

eliminating racism  
empowering women

**ywca**

Greater Pittsburgh

**150 years**

YWCA Greater Pittsburgh  
412-789-6915  
ywcaph.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**

Ellen Sheppard  
YWCA Greater Pittsburgh  
412-789-6915  
esheppard@ywcaph.org

**YW Greater Pittsburgh joins 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Stand Against Racism April 28**  
***Equity in positions of leadership is 2017 focus***

*Pittsburgh, PA -- April 20, 2017 --* YWCA Greater Pittsburgh will join YWCA USA's 10th Annual Stand Against Racism with a public event on Friday, April 28, at the YW's downtown headquarters at 305 Wood Street. This year's theme is Women of Color Leading Change.

From April 27-30, YW branches and their partner organizations across the nation will support this signature campaign through events that provide opportunities for education, advocacy and community building amongst those engaged in racial justice work in the communities they serve.

The YW will host a silent vigil from 11 am to 2 pm with YW staff, volunteers, and the general public wearing t-shirts and holding signs declaring "I'm with YWCA. I Stand Against Racism."

"The silent vigil is intended to draw contrast to the anger and violence frequently associated with racism in the news. In fact, racism can often play out in the silence of apathy. By our collective action, we hope to call attention to this issue in a peaceful and respectful way that dramatizes its profound impact on all our lives," explains Chaz Kellem, Senior Director, Advocacy for Race and Gender Equity, YW Greater Pittsburgh, who is coordinating the event.

The YW also will support an event on Thursday, April 27, from 11 am to 1 pm at Community College of Allegheny County's West Hills Campus, 1000 McKee Road, Oakdale. The event, open to the public, will feature a community fair of social justice resources, story boarding, and interactive social media activities.

"As we take stock of our country, our government, our business sector, and our communities, the lack of visible leadership of women of color is telling," says Magdeline Jensen, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh CEO. "Young women need mentors who mirror the possibilities for them to be confident, productive, and self-sufficient. This makes a major difference in how people progress in life, as well as in their careers."

YWCA USA reports that despite outpacing other groups in college education, leading social progress since the very beginning, and often being the primary breadwinner in their households, women of color are consistently underrepresented in positions of leadership.

Only four percent of elected officials (federal, state, and local) across the country are women of color.

The corporate sector is no better. Statistics show that:

- Only 14 percent of executive officers in Fortune 500 companies are women
- Just 18 of those companies have female CEOs
- 0.40 percent of CEOs are either Asian or Black and there are no Latina CEOs

Even in nonprofit organizations, where women make up the majority of employees, only 45 percent are CEOs or executive directors.

“YWCA Greater Pittsburgh is committed to changing these numbers through advocacy for public policy and fair workplace practices. Throughout our 150 year history, YW women have been vocal advocates for positions that advance the economic well-being of all women,” Jensen states. “Our focus on leadership starts with the YW’s Young Leaders Board, which engages young women early on so their voice can be heard in all that we do.”

“Workplaces can invest in formal mentoring across age, race, gender, and other differences to help level the playing field. This is especially important in white male dominated spaces such as STEM fields,” Jensen explains.

To address STEM disparities early on, STEM Stars engages middle school girls in hands-on, project-based STEM activities, math and science enrichment, and college/career exploration. A collaborative project of YWCA Greater Pittsburgh and Carnegie Science Center, STEM Stars improves girls’ STEM interest, confidence, and aptitude while helping them overcome barriers they face. The YW’s STEM programming currently engages more than 2,400 youth.

“Our work also includes establishing partnerships with allies and coalitions, engaging grassroots networks, and hosting community forums, workshops, and trainings,” says Kellem.

YWCA Greater Pittsburgh’s Center for Race & Gender Equity (CRGE) promotes awareness of equality issues, educates individuals, and advocates for change in communities throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania. CRGE supports and promotes the YW’s national advocacy agenda and identifies legislative opportunities (federal, state, and local) that advance YWCA’s focus areas of Eliminating Racism and Empowering Women. These efforts are supported by the YWCA Equity Team and the Center for Race and Gender Equity Community Advisory Committee.

Companies can hire YW staff to conduct programs that address inclusion and equity. Since July 1, the beginning of the YW’s current fiscal year, Kellem reports that these sessions have recorded 3, 700 interactions, through 34 programs and an additional set of panels and roundtables.

“These issues are complicated, but anyone can take a Stand Against Racism. We encourage the community to get involved, and they can start with us on April 28,” urges Kellem.

The YW will support other partners who are also planning a variety of Stand Against Racism events at their sites to celebrate women of color in leadership roles from various sectors and explore solutions to the barriers women of color face. These organizations include: Carlow University’s Black Students United, Family Services of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh Career Institute, Pittsburgh Manchester K-8, and The Ellis School.

Those interested in participating in the April 27 or 28 public events should register online at [standagainstracism.org](http://standagainstracism.org). An online pledge to “Stand Against Racism” is another way to show support.

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### **About YWCA Greater Pittsburgh**

*YWCA Greater Pittsburgh is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We envision a community that advances education, opportunity, and equity regardless of gender, race, or background. For more information about YW programs and services, visit [ywcapgh.org](http://ywcapgh.org) or call 412-391-5100.*