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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOW PRESIDENT TRYING TO SILENCE RACISM WHISTLEBLOWERS

Nine Board Members Targeted for Calling Out President for Racist Behavior

After the National Organization for Women (NOW) and its President Toni Van Pelt appeared as the subject of numerous news articles on the systemic racism experienced by the organization's officers, staff and members, a group of nine board members called on President Van Pelt to resign to save the organization and help it to heal.

"More than 20 current and former employees, including the former and current vice presidents, have accused the President of racist behavior since she was elected to the position three years ago," stated NOW board member Victoria Steele, a Native American State Senator from Arizona. "We, the majority of the board members, are acting at the behest of hundreds of NOW members across the nation, dozens of former leaders and a majority 24 out of 36 NOW State Presidents who have written to demand the President's removal."

After President Van Pelt refused to resign, we followed the rules and procedures in place to remove an executive officer. However, the group was silenced and we, representing the majority of the board who called for the ouster of the President are now experiencing retaliation through a grievance process.

"We refuse to be silent on this matter because to be silent is to be complicit and allow the cancer of racism to destroy our organization," remarked Nina Ahmad, NOW board member and member of the organization's Racial Justice Committee. " We love this organization and are determined to save it and help it thrive. With that, we are demanding the immediate removal of President Van Pelt so that NOW can begin to heal and tackle the systemic racism plaguing the organization."

All four women of color on NOW's board are among the group of nine calling for the President's removal.

The group asserts that President Van Pelt has lost the confidence of the majority of the NOW Board by acting in a manner that is injurious to the organization and/or contrary to the purpose of the NOW, which is "to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and

achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life.”

- President Van Pelt has been reported to have engaged in a pattern of racism in the office that has resulted in a series of news reports jeopardizing NOW’s relationship with members, partners, and political candidates.
- There are numerous allegations that President Van Pelt has engaged in a pattern of racism, discrimination, and created a hostile work environment in the office that has resulted in staff leaving the National Action Center, former Vice-President Gilda Yazzie suing the organization, and Vice President Christian Nunes filing a complaint to the Board alleging racism, tokenism, and discrimination against her in part, because she is a new mother.
- By sending out a press statement under her signature headlined, “I can’t Breathe, We all Can’t Breathe,” President Van Pelt echoed the clearly racist statement “all lives matter.”
- President Van Pelt failed to take appropriate disciplinary action against an employee who put racist posts on social media. That employee continues to direct NOW’s social media activities.

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