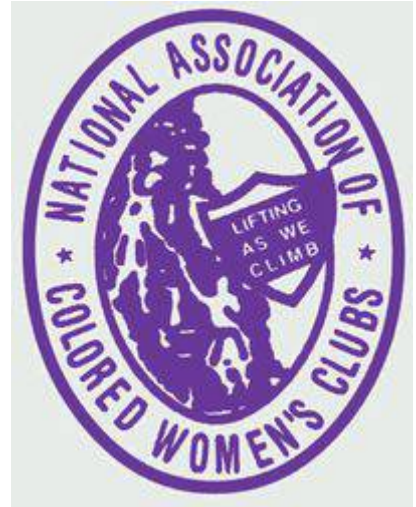


National Association of Colored Women's Clubs

The **National Association of Colored Women's Clubs** (**NACWC**) is an American organization that was formed in July 1896 at the First Annual Convention of the National Federation of Afro-American Women in Washington, D.C., United States, by a merger of the National Federation of African-American Women, the Woman's Era Club of Boston, and the National League of Colored Women of Washington, DC, at the call of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin.^[1] From 1896 to 1904 it was known as the **National Association of Colored Women** (**NACW**). It adopted the motto "Lifting as we climb", to demonstrate to "an ignorant and suspicious world that our aims and interests are identical with those of all good aspiring women." When incorporated in 1904, NACW became known as the **National Association of Colored Women's Clubs** (**NACWC**).^{[2][3]}



National Association of Colored Women's Clubs Emblem



Banner with the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs' motto. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

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History

"In 1895 an obscure man in an obscure Missouri town sent a letter broad-cast over this country and England, reflecting upon the character and morals of our Women. So utterly false were the vile statement, that the women were aroused as never before and when Mrs. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, President of the New Era Club of Boston, called a meeting of protest in July 1895, the indignant women from North, South, East and West flocked to the "Classic Hub", and in no uncertain terms vindicated the honor of the Race. The National Federation of Colored Women's Club was the result of that meeting, with Mrs. Booker T. Washington at its head. However, another National organization, the Women's Loyal Union,^[5] with Mrs. Cook (née Helen Appo Cook) as President existed at Washington and the women soon realized that two organizations so identically similar could not work harmoniously as separate units. Therefore, the two organizations met in July 1896, and each appointed a committee to arrange for a consolidation, which was effected and the National Association of C.W.C came into existence with Mrs.

Officers elected at the first meeting of the National Association of Colored Women, July 1896^[4]

President

Mrs. Mary Church Terrell

Mary Church Terrell, of international fame, as President. This joint session was attended by some of the most notable women of our Race, among whom were Harriet Tubman. Francis E.W. Harper, poet and writer, Victoria E. Matthews, founder of the White Rose Mission of New York, Josephine S. Yates, teacher and writer, an others. Mrs. Ida B. Wells Barnett and Elizabeth Lindsay Davis were the delegates from Illinois." Elizabeth Lindsay Davis, N.A.C.W.C. Historian, 1933^[6]

The National Association of Colored Women (later National Association of Colored Women's Clubs) was established in Washington, D.C., on July 21, 1896. This first of what would later become biennial convention meetings of the association was held at the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church. The organizations attending this convention included the National Federation of Afro-American Women, the Woman's Era Club of Boston, and the National League of Colored Women of Washington, DC, the Women's Loyal Union as well as smaller organizations that had arisen from the African-American women's club movement. These organizations and later others across the country merged to form the National Association of Colored Women. The organization helped all African-American women by working on issues of civil rights and injustice, such as women's suffrage, lynching, and Jim Crow laws.^[7]

Founders of the NACWC included Harriet Tubman, Margaret Murray Washington,^[8] Frances E. W. Harper, Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell. Its two leading members were Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and Mary Church Terrell. Their original intention was "to furnish evidence of the moral, mental and material progress made by people of color through the efforts of our women". They organized to refute a letter written by James Jacks, the president of the Missouri Press Association, challenging the respectability of African-American women, and referring to them as thieves and prostitutes.^[9]

During the next ten years, the NACWC became involved in campaigns in favor of women's suffrage and against lynching and Jim Crow laws. They also led efforts to improve education, and care for both children and the elderly. By 1918, when the United States entered the First World War, membership in the NACWC had grown to an extraordinary 300,000 nationwide.

Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and Mary Church Terrell

That the National Association of Colored Women was the most prominent organization formed during the African-American Woman Suffrage Movement was due chiefly to the efforts of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and Mary Church Terrell. Both women were educated and had economically successful parents.

Born on August 31, 1842, in Boston, Josephine St. Pierre was the daughter of John St. Pierre, a successful clothes dealer from Martinique and Elizabeth Matilda Menhenick from Cornwall, England. Her parents supported her going to school in Salem for its integrated schools, rather than attend segregated ones in Boston. There Josephine St. Pierre flourished. At the age of 16, she married George Lewis Ruffin, who became the first African-American graduate of

First Vice President	Mrs. Fanny Jackson Coppin
Second Vice President	Mrs. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin
Third Vice President	Mrs. F. E. W. Harper
Fourth Vice President	Mrs. Josephine Silone Yates
Fifth Vice President	Mrs. Sylvanie Williams
Sixth Vice President	Mrs. Ella V. Chase Williams
Seventh Vice President	Mrs. Lucy Thurman
Recording Secretary	Mrs. Alice Ruth Moore
Corresponding Secretary	Miss A. V. Thompkins
Treasurer	Mrs. Helen Appo Cook
Chairman of the Executive Committee	Mrs. Margaret Murray Washington
National Organizer	Mrs. Victoria Earle Matthews
Editorial Staff	Mrs. Margaret Murray Washington, Dr. Rebecca Cole, Mrs. Rosa D. Bowser, Mrs. Ida Wells-Barnett,

Harvard Law School. Among their early activities was recruiting black soldiers for the Union Army during the Civil War.

After her husband died in 1886, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin used part of her estate to fund *Woman's Era*, the first journal published by and for African-American women. She was a vice-president of the National Association of Colored Women. In 1910 Ruffin enlarged her social activism by helping form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She died in March 1924.

Mary Church Terrell was the daughter of Robert Church, Sr., a former slave and reputed son of a white master. Church, Sr. built a business and became one of the wealthiest black men in the South. He was able to send Mary to Oberlin College, where she earned both bachelor's and master's degrees. Years later Mary Church Terrell spoke at the Berlin International Congress of Women, giving her speech in fluent German and French, as well as English. She was the only black woman at the conference.

Terrell was elected as the first president of the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. She led the struggle in Washington, DC against segregation in public eating places and succeeded in winning a court decision for integration there. Terrell died in Annapolis, Maryland, on July 24, 1954.

NACWC objectives

1. To work for the economic, moral, religious and social welfare of women and children.
2. To protect the rights of women and children.
3. To raise the standard and quality of life in home and family.
4. To secure and use our influence for the enforcement of civil and political rights for all citizens.
5. To promote the education of women and children through the work of effective programs.
6. To obtain for African-American families the opportunity of reaching the highest levels of human endeavor.
7. To promote effective interaction with the organization's male auxiliary.
8. To promote inter-racial understanding so that justice and good will may prevail amongst all people.
9. To hold informative workshops biennially at organization's National Convention.

Presidents

- Mary Church Terrell – 1st President (1896–1900)
- Josephine Silone Yates – 2nd President (1900–1904)
- Lucy Thurman – 3rd President (1904–1908)
- Elizabeth Carter Brooks – 4th President (1908–1912)
- Margaret James Murray (Mrs. Booker T. Washington) – 5th President (1912–1916)
- Mary B. Talbert – 6th President (1916–1920)
- Miss Hallie Q. Brown – 7th President (1920–1924)
- Mary McLeod Bethune – 8th President (1924–1928)
- Mrs. Sallie Wyatt Stewart – 9th President (1928–1933)

	Mrs. Frances J. Jackson
Ways and Means Committee	Mrs. J. Napier Kemp, Miss Lulu Chase, Mrs. Ella Mahammitt, Miss Julia F. Jones
Committee to Draft Constitution	Mrs. A. V. Jones, Mrs. Anna Jones, Mrs. C. L. Franklin, Mrs. Rosa D. Bowser, and Mrs. V. E. Matthews
Other significant attendees	Mrs. John H. Smyth



National Association of Colored Women headquarters in Washington, D.C.

- Dr. Mary Fitzbutler Waring – 10th President (1933–1937)
- Mrs. Jennie B. Moton – 11th President (1937–1941)
- Mrs. Ada Belle Dement – 12th President (1941–1945)
- Mrs. Christine S. Smith – 13th President (1946–1948)
- Ella P. Stewart – 14th President (1948–1952)
- Irene McCoy Gaines – 15th President (1952–1958)

- Dr Rosa L. Gragg – 16th President (1958–1964)
- Mamie B. Reese – 17th President (1964–1968)
- Myrtle Ollison – 18th President (1968–1972)
- Juanita W. Brown – 19th President (1972–1976)
- Inez W. Tinsley – 20th President (1976–1980)
- Otelia Champion – 21st President (1980–1984)
- Myrtle E. Gray – 22nd President (1984–1988)
- Dolores M. Harris – 23rd President (1988–1992)
- Savannah C. Jones — 24th President (1992–1996)
- Patricia L. Fletcher — 25th President (1996–2002)
- Margaret J. Cooper — 26th President (2002–2006)
- Dr. Marie Wright Tolliver – 27th President (2006–2010)
- Evelyn Rising – 28th President (2010–2014)
- Sharon R. Bridgeforth – 29th President (2014–2018)^[11]
- Andrea Brooks-Smith – 30th President (2018–present)



Irene M. Gaines, 15th President^[10]

Conventions

- 1st, 1897, Nashville, Tennessee
- 2nd, 1899, Chicago, Illinois
- 3rd, 1901, Buffalo, New York
- 4th, 1904, St. Louis, Missouri
- 5th, 1906, Detroit, Michigan
- 6th, 1908, Brooklyn, New York
- 7th, 1910, Louisville, Kentucky
- 8th, 1912, Hampton, Virginia
- 9th, 1914, Wilberforce, Ohio
- 10th, 1916, Baltimore, Maryland
- 11th, 1918, Denver, Colorado
- 12th, 1920, Tuskegee, Alabama
- 13th, 1922, Richmond, Virginia
- 14th, 1924, Chicago, Illinois
- 15th, 1926, Oakland, California
- 16th, 1928, Washington, D. C.
- 17th, 1930, Hot Springs, Arkansas
- 18th, 1933, Chicago, Illinois
- 19th, 1935, Cleveland, Ohio
- 20th, 1937, Fort Worth, Texas
- 21st, 1939, Boston, Massachusetts
- 22nd, 1941, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- 23rd, 1946, Washington, D. C.
- 24th, 1948, Seattle, Washington
- 25th, 1950, Atlantic City, New Jersey
- 26th, 1952, Los Angeles, California
- 27th, 1954, Washington, D. C.

- 28th, 1956, Miami, Florida
- 29th, 1958, Detroit, Michigan
- 30th, 1960, New York, New York
- 31st, 1962, Washington, D. C.
- 32nd, 1964, Denver, Colorado
- 33rd, 1966, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- 34th, 1968, Chicago, Illinois
- 35th, 1970, Atlantic City, New Jersey
- 36th, 1972, San Jose, California
- 37th, 1974, Atlanta, Georgia
- 38th, 1976, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- 39th, 1978, Seattle, Washington
- 40th, 1980, Washington, D. C.
- 41st, 1982, Anchorage, Arkansas
- 42nd, 1984, Norfolk, Virginia
- 48th, 1986, Austin, Texas
- 49th, 1988, Orlando, Florida
- 50th, 1990, Cleveland, Ohio
- 51st, 1992, Portland, Oregon^[12]

Notable affiliates

- [California State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs](#)
- [Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs](#)
- [Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs](#)
- [Iowa Federation of Colored Women's Clubs](#)
- [Mississippi State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs](#)
- [Northeastern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs](#)
- [Oklahoma Federation of Colored Women's Clubs](#)
- [South Carolina Federation of Colored Women's Clubs](#)
- [Texas Association of Women's Clubs](#)

See also

- [African-American women's suffrage movement](#)
- [Black feminism](#)
- [The First National Conference of the Colored Women of America](#)

Further reading

- "The Women of NACWC: Strong, Valiant, Innovative and on Whose Shoulders We Stand" (c) 2012, revised 2016 by the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc.

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12. Boehm, Randolph (1994). "A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1895–1992" (https://web.archive.org/web/20161023001220/http://www.lexisnexis.com/document/s/academic/upa_cis/1555_RecsNatlAssocColWmsClubPt1.pdf) (PDF). *LexisNexis*. Bethesda, Maryland: University Publications of America. Archived from the original (http://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa_cis/1555_RecsNatlAssocColWmsClubPt1.pdf) (PDF) on October 23, 2016. Retrieved April 28, 2017.

External links

- [NACWC website \(http://www.nacwc.com/\)](http://www.nacwc.com/)
 - [AfricanAmericans.com information \(http://www.africanamericans.com/NationalAsscofColoredWomen.htm\)](http://www.africanamericans.com/NationalAsscofColoredWomen.htm)
 - "The Mary McLeod Bethune Council House: African American Women Unite for Change" (<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/135bethune/135bethune.htm>), National Park Service Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP) lesson plans
 - [Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture entry \(http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=8201\)](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=8201)
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