dreamed of aging comfortably here.

But 2020 had other plans for Mocha. **Like so many others, when the pandemic hit, her plans were derailed - she lost her job and had no choice but to return to Minneapolis.** In this tumultuous period, she stayed with different family members, but no situation was a great fit or financially sustainable.

Mocha was determined to get back to her home of Charlotte. Eventually, an opportunity came up to live with a family member in Charlotte, giving her the “jump off” she needed for a fresh start. She found a job she loved at a juice bar in Charlotte. Mocha was ecstatic to be back home. But not too long after, she discovered that her family member was too far behind on rent payments, and Mocha realized she was in trouble. **“At that point, I was getting ready to be homeless,” explains Mocha.**

That’s when Mocha called 211 and found out about YWCA’s Women In Transition program. It sounded like the perfect fit. She was all set to interview for the program until she got the call that YWCA had to pause intakes due to staff shortages. To make matters worse, the juice bar where she worked was forced to close due to rising costs, leaving Mocha without a job. The next two months were hard - without other options, she had to stay in hotels and used up her credit. **So when she got the phone call from Rebecca Stickel, YWCA’s Director of Women In Transition, saying that the program was fully staffed and intakes had restarted, Mocha was beyond relieved. She joined YWCA's Women In Transition program and moved into YWCA’s Park Road campus in June 2022.**

Story continues on page 2...



704.525.5770
ywcacentralcarolinas.org

Celebrating the Joy of Reading: YWCA's Literacy Festival



This past March, our Youth Programs students celebrated the magic of literacy by gathering for our first Literacy Festival in partnership with local nonprofit Books with Color! Students spent the afternoon doing LiYo Literacy Yoga Fusion, participating in book readings with local authors Lawrence Gordon and Kristi Cruise, and hearing from librarians from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. Students even got to dream up a book of their own!

“I had fun at the literacy festival! Yoga was awesome and Miss Jasmine was nice. I got to take home new books to read to my mom!”

- Student, Billingsville Youth Learning Center



More Than A Notion

A Discussion of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome and its Radiating Effects on Black America

On April 5, YWCA hosted our first in-person forum since before COVID-19 at Allegra Westbrook Public Library in West Charlotte. *Until Justice Just Is* (previously known as *Stand Against Racism*) is an annual series of events held at YWCAs across the country that raises awareness about institutional and structural racism in our communities and builds community among those who work for racial justice.

This year, our association focused on mental health and racial trauma by discussing Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (P.T.S.S.), a theory developed by Dr. Joy DeGruy. Our panelists, Isis Bey, LCSW, Sonyia Richardson, PhD, MSW, LCSW and Racquel Ward, LCSW, LCAS, unpacked P.T.S.S.'s definition along with the impact of multigenerational oppression on those of African descent. The conversation was moderated by Ashley Peterson on behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.



Attendee Bliss Green reflected on her experience:

“As an African American woman, and mother of 2 male children, it is so necessary to have a space to be seen, heard, and elevated to greatness. I left the event feeling validated, appreciated, and called to meaningful and purposeful action. I am grateful to the YWCA for being a beacon of change, and challenging the community to do the same.”



“When I went in and saw that room - the wood floors, the cleanliness, the desk, and that they had given me a handmade quilt - I couldn’t even believe that. I was safe. From there, I felt like a queen in this place.”

Finally in a safe, comfortable home, Mocha was able to focus on herself at YWCA. **With the support of YWCA’s participant advocate Carmen Crape and MSW Intern Layah Hammock, she started paying off her bills and improving her credit, all while working towards her ultimate goal of securing permanent housing.** Mocha even got a new job cooking at a vegan restaurant. She loved being able to take care of her health by using YWCA’s fitness center, to which all participants in YWCA’s housing programs have a membership.

With her life and finances in a safe and stable place at YWCA, Mocha was able to devote her energy and time to her ultimate goal of securing permanent affordable housing. She learned how to investigate affordable housing options and navigate the complicated processes and long wait lists to attain that housing. **And her hard work has certainly paid off: in March, Mocha received a call from an apartment she had applied for in Uptown saying that she was off the waitlist.**

She moved into her new home the following week and is ecstatic for this new chapter in her life. After the pandemic, Mocha was struggling to make things work. Now, after nine months of perseverance and hard work both on her health and finances in YWCA’s Women In Transition program, Mocha is all moved into her new apartment in the heart of Uptown. Today and every day, she gets to enjoy the comfortable feeling of home in Charlotte she’s sought since 2018.

Thank you to YWCA’s generous donors who support our transitional housing programs. Mocha’s story is possible because of you.

“This place right here, and the energy, and what they’ve done - I’ll be grateful all my life for this,” shared Mocha about her time at YWCA. “This place is my community.”



Dear YWCA family and friends,

We often refer to the visionary women who, in 1902, founded the YWCA in Charlotte. They were leaders in the Women’s Suffrage movement. Over the years, we’ve marveled at the bold moves they made and the forward-thinking they displayed, all with our mission front and center to guide their steps.

When you consider YWCAs in the context of their time, you find this visionary, bold spirit in YWCA women’s DNA across the nation. Strong alone, fearless together. Did you know that in 1915, YWCA held the first interracial conference in Louisville, Kentucky? **Locally, in 1917, the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of YWCA Charlotte was established and was one of the first YWCA branches for Black women and girls in the nation.**

Did you know that in 1946, the Interracial Charter was adopted by the 17th National YWCA Convention, 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”? This charter was adopted eight years before the United States Supreme Court decision against segregation. In 1964, our main YWCA branch merged with the Phyllis Wheatley Branch, and in 1966 - on land that was given to us - we opened a new de-segregated campus at our current location on Park Road. The new campus included the first desegregated swimming pool in Charlotte. Five years later, Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education accelerated racial integration in schools across the Nation.

We marvel at the visionary women who built our Park Road facility in 1966. Did you know that they thought to add a second elevator shaft, knowing it might be needed one day? Happily, that day has arrived! **Now if an elevator is offline, Women in Transition with limited mobility do not have to dread trying to navigate flights of stairs to come home safely.**

We congratulated Mocha, whom you’ve met in this YWorks. Mocha recently left Women in Transition and moved into affordable housing in Uptown Charlotte. She shared with us that she felt spurred forward in her journey here by all the women who came before her. **Thank you for your support. It fuels our vision and allows us to move boldly.**

In solidarity,

Shelley Smith
Board President

Kirsten D. Sikkelee
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

- Shelley G. Smith
President
- Brittany Conner
President-elect
- Laurie Guy
Treasurer
- Barbara Ashford
- Frenchie Wilson Brown
- Shavette D. Campbell
- Tamika Crawl-Bey
- Elizabeth Funck
- Christie Gragnani-Woods
- Lauren Harkey
- Andrea S. Jackson
- Deepa Naik
- Kelly Love-Sayasithsena
- Judy Seldin-Cohen
- Elizabeth Shah-Khan
- Kristy Teskey
- Angela Witt
- Sherri York
- Patricia Zoder

Kirsten D. Sikkelee
Chief Executive Officer



Renovations at YWCA Benefit Women in Transition Program

Have you visited our Park Road campus recently? Over the past year, YWCA has taken on two renovation projects benefiting participants in our Women In Transition program. In the summer of 2022, **YWCA renovated the ADA accessible bathrooms** on each of our three Women In Transition floors. This spring, YWCA **added a second elevator** to take Women In Transition participants to their rooms, and soon we'll begin modernizing our existing elevator. **These projects are important to create a welcoming home for our participants, and especially for those with mobility challenges.** Thank you to the donors whose gifts have made these projects possible!