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YWCA SURVEY REVEALS WOMEN'S PRIORITIES FOR NEW OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

National Survey of American Women Shows Generation Y is More Concerned About Racial Discrimination, More Demanding of New Administration

(Washington, DC, Nov. 24) — YWCA USA today released the results of a new national survey of American women, which shows that Generation Y women (aged 18-29) will be more demanding of the new administration than their older sisters, mothers and grandmothers on key domestic issues, and despite decades of social progress, they are more likely than older women to see racism or discrimination based on ethnicity or religion as an obstacle to progress for women like them, and to perceive racial discrimination as a very serious problem in this country.

The representative phone survey, “What Women Want: A National Survey of Priorities and Concerns,” conducted on behalf of YWCA USA by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI), included interviews with 1,000 women aged 18-70 between October 28 and November 2, 2008. The findings reveal that significantly more Generation Y women (18-29) than older women (30-70) say that the new administration needs to make several domestic issues “top priority” in the first year, including healthcare reform (87% v. 76%), quality and cost of education (85% v. 76%), the housing crisis (83% v. 69%) and HIV/AIDS (66% v. 45%). The findings also show that more than seven in ten (77%) Gen Y women say that civil rights and racial justice should be a “top priority” for the first year of the new administration, compared with 54 percent of women aged 30-70. Gen Y women are similarly more worried about personal experiences with discrimination; half (50%) of these younger women say that racism or discrimination based on ethnicity or religion will be a “major obstacle” to the progress of women like them over the next decade, compared with only 31 percent of older women.

“At this moment in our history, these are surprising findings about young women,” said YWCA USA CEO, Dr. Lorraine Cole. “Despite the progress we have made in this country with regard to racial issues, this new generation of women is actually quite concerned about personal experiences with racism for themselves and women like them. This is clearly an assertive generation of young women who are very clear what they want from President-elect Obama and the new Congress – we all need to pay attention to them.”

Other key findings from the survey include:

- The majority of all American women say that personal economic problems pose the greatest barriers to their success over the next ten years, including: Lack of retirement savings (70%), major illness or medical expense (68%), lack of jobs or layoffs due to jobs sent overseas (63%) and cost of college or higher education (60%).
- Nine in ten (92%) American women aged 18-70 say that President-elect Obama and the new Congress should make solving the financial crisis in the U.S. the number-one priority to address in the first year.

- Seven in ten (73%) Gen Y women say that violence against women in the U.S. should be a top priority for President-elect Obama and Congress to address in the first year.
- One in three (36%) women of Generation Y say they are “very worried” about being a victim of or knowing someone who is a victim of domestic violence, compared with one in four older women (23%).
- Gen Y are more likely than older women to say that discrimination against Blacks (42% vs. 24%) and Hispanics (28% vs. 18%) is a “very serious” problem in the country.

The survey was conducted to commemorate the start of the YWCA USA’s 150th anniversary year and to launch a new campaign to reach out to Generation Y women – the *Own It* campaign. During the next year, the YWCA will reach out to young women in several ways in order to connect them with issues that matter to them, provide opportunities for them to network with other young women and get involved. As part of the campaign, the YWCA will hold forums and discussion events for young women at their local associations and will reach out through the Web to build awareness about priority issues for Generation Y women. Additionally, the YWCA will release a series of reports about these issues of importance to young women, including healthcare, racial discrimination, violence against women, HIV/AIDS and economic concerns.

“The YWCA has spent 150 years serving American women, understanding their issues and working to provide critical foundations in support of our mission to provide racial justice and opportunities for all women,” said YWCA USA Board Chair, Tracy Lakatua. “We are demonstrating our renewed commitment to reach out to a new generation of younger women – the future leaders – by working to understand their issues and ensure that we are listening to their hopes for the future.”

The YWCA leadership was joined today by civil rights and women’s leader, Dr. Dorothy Height, and Gen Y blogger, Jennifer Nedeau, to discuss the survey findings, the YWCA’s role in achieving important milestones for women over the past 150 years, and the challenges and opportunities facing the younger generation of women.

About The YWCA

The YWCA USA is a national not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to social service, advocacy, education, leadership development and racial justice. Established in the United States in 1858, the YWCA is the oldest and largest national organization dedicated to the empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of racism. Through nearly 300 local YWCAs located across the nation in almost every state, and headquartered in Washington, D.C., the YWCA reaches 2.5 million women and girls, as well as their families. Globally, the YWCA USA is part of an international movement at work in 122 countries serving 25 million women and girls worldwide. For more information, visit our Web site, www.ywca.org.

For more information about the YWCA or local YWCA associations, visit the Web site, www.ywca.org, or contact the YWCA at 202-467-0801.

Survey Methodology

This representative telephone survey of 1,000 adult women ages 18 to 70 was conducted from October 28 to November 2, 2008, by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). For results based on the total sample, the overall sample margin of error is +/- 4 percentage points. Differences between groups of women were included in the key findings and final report only if there were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

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