



We refuse to be invisible®

SAGE's National Housing Initiative (NHI)

Quarterly Newsletter: January 2021

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.

In this new calendar year, our communities continue to meet the challenges and threats of inequity and violence with boldness and courage. As SAGE recently noted, “with more than 400,000 Americans dead from the COVID-19 pandemic - the majority of whom are 65 and older - a devastated economy, and a renewed fight for racial equity in the face of rising white supremacist violence, the Biden-Harris administration enters the White House at a time requiring swift, courageous action. Older Americans are also threatened by the dual pandemics of financial insecurity and isolation. This is especially true for LGBT and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) elders, who are subjected to discrimination and multiple forms of violence. As the recent deadly attack on the U.S. Congress reminds us, violent forces of extreme-right hatred are on the rise in this country. BIPOC, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people are especially at risk. Protecting them and championing their rights must be a consistent priority for the new administration.”

While a new administration may not fix the myriad of challenges the country is facing, we can take time for a sigh of relief. We will continue to hold our elected officials accountable, while fighting to create new systems and lifting up the community organizing of BIPOC, TGNCNB folks, and other people living in the margins who are most deeply impacted by oppression.

We know that addressing the safety and health needs of LGBT elders through housing and wraparound care is a piece of the fight to disrupt systems that do not serve LGBT elders. We remain committed to collective responsibility, care, and healing.

Remembering Movement Leader Carmen Vázquez

Our community is shaken at the [passing of long-time LGBTQ+ and social justice activist, community leader, proud butch Carmen Vázquez](#). Vázquez was born in Puerto

Rico and grew up in Harlem, New York. Among her many accomplishments, Vázquez was the Founding Director of the Women’s Building in San Francisco, helped found the Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center in San Francisco, and the LGBT Health & Human Services Network. She was a founder and principal author of Causes in Common (a national coalition of Reproductive Justice and LGBT Liberation activists). Her essays have been published in several anthologies and she made scores of keynote presentations at conferences and college campuses across the United States. Vázquez was the Co-Chair of the Woodhull Freedom Foundation Board of Directors and the former Director of LGBT Health and Human Services.

At the 2020 Creating Change Conference, Vázquez said, “Change is never about one person alone. There are countless others who paved the way for my activism, and countless others who will follow me and build a bridge to the future...we are and always will be an intergenerational movement and we should act that way...equality is not enough, justice and liberation are where our hearts and minds should lead us.”

Please join us in honoring her life, and read the full joint statement on her passing from the National LGBTQ Task Force and SAGE [here](#).

Mary’s House for Older Adults is Breaking Ground in DC!

2021 is a big year for Mary’s House as they plan to obtain their building permit and host a groundbreaking ceremony! Please see the [south facing](#) and [north facing](#) architectural renderings, as well as the [floorplan](#). You can access more information about [how to support Mary’s House here](#), or visit their [website](#).

Mary’s House for Older Adults, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation incorporated in the District of Columbia in September 2012. The vision of Mary’s House is to create affordable, independent, communal housing for older adults that will eliminate the intense social isolation experienced because of aging and by subtle and overt discrimination and intolerance based on one’s sexual orientation and identity. Mary’s House seeks to create living environments that celebrate and honor the whole person as they age. Mary’s House will be the first communal residence of its kind in Washington, DC meeting the cultural and relational needs of adults over 60 years of age, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender-loving (LGBTQ/SGL) individuals. Led by beloved community organizer, leader, and fierce advocate [Dr. Imani Woody](#), Mary’s House educates on and advocates for issues germane to elders, emphasizing the lack of safe and affordable housing as a public health intervention. Learn more [here!](#)

Coming Soon: Training Products for Housing Developers

Thanks to the generous support of the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, the NHI is developing training products for affordable housing developers. Trainings will focus on the unique developer roles and needs in the LGBT-affirming elder housing

development process. Topics will include fair housing regulations, trauma-informed design, roles of property management, community engagement, establishing key partnerships, working with providers, cultural competency, and more! If you have feedback on what you'd like to see in these trainings, please reach out to [Sydney Kopp-Richardson](#) with your thoughts.

Research and Reporting on LGBT Elder Housing Models

- The National Housing Initiative has been working with a team at [Ariadne Labs](#) to develop a research proposal looking at the needs and feasibility of developing LGBT-affirming affordable elder housing in Western Massachusetts. This is an exciting prospect in the ongoing dilemma of data gaps around the needs and experiences of LGBT elders. More to come!
- The Fenway Institute and The Boston Foundation's Equality Fund released [a 2020 report](#) titled "**LGBT Aging 2025: Strategies for Achieving a Healthy and Thriving LGBT Older Adult Community in Massachusetts.**" The report looks at key significant differences amongst LGBT adults aged 50-75 years old and their straight, cisgender counterparts and provides key programming, data, and policy recommendations to help address disparity in access and care.
- In December, Shelterforce [published a thorough piece](#) on the national landscape of LGBT-affirming elder housing, featuring leaders in the field and SAGE's National LGBT Elder Housing Initiative.

Reimagine

The NHI is working with [Reimagine](#) on content and programming for this year's new series in May/June 2021 by and for LGBTQ+ communities. This multi-hued, multi-disciplinary series will amplify queer voices in healthy aging, mental health, and end-of-life practices, honor their diverse racial, ethnic, and spiritual backgrounds, and celebrate artistic expression, innovation, and leadership in a time of crisis. Programming will spotlight intergenerational initiatives, new visions for elder housing, and the historical arc of caregiving from the early AIDS epidemic to current mutual aid networks developed by queer and trans people of color. The Reimagine series seeks to answer the core question: What does it mean to live and die well for us as individuals and as a community?

National LGBT Elder Housing Development Toolkit: Modules 1-4!

SAGE continues to launch iterative modules of the Housing Development Toolkit, a guide featuring strategies for developers, nonprofits, and community-based organizations to develop LGBT-affirming affordable housing. The next two modules, focused on marketing plans and vetting partnerships, will be released next week and is available [here](#).

Reminder: SAGECARE Certification and Training Go Virtual!

Our SAGECare LGBT aging cultural competency program is now fully virtual. Visit our [website](#) to learn how SAGECare is continuing to support providers during the pandemic, including training frontline housing staff on the critical needs of LGBT older adults.

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