

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

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YWCA USA Recognizes Historic Election Milestone

The Content of His Character...

Statement of Lorraine Cole, Ph.D., YWCA USA CEO

Washington, DC (Nov. 5) – I recently had the privilege of conducting an oral history interview with Dr. Dorothy Height, who led the national YWCA Office of Racial Justice throughout the Civil Rights era. Prior to her move to New York to take that position, she served as the Executive Director of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, which was the “colored” YWCA in Washington, D.C. In describing life in racially segregated Washington D.C. at that time, Dr. Height recounted that there were only three public places in the Nation’s Capitol where a Black person could be served a meal: the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, the 17th Street YWCA (which was the white YWCA) and Union Station. On the night of November 4, 2008, the nation traveled light years from those days as a Black family prepares to move to the most prestigious address in Washington D.C., the White House.

The YWCA, as a tax-exempt not-for-profit organization, cannot endorse any political candidate or political party. But, no tax status can deny us the significance of this moment in history. The YWCA has been an active participant in every phase of racial progress in this nation, from abolition to this most historic election. What a defining moment to savor!

Although it still will be a while before “eliminating racism” will be an irrelevant focus of the dual mission of the YWCA, this turning point takes it out of the “dream” state. Let us rejoice in knowing that our next President was judged “by the content of [his] character,” in Dr. King’s prophetic words, and that we were alive to bear witness to it.

The YWCA USA is a national not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to social service, advocacy, education, leadership development, and racial justice. Its mission is the empowerment of women and the elimination of racism. Established in the United States in 1858, the YWCA is the oldest and largest national women’s organization, and celebrating its 150th anniversary. Through its nearly 300 affiliated local YWCAs and its headquarters in Washington, D.C., the YWCA serves 2.5 million women and girls each year. Globally, the YWCA USA is a member of World YWCA, which has affiliates in 122 countries that serve 25 million women and girls worldwide. For more information, visit www.ywca.org. Contact: Nancy Loving, Communications Director, at 202-467-0801 or nloving@ywca.org. YWCA USA, 1015 – 18th Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036.

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