



# YWCA IS ON A MISSION

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
TULSA

**COMMUNITY LETTER**

**OUR COMMITMENT FORWARD**

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# LETTER FROM YWCA TULSA

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YWCA Tulsa is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. For the past 106 years, we have been committed to serving the diverse community in which we live, work, and serve. We cannot ignore the segregated history that marked our beginning, but we are committed to working in unity with communities of Black and Brown people to change our future.

**Acknowledging Our Past.** YWCA Tulsa had a century-long commitment to serving in the Black community in Tulsa, one that promoted Black women leaders and established programs that supported youth and women for decades. In 2012, financial circumstances led to the decision to close down the YWCA North Tulsa Center and programs that had served for years in the Black community. We own the impact that the closure of those programs had for the families and members of the community effected. Children were displaced from their childcare home. Teachers and employees were left jobless. And families who had access to affordable, quality childcare had to find a new childcare home. Furthermore, we ended racial justice advocacy and training programs

**Changing Our Future.** YWCA Tulsa is called to action to do more to bring an end to racism. We recognize that we have gaps to fill because of the closure of our programs in the past decade. Moving forward, we are committed to investing our resources and energy back into racial justice and racial equity work. We must do more to bring an end to the systemic racism that continues to oppress Black and Brown people.

**Join Us.** We cannot do this work alone. We need your support as allies, as donors, as advocates. Take the pledge. Make a donation. Sign up to join our cause.

This work takes time and community. It requires humility, boldness, and compassion. We are **strong alone, fearless together.**

Together we rise,

Julie Davis, CEO YWCA Tulsa



**UNITED**

**WE STAND.**

**TOGETHER**

**WE ACT.**

**JOIN THE MOVEMENT.**

**UNTIL JUSTICE JUST IS**

# 1920

## 1920 -1929

- Mrs. Pearl Stewart Graves and other women in North Tulsa had organized a YWCA club which met on Archer Street

- In 1921, the YWCA opened a North Tulsa Center with Graves as Director – the center focused on helping girls and women of the area find economic independence through training programs and employment assistance.

- In 1922, formed the Friendship Club which became one of the longest-running programs of the YWCA, observing 72 years of uninterrupted activities and became active as the Northside Reading Club

- YWCA Hostess House for Colored People | Colored YWCA Headquarters | 1929  
- Changed name to the North Tulsa YWCA

## 1931- 1969

- 1931 North Tulsa YWCA (along with two other centers) were forced to close due to the Great Depression



- In 1937 the North Tulsa YWCA re-opened in a cottage at 621 E Oklahoma
- In 1949 A successful campaign was held that allowed North Tulsa YWCA to dedicate the Carver Memorial Youth Center (the future home of the North Tulsa YWCA)
- North YWCA offered swimming, sports and day camps, classes in art, cooking, fitness and ballet | North YWCA continued to grow thanks to the leadership of Thelma Whitlow
- During the time leading up to the integration of the Tulsa Public Schools in 1955, the Central YWCA provided meeting space for interested parties to discuss the issues. For many years, the YWCA was the only organization to offer a meeting place in downtown Tulsa where people of both races could discuss matters related to civil rights.

## **1970-2020**

- North YWCA established a Prison Reform Committee, to ensure equal treatment, meaningful training programs, and adjustment assistance after release for female inmates of McAlester Penitentiary
- In 1983, the YWCA built a 1,600 square foot building on an acre of land the YWCA owned at 52nd Street North and Peoria to be the new home of the North YWCA
- By the late 1980s, the YWCA was offering affordable, high-quality child care at each of its centers, to help working single mothers, as well as the growing number of single fathers

2012: YWCA shuts down the YWCA North Tulsa Center, closing all programs that had been successfully offered in that community for nearly 100 years . YWCA shuts down the Women's Resource Center, closing programs that had offered employment and mental health services

# 2020



YWCA Tulsa's focus to advance racial equity includes four key areas of focus:

- **Educate and Empower Our Team and Board:** We are beginning with our team, where we are focusing on investing in ongoing anti-racist training to ensure all team members have a baseline education in what it means to achieve our mission and advance racial equity. YWCA Tulsa's Organizational Leadership Team is participating in an extended Unconscious Bias training, as well as taking part in Racial Justice trainings provided by YWCA USA. As part of our strategic plan, all team and Board members will have participated in this training, and we will hold ongoing annual trainings to continue to help team members understand their role in this effort. We are also committing to a Racial Equity audit of our organization to identify current gaps in equity and identify opportunities for improvement moving forward. Finally, we are committed to holding an internal annual audit of salaries to ensure that there is pay equity among all team members.

- **Ensure Inclusive and Welcoming Spaces for Black and Brown People:** Inclusivity is a core value at YWCA Tulsa and we are committed to being an open and welcoming company for all. We will continue our work to create an environment where all people feel welcome at the YWCA and see themselves represented in our staff, volunteers, and leadership.

- **Stand with the Community. Black Lives Matter.:** YWCA Tulsa will specifically focus on supporting civic and local partners, as well as community leaders in the work to advance racial equity in Tulsa. An essential part of this work will be elevating the voices of those most impacted by systemic racism and learning from and partnering with minority communities on solutions and programs. We will work with partners who share and uphold YWCA Tulsa's anti-racist standards.

- **Advocate for Justice – Until Justice Just Is.:** YWCA Tulsa will work with policy makers on issues where our expertise will make a difference. We will prioritize health equity, immigration reform, and reform in the justice system. In addition, we will focus on how YWCA Tulsa can contribute to non-partisan efforts to raise awareness of local, state, and national elections and encourage civic engagement through fair, safe, and accessible access to voting.

## Outcomes

Our commitment is to build a long-lasting foundation for these efforts so that our ongoing work will bring about racial equity. With the support and guidance from the Strategic Leadership team, YWCA Tulsa will set specific, measurable goals to define success across this work and regularly report on our progress.

# FOR CHANGE

- **Accountability:** To ensure that we drive meaningful outcomes, we'll create measurable goals against each of the four areas of focus.
- **Transparency:** We'll be transparent about this work, including where we meet or fall short of our goals, and what progress we're making in our mission to create lasting change.
- **Engaging Black and Brown Team Members & Clients:** We'll continue to systematically engage and listen to feedback from our Black and Brown team members and guests along the way so their experiences and perspective help guide the YWCA Tulsa's work on an ongoing basis.
- **Organization Effort:** We'll establish affinity groups across the organization to ensure that all team members have access to safe spaces for dialogue, and to create opportunities for all to understand the role they play in driving this work forward.

## PLEDGE

We Hold These Truths To Be Self Evident:

That all people are created equal and born with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, regardless of who they love, how they identify, where they come from, or the color of their skin.

But all too often, that truth is forgotten. All too often, those rights are ignored. As all too many stand in silence, and all too many suffer alone.

That's why we pledge to come together. And commit to act for the greater good. Until the land of the free is free of racism. Until the home of the brave is brave enough to change. Until "by the people" and "for the people" means doing right by all the people.

UNTIL JUSTICE JUST IS.

I pledge to advance racial justice in my home, my workplace, and my broader community. I won't stop until this country is free of racism



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