

## YWCA Hartford Region, Inc.

### Excerpts from Strategic Plan 2021-2023: Unlimiting Opportunities

Throughout its 160-year history, YWCA network has boldly stepped forward to address the most pressing social, economic and political issues of the day – the issues that influence women’s empowerment and racial and gender equity. As a network of associations, YWCA’s legacy has been to change the rules and create new paradigms as we dismantled gender and racial barriers.

The #MeToo movement. The humanitarian crisis at the border. Strident efforts to eliminate access to reproductive healthcare, fair workplaces, and safety for women, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized groups. The rise of white nationalism and acts of extremist violence. Gun violence across communities and in the lives of women and girls. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting “shecession.” National protests against racism as a result of the killing by police officers of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and too many others – have rapidly transformed the national conversation about systemic racism, white privilege, the value of low-wage earners, the financial fragility of families and the way we work.

These challenges and developments demand that we respond to “the urgency of now, by embracing change to power a movement.”<sup>1</sup> This plan describes who we are becoming, and what we commit to do, in response to these developments and to meet these challenges.

## Our Values

The values of YWCA Hartford Region define who we are, what we stand for and how we do our work. They are the principles against which we measure the worthiness of our decisions and actions. We hold ourselves accountable for the bold culture shifts that transform these values into action.

**Equity:** Equity and equality are different. We believe in equity – that all people deserve fairness, impartiality, justice and opportunity. We know that equity requires intentional action to give everyone what she/he/they need to be successful. Equality promotes fairness, treating everyone the same – as if we all start in the same place and need the same help.

**Empowerment:** We know that true empowerment comes from within oneself, and is not granted by one person to another. We believe in *supporting* women and girls – particularly those of color – to acquire the wherewithal, opportunity and power to realize their own potential and life goals.

We acknowledge intersectionality<sup>2</sup>, the interconnected nature of such social categories as race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion and more. We know that people are marginalized through multiple sources of oppression.

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<sup>1</sup>YWCA USA Strategic Business Plan, May 2019.

<sup>2</sup> In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality”. This term now leads USA conversations about racial justice, identity politics, and policing. See details at Wikipedia.

**Justice:** We seek to dismantle systemic and institutional oppressions to right the imbalances of an unjust society and an unequal distribution of resources. We challenge the assumption that economic and social inequities are the unavoidable price of progress and prosperity.

**Diversity:** We embrace diversity – including race/ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status and other differences. We nurture and celebrate the richness of our community, building bridges and bonds.

**Partnership:** We know that the greatest results come from the combined efforts of diverse organizations and individuals. We reach out and work collaboratively with others in order to make meaningful and long-lasting change, working together to achieve a defined and common purpose.

**Transparency:** We operate in ways that create openness, and build honesty and trust, to make informed decisions. We honor truth-telling and hold ourselves accountable to each other and to the community to operate with integrity, reliability and fairness.

We are lifelong learners who commit to living these values. By grounding our work in these values, we will transform our community.

## Our Mission

In this strategic plan, we re-affirm our commitment to the mission of YWCA-USA:

**YWCA Hartford Region is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.**

The YWCA has long understood that race and gender must be addressed together in order to create a society that ensures dignity and peace for all. Racial justice and gender equity work is more than a programmatic intervention. It requires a commitment to social change, and is a guiding philosophy and practice that is incorporated into all of the work we do.<sup>3</sup>

## Our Vision for the Future

Vision is the picture of our desired future. Vision describes what we aspire to become, where we want to be, and what we want to look like. Envisioning our future is a creative act. The resulting picture – the unrealized dream – serves as the unifying focal point for our actions.

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<sup>3</sup> *Leveraging our Collective Power: YWCA Mission Impact Framework: Planning, Tracking and Reporting Outcomes.* Prepared by YWCA.

YWCA Hartford Region envisions:

## **A community with unlimited opportunities to un-limit opportunity.<sup>4</sup>**

In this community, **all women and girls, especially women and girls of color, are free from racism and sexism and are able to fulfill their potential and thrive.**

### **Big (Strategic) Question**

A Big Question is “an opportunity or threat to which the organization must respond. Usually, it is beyond the scope of the organization’s current strategies, thus requiring a new strategy.”<sup>5</sup>

While there are many questions to be answered and issues to be addressed, YWCA Hartford Region has identified one Big (Strategic) Question as its critical issue to resolve:

***What does it mean to be a social justice organization at the intersection of racial justice and gender equity in the Hartford region?***

It is the question underlying each of our discussions, and the question we will continue to ask as we assess and re-assess ourselves. The key decisions made through this process represent our initial answer to this question.

### **Strategic Goals and Initiatives**

**Goal I: Strengthen the YWCA Hartford Region as a leading partner in the intersection of racial justice and gender equity.**

- **Create an Advocacy Academy to engage the community**
- **Develop a workforce that lives the mission**
- **Develop and execute an annual legislative/advocacy agenda to include local, state and national goals**
- **Develop and execute a multi-channel marketing and public awareness campaign to position organization as a leader in racial justice and gender equity**

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<sup>4</sup> YWCA Future Design Day: *Imagining our future and planning for action*, December, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> David La Piana, *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (New York: Turner Publishing Company, 2018), 74.

**Goal II:** Prepare women and girls to lead in the workplace, education, and their community.

- Establish the *Center for Racial Justice and Gender Equity*
- Develop and execute programs that prepare women and girls to be strong leaders and advocates for equitable change
- Create workforce development programs and partnerships to elevate economic mobility and parity for Women and Girls
- Increase program offerings in the City of Hartford
- Re-establish YWCA Hartford Region as a leader in financial literacy education
- Develop staff/leadership into subject matter experts/thought leaders

**Goal III:** Develop sustainable resources to inspire confidence and support organizational growth.

- Revise current business model to ensure long-term financial viability
- Increase fundraising from individuals
- Bring in-house full investment in Soromundi Commons, and execution of housing programs
- Strengthen the organization's internal financial standards and practices, and adaptive capacity
- Implement ongoing short and long-term technology and facilities planning

**Goal IV:** Create an organizational culture that embraces our values, and capacity that supports our employees, programs, and services.

- Become the employer of choice for current and prospective employees with a passion for racial justice and gender equity
- Improve ability to measure and communicate impact – quantitative and qualitative
- Empower staff to be organization ambassadors
- Become a trauma-informed organization
- Develop a culture of philanthropy