

## NCNW History Speech – February 2015

The National Council of Negro Women is a non-profit organization with a mission to advance opportunities and quality of life for Black women. NCNW fulfills this mission through research, advocacy, national and community based services and programs, in the United States and Africa.

Historically, positive change has come about when coordinated, focused efforts, are put into action, both on local and national levels, simultaneously. In 1935, Mary McLeod Bethune, working as Advisor of Minority Affairs to President Franklin Roosevelt, saw the need for our voices to be heard, and sent out a call to which 28 women responded. She said, what was needed was not another organization, but one that would bring us together, and amplify our voices, in a collective, powerful unified purpose. Mrs. Bethune envisioned NCNW functioning as a clearinghouse, facilitating networking, coalition-building, and advocating the use of a powerful collective voice.

On December 3, 1935, a group of women met at the Harlem Branch of the YWCA, to discuss the need for organizing this collective. Mary Church Terrell proposed forming a "council." Mrs. Bethune, inspired by the leadership at this meeting, founded the National Council of Negro Women. Her vision was one of working together with a "Unity of Purpose... and a Unity of Action." As the United Nations, is a council of sovereign nations coming together to promote development and peace, NCNW is a council of autonomous national organizations, coming together to improve the quality of life for people of color.

In 1966, NCNW was granted a not for profit status, which changed the operations and provided the section structure for the council. Our national headquarters, paid for by Black Women, is located in Washington, D.C., on Pennsylvania Avenue, and sets between the White House and the U.S. Capitol. We have three international field offices, in Senegal, Zimbabwe and Egypt. In Senegal, NCNW has established a Women's Business Center. NCNW's collaborative microcredit programs have extended loans to more than 600 women in three countries, enabling them to start or expand small businesses.

We have a long-term relationship with the United Nations, and we hold a seat on its Board of Directors. Through its consultative status at the United Nations, NCNW provides millions of African American women with a voice in the dialogue of the global Non-Governmental Organization community.

There has been growing appreciation and recognition of the value of a unified voice in the corridors of power. Fortunately for us, this was realized and acted on by Bethune 80 years ago. What happens on Capitol Hill, and in our State Capitols, has direct bearing on the quality-of-life issues in our communities, and our voices must continue to be heard. . . loudly.

From those 28 women's effort back in 1939, our organization continues, and now consists of several dozen national affiliates, over 250 community-based sections, and has an outreach of over four million women international in scope.

The uniqueness of NCNW lies in its ability to communicate to women across all interests and backgrounds, all education and economic levels, all religions, and into all levels of government. NCNW advocates for quality education, children's rights, and has led the struggle against racism, sexism, and poverty. We prepare women to be catalysts for change in their neighborhoods and the world.

The Indianapolis Section was founded in 1946. Our local motto is: "To Love is To Serve."

In the Bethune tradition, our national motto is: "Leave No One behind: Legacy, Vision & Leadership"

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The challenge now is to maximize our collective strength to meet current critical needs, promote good health, self-sustainability, and utilize new outreach communication methods and technology, to get our voices heard.

I encourage you to learn more about the history NCNW. If you are interested in service opportunities and being a part of this historical organization, the Indianapolis Section needs you! I have applications.

Thank you.