



YWCA USA Celebrates its 150th Anniversary

Washington, D.C. (May 1, 2009) – The YWCA USA celebrated its distinguished 150-year legacy as the nation’s oldest and largest women’s organization at a gala awards dinner in Washington, D.C.

First Lady Michelle Obama noted that “the YWCA has been on the frontiers of this nation’s history, standing up for gender and racial equality.” In a videotaped message to the YWCA, she remarked, “You fought for job opportunities for women and bringing down barriers that were used to limit the ability of all women to achieve their full potential, and your rich legacy has touched generations of women – mothers, grandmothers and daughters. I want to personally thank you for supporting the President’s call to service. In these challenging times, we all have something to contribute.”

For the past 150 years, the YWCA has been at the forefront of every social justice movement in America – from the abolition of slavery to voting rights, from civil rights to pay equity, and from violence prevention to global health. Today, its nearly 300 local associations represent the largest provider of services to battered women in the country, and offer critical community services such as sexual assault support services, child care and after school programs, transitional housing for homeless women, job training, leadership development, and economic empowerment programs.

“We are very proud of our 150-year history of accomplishments in civil rights, women’s rights and human rights,” said Lorraine Cole, Ph.D., YWCA USA CEO. “We look forward to another 150 years of serving American women and girls, and advocating for peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.”

Four distinguished American women leaders were honored at the dinner, which was held at the J.W. Marriott Hotel:

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Lilly Ledbetter is the Supreme Court plaintiff whose name is attached to the first bill signed into law by President Obama. It stipulates that the 180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit can be reset with each new discriminatory paycheck.

Patti Austin is a Grammy® Award-winning jazz singer, composer, and staunch activist against domestic violence who started the Blue Movement, a growing national campaign that brings together individuals to help stop violence against women, children and men.

Eve Ensler is an internationally acclaimed playwright, author of “The Vagina Monologues” and founder of V-Day, a global movement to end violence against women and girls.

Dorothy I. Height is an icon of the civil rights movement who also worked for the YWCA, leading its racial justice efforts for 33 years, and then later headed the National Council of Negro Women for many decades.

The YWCA USA is a national non-profit organization dedicated to social service, advocacy, education, leadership development, and racial justice. Established in the United States in 1858, the YWCA is the oldest and largest national women’s organization, and celebrating its 150th anniversary. The YWCA USA is also a member of World YWCA, which has affiliates in 122 countries that serve 25 million women and girls worldwide. Visit www.ywca.org. Contact: Nancy Loving, at 202-467-0801, cell 202-641-1845, or nloving@ywca.org

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