

January 2008

Dear NOW Activists,

As part of our ongoing plans to provide chapters with ideas and suggestions for actions and activities that NOW chapters may want to consider, in February, the National Organization for Women celebrates Black History month by calling for equality and justice for Black women throughout the entire African Diaspora. As feminists, we recognize the intersectionality between the oppression of race and gender. We remember this month, leaders such as Julia Carson, Juanita Millender-McDonald and other great Black women who have passed along, yet paved the way for women's rights activists today.

Enclosed is a packet of information to assist you in taking action for Black History Month! You will find suggested books and films that your chapter can read and watch together, blogs that provide spaces for voices in the community of Black women and others in the civil rights movement, ideas for action and a list of organizations engaged in the fight for the civil rights and social justice for all. This packet has been created as a roadmap, a place to begin, as your chapter develops ideas and actions that re-affirm our collective commitment to celebrating the gains for Black women and to guide the call to remember the resistance that leaders met during the early struggles.

NOW activists continue our part in the fight to end racism and sexism and remind ourselves that we must be prepared, organized and informed as we advocate for social justice. We must not replicate the systems of oppression that govern the world and hamper our ability to organize together for a stronger, unified women's movement.

Some of the information enclosed is recreational and some of the ideas are activism centered. We hope your chapter will take this opportunity to engage this February in the ongoing struggle to ensure our culture no longer marginalizes or excludes Black women from the public debate and discussion of racism and sexism. We look forward to receiving your pictures, newsletters and feedback from your Black History organizing efforts.

Sincerely,
The NOW Action Center

Celebrate Black History Month!

Black Feminist/Womanist Reading



Sexual Healing

By Jill Nelson

Explore a gripping and honest story about positive sexuality where mainstream feminism, the black church and two best friends collide.

Killing the Black Body

By Dorothy Roberts

Learn about the reproductive justice history of Black Women in America from slavery to the late '90s.

But Some of Us are Brave

By Gloria t. Hull

Take a journey with two authors who piece together the black feminist/womanist presence that mainstream media and academia left out

From Oppression to Grace

By Theodorea Regina Berry and Nathalie Mizelle

Join in for a critical look at the educational system and its impact on women of color.

Pregnancy and Power

By Rickie Solinger

Be strengthened by this bold perspective on women of color organizing for reproductive justice.

Don't Play in the Sun

By Marita Golden

Intra-racial racism meets the beauty myth in this heart tugging account on the different values placed on light-skinned and dark-skinned women in the black community.

Gumbo: An Anthology of African American Writing

Edited by E. Lynn Harris and Marita Golden

Engage in a myriad of fictional works constructed by the most profound truth-tellers in the black literary community.

The Color Purple

By Alice Walker

Be present for the most beautiful coming of race, class, gender and age story.

Naked

By Ayana D. Byrd and Akiba Solomon

Black women bare all about their bodies, hair and self.

Beloved

By Toni Morrison

This is classic work of Morrison's forever lasting depiction of the black female condition in America.

Sister Outsider

By Audre Lorde

Explore womanism in the speeches and essays of one of the most influential thinkers on Black women's lives today.

Ain't I A Woman: Black Woman & Feminism

By bell hooks

Witness bell vividly explore the intersection of oppression where race and sex collide full force in the lives of Black women.

Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness & the Politics of Empowerment

By Patricia Hill Collins

Take a journey with Collins as she exposes the condition of Black women and their resistance throughout the African Diaspora.

Please tune into <http://www.now.org/store/amazon.html> to purchase the items above for your friends and family.

Black Women in Film



What's Love Got to Do with It

Directed By Brian Gibson

Mahogany

Directed By Berry Gordy

Lady Sings the Blues

Directed By Sidney J Furie

Just another Girl in the I.R.T.

Directed By Leslie Harris II

Introducing Dorothy Dandridge

Directed By Martha Coolidge

The Color Purple

Directed By Steven Spielberg

Beloved

Directed By Jonathan Demme

Our Song

Directed By Jim McKay

Waiting to Exhale

Directed By Forest Whitaker

Directed By Sam O'Steen

Life Support

Directed By Nelson George

Sparkle

Directed By Sam O'Steen

Chisholm '72 Unbought & Unbossed

Directed By Shola Lynch

No! The Rape Documentary

Directed By Aishah Shahida Simmons

<http://www.notherapedocumentary.com/>

Silent Choices

Directed By Faith Pennick

<http://www.silentchoices.com/> -<http://www.newday.com/films/SilentChoices.html>

Please tune into <http://www.now.org/store/amazon.html> to purchase the items above for your friends and family



BUILD PARTNERSHIPS IN YOUR OWN TOWN FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH!

Black Women Organizations

Partnering for Power!

There are many national organizations engaged and leading the fight for social justice across the country. February might be the perfect time to renew partnerships with local chapters of these organizations.

National Council for Negro Women

Leads, develops, and advocates for women of African descent as they support their families and communities through research, advocacy, and national and community-based services and programs on issues of health, education, and economic empowerment in the United States and Africa.

<http://www.ncnw.org/about/mission.htm>

National Coalition of 100 Black Women

The NCBW mission is the development of socially conscious female leaders who are committed to furthering equity and empowerment for women of color in the society-at-large, improving the environment of their neighborhoods, rebuilding their communities and enhancing the quality of public and private resources for the growth and development of disadvantaged youths.

<http://www.ncbw.org/intro.html>

National Congress of Black Women

Dedicated to the educational, political, economic and cultural development of African American Women and their families. NCBW also serves as a nonpartisan voice and instrument on issues pertaining to the appointment of African American Women at all levels of government, and to increase African American women's participation in the educational, political, economic and social arenas.

<http://www.nationalcongressbw.org/index.asp>

Black Women's Health Imperative

Their mission is education, advocacy, and training. This organization is devoted solely to helping the nation's 19 million African American women and girls lead healthier lives. It promotes the empowerment of African American women and girls as educated health care consumers and caregivers, as well as strong voices for the elimination of gender and racial disparities in health.

www.blackwomenshealth.org

National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.

These clubs promote and protect the interests of African American business and professional women; to serve as a bridge for young people seeking to enter

business and the professions; to improve the quality of life in the local and global communities; and to foster good fellowship.
<http://www.nanbpwc.org/AboutUs.asp>

The Historically Black Sororities in the National Pan-Hellenic Council: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated; Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated.

The council promotes interaction through forums, meetings and other mediums for the exchange of information and engages in cooperative programming and initiatives through various activities and functions. The primary purpose and focus of member organizations remains community awareness and action through educational, economic, and cultural service activities.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated
<http://www.aka1908.com/>

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated
<http://www.deltasigmatheta.org>

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated
<http://www.zphib1920.org/>

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated
<http://www.sgrho1922.org/>

Sistersong

Sistersong brings women of color together through mentoring and self-help and organizing to create change.
<http://www.sistersong.net/index.html>

Women of Color Resource Center.

Founded in 1990, the Women of Color Resource Center (WCRC) is headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area and promotes the political, economic, social and cultural well being of women and girls of color in the United States. Informed by a social justice perspective that takes into account the status of women internationally, WCRC is committed to organizing and educating women of color across lines of race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, class, sexual orientation, physical ability and age.
<http://www.coloredgirls.org/article.php?id=39>

YWCA

The YWCA is the oldest and largest multicultural women's organization in the world. Their mission is to eliminate racism and empower women. They provide safe places for women and girls, build strong women leaders, and advocate for women's rights and civil rights in Congress.

<http://www.ywca.org/site/pp.asp?c=djISl6PIKpG&b=281387>

Pro-choice Public Education Project

Their mission is to educate young women about reproductive freedom, choice and developing a new generation of leaders.

<http://www.protectchoice.org/>

Women's Rights Organizations

Partnering for Power!

Feminist Majority Foundation

The Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF), founded in 1987, is a cutting edge organization dedicated to women's equality, reproductive health, and non-violence. The campus program promotes research and action to empower women economically, socially, and politically. They believe that feminists - both women and men, girls and boys - are the majority, but this majority must be empowered. <http://feminist.org>

National Council of Women's Organizations

NCWO has over 200 member organizations that collaborate through substantive policy work and grass roots activism to address issues of concern to women, including family and work, economic equity, education, affirmative action, older women, corporate accountability, women and technology, reproductive freedom, women's health, younger women and global progress for women's equality. <http://www.womensorganizations.org/>

ACLU's Women's Rights Project

They have worked to empower women and advance equality. They demand basic economic and social opportunities for all women – regardless of race, class, or national origin – WRP works to ensure that women and their families can enjoy the benefits of full equality and participation in every sphere of society.

<http://www.aclu.org/womensrights/index.html>

Media Justice Resources

Partnering for Power!

Women's Media Center

Their mission is to assure that women and women's experiences are reflected in the media just as women are present everywhere in the real world; that women are represented as local, national, and global resources for and subjects of the media; and that women media professionals have equal opportunities for employment and advancement.

<http://www.womensmediacenter.com>

Industry Ears

Their mission is rooted in finding solutions to disparities in media that negatively impact individuals and communities. Industry Ears functions to bridge the gap between consumer expectations and industry standards as defined by the Federal Communications Commission. Industry Ears seeks to empower individuals and communities by providing media literacy, education, research, and continuous dialogue with industry stakeholders, media experts, researchers, public officials and consumers. <http://www.industryears.org/>

R.E.A.C.Hip-Hop

This is a diverse coalition of artists, activists, Hip Hop legends and historians, journalists, educators, students, and parents within, and in alliance with, the greater Hip Hop community. Their efforts are to not only demand ethical corporate accountability, but also to protect, preserve, and regenerate the great legacy of Hip Hop culture by Representing Education, Activism and Community through Hip-Hop. <http://www.hiphopliveshere.com/>

National Women's Editorial Forum

NWEF is dedicated to increasing the supply of commentary by women and participation of women in the media. Their mission is to ensure that women's voices, their stories, and their perspectives on all key policy issues of the day are read, are heard, and are seen. <http://www.mediaforum.org/NWEF/>

Free Press

Free Press is a national nonpartisan organization working to increase informed public participation in crucial media policy debates, and to generate policies that will produce a more competitive and public interest-oriented media system with a strong nonprofit and noncommercial sector. <http://www.freepress.net/>

Women in Media and News

Women In Media & News, a media analysis, education and advocacy group, works to increase women's presence and power in the public debate. WIMN's POWER Sources Project provides journalists with a diverse network of female experts. <http://www.wimnonline.org/>

Reclaim the Media

RTM is dedicated to pursuing a more just society by transforming our media system and expanding the communications rights of ordinary people through grassroots organizing, education, networking and advocacy. They are advocates for a free and diverse press, community access to communications tools and technology, and media policy that serves the public interest.

<http://www.reclaimthedia.org/>

Blogs Making Black History

<http://whataboutourdaughters.blogspot.com/>

<http://myblackisbeautiful.com/>

<http://www.essentialpresence.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.blackcommentator.com/>

<http://www.blackagendareport.com/>

<http://blackamericaweb.com/>

<http://www.blackademic.com/>

<http://blacklooks.org/>



VBlog

<http://supersistas.com/>

Actions and Activities

Host an Ending Racism Speak Out in partnership with Black people and other people of color to speak out about incidents of racism that have occurred in their lives and in your community. Partner with women-led organizations and community groups to plan the event. Be sure to choose a venue in a neutral location and not a private residence or any location that requires participants to purchase expensive foods or beverages. For example, the headquarters of your chapter is not necessarily neutral and a library conference room in your community may be more welcoming for first time participants.

Partnering with other organizations helps to ensure that you create a diverse environment that is a safe space for people to contribute. Consider beginning the event by setting some ground rules. Some examples that may be useful are:

1. What is said in this space stays in this space.
2. Avoid talking to others about their personal testimonies unless they invite your feedback
3. Use “I” statements.
4. No commenting on anyone’s personal experience.
5. Thank everyone for sharing their testimony.

End the evening with a call to continue the conversation and generating ideas and ways to bring the missing voices into future discussions. Capture the ideas and suggestions on ways to take action to address the issues raised by the participants. Offer a way for people who attend to organize together to take future action to address racism.

Hold a Town hall Meeting on Racial Profiling against Black people and other people of color. Invite experts in your local police department, managers of retail stores and elected officials to talk about the state of racial profiling in your community. In preparation, gather information on incident reports of racial profiling, media coverage of police brutality, excessive force and hate crimes against Black people in your community. Learn about any legislative initiatives that have been passed or need to be passed to address racial profiling.

Partner with an ally organization that is in tune with the needs and concerns of Black people in your community. Learn about local (informal) groups working to highlight the issue and be sure to invite them to take a lead in organizing the event. In many communities, clergy are involved and working on this issue and can be good allies.

At the town hall meeting, hold institutions accountable by publicizing the incidents of racial profiling. Get the institutions to commit to measures that work to prevent racial profiling such as ongoing cultural sensitivity/diversity training. Invite members of the local media, alternative media and community press to attend and contribute their thoughts and opinions on the status of racial profiling. Ask local community college or university professors to speak on the history of racial profiling. Create an agenda and make space for people to talk about their experiences. Document the event and make plans to share with local law enforcement, elected leaders, and other community leaders.

Write an Op-ed on the State of Black Women in your community using NOW's priority issues as a guide. If it is easier for you, pick a topic within one priority issue. Do your research and be careful of tokenization. It's OK to ask predominantly Black women organizations who have chapters in your area question such as, what are the top two issues facing Black women in your community? What is the economic situation of Black women in this county? It's not OK to ask a black female acquaintance or stranger what the numbers are for women on welfare. Your public library and reputable sites on the Internet will be your No. 1 informants. Once you are finish researching how Black women are affected by your defined priority issue(s), look in to how other minorities in your community (according to recent Census data, not your own personal hypothesis on the make-up of your community) are affected by this issue. Try to come up with recommendations that will be the most beneficial to all groups while also noting recommendations that specifically are directed to the different ways Black women are affected by NOW's issue(s).

Hold a Spoken Word Event where NOW members recite readings and poetry from famous, and not-so-famous, Black women in the women's rights movement. Start each reading with a brief biography as it relates to women's rights on each woman. A few names include Angela Davis, Nikki Giovanni, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Gloria T. Hull, Loretta Ross, Jill Nelson, Toni Blackmond, Dorothy Roberts, Jill Scott and others.

Hold an Essay Contest on a Black Woman who has made a difference in your community. From crossing-guards, educators, elected officials to moms. Encourage people to look to the many different roles black women could have in your community and to reflect on one. If your community is not that diverse, encourage essay participants to research a black woman they do not know who has made a difference. Try to partner with a local high school history class or Africana Studies department, Women's Studies Department and other educational institutions. If you have the capacity to award a cash prize along with a NOW membership, do so. If you have a lot of resources at your disposal, have an award banquet where you recognize the students along with the woman featured in their essay. Invite Black women's rights groups to attend and recognize them for their women's rights advocacy in your community.

Sit in on a Black Women's Studies or Africana Studies class. Share your experience at the next NOW meeting and talk about how the lessons pertain to the current struggle to bring about equality through NOW's priority issues. Allot time for the presentation and discussion about how race can be a component in your next direct action.

Watch "The Color Purple." Whether you are screening the film at a local High School, College or University, watching it amongst friends or family or traveling with NOW activists to see a theater production, take some time to view one of the most comprehensive films on black women in America. Hold a discussion afterwards.

Partner with a Local Radio Station to Have a Segment on Black Female Singers/Songwriters who have created positive messages about Black women. Encourage them to play songs from Lauryn Hill, Alicia Keys, India.Arie, Jill Scott, Corinne Bailey Rae, Chisette Michelle and others. They can also invite listeners to do their own interpretations and to talk about what is feminist/womanist and empowering about the music.