

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

Agenda for Social Change: YWCA Policy Priorities



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**Advocacy Committee
YWCA Mid-Atlantic Regional Council
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mission statement

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

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overview

Agenda for Social Change: YWCA Policy Priorities has been created to guide and support the grassroots advocacy efforts of local Associations throughout the YWCA Mid-Atlantic Region, both individually and collectively. It illustrates the direct link between the mission of the YWCA as a social justice movement and the public policy priorities identified by the YWCA USA to further that mission.

The booklet has been customized for each of the eight states, plus the District of Columbia, that comprise the YWCA Mid-Atlantic Region: each booklet contains both state-specific and national statistics, as well as examples that underscore the ongoing need for advocacy on each of the seven YWCA core advocacy issues. The information contained in each booklet is timely, reliable, and relevant to advocates throughout the Mid-Atlantic region.

Agenda for Social Change: YWCA Policy Priorities is the centerpiece of a 12-month project being conducted by the YWCA Mid-Atlantic Region to enhance and support the public policy advocacy of the region. During Phase II, Executive Directors, Board Presidents and other designated representatives of Mid-Atlantic Associations will be trained on basic advocacy skills and suggested uses of the information in their state's version of *Agenda for Social Change: YWCA Policy Priorities*. An online Advocacy Training Module will also be developed and posted on the region's website. Phase III involves the development of the information and tools necessary for an efficient, effective network of YWCA grassroots advocates throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. This includes the publication of an Advocates' Workbook, Advocates' Listserv, quarterly ENewsletters, and ongoing training on advocacy skills and critical issues.

eliminating racism

The YWCA advocacy agenda includes seven issues that relate directly to the mission of the organization: the elimination of racism and the empowerment of women.

Like the two sides of a coin, each component of our mission includes characteristics that define and distinguish it. Also like both sides of a coin, the two parts of the YWCA mission support and strengthen each other— they are inseparable.

The seven current policy priorities of the YWCA, as listed below, were chosen to promote solutions that will improve the lives of women, girls and people of color:

- **Eliminate Racism.** The elimination of racism is central to the vision and mission of the YWCA, and is a core value of the organization. YWCAs work to combat racism between individuals and to remedy institutional racism. By specifically naming the elimination of racism as a policy priority, the YWCA raises the visibility of the issue, and demonstrates its commitment to focus the energy and the resources of the YWCA on the elimination of racism.
- **Affirmative Action.** Affirmative Action policies and practices provide equal opportunities and protection for women and people of color, uniquely addressing the “intersection” of racism and sexism in our society. The YWCA supports Affirmative Action as a strategy to further our mission to eliminate racism and empower women. By identifying Affirmative Action as a policy priority, the YWCA acts to end the impact of racism now, and to prevent future injustices, by improving the economic and educational opportunities of protected classes of individuals, including racial and ethnic minorities in this country.
- **Hate Crimes.** Local, state and national hate crime laws are intended to ensure severe criminal penalties for violent crimes, hate speech or vandalism motivated by racial bias. This policy priority addresses the YWCA mission to eliminate racism and empower women through the enactment and enforcement of hate crime legislation.

empowering women

- **Violence Against Women.** Day after day, women of all ages, income levels, and racial and ethnic groups are victims of violent acts, including rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. Many women are living their lives as survivors of violence. Through this policy priority, the YWCA works to end the personal and institutional violence that penetrates the lives of countless women and their families, without regard to their socioeconomic status, class, age, or racial or ethnic background.
- **Increasing Women's Income.** Economic justice is fundamental to the well-being of women and people of color. Through this policy priority, the YWCA works to ensure economic and financial security for women and people of color throughout their lifespan.
- **Welfare Reform.** In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed into law a bill that ended cash welfare as an entitlement program and replaced it with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which imposes strict work requirements and limits the length of eligibility for assistance. This YWCA policy priority focuses on the impact of this sweeping change on the lives of women, particularly as they transition from welfare to work, and the difficulties they face in accessing the services, programs and educational opportunities necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. A key feature of this priority is to assure a focus on poverty prevention in changes to the welfare system.
- **Early Childhood Education.** This policy priority furthers the YWCA mission by addressing the multi-generational empowerment of women by ensuring today's mothers that their children will have access to high-quality, affordable early education opportunities to prepare them for success in the classroom; and by ensuring our next generation of girls that they will enter their adolescent and adult years with a background of educational experiences that help them achieve their own empowerment.

ywca core advocacy issues for tennessee

- **Elimination of Racism**

The YWCA supports the enactment and enforcement of policies and legislation that contribute to the elimination of racism, such as prohibitions against racial profiling, illegal housing discrimination, inequities in the criminal justice system and unfair practices in public accommodations.

In one typical grouping of a major auto loan corporation doing business in Tennessee, lawyers found that whites in the group paid an average of \$643 in “mark-ups”, compared with \$959 for blacks. The difference of almost 49 percent cannot be anything other than “pervasive discrimination,” and is a plain violation of federal law the lawyers argue. National Consumer Law Center. “Two Car Finance Companies Sued for Discrimination”. Press Release. October 2000.

- Reports from 50 different Tennessee agencies indicate that in 2004, 10.0% of anti-racial hate crimes were anti-White; 71.1% were anti-African American; 2.2% were anti-Native American/Alaska Native; 4.5% were anti-Asian/Pacific Islander; and 12.2% were anti-multiracial group. Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. *Tennessee Hate Crime Report 2004*.
- Race, national origin or color accounted for nearly 75 percent of the housing discrimination charges filed with the Tennessee Human Rights Commission during 2004-2005 and for 50 percent of employment discrimination charges during that time. Tennessee Human Rights Commission. *2004-2005 Annual Report*.
- Dumaka Shabazz, a member of the Black Student Alliance at the University of Tennessee reported “visible signs of racism” on campus, including nooses hung from a tree, a Confederate flag painted on a rock and ethnic slurs scrawled on walls. Independent News Media Institute. “BAMN Defends Purpose.” Second National Conference of the New Civil Rights Movement. February 12, 2002.
- Based on the false premise that immigrants will not learn English unless ordered to do so, Tennessee Judge Barry Tatum ordered a young mother living in Lebanon, Tennessee to learn English on a 4th grade level or risk losing her child. American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee. “Monday Morning Conference in Lebanon - Immigrant Mother Scheduled to Take English Test or Lose Child.” Media Advisory. April 15, 2005.

ywca core advocacy issues for tennessee

- **Affirmative Action**

The YWCA opposes federal or state action that would eliminate affirmative action programs and policies that provide equal access and equity for racial and ethnic minorities and women in the areas of employment, education and economic opportunity.

During the 2006-2007 term the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in two lawsuits seeking to bar any and all measures that promote racial integration and equal opportunity in American education. The ruling in these cases will determine whether or not measures to desegregate K-12 public schools, as well as affirmative action programs for higher education, remain legal. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action. Integration and Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality by Any Means Necessary. "Undo Proposal 2!" December 2006.

- Since 1990, the white-collar employment gap between Hispanics and other groups has widened. From 1990-2000 the percentage of workers who were managers or professionals increased from 29% to 33% for whites, from 16% to 22% for Blacks and from 13% to 14% for Hispanics. American Council on Education. *Twentieth Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education*. 2003.
- According to the 2000 U.S. Census, only 4.6% of Chief Executives in Tennessee business organizations were minorities, and only 18.5% were women. U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000. EEO Data Tool Special Tabulation. Residents Data Results for Tennessee.
- Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Tennessee ranks 18th in the number of privately-held, majority (51% or more) women-owned firms in 2004. Women in Business Research. Fact Sheet. "Women-Owned Businesses in Tennessee 2004."
- African Americans, who comprise only 14.6 percent of the Tennessee workforce, have an unemployment rate more than twice the rate for whites. U.S. Census 2000. "Affirmative Action Data Supplement - Tennessee."
- Despite the attention pay equity has received, the wage gap between men and women in Tennessee still ranges from 56.9% to 82.1%. "The Gender Wage Gap." Yasmeen Mohiuddin. Presented to 2005 Economic Summit for Women. Nashville, TN.

ywca core advocacy issues for tennessee

- **Hate Crimes**

The YWCA supports the enforcement and enactment of legislation to prevent hate crimes in which the victim is intentionally selected because of actual or perceived race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability; and to provide more severe sentences for convicted perpetrators.

In June, 2006 a resident of Athens, Tennessee discovered a 7 foot tall burning cross and a hate message with homophobic epithets on the front lawn of the home he shares with his partner and mother. The District Attorney General Scott considers the attack to be a hate crime and the County Sheriff called the FBI in shortly after the incident. Federal investigators interviewed the sheriff and examined evidence, but said that even if the people responsible are caught they cannot be prosecuted under federal law. Legislation that would have included crimes against gays and lesbians in federal hate crime laws was dropped by the Senate in May, 2006. 365Gay.com Newscenter. "Feds Leave Cross Burning at Gay Home to Tennessee to Solve." July 22, 2006.

- In Tennessee, there were a total of 161 bias-motivated criminal incidents reported for 2003. Of the incidents, 101 (62.7%) were racial bias motivated; 17 (10.5%) were religious bias motivated; sexual orientation bias accounted for 26 (16.1%); ethnicity/national origin bias was the cause of 15 (9.3%); and disability bias was connected with 2 (1.2%). Partners Against Hate. Hate Crimes Database. "Tennessee: 2003."
- Tennessee was one of 15 states with the highest number of hate crimes during 2005. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Hate Crime Statistics 2005. Table 12.
- The FBI said a discharged National Guard soldier had a detailed plan to suicide-bomb a local synagogue in Knoxville, Tennessee wearing a trench coat stuffed with explosives and getting himself "as close to children and the rabbi as possible to cause the greatest amount of damage possible." Southern Poverty Law Center. "Extremist Plots - Ex-Guardsman Planned Slaughter of Jews, Police Say." Intelligence Report. Winter 2004.
- Former Klansman Daniel Schertz has been indicted in Chattanooga on charges of building pipe bombs to kill Hispanic immigrants. Hispanic News. "Hate Groups Turn Focus on Hispanic Immigrants in Tennessee." July 30, 2005.

ywca core advocacy issues for tennessee

- **Violence Against Women**

The YWCA advocates for the enactment and reliable enforcement of strong state and federal laws that assure justice, autonomy, restitution and safety for all victims of violence against women and their dependent children, and for perpetrator accountability. This includes full funding for the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and legislation that promotes employment stability and economic security for victims.

Bernice Hampton, a victim of domestic violence since the age of fourteen describes how she was restrained by terror: "My fear level was so high. That was what controlled me. He controlled me through fear. When I disobeyed him, I would get beaten. I lived in a state of fear for over ten years. My whole day was filled with, what is he going to do to me today? After a while, Billy no longer had to isolate me. I isolated myself. With each incident the trap door was closing tighter. I could not see my way out of it. I saw myself dead if I ever left the relationship" *Saving Bernice* by Jody Raphael. 2000.

- In 2003, Tennessee ranked 5th (up from 7th place in 2002) in the United States in terms of the rate of females killed by males in single victim/single offender homicides.
Violence Policy Center. "When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2003 Homicide Data."
- In 2004, Tennessee law enforcement agencies received reports of 2,258 forcible rapes, 639 cases of statutory rape, and 2,298 cases of forcible fondling.
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "Tennessee Domestic Violence Facts." Accessed June 2006.
- Due to funding shortfalls, Tennessee domestic violence programs were unable to provide emergency shelter to nearly 4,000 women, children and men who requested services during 2003-2004.
Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. "Domestic Violence Statistics."
- The number of domestic violence-related incidents in the workplace is escalating and creating additional liability for employers; Tennessee companies currently spend at least \$10 million per year in paid work time due to DV injuries (not including time off for court testimony or receiving attention from medical professionals.)
Tennessee Economic Council on Women. *Fourth Biennial Report*. September 2006.
- The majority of victims of sexual violence in Tennessee during 2005 were under 18 (62.1%).
Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. Crime Statistics Unit. "Sex Offense Research Brief." August 2006.

ywca core advocacy issues for tennessee

- **Increasing Women's Income**

The YWCA engages in advocacy to increase women's income through legislation and policies that will end gender-based wage gaps, employment discrimination, challenges for working parents, inequities in the Social Security system and minimum wage standards that perpetuate the difference between family income and the cost of meeting basic needs.

Tennessee currently ranks 49th nationally in women's political involvement. In order for Tennessee's women to fully participate in the economic decisions affecting their daily lives, they must take part in the political process. Tennessee Economic Council on Women. "When Women Run. . . Women Win." ECOW Campaign School. May 2005.

- In Tennessee, the unemployment rate among women who maintain families is 7.0%, which is higher than the 5.1% average unemployment rate for the state.
Tennessee Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Employment Status of the Civilian Non-institutional Population: 2004 Annual Averages."
- Between 1981 - 2001 the number of women filing petitions for bankruptcy increased 66.2%, more than double the rate of increase for males, with single filing women accounting for 40% of total filers. Tennessee has the second highest bankruptcy rate in the nation, with 63,344 filings in 2003. Tennessee Economic Council on Women. "Financial Literacy." 2004.
- In Tennessee, 130,400 women over age 65 receive Social Security benefits in rural communities, or 7.9 percent of those communities. This compares to 6.5 percent of the population in non-rural areas who are senior women.
Institute for America's Future. "Snapshot: Social Security and Rural Tennessee." June 2005.

ywca core advocacy issues for tennessee

- **Welfare Reform**

The YWCA advocates for reforms in the welfare system that do not include marriage promotion but focus on ending poverty through training, education, affordable child care and health insurance, and on addressing barriers to employment encountered by victims of domestic violence.

“The process taught me that mothers who receive welfare are a lot like other Tennessee mothers in that they are intensely interested in their children having a better life than they have had. It takes a lot of skill to be head of a household when you are only able to read at a sixth grade level.” National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. “Families First: Implications of Welfare Reform for Tennessee Adult Basic Education.” NCSALL Reports #10C. April 1999.

- Even with the help of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, a full-time job with the minimum wage in Tennessee provides just about one-half (46.8%) of the amount needed to be self-sufficient.
Wider Opportunities for Women. *Six Strategies. The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Tennessee.* Accessed June 2006.
- “Child-Only” welfare cases, in which children reside with family members other than their own parents or non-related legal guardians, most often grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts or uncles comprise about 60 percent of Tennessee’s child-only caseload and are likely to have different needs than typical Families First assistance groups.
The University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research. “Non-Parent Caretakers of Child-Only Families First Cases: Evidence from Tennessee and Davidson County.” May 2006.
- Transportation difficulties among current and former Tennessee welfare recipients, who often live within inner-city areas frequently isolated from suburban jobs, affect job-searches as many entry-level positions require applying in person for interviews.
The University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research. “Car Access and Employment Outcomes for Tennessee Welfare Recipients.” June 2004.
- Cuts in funding to Tennessee’s Medicaid program to help ease a state budget crisis during 2005 left more than 323,000 people facing the possibility of losing health care coverage.
Online NewsHour. “Medicaid Squeeze.” March 2, 2005.

ywca core advocacy issues for tennessee

- **Early Childhood Education**

The YWCA advocates for the broad range of legislation and public policy necessary at the federal, state and local levels to assure high-quality and accessible early childhood education for all children.

“We have noticed in my district that we do not have kids in juvenile detention who can read at grade level. The great thing about Head Start is it aimed at the very kids who are at risk of falling behind, then slipping into trouble with the law,” said Knox County District Attorney General. “I wish we could keep stats on crimes that don’t occur; if we did, we would see how Head Start not only helps kids but makes our communities safer.” Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Tennessee. “New Report Shows Proposed Elimination of Head Start’s Quality Standards and Local Control Will Increase Crime.” News Release. April 7, 2005.

- The average annual cost of center-based child care for a 4 year-old in an urban area in Tennessee in 2000 was \$4,420. By comparison, the average annual cost of public college tuition in Tennessee in 2000 was \$2,698.
Children’s Defense Fund. Issue Facts. “Early Childhood Development Facts: Tennessee 2005.”
- State and federal pre-kindergarten programs in Tennessee serve only 22 percent of the state’s 4 year-olds, forcing many working families to put their children in care that is more like “child storage” than education.
National institute for Early Education Research. “The State of Preschool: 2005 State Preschool Yearbook.” 2005.
- Although Tennessee’s Head Start program was funded for 16,740 children in 2004-2005, nearly 20,000 children were actually enrolled.
Tennessee Head Start. “About Head Start in Tennessee.” Excerpted from 2004-2005 National Program Information Report.

dedication

With boundless respect and gratitude for those YWCA advocates who have worked throughout the years on behalf of social justice...and for all those who will follow them...until our goal is achieved.

acknowledgments

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Statistical documentation is provided using the most recently available data and information on specific issues.

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