



We refuse to be invisible®

SAGE's National Housing Initiative (NHI)

Quarterly Newsletter: July 2020

SAGE's NHI is dedicated to providing information that helps LGBT elders and allies make informed decisions when it comes to housing. For LGBT older people, finding a place that's welcoming—where they can feel free to be themselves and be treated respectfully and compassionately is a mainstay of our program.

Greetings to our steadfast network of colleagues and comrades during this time of public health concern and growing world change.

First, take a moment to breathe...

A global pandemic has put our communities at risk, and the eruption of protest against police murders of Black people is at the center of the nation's collective consciousness. We are living in a time of uncertainty, and we are living in a time of global change. A year after the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion – a rebellion initiated by transgender and other lesbian, gay and bisexual people of color also fighting police violence – we stand at a critical juncture to center the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities as we age. We are here to stand with and support you in any way we can, as community is critically important to our lives and survival.

Black Lives Matter

The intersection of transphobia, racism, poverty, and militarized state-sanctioned violence continues to play out on the bodies of Black people in this country. In recent months, we have witnessed the violent murders of [George Floyd](#) and [Breonna Taylor](#) by police in Minnesota and Kentucky; public action has resurfaced the August 2019 police murder of [Elijah McCain](#) in Colorado; the February murder of [Ahmed Arbery](#) in Georgia has highlighted the disease of vigilante white supremacist violence—and these are devastatingly only a few cases of our society's epidemic.

We must also center the devastating deaths of transgender people — Black transgender women in particular — with such regularity, demonstrating the horrifying normalization of state violence.

This regularity—increasingly captured on film—has been evident in prison systems, exposed again in the preventable death of Layleen Cubilette-Polanco, a 27-year-old Afro-Latinx transgender woman who was found dead in her cell at Rose M. Singer Center at Rikers on June 7, 2019, eleven days before her next scheduled court date. [Say her name, and learn about her case.](#)

This year alone, we have lost at least 12 members of the transgender community to police violence and hate violence. This violence is disproportionately directed at Black trans people. Please remember to say the names of those lost to hate violence, and learn not only about their deaths, but about their lives. We must tell stories of trans people living and thriving, of people's full selves. But these losses deserve dignity, recognition, and honor as we continue to fight for justice.

Please note that these stories of violence against our communities contain graphic violence, are traumatic, and may be difficult to read and process. If you need support during this time, or if you or someone you know is experiencing violence, you can reach the NYC Anti-Violence Project's free bilingual hotline at 212-714-1141 or report online for support.

[Dustin Parker](#)

[Neulisa Luciano Ruiz](#)

[Yampi Méndez Arocho](#)

[Monika Diamond](#)

[Lexi](#)

[Johanna Metzger](#)

[Serena Angelique Velázquez Ramos and Layla Pelaez Sánchez](#)

[Penélope Díaz Ramírez](#)

[Nina Pop](#)

[Helle Jae O'Regan](#)

[Tony McDade](#)

We must think about our housing work as one of many strategies to dismantle systemic racism. Here are a few examples of ways SAGE is working to uplift and support the Black Lives Matter movement.

- SAGENet, SAGE's National Affiliate Network, will be hosting a series of Race and Racism Sessions over the course of 8 weeks to better align an understanding of structural racism and how to build effective multi-racial spaces. Some desired outcomes include:
 - Personal story sharing related to race and socialization
 - Shared experience of defining and reflecting on structural racism
 - Alignment about the impact of structural racism on people of color as well as white people

- Deepen the network’s understanding of how structural racism and white privilege impact the work of the SAGENet team
- SAGE has endorsed the NAACP’s #WeAreDoneDying campaign and its four demands for elimination of racist policing and has made contributions in support of the campaign.
- SAGE’s public statement in support of Black Lives Matter and the fight for intersectional liberation work with other LGBTQ advocates is [here](#).
- CEO Michael Adams and American Society on Aging President CEO Peter Kaldes penned an op-ed piece: [“Anti-Racism and Pro-Aging: A Stonewall Legacy.”](#)
- Serena Worthington has hosted a racial justice caucus to provide tools and supports to SAGE affiliates and successfully encouraged organizers of the “Stonewall to Pulse” event to convert the event to a fundraiser for Brave Space Alliance, the first black-led and trans-led LGBTQ community center and a strong supporter of recent protests in Chicago.
- SAGE Bronx held a workshop called “America is Burning: A Discussion of George Floyd, The Protests and How We Can Heal as a Community.”
- The Edie Windsor SAGE Center held a workshop called “Stonewall was a Police Riot!: How to Support the Movement for Racial Justice and the Movement Against Police Brutality.”
- SAGE is hosting a series of lunch and learn workshops for staff, starting with the racial impact of COVID-19, to be led by Shawanna Boyd, Sadiya Abjani, Al Dominguez, and Sydney Kopp-Richardson to discuss the legacy of racism in the medical sector, and providing space for staff to process the racialized impact of COVID-19.

Gaining traction in our collective consciousness – the movements to defund the police (see this [historic victory in Minneapolis](#)), abolish prisons (see Angela Davis’ [“Are Prisons Obsolete?”](#)), and the case for reparations (see Ta Nehisi-Coates’ [“The Case for Reparations”](#)) – we are living in a time of both incremental and radical change. SAGE’s National Housing Initiative is committed to centering these movements and values in our understanding of systemic and intergenerational violence that impacts the housing barriers, needs, and possibilities for LGBT elders. As always, we hold our communities with reverence and care as we fight for justice and liberation.

LGBT Elders, COVID-19, and SAGE Support

The SAGEConnect program has grown and we continue to link elders to volunteers across the country for connection and support amidst the isolation of the pandemic. Those interested in participating can sign up on SAGE’s website at sageusa.org/sageconnect.

SAGE Center staff continue making calls to participants in all five boroughs since the onset of the pandemic. Food security and isolation have been the major issues facing

LGBT elders. Nutritional deficiency leads to quick dehydration and low potassium, and cognitive and mental health decompensation can happen more quickly. SAGE has worked with the city to increase food deliveries and AC units to elders in need. The Centers in each borough have also been doing online programming and calling folks on the phone to get people plugged in. We currently have about 100 programs across all 5 centers online. SAGE Centers will not re-open until Fall 2020 at earliest, but the health and safety of our program participants during this public health uncertainty is at the forefront of this process.

Housing Development Primer Publication, 2nd Edition

The NHI has published a 2nd edition to the publication, “Understanding the Housing Development Process” primer. The primer will be available in print by the end of the summer, and the new edition will be available on the [NHI website](#) within the next week!

NYC Housing Updates: Stonewall House in Fort Greene, Brooklyn

The NYC Housing Team continues reaching out to tenants via phone and email, as well as in-person home visits (maintaining social distance) on a weekly basis, and high-needs/medically complex individuals are spoken to several times a week. The Housing Team has also been monitoring any potential COVID-19 cases and is collaborating with property management if safety planning requires more in-depth quarantine. Latisha and Lauren conducted over 200 in-person wellness visits in June alone, and the Housing Team has supported tenants in forming their first Stonewall House Tenants Association. Meetings have been virtual, and tenants are finding ways to connect and form community in their new building.

SAGECARE Certification and Training Go Virtual

Our SAGECare LGBT aging cultural competency program is now fully virtual! Visit our [website](#) to learn how the SAGECare team are continuing to support providers during the pandemic.

RESOURCES

Serving Diverse Elders: Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion in Service Planning and Delivery

As the older adult population grows, many Aging Network providers are considering the unique needs and barriers diverse elder communities navigate by incorporating their stories and experiences into their organization’s planning process. By making some simple changes, diverse elders can be included as aging services and programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated. This guide aims to provide the Aging Network with tools and resources needed to be more inclusive of culturally diverse populations of

older adults during the planning process. Find the guide [here](#).

Supportive Housing Network of New York

The Supportive Housing Network of New York's [Supportive Housing COVID-19 Safety Plan Recommendations](#) were developed to assist supportive housing providers in creating their own strategies for making residences and offices COVID-19 “unfriendly” as New York ‘re-opens’. This document is a compilation of best practices developed by a learning collaborative of representatives from fifteen supportive housing organizations with consultation from Doctors Without Borders and aligned with current state, local and federal guidance.

National Resource Center

National Resource Center on LGBT Aging COVID-19 [Resource List](#)

Guided Practices for Self-Compassion

Feeling stressed, anxious, or unstable amidst the current environment? Here are some simple [self-guided exercises by Dr. Kristin Neff](#) to help stabilize our minds and hearts during this time.

Please feel free to forward any helpful information or questions to Sydney at skopprichardson@sageusa.org. Be well, friends!