

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **PROJECT SPEAK UP: NEW YWCA KALAMAZOO INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF HATE CRIMES**

For Immediate Release  
February 8, 2017

**KALAMAZOO, MI** - In the past three months Michigan has seen the highest rise in hate crimes in the Midwest, with a number of them happening right here in west Michigan neighborhoods and schools, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. In response to this alarming trend, YWCA Kalamazoo is launching Project Speak Up – a six-month program to support those impacted by hate crimes in southwest Michigan.

Project Speak Up is on a mission to serve victims and survivors who have been impacted by hate crimes here in southwest Michigan, in addition to community members impacted by the collective trauma of such acts. The project has three distinct components: community education, therapeutic support groups, and legal clinics, each serving in a capacity to empower schools, community organizations, and community members to create inclusive and supportive communities.

“YWCA Kalamazoo is grateful to Open Society Foundation for providing the funding to empower our community in efforts to support those affected by hate crimes. YWCA Kalamazoo will continue to lead southwest Michigan in creating a more socially just and equitable world.” *Grace Lubwama, CEO YWCA Kalamazoo*

“Project Speak Up will allow us to provide quality wraparound services and community education to those impacted by hate crimes. For over 130 years, YWCA Kalamazoo has been a beacon of hope and progress in southwest Michigan. This program will allow us to respond to one of our community’s most pressing needs—safety and healing for all residents.” *Jessica Glynn, Senior Director of Law and Policy YWCA Kalamazoo.*

For more information contact Jessica Glynn, Senior Director of Law and Policy at YWCA Kalamazoo, [jglynn@ywcakalamazoo.org](mailto:jglynn@ywcakalamazoo.org) or 269-345-5595.

The YWCA Kalamazoo team recognizes that this work is more important now than ever. **If you, or anyone you know, has been impacted by a hate crime please call our hotline: 269-743-9463.**

#### **About YWCA Kalamazoo**

YWCA of the USA, of which YWCA Kalamazoo is a member Association, is the oldest, largest autonomous women’s membership organization in the world. YWCA Kalamazoo is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. YWCA Kalamazoo, the oldest Association in Michigan, was founded in 1885 and began as a residence service provider to young women who gravitated to the city to work in its factories. Today, YWCA provides the only shelter, crisis intervention services and an array of post crisis shelter supportive housing options specifically designed and operating for victims of domestic violence and their dependent children; the only services of our

kind for adult sexual assault survivors, including medical forensic exams in a non-hospital setting, supportive volunteers and counseling; one of very few licensed child care centers that both offers tuition assistance and accepts government subsidies; and services to the community-at-large, focusing on racial justice.

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