

THE YMCA AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT IN HISTORY

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At The Family YMCA, respect and social responsibility are two of our core values, the other two are caring and honesty. Social movements have been at the core of the YMCA since its founding, and we support the call to increased awareness of how we treat each other as fellow human beings.

The Family YMCA is an independent chapter of the YMCA of the USA, which provides resources to its autonomous chapters, and as such, our Y is a child of the YMCA.

And the YMCA movement has evolved with time. The Young Men's Christian Association was founded in 1844 by a 23-year-old white Christian named George Williams and 11 friends, who wanted a positive place to socialize apart from the corruptible conditions, bars and red-light districts of London's Industrial Revolution. Driven by a social need, they created a refuge of Bible study and prayer for young men seeking escape from the hazards of life on the streets. Seven years later, in 1851, retired sea captain Thomas Sullivan having noticed the same need for sailors and merchants, led the formation of the first U.S. YMCA in Boston.

In the U.S., the YMCA has grown in step with history, and evolved **through segregation and service only to men**. Yet within the history of the YMCA movement, men and women of all races have made profound contributions toward progress, not only in the founding of new sports and holidays and sister organizations, but in support of diversity and inclusion:

- In 1853-two years after the Boston Y creation, Anthony Bowen, a freed slave, because he could not do it at a "white" YMCA, founded the first YMCA for African American in Washington D.C. to teach young black boys to read.
- In 1875, YMCAs were established in San Francisco to serve the large Chinese population.
- In 1878, the Eighth Conference of the World Alliance of YMCAs meeting in Geneva, Switzerland adopted a logo from John 17:21, "That they **all may be one**...as We are one."
- In 1879, Thomas Wakeman, a Dakota Indian, founded a YMCA in Flandreau, South Dakota.
- In 1903, the YMCA created an "industrial" department to work with railroad workers (many Asian), miners and lumberman, and to assist immigrants.
- In 1910, 25 African American YMCAs were built in 23 cities as a result of a challenge grant program announced by Sear Roebuck founder Julius Rosenwald. The Ys included clean, safe dorm rooms and eating facilities, which were a boon to African American travelers, especially servicemen, in a segregated and discriminatory era.
- In 1917, a Japanese YMCA was founded in San Francisco.

- During World War II, YMCA staff worked secretly in U.S. internment camps holding 110,000 Japanese Americans, organizing clubs and activities for the children.
- By the end of WWII, in 1946, Ys were welcoming female members who made up 12% of membership; today it is closer to 64%.
- Martin Luther King, Vernon Jordan and many others grew up using the Butler Street YMCA in Atlanta, a safe place where they eventually as adults could relax, discuss and plan Civil Rights activities.

So where is the Y today?

- The Family YMCA was established in 1955 in Los Alamos by volunteers who recognized the need for a place for families to recreate. They petitioned the YMCA of the USA and were granted a charter. We were the first “family” YMCA in the country and granted the name The Family YMCA.
- Our national organization’s mission is to “Put Christian principals into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.” The mission is **inclusive of all**, and the charter allows Y’s to adopt a mission that serve the needs of the communities they serve.
 - YUSA has been led by Kevin Washington since 2015; he is the 14th person and first African American to lead the Y in the United States and has a 40-year association with the YMCA.
 - Washington has called on member associations to support **“Change Makers,”** young people who will forward progress in our time.
- The Family YMCA’s mission is to build community strength by focusing on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, and to ensure access to all. Board leadership long ago recognized the diverse population of the community, and chose to respect the religious beliefs of their community members, and to be inclusive of all.
 - The Family YMCA has adopted diversity and inclusion practices and training since 2000: We work to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, age, cultural background, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, ideology, income, national origin, race, or sexual orientation has the opportunity to reach their full potential with dignity. In 2017, the Y earned a Diversity, Inclusion and Global awareness designation called DIG, and was recognized as a CHAMPION YMCA for being inclusive, vocal leaders of LGBTQ staff, volunteers, and participants, as well as the LGBTQ community.

Overall, The Family YMCA chooses to support the diversity of our individual community members and advocate for their well-being and social dignity. We respect our member’s personal choices and philosophies, but within our walls we ask that everyone conduct themselves by our core values of caring, honesty, respect and social responsibility, and treat each other kindly.