

# Highlights from NOW's History of Working to End Racism

NOW is committed to ending racism, promoting diversity, and advancing issues important to women of color – from lobbying for voting rights, affirmative action, fair housing and living wage laws, to campaigning against apartheid and punitive welfare “reform.” NOW serves on the Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and has mobilized to support every civil rights bill since our founding in 1966.

**1966:** Dr. Pauli Murray, a NOW founder who later became the first African American woman ordained as an Episcopal priest, writes NOW's founding Statement of Purpose.

**1970:** NOW is a party to the landmark EEOC petition against AT&T for “pervasive, system-wide and blatantly unlawful” discrimination against women and people of color.

**1972:** NOW endorses Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman to run for President. Chisholm, a NOW member, was elected to Congress in 1968 with NOW's active support.

**1980:** NOW conference adopts an affirmative action bylaw, reserving a minimum of nine National Board seats (out of approximately 34 seats) for women of color.

**1984-1988:** NOW works to pass the Civil Rights Restoration Act, reversing Supreme Court cases that limited federal laws combating discrimination based on gender, race, age and disability.

**1989-1991:** NOW serves on the drafting committee of the 1991 Civil Rights Act, landmark legislation making it easier to establish employment discrimination.

**1996:** Women-Friendly Workplace campaign names Mitsubishi Motors, where race and sex discrimination and harassment were rampant, its first NOW Merchant of Shame.

**1998:** NOW holds its first Women of Color and Allies Summit during which activists hold a demonstration in support of equal wages for women janitors in the U.S. Capitol.

**2002:** NOW calls on the Supreme Court to uphold the race-based affirmative action in colleges and higher education, and plans Supreme Court rally (see February photo) in support.

**2003:** NOW organizes for the 40th Anniversary celebration of the 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. March (I Have a Dream) and calls for a “march to the polls next year.”

**2005:** Our second Women of Color and Allies Summit draws hundreds of women to Arlington, VA to draft an action plan to empower, enfranchise and energize women of color.

**2005:** Conference delegates call for regional NOW Women of Color and Allies Summits and direct a study of the “war on drugs” and its negative impact on women, particularly women of color.

**2005:** NOW’s National Board of Directors passes a resolution calling for NOW to demand U.S. officials address the discrimination apparent in the response to Hurricane Katrina by the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), Homeland Security, and the Bush Administration.

**2005:** NOW President Kim Gandy joins the Hip Hop Caucus, Rep. Cynthia McKinney, New Orleans organizers and other civil rights allies in a march across the Crescent City Connection Bridge into the city of Gretna, Louisiana. It was the same bridge where hundreds of desperate Katrina survivors, mostly African American, tried to flee the devastating floodwaters—and were prevented from crossing to safety by Gretna police officers who fired shots in the direction of the crowd.