

HISTORY OF THE BLACK WOMEN'S CAUCUS OF WASHINGTON STATE TACOMA CHAPTER

The Black Women's Caucus is a non-profit organization which is incorporated in Washington State. This Caucus has been in existence since the State Women's of the Conference which was held in July 1977 in connection with the International Women's Year. It is an outgrowth of numerous meetings of Black Women throughout the State of Washington during that time.

The purpose of the organization is to define the barriers that prevent Black Women from fully participating in mainstream society and to set forth a course of action directing their efforts, resources, and talents towards the removal of these barriers.

The fate of African Americans as a racial minority group and the development of Black Women in the United States are intricately bound together. We have a long history of vital concern for civil liberties, and each generation of Black Women has contributed mightily to the long struggle for the rights of women. The social, political, and cultural background of African American Women differ greatly from that of other women, and as a consequence, we view the world differently and have different priorities and experiences.

It is doubtful that anyone else can or should speak for our communities and us. We assume the responsibility for our own interpretation of women's mission, believing that it is one on the basis of sound, historically correct analysis that we may organize effectively around our specific experiences as Black Women and press not only for women's rights, but more importantly, for human rights.

A Constitution governing the operation of the Caucus was adopted on January 7, 1978, in Seattle, Washington at a statewide meeting of Black Women. Thelma Jackson of Olympia, Washington was elected our first State President. The State organization was divided into four areas, basically regarded as the Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, and Southeast quadrants. Officers served for a one-year period at the State level as well as the regional levels.

The activities of the Caucus have centered on issues identified by Black Women. A plan of work is adopted and is constantly updated and evaluated as to the progress of the plan.

In October 1978, the Black Women's Caucus sponsored the First Annual Black Summit Conference in Yakima, Washington. This conference was a huge success with positive information gathered and positive participation from Black Men and Women throughout the State. In October 1979, the Second Summit Conference was held in Seattle with the same positive results. Our Third Annual Meeting was held in May 1980 in Seattle, with Barbara Williams, The Executive Director of the Congressional Black Caucus as the keynote speaker and workshop leader.

The Tacoma Chapter of the Black Women's Caucus has continually struggled to keep the original purpose of the statewide group in focus. Since 1990, the Caucus has been active in presenting cultural events that are important to the history of African Americans. During our annual fund-raising luncheon, we presented such holidays as Juneteenth and Kwanzaa. Festival Sundiata, Black Women throughout history, an Old-Fashioned Barbecue and Kemet (Ancient Africa - Egypt) were celebrations that were presented to the community as examples of cultural events that are important to the African experience. For many years in June, the Caucus presented a luncheon with themes that were relevant to our community.

The Tacoma Chapter is presently the only active chapter of the Caucus in the State. We have continued to work to break the same barriers that prevented us from fully participating in mainstream society when the organization was first formed.



Black Women's Caucus
of Washington State
Tacoma Chapter
Tacoma, Washington

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The Tacoma is presently the only active chapter of the Caucus. We will continue the struggle until the barriers that prevent us from fully participating in mainstream society are removed.

Rev 8-05

Determining
for ourselves,
by ourselves