CELEBRATING 40 YEARS
OF Ms. MILESTONES, 1973—2013
The Ms. Foundation for Women fights to eliminate barriers for all women.

We fight to keep lawmakers and public figures in check, to protect and fortify our fragile successes and to secure the same opportunities for all women in the U.S.

We especially focus on those whose voices are muted because of their economic realities and everyday challenges. Because to secure a better future for ourselves, our families and our communities, this is a fight we can’t afford to lose.
The Ms. Foundation for Women was founded by Patricia Carbine, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Gloria Steinem and Marlo Thomas.

The foundation was created to deliver funding and other strategic resources to organizations that were elevating women’s voices and solutions across race and class in communities nationwide.

The Ms. Foundation seeds and strengthens women’s grassroots organizing around the country and creates a vibrant, inclusive feminist movement in which everyone’s voices are visible, valued and heard.
Ms. begins investing in child care centers and advocating for accessibility, understanding that child care is an essential work support for women.

1975–1979 Brenda Brimmer serves as the first executive director.

1977 Ms. offers critical support for lesbian women, specifically advancing the legal rights of women who face loss of custody of their children due to sexual orientation.

1978 With a broader emphasis on safety, Ms. begins funding the first programs specifically naming child sexual abuse as a problem distinct from child abuse.

1978 Anticipating the emergence of anti-abortion backlash, Ms. begins working on reproductive health, rights and access, with the Pro-Choice Project for Reproductive Freedom.

1972 The American Psychiatric Association lists homosexuality as a mental disorder. (It is declassified in 1973; the American Psychological Association Council of Representatives declassifies it in 1975.)

Women cannot get a car, credit card or student loan in their own names.

Domestic violence is a hidden epidemic and personal problem. Victims are called battered women and have little social support.

1976 The Hyde Amendment, which restricts federal funding from going to abortion services, passes. Low-income women on Medicaid, women in military service, federal employees and others are denied access to abortion.

1981 Ms. continues to support innovative violence-against-women initiatives, including programs helping women and other communities of color.

1980s MILESTONES & U.S. CONTEXT

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with disabilities who are experiencing violence.

Ms. works to transform the workplace, focusing on issues like equal pay, non-discrimination and essential support services for working women.

Ms. leads strategies to encourage economic development and justice for women.

1984 Ms. begins to build broader philanthropic support for funding of LGBTQ issues.

1985 - 2004 The Ms. Foundation appoints Marie C. Wilson executive director, who is the longest serving leader of the organization.

1985 Ms. plays a key role in the creation of the Women’s Funding Network, a network of philanthropic organizations dedicated to supporting women and girls nationwide.

1986 Ms. introduces a proactive approach to reproductive rights and access. It broadens the base of support by investing in organizing in communities across the country, including in religious communities, rural communities and communities of color.

1988 Sandra Day O’Connor becomes the first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

1988 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention renames Gay Related Immune Deficiency and identifies AIDS.

1987 March is declared Women’s History Month.

1988 An amnesty deadline for undocumented immigrants is met with 1.4 million applicants.

1990s MILESTONES & U.S. CONTEXT

1991 Ms. takes education and youth support to the next level through a dedicated program supporting girls’ leadership and youth activism.

1993 Ms. establishes Take Our Daughters to Work Day.

1993 Anticipating the rise of the Religious Right, Ms. fights back against their harmful rhetoric and organizing by releasing Challenging the Religious Right: The Activist’s Handbook.

1996 Ms. formalizes the Women and AIDS Fund, the first philanthropic fund dedicated to supporting programs for women and families dealing with AIDS and HIV, as an extension of its support of independent women and AIDS programs.

1997 Recognizing that women make up the large majority of the low-wage labor sector, Ms. develops the New Voices, Proactive Strategies initiative, focusing on improving the incomes, working conditions and job security of low-wage women.
1998 Anticipating state-based attacks on reproductive rights, Ms. focuses its strategy on building support and countering attacks at the state level.

1998 The Ms. Foundation incubates The White House Project, which aims to increase female representation in American institutions, businesses and government.

1999 Ms.' Collaborative Fund for Women's Economic Development receives the Presidential Award for Excellence in Microenterprise Development.


1990 The Ms. Foundation enlists 12 other funders to form the Collaborative Fund for Women's Economic Development to fund innovative business and job creation projects for women of color and low-income women. The collaborative fund idea becomes a preeminent philanthropic model.

1994 The Violence Against Women Act passes, providing federal funding and support for programs combating violence against women.

1995 The fourth U.N. World Conference on Women in Beijing takes place, convening the largest conference ever.

2000s MILESTONES & U.S. CONTEXT

2002 Ms. launches a campaign, Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work for All of Us, to address the inequity of low-wage labor (the majority of which is done by women), by raising the minimum wage and ensuring a living wage for all workers.

2002 Ms. initiates a program to build support for comprehensive sexuality education, bringing in new communities of advocates at the state level (where most of the attacks on sexuality education occur).

2005 The National Women and AIDS Collective (NWAC) is created by Ms. Foundation grantees. NWAC is the country's first national policy coalition led by and for women living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

2006 Ms. invests in the informal caregiving labor force, which is explicitly excluded from labor protections. The majority of this workforce is women, and especially immigrant women and women of color.

2006 Led by President and CEO Sara K. Gould the Ms. Foundation establishes the Katrina Women's Response Fund, supporting women's leadership and role in the hurricane rebuilding efforts.

2008 The Ms. Foundation establishes its Southern Strategy, addressing the need for a progressive base for women's health, safety and economic security in the South.

2001 Terrorists attack the U.S. on Sept. 11.

2004 During the March for Women's Lives, an estimated 800,000 women
march on the Washington Mall in support of women’s and reproductive rights.

The Religious Right maintains its prominence, focusing many legislative and media-related attacks on women’s right to contraception and abortion.

2005 Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans and its surrounding areas, devastating both the physical and social infrastructure.

2008 Barack Obama is elected the first African-American president.

2009 The worst economic downturn since the Great Depression begins.

The gender pay gap stagnates, with women earning 77¢ to every dollar a man makes. African-American women earn just 62¢ to every male dollar. Hispanic women earn even less, just 54¢ to the male dollar.

2010 Ms. supports Domestic Workers United’s campaign to create the first ever Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights in New York State. The bill offers labor protections for this traditionally excluded group of workers, including overtime pay, one mandated day of rest per week, three paid days of rest after one year of employment and protection against workplace and sexual discrimination and harassment.

2011 The Ms. Foundation and key partners fight for and win the inclusion of coverage for women’s preventative health services in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

2013 The Ms. Foundation raises its voice on the national level, speaking out on the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), paid sick days, coverage of sexual violence in the media and many other issues.

2010 President Obama passes the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the largest overhaul of the U.S. health care system since the introduction of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. The legislation extends coverage to all U.S. citizens, bans denial of coverage due to pre-existing conditions, ensures women’s preventative health care is covered and aims to contain the rising costs of health care.

2011 Australia mandates paid maternity leave, making the U.S. the only industrialized nation and just one of four countries without mandated paid maternity leave.

2011 The U.N. Convention on Domestic Workers is ratified. It states that workers around the world who care for families and households must have the same basic labor rights as other employees.

2012 The LGBTQ community sees growing support for the marriage equality movement. Voters in Maryland, Washington and Maine approve marriage equality through ballot measures.
ARE WE DONE ADVANCING WOMEN’S RIGHTS?
NO, NOT EVEN CLOSE.