YWCA IS ON A MISSION

YWCA OF GREATER CLEVELAND
STRATEGIC PLAN
2020-2025
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I. INTRODUCTION

The YWCA of Greater Cleveland was founded over 150 years ago, in 1868, as the Women’s Christian Association of Cleveland. Established to promote “the temporal and spiritual welfare of the city’s growing number of self-supporting women,” the organization changed its name in 1893 to the Young Women’s Christian Association of Cleveland, Ohio. In 1906 the group formally affiliated with the new YWCA of the U.S.

Since its inception YWCA Greater Cleveland has both created and catalyzed a wide range of services and programs designed to improve the lives and well-being of women and girls. While always committed to race relations, YWCA has in recent decades taken on an even stronger national and local leadership role to realize its vision to “eliminate racism and empower women.”

More recently, and to address a growing unmet need, YWCA Greater Cleveland built Independence Place in 2011, providing supportive housing for young girls aging out of foster care; the organization continues to play a convening and coordinating role, through A Place 4 Me, among agencies addressing youth in and aging out of foster care. Other programs include the Early Learning Center, providing high-quality early education for children aged 3-5 years; the Women’s Leadership Institute, a leadership development curriculum designed to train, recognize, and empower women; It’s Time for Equity, a community forum on race and cultural competency. Most recently, YWCA Greater Cleveland assumed management of Norma Herr Women’s Center, Cuyahoga County’s low-barrier, service-enriched shelter for women.

YWCA Greater Cleveland’s last strategic plan covered the period 2013-2018. The plan helped guide YWCA Greater Cleveland towards increased financial stability, operational infrastructure and organizational effectiveness, which is where it stands today. YWCA Greater Cleveland now turns its attention toward longer-term mission and goals.

The following plan is a strategy-focused update built on the operational plan, spelling out in broad strokes the strategic imperatives that will steer YWCA Greater Cleveland for the next five years. It is founded upon one, overriding imperative—Leading with Racial and Gender Justice for Women and Girls of Color—and three subsidiary, supporting objectives designed to help position and equip the organization to realize that imperative.
II. OVERALL CONTEXT

The current planning process unfolded against a number of national, state, and local backdrops that informed the subsequent strategic plan. They include the following.

- There is profound and growing discord in the United States that is manifesting itself in intolerance, hatred, and violence against women and girls, people of color, and other communities. This is coupled with a deeper awareness that structural racism and sexism are at the heart of many of our current crises and must be addressed forthrightly if prospects for women and girls are to improve.

- There is widespread concern that the nation’s economy is more vulnerable than some indicators, such as stock markets, would suggest, and that we are past due for a recessionary phase. This will affect resource availability in multiple ways and could result in reduced revenue for nonprofits such as YWCA Greater Cleveland.

- The national YWCA, of which our local YWCA is an affiliate, is experiencing significant contraction; nearly 100 of the nation’s 300 local YWCAs have closed in the last decade. The current national CEO is the third person to fill her position in the past eight years.

- The coming-of-age of millennials and Gen Z represents challenges and opportunities—challenges because individuals are entering the workforce with more debt and deeper cynicism about the future, opportunities because young people understand the interrelatedness of issues and feel a sense of personal responsibility for civic well-being.

- Ohio has a new Governor and Attorney General. While the Governor has stated a strong commitment to some issues, such as early childhood education, the state’s priorities, and the Ohio Attorney general’s future directions for VOCA, continue to evolve.

- Many of the issues addressed by YWCA Greater Cleveland—homelessness, addiction, poverty, mental illness—are founded upon and fueled by racism and social injustice. While federal and state funding mechanisms may ignore the degree to which racism in particular is implicated in those social ills, YWCA does not, meaning that YWCA will at times be compelled to “speak truth to power” when the power in question is a funder or government contractor.

- The mounting challenge of youth residing in and aging out of foster care has been worsened by the opiate crisis, which as dramatically increased the number of young people and foster families / systems needing critical resources just to maintain current levels of care—not to mention improving that care in light of evidence about best practices. This is a long-term crisis with profound implications for YWCA Greater Cleveland and similar agencies.

- The presence of 15 separate YWCAs across the state suggests both threats—division, competition, differing messages—and opportunities: alliances, common messaging, new operating efficiencies.
II. OVERALL CONTEXT

• Pressure to create behavioral health and social service efficencies has accelerated local mergers and alliances; subsequently, smaller and mid-size social service agencies may find it more difficult to compete with all large agencies. Especially concerning is reality that many of the services YWCA Greater Cleveland now provides, or would like to provide / expand in the future, are supported by expense reimbursement government contracting; organizations without robust cash reserves (smaller agencies) will find it difficult to manage cash flow against expense reimbursement (which can take months).

• Locally there is a high and continuing demand for a wide range of services to meet the needs of poor and marginalized communities, and insufficient resources to provide high-quality services that can address those needs. Collaboration, advocacy, and insistence on quality in service provision are essential.

• The adoption of Cleveland as the next “Say Yes” city means that new resources for K-12 CSMD education and wraparound services will become available; it may also mean that other areas of need, such as adult behavioral health, could struggle to find resources.

• YWCA Greater Cleveland is fortunate to have high quality governance and executive leadership, skilled staff, and relatively stable financial position, and a position of respect within the community. The organization could benefit from a more diverse board in key areas, stronger and more stable financial oversight and fundraising, substantially improved technology and related expertise, and on going mechanisms that ensure that all staff are trained consistently and to their highest level of functioning. And while the CEO is highly skilled and respected as a leader for social justice, the organization does not have in-house government relations expertise.

• Finally, it must be noted that YWCA Greater Cleveland’s CEO and Chief Program Officer have both emerged as leading voices about social injustice, foster care, homeless services, and trauma. This creates both opportunities, as they become increasingly able to catalyze productive change on these and other issues; and challenges, as the external demands on their time increases. It also requires that the organization address issues of future leadership succession.
III. GOALS AND PROCESS

The YWCA’s last strategic plan was adopted at a time of financial uncertainty. The organization had experienced a series of organization setbacks, which led to a period of financial insecurity. Swift action to trim expenses, improve reporting, raise additional revenue, and implement effective communication with funders and stakeholders was critical to helping the organization emerge from the crisis.

The strategic plan formulated in the wake of these difficulties had four strategic pillars:

1. Identify Options for Aspirational Growth
2. Deliver Premier Programs and Services
3. Build Operational Excellence
4. Achieve Financial Robustness

The current plan is intended as an update after the restabilization of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland. The process involved:

- a brainstorming and input session from community stakeholders,
- six meetings with the strategic planning committee,
- interviews with external partners,
- a review of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland’s internal capacity, and
- a presentation to the committee on state policy issues.

The planning process had two goals:

1. To create a strategic framework to guide the work of the organization for the next five years; and
2. To create a “decision-making template” that the organization can utilize to evaluate the strategic “fit” of new opportunities as they arise.
IV. THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW: YWCA GREATER CLEVELAND STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

RACIAL AND GENDER JUSTICE FOR ALL

At the 1970 YWCA national convention, Dorothy Height, the first National Director of the YWCA’s Center for Racial Justice, led the charge to adopt the YWCA’s One Imperative:

The elimination of racism wherever it exists, and by any means necessary.

Now, nearly 50 years later, the YWCA of Greater Cleveland remains solely committed to its mission: Eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

These are the moments—when the One Imperative was embraced, and again today—that call for bold leadership. The YWCA of Greater Cleveland answers that call and dares to lead.

We honor our history, our 150-year movement for equity, inclusivity, and opportunity, through our continuing mission to eliminate racism and empower women, and with a renewed and deeper focus on the aspirations, challenges, and potential of girls and women, especially girls and women of color.

We do so because the YWCA of Greater Cleveland has long understood that race and gender must be addressed, together, in order to secure a society that ensures respect and dignity for all. Racial and gender justice must take center stage in the struggle and must undergird all of the YWCA’s work—not merely as a program or service, but as an animating philosophy and practice that is incorporated into every aspect of our shared organizational life. Placing racial and gender justice at the center of our work is not only a moral imperative, it is also a strategic imperative: by emphasizing the potential of women and girls of color, we believe, we can achieve the greatest overall improvements in well-being for all women and girls, since women and girls of color constitute a majority of women and girls in Greater Cleveland, and since women and girls of color experience the most profound and entrenched marginalization, discrimination, and oppression.

Fueled by the fierce urgency of now, and in response to the deep needs of this historical moment, the YWCA will marshal and coordinate its collective resources to create transformative community change, recognizing that such change must be integrated, strategic, and disruptive.

The following plan outlines strategic imperatives to guide the next five years, all of which rest on a transformational focus on women and girls of color—not as the only community to be served by the YWCA of Greater Cleveland, but as the community whose liberation most ties the YWCA’s past to its future, and the community whose liberation will most catalyze other forms and realizations of peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

Margaret Mitchell, July 2019
IV. THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW:
YWCA GREATER CLEVELAND
STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

MISSION:
ELIMINATING RACISM;
EMPOWERING WOMEN

VISION:
PROMOTING PEACE, JUSTICE,
FREEDOM AND DIGNITY FOR ALL

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:
DISMANTLING RACISM THROUGH THE
LENS OF RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

OUR KEY INDICATORS FOR CHANGE

RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

EMPOWERMENT AND ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT FOR WOMEN

HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

OUR THREE-TIERED APPROACH FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

ADVOCATE
for local policies that would transform the conditions of those impacted by racism and sexism.

EDUCATE
staff and community about racism and gender inequality.

BUILD
bridges and relationships for those most immediately impacted by racial inequality.
IV. THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW: YWCA GREATER CLEVELAND STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

OUR KEY INDICATORS FOR CHANGE

RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

GOAL: Achieve our strategic priority of dismantling racism through the lens of racism as a public health crisis

GOAL: Deliver racial equity and social justice education to the state of Ohio

GOAL: Increase staff retention, resiliency, satisfaction and agency impact
IV. THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW: YWCA GREATER CLEVELAND STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

OUR KEY INDICATORS FOR CHANGE

EMPOWERMENT AND ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT FOR WOMEN

**GOAL:** Advance advocacy for pay equity especially for women of color

**GOAL:** Close the gender pay gap

**GOAL:** Increase racial parity in YWCA Women’s Leadership Institute
IV. THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW: YWCA GREATER CLEVELAND STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

OUR KEY INDICATORS FOR CHANGE

HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

GOAL: Advance advocacy to improve the health and safety of women and girls of color

GOAL: Reframe the health and safety narrative for women and girls of color

GOAL: Develop health and safety initiatives especially for women and girls of color
VII. APPENDIX

PARTICIPANTS

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS
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Samantha Scheutzow, YWCA Staff
Heather Steranka, YWCA Staff

Facilitated by Earl Pike. Special thanks to Sharon Renner for her assistance.
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**YWCA GREATER CLEVELAND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Jill Bautista – Vice-President</td>
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<td>Renee Chelm</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
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<td>Tammy Coney</td>
<td>Vive Le Macaron!</td>
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<td>Julie A. DiBaggio Lum</td>
<td>Weltman, Weinberg &amp; Reis</td>
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<td>Freelance Paralegal</td>
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<td>Community Member</td>
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<td>Deandra Williams Lewis</td>
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<td>John M. Wirtshafter - Secretary</td>
<td>McDonald Hopkins Co., LPA</td>
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<td>EY</td>
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<td>Margaret Mitchell - Ex-Officio</td>
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VII. APPENDIX

RACIAL EQUITY GLOSSARY

BY THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

STRUCTURAL RACISM: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.

RACIAL EQUITY: Racial equity refers to what a genuinely non-racist society would look like. In a racially equitable society, the distribution of society’s benefits and burdens would not be skewed by race. In other words, racial equity would be a reality in which a person is no more or less likely to experience society’s benefits or burdens just because of the color of their skin. This is in contrast to the current state of affairs in which a person of color is more likely to live in poverty, be imprisoned, drop out of high school, be unemployed and experience poor health outcomes like diabetes, heart disease, depression and other potentially fatal diseases. Racial equity holds society to a higher standard. It demands that we pay attention not just to individual-level discrimination, but to overall social outcomes.

SYSTEMIC RACISM: In many ways “systemic racism” and “structural racism” are synonymous. If there is a difference between the terms, it can be said to exist in the fact that a structural racism analysis pays more attention to the historical, cultural and social psychological aspects of our currently racialized society.

WHITE PRIVILEGE: White privilege, or “historically accumulated white privilege,” as we have come to call it, refers to whites’ historical and contemporary advantages in access to quality education, decent jobs and liveable wages, homeownership, retirement benefits, wealth and so on. The following quotation from a publication by Peggy Macintosh can be helpful in understanding what is meant by white privilege: “As a white person I had been taught about racism that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. . . White privilege is an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in every day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious.” (Source: Peggy Macintosh, “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” excerpted from Working Paper #189 White Privilege and Male Privilege a Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for the Study of Women (1989).)

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM: Institutional racism refers to the policies and practices within and across institutions that, intentionally or not, produce outcomes that chronically favor, or put a racial group at a disadvantage. Poignant examples of institutional racism can be found in school disciplinary policies in which students of color are punished at much higher rates that their white counterparts, in the criminal justice system, and within many employment sectors in which day-to-day operations, as well as hiring and firing practices can significantly disadvantage workers of color.
INDIVIDUAL RACISM: Individual racism can include face-to-face or covert actions toward a person that intentionally express prejudice, hate or bias based on race.

DIVERSITY: Diversity has come to refer to the various backgrounds and races that comprise a community, nation or other grouping. In many cases the term diversity does not just acknowledge the existence of diversity of background, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and so on, but implies an appreciation of these differences. The structural racism perspective can be distinguished from a diversity perspective in that structural racism takes direct account of the striking disparities in well-being and opportunity areas that come along with being a member of a particular group and works to identify ways in which these disparities can be eliminated.

ETHNICITY: Ethnicity refers to the social characteristics that people may have in common, such as language, religion, regional background, culture, foods, etc. Ethnicity is revealed by the traditions one follows, a person’s native language, and so on. Race, on the other hand, describes categories assigned to demographic groups based mostly on observable physical characteristics, like skin color, hair texture and eye shape.

CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS: Cultural representations refer to popular stereotypes, images, frames and narratives that are socialized and reinforced by media, language and other forms of mass communication and “common sense.” Cultural representations can be positive or negative, but from the perspective of the dismantling structural racism analysis, too often cultural representations depict people of color in ways that are dehumanizing, perpetuate inaccurate stereotypes, and have the overall effect of allowing unfair treatment within the society as a whole to seem fair, or ‘natural.’

NATIONAL VALUES: National values are behaviors and characteristics that we as members of a society are taught to value and enact. Fairness, equal treatment, individual responsibility, and meritocracy are examples of some key national values in the United States. When looking at national values through a structural racism lens, however, we can see that there are certain values that have allowed structural racism to exist in ways that are hard to detect. This is because these national values are referred to in ways that ignore historical realities. Two examples of such national values are ‘personal responsibility’ and ‘individualism,’ which convey the idea that people control their fates regardless of social position, and that individual behaviors and choices alone determine material outcomes.

PROGRESS & RETRENCHMENT: This term refers to the pattern in which progress is made through the passage of legislation, court rulings and other formal mechanisms that aim to promote racial equality. Brown v. Board of Education and the Fair Housing Act are two prime examples of such progress. But retrenchment refers to the ways in which this progress is very often challenged, neutralized or undermined. In many cases after a measure is enacted that can be counted as progress, significant backlashes—retrenchment—develop in key public policy areas. Some examples include the gradual erosion of affirmative action programs, practices among real estate professionals that maintain segregated neighborhoods, and failure on the part of local governments to enforce equity oriented policies such as inclusionary zoning laws.