SECURING RIGHTS, SHAPING THE FUTURE

RACIAL JUSTICE

CAPSULE THREE | **SECTION 2** | **JULY 21ST - AUGUST 2ND 2026**

OVERVIEW

Our second policy focus for our third capsule, *Securing Rights, Shaping the Future*, is NOW's commitment to racial justice. NOW has been a fierce leader in civil rights since 1966 and continues to fight for equal opportunities for women of color in all areas, including employment, education & health care. We are committed to identifying and addressing the barriers to equality and justice caused by structural racism. We champion equal opportunities in all areas, including employment, education, and reproductive rights.

FOUNDATIONS

Ending racism is one of NOW's six core issues. In 1966, distinguished civil rights leader Dr. Pauli Murray encouraged Betty Friedan and others to establish an organization to pressure the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to carry out its mandate to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, and religion.

This action led to the founding of the National Organization for Women. Dr. Murray, who wrote NOW's Statement of Purpose, acted as a bridge between the civil rights movement and the modern women's movement.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1970: NOW became a party to the landmark EEOC petition against AT&T for "pervasive system-wide and blatantly unlawful" discrimination against women and people of color. In 1973, AT&T signed a $38 million agreement to pay victims of the discrimination.
1990s: NOW President Patricia Ireland declared a NOW hunger strike to oppose welfare reform and Republican attacks on women receiving welfare assistance that used the racist and derogatory term, "welfare queens."
1991: NOW serves on the drafting committee of the 1991 Civil Rights Act, landmark legislation making it easier to establish employment discrimination in court.
1985-1989: Loretta Ross serves as the director of Women of Color Programs for NOW and organizes the first national conference on Women of Color and Reproductive Rights in 1987.
1998: NOW holds its first Women of Color and Allies Summit during which activists staged a demonstration in support of equal wages for women janitors in the U.S. Capitol.
2002: NOW rallies on the Supreme Court to uphold the race-based Affirmative Action policies in colleges and higher education.
2020: NOW celebrates the 100th anniversary of the right to vote with Sisters in Suffrage to honor suffragists of color.
2020-2023: NOW hosts annual Racial Justice Summits.

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LEGISLATION

NOW actively monitors and supports federal legislation aimed at expanding Racial Justice including:

- HR 4395: **Stephanie Tubbs Jones Uterine Fibroid Research and Education Act of 2025**
- HR 3974: **Protect Black Women and Girls Act**
- HR 8663: **Fair Pay Act of 2026**
- S 3425, HR 6589: **Ranked Choice Voting Act**
- HR 9816: **MOMMIES Act**

And many more

TODAY

Under the Trump Administration, the bold advances that women have made over the past decades, particularly those of our Black, Indigenous, Women of Color, Latinx, trans, and gender non-conforming relatives, were decimated.

NOW has taken a holistic approach to women's rights, and our advocacy is always conducted through an intersectional lens. For NOW, intersectional feminism means that every piece of legislation, policy, or program that we support must address marginalized and under-resourced populations, including BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities. It is at the core of who we are as an organization.

Throughout our 60-year history, NOW's work on racial justice has included marches, rallies, summits, public awareness campaigns, event co-sponsorships, litigation, coalition work, letters and petitions to Congress, shaping and endorsing legislation, action alerts, conference panels and featured speakers and much more.

NOW has adopted more than 60 resolutions addressing racial justice and equity at our annual conferences. We are also a long-time and active member of the Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights, and have published numerous reports on the importance of Social Security, highlighting the fact that women of color in particular often live near the poverty line in retirement due sex and race discrimination in employment and pay.

As champions of equal opportunities in all areas, including employment, education, and reproductive rights, we recognize that racial justice is a feminist issue and that to achieve equality, our activism must be anti-racist. Having a thriving and free civil society is fundamental for human rights, and NOW is committed to ensuring that historically excluded communities of color have the freedom to participate at every level.