

## YWCA of Minneapolis

*In each issue throughout the year, Nonprofit News features Nonprofit Mission Awards recipients, highlighting the work of some of the most promising nonprofits in the state. This issue, we highlight the YWCA of Minneapolis, recipient of the 2005 Nonprofit Mission Award for Anti-Racism Initiative.*

Many people think that the job of improving race relations is a job for people of color. The YWCA of Minneapolis thinks that it is a job for everybody.

Since its inception in the late 1800s, the YWCA of Minneapolis has been at the forefront of social change. Three years ago, the organization founded the Racial Justice Department to act as a catalyst for racial equality.

“People need to get beyond the guilt, the shame, and the political correctness and deal with race,” said Joyce Yamamoto, director of racial justice for the YWCA of Minneapolis. “If we are going to build a community with strong race relations, we must keep the conversation going. We believe it is our role to keep that dialogue going.”

The YWCA serves more than 25,000 people who live or work in Minneapolis. Its Racial Justice Department was founded to eliminate barriers that perpetuate racism by raising awareness of white privilege, promoting practical solutions that individuals can use as they begin and continue their anti-racist journey, and building commitment to policies and practices that eliminate institutional racism.

In the fall of 2005, the YWCA of Minneapolis hosted the third annual “Its Time To Talk” luncheon. More than 700 people gathered to hear from keynote speaker Johnnetta Betsch Cole, president of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina. Dr. Cole made history in 1987 by becoming the first African American woman to serve as president of Spelman College. In May 2004 she became the first African American to serve as chair of the board of United Way of America.

During the luncheon, Dr. Cole called out to the community to extend beyond themselves and to reach beyond their comfort zones in order to address the



everyday issues of equity and racism.

Racial justice work is becoming more common among YWCAs across the country. The Summit on Eliminating Racism, a national conference of YWCAs, will convene in January 2006 in Birmingham, Alabama. Yamamoto and others from Minneapolis will be there ready to share their experience fighting racism and to learn from others about their experiences.

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Joyce Yamamoto, Director of Racial Justice, YWCA of Minneapolis

In fact, the Minneapolis organization has been a leader among regional YWCA affiliates, bringing their anti-racism programming and experience to other organizations. It has worked with the YWCA in Fargo and will soon begin working with the YWCA in Mankato, helping those organizations strengthen their anti-racism programming.

“None of us is an expert on this,” said Yamamoto. “Each of us carries valuable

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
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information, that will be valuable to the next person.”

This year the YWCA of Minneapolis hopes to add to its Unlearning Workshops and complete development of a workshop on white privilege. It is the goal of the organization to sponsor a workshop on white privilege that goes beyond what it means for Euro-Americans and includes everyone in improving their entire community.

In one of its newer programs, the Leadership Registry, the YWCA of Minneapolis works with MAP for Nonprofits to maintain a network of individuals, including people of color and women, to increase diversity in participation on nonprofit boards and government commissions in Hennepin County. More than 200 people of color and women have signed up for the Registry and are ready to serve on a nonprofit board.

“Ending racial injustice is a huge priority for our future,” said Yamamoto. “It is a personal commitment, everyday.”

To learn more about the YWCA of Minneapolis, visit their Web site at [www.ywcampls.org](http://www.ywcampls.org).