



135 Broad Street
Hartford, CT 06105

CONTACT: Alisa Dzananovic
(860) 525-1163, Ext. 292
alisad@ywcahartford.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The YWCA Takes a Stand Against Racism *The Greater Hartford Community is Asked to Support and Join the Initiative*

[Hartford, CT, February 10, 2009] – The YWCA of the Hartford Region announced today a new initiative coming to the Greater Hartford region: The “Stand Against Racism.” A program of the YWCA, this initiative is aimed at raising awareness that racism still exists in our communities and that it cannot be ignored and tolerated.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, there are 878 active hate groups in the United States, including 34 in New Jersey, 26 in New York and six in Connecticut. Hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign certain classes of people, promoting hate, hostility, and sometimes violence. The Stand Against Racism was created by the YWCA in order to combat the spread of hate and to honor and celebrate the richness of diversity.

In 2008, the Stand Against Racism attracted over 60 organizations that took a bold step forward in the battle against racism in Mercer County, New Jersey. Over 5,000 individuals took a Stand Against Racism, sending a strong message against racism and discrimination of any kind and committed themselves to a lifetime of promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all people in their community. This powerful, unified, effort helped raise awareness that racism hurts everyone. Participants ranged from school-age children to elected officials, executives of large corporations, church leaders, and others.

Today, the YWCA of the Hartford Region is calling on local organizations, corporations, Houses of Worship, government agencies and individuals in the Greater Hartford area to join the organization on Friday, April 3, 2009 to take a Stand Against Racism.

Any organization or group of individuals can become a participating site by signing up through the YWCA’s Stand Against Racism Web site: www.StandAgainstRacism.org. A participating site will host their own Stand Against Racism event at their own location (which can be private or open to the public). Participation in the Stand Against Racism is free and the process to becoming a participating site is very simple. The YWCA will provide all the necessary materials and documents, including a *How to Run the Event Template* that can be customized to meet the participating site’s needs.

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The persistence and pervasiveness of racism divides communities and keeps individuals from achieving success in education, economics, employment, and quality of life. Strength comes from numbers. This year the Stand Against Racism will take place in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. For more details, please visit www.StandAgainstRacism.org, or contact Shari Smith at (860) 525-1163, Ext. 258 or sharis@ywcahartford.org.

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Background:

The Stand Against Racism was initiated by the YWCA's Racial Justice Institute of Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey in 2008. The YWCAs in the United States and around the world have a rich history of advocating for racial justice. Throughout the organization's history, the YWCA has been at the forefront of most major movements in the United States as a pioneer in race relations, labor union representation, and the empowerment of women. Today, the organization not only intends to raise awareness of the issues of racism, but moreover to affect real change in the lives of families, friends and co-workers through a process that identifies and eradicates the barriers that divide people and that perpetuate racism and other forms of oppression. As individuals learn what has kept them apart, they will develop new ways of working cooperatively by creating new models of shared resources and perspectives. The YWCA's goal is not to pave the way for the future. The goal is to create the future - a better future for all.