

National Women's Shelter Network, LLC

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# Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Advancing Social Justice and Success In Your Shelters

Inclusive Sheltering for Transgender and Nonbinary people; Enhancing services for LGBTQ+ persons; Importance of Lived Experience; Racial Equity and Justice

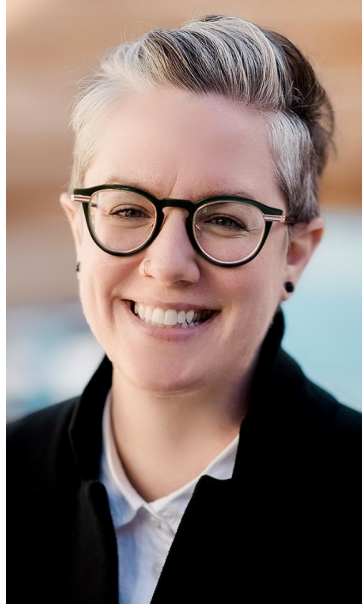
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# MEET THE PRESENTERS



**Allison Blakeney**  
The Delores Project  
Denver, Colorado  
they/them



**Emily Wheeland**  
The Delores Project  
Denver, Colorado  
she/ her



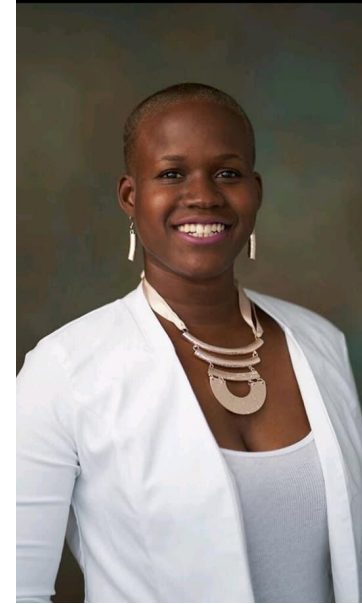
**Teresa Sanders**  
Chief Program Officer  
YWCA Greater Cleveland,  
Ohio



**Nicole Brooks**  
Special Assistant to the  
President & CEO,  
N Street Village  
Washington, DC



**Sharonee  
Delevante**  
Operations Director  
Lotus House  
Miami, FL  
she/ her



**Georgette Madison**  
Guest Services Director  
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# INCLUSIVE SHELTERING FOR TRANSGENDER AND NONBINARY PEOPLE

BY THE DELORES PROJECT



THE  
**Delores  
Project**

TRANSFORMING LIVES  
THROUGH CREATIVE  
HOUSING SOLUTIONS

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# ABOUT THE DELORES PROJECT



**The Delores Project, founded in 2000, operates a 50-bed extended-stay, housing-focused shelter for women, transgender, and nonbinary people. Above our shelter is a 35-unit supportive housing building for people with a disability who are transitioning out of homelessness.**

**Realizing there were no inclusive shelter providers for transgender people in the city of Denver and already unofficially serving them, in 2017 we changed our mission statement to include the word "transgender." Since then we have seen this population increase by 3-5% each year. Last year 20% of our shelter guests identified as a gender(s) other than female.**

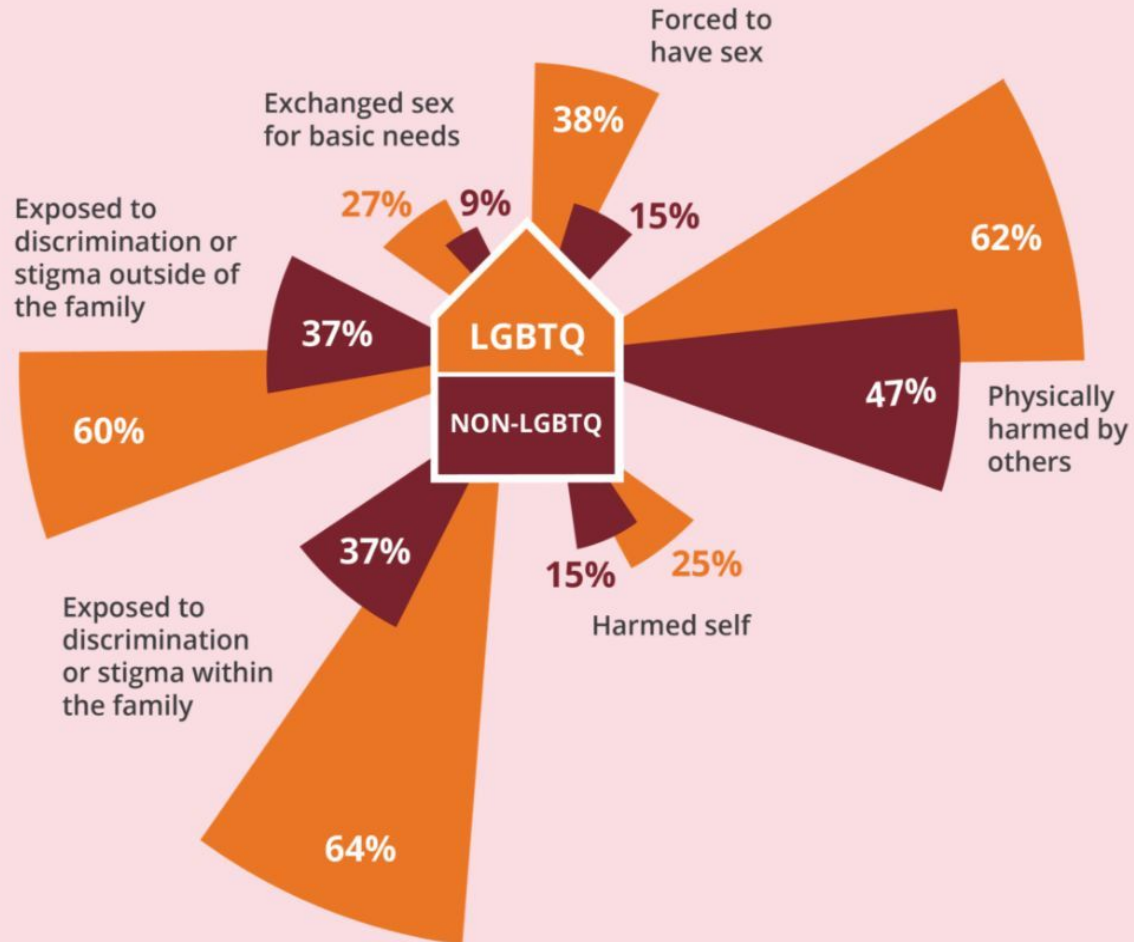


# WHY SERVE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE?

Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community face legal and societal barriers that disproportionately impact their ability to access housing, shelter, and health services. As a result, they experience homelessness at higher rates than heterosexual and cisgender individuals that are similarly situated in terms of income, family size.

- Between 20-45% of LGBTQ+ youth experience homelessness while only 7-10% of the general youth population do.
- Black LGBTQ+ youth are 4 times more likely to experience homelessness than white, non-LGBTQ+ youth.
- 1 in 5 transgender individuals have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.
- People who have been incarcerated are 13 times more likely to experience homelessness, and LGBTQ+ people are 3 times more likely to experience incarceration than non-LGBTQ+ people.
- One Colorado's Closing the Gap Report suggests LGBTQ+ populations are more likely to lack health insurance and rate their health as poor. Without affordable, quality housing, their health may be further jeopardized.

# LGBTQIA2S+ Homelessness Risk Factors



(Source: VoYC In-Depth Interviews)

# DELORES VALUES



The Delores Project is named after Delores Big Boy, a Lakota Sioux woman who experienced chronic homelessness in Denver and died on the streets at 44. She was well-known for her deep care of others and for sharing whatever she had with whomever she could.

In Delores' legacy, some of our organizational values that inform our choice to serve transgender and nonbinary people with cultural confidence and a welcoming spirit are as follows:

- Our model of service is one of respect, hospitality, and dignity for each guest.
- We support those we serve without judgment.
- We believe in the potential of each individual and their right to self-determination.
- We value the diversity of our guests, staff, board, and volunteers, and we are a model of inclusiveness.
- We believe the community is strengthened when it cares for those with the fewest resources.



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

How quickly homeless service providers forget that in most of our own homes, we share bedrooms, bathrooms, and living spaces with people of a variety of genders! There is no reason sheltering spaces cannot be the same. With some basic education about gender identity and a focus on safety for all guests, even those unfamiliar with transgender identities, adjust exceptionally quickly.



When guests arrive at Delores and are unfamiliar with transgender and nonbinary identities, or see someone whom they assume is not the same gender as them and express concern to staff, we engage them in a conversation about safety versus comfort to help identify their feelings of discomfort, acknowledge many things about community living as uncomfortable, and let them know they are safe in our community. All guests are provided written information at intake about gender identity and pronouns and are told our most basic community agreement is being respectful of others, which among other things, includes using all individual's correct name and gender pronouns.

# INTAKE PAMPHLET GIVEN TO NEW GUESTS

## WHY PRONOUNS MATTER

- You can't always know what someone's gender pronouns are by looking at them. When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed, alienated, or hurt.
- Discussing and correctly using gender pronouns sets a tone of allyship. It can make all of the difference, especially for newer members of our community who may feel particularly vulnerable in a new environment.

## GENDER INCLUSIVITY at The Delores Project



### NOT JUST A WOMEN'S SHELTER

At The Delores Project we are proud to serve people who identify as a variety of genders and our goal is to keep our community safe, healthy, and supportive for everybody who walks through our door. In order to create a place of safety and comfort for everyone, we need everyone's help. While you're with us please use people's correct gender pronouns and treat everyone you encounter with respect and dignity. If you are unsure about somebody's pronouns, please ask them or come to staff. Intentionally misgendering others or using derogatory speech towards others is not tolerated in our community.

### GENDER IDENTITY

One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

### SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH

The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy.

### GENDER EXPRESSION

External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

### GENDER NON-CONFORMING

A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.

### GENDER PRONOUNS

She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.

### TRANSGENDER

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

### CISGENDER

A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

### NONBINARY

An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

# REPAIRING HARM

People often experience harm when someone addresses them with incorrect gender pronouns and terminology or asks invasive questions. It can leave them feeling unseen, devalued, dehumanized, and disrespected. Because mistakes sometimes happen, it's important to understand a person's intention and also hold each other and ourselves accountable for the impact we have on others .

If you accidentally misgender someone, the best course of action is to apologize, correct yourself, and move on. Do not linger and create a space where the person misgendered feels they need to excuse your words.



If you hear someone misgendered in a conversation, the respectful thing to do is say something in the moment. For example, "Oh, Sam uses they/ them pronouns," and allow the person speaking to apologize, correct themselves, and move on.





# TIPS ON MAKING YOUR PROGRAM TRANS-FRIENDLY AND SAFE

**1**

Make education about gender identity and pronouns part of all new staff's onboarding so they are thoughtfully able to discuss gender and coach/ hold accountability for guests as necessary.

**2**

Honor any name a guest chooses for themselves and their pronouns. Teach community members to be good allies by respectfully correcting anyone who misgenders another community member.

**3**

Create a lived environment with privacy and dignity. At Delores, this looks like private changing stalls in the all-gender restroom and an optional single-use all-gender restroom for extra comfort and privacy of anyone who desires it.

**4**

Create a culture of learning and accountability in the community where it is okay for people to ask respectful questions and engage in dialogue about gender and where hate speech and disrespect are not tolerated.

**5**

Celebrate all identities and cultures in the community, not just transgender and nonbinary ones. Intentionally build a culture of inclusivity and belonging for all community members, regardless of identity.

**6**

Provide opportunities for ongoing learning and growth of all community members. At Delores, this looks like our Gender 101 life skills class, community circle therapy group and seeking safety class, social and community-building activities like writing group, fashion show, talent show, spa night, bingo, etc. where people can get to know one another beyond outside observations of gender presentation and other observed identities.

**7**

Train and coach staff to avoid using gendered language such as "women, ladies, men, etc." when referring to a group of people. Coach staff and guests to use words like "Y'all, friends, comrades, everyone, etc."

**8**

Hire staff that reflects the identities of the people you serve. Representation matters and having transgender and nonbinary staff helps guests get on board with community agreements around pronoun usage and treating others with respect and dignity and helps guests feel more safe.

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# ELIMINATING RACISM EMPOWERING WOMEN

BY YWCA GREATER CLEVELAND

**eliminating racism  
empowering women**

**ywca**

**Greater Cleveland**

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**Black people comprise 13% of the general population in the United States and 26% of those living in poverty.**

**They account for more than 40% of the homeless population, suggesting that poverty rate alone do not explain the overrepresentation.**

**YWCA IS ON A MISSION**

# KEY DOMAINS INFLUENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

- **Economic Mobility**
- **Housing**
- **Criminal Justice**
- **Behavioral Health**
- **Family Stabilization**

**YWCA IS ON A MISSION**

Because of the **complex, underlying issues** that drive homelessness among people of color, it is important to address multiple levels simultaneously.

*It is not possible to solve these issues at the programmatic level alone.*

# STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

- **Train all staff on understanding racism and the intersection of racism and homelessness.**
- **Establish professional development opportunities to identify and invest in emerging leaders of color**
- **Create greater racial and ethnic diversity on boards for non-profit organizations working on homelessness**

## POLICY CHANGE

- **Focused advocacy to shape political will and public support**
- **Implement and enforce Fair Housing Protections with the full force of local, state and the federal government**
- **Develop new affordable housing stock through broader use of inclusionary zoning and mandatory affordable units for new development**

**YWCA IS ON A MISSION**

DISABILITY • HOUSING



eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**

**RACIAL  
JUSTICE  
CHALLENGE**

MENTAL HEALTH • MUSIC

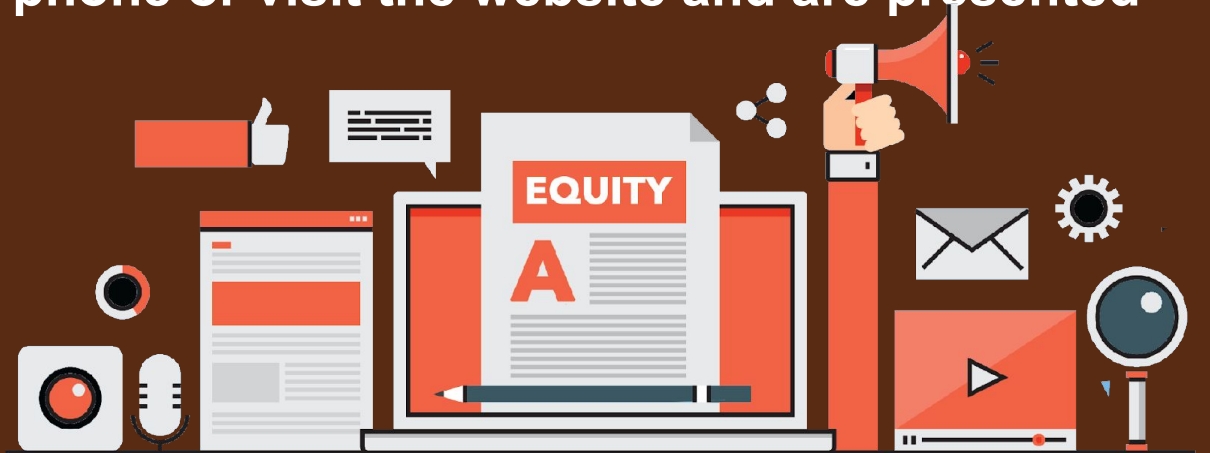


# ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
Greater Cleveland

**YWCA's Racial Justice Challenge** is a virtual learning tool designed to create dedicated time and space to build more effective social justice habits, particularly those dealing with issues of race, power, privilege, and leadership. Participants log on to the challenge app on their phone or visit the website and are presented with 21 days of activities such as:

- reading an article
- watching a video
- listening to a podcast
- reflecting on personal experience



# HOW WE GOT HERE

- YWCA's Racial Justice Challenge was launched in 2019 as an internal training tool for our staff
- Over 30,000 participants from 5,700 ZIP codes in 48 states have participated in the challenge.
- In 2022, YWCA officially partnered with YWCA USA to launch the Challenge at the national level.
- We have supported individuals, businesses, faith groups, and nonprofits, across the country in having substantial conversations about the impact of systemic injustice and how they can make an impact.
- Designed to fit into your schedule and accommodate different learning styles.
- The content is accessible and will be available in Spanish.

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# FOSTERING PURPOSEFUL INCLUSION

BY N STREET VILLAGE





# N STREET VILLAGE

## 8 Locations, One Village

N Street Village is the largest provider of housing and supportive services for women experiencing homelessness in Washington, D.C. We have served over 2,000 women annually prior to COVID-19, and we assist them as they make meaningful gains in their housing, income, employment, health, and addiction recovery in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

### Miriam's House

25 units of permanent supportive housing for women living with HIV.

### Flagship

Day Center, Wellness Center, 51 units of affordable housing, 44 units of permanent supportive housing, 12 units of recovery housing, and 9 units of mental health focused housing.

### Patricia Handy Place for Women

213 beds including emergency, temporary, senior and medical respite shelter.

### Erna's House

30 efficiencies and one-bedroom housing first apartments.

### Phyllis Wheatley YWCA

Comprehensive case management provided to 42 women by Village staff.

### Diane's House

42 units of permanent supportive housing, including 6 units for families.

### Step Up Rapid Rehousing

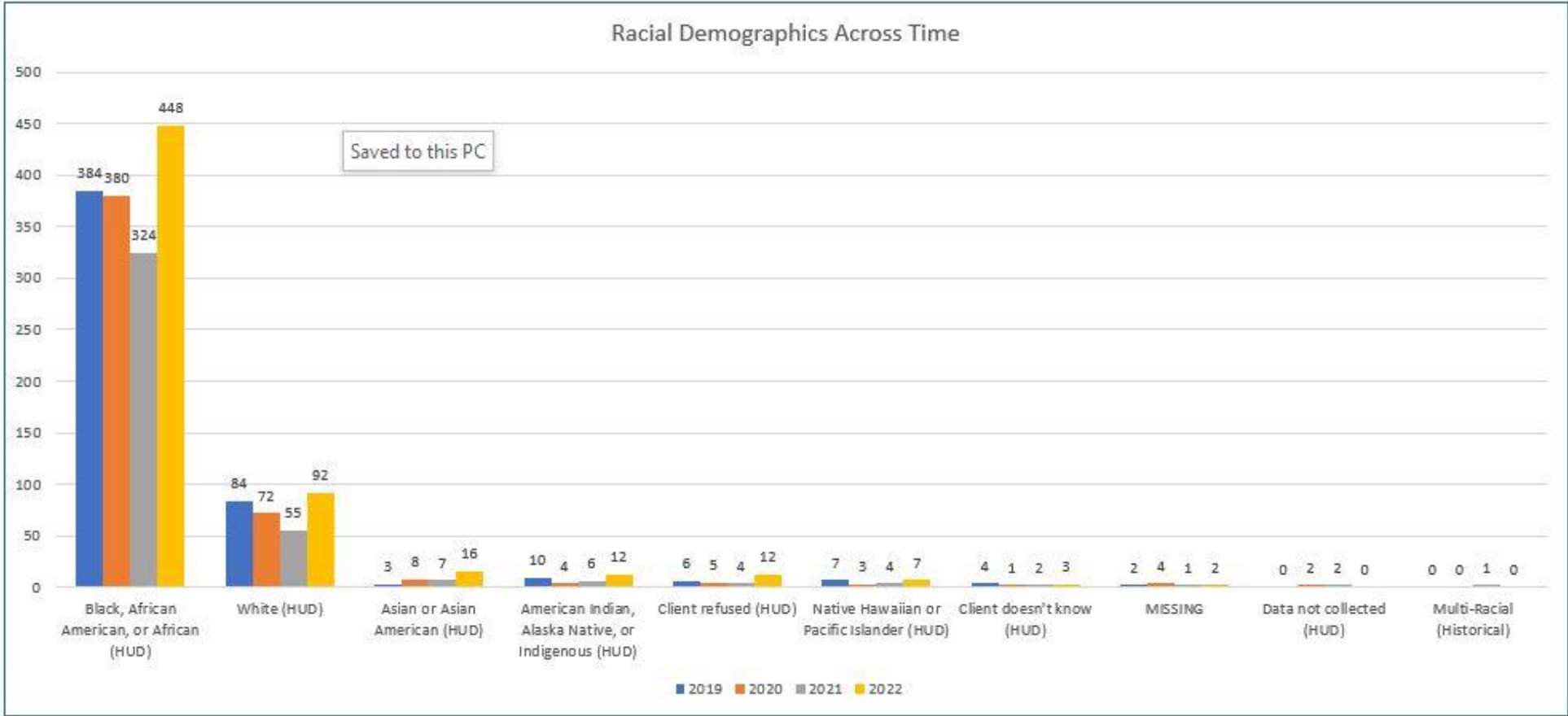
17 units of short-term rental and housing assistance for women with income.

### Cap Vista

21 units of permanent supportive housing with on-site care and services by Village staff.



# WHO WE SERVE





# GENDER IDENTITY MATTERS

The Gender Identity Matters workgroup policy proposal was designed to enhance services to LGBTQ+ persons (clients), specifically transgender and gender nonconforming persons, in a manner consistent with the values of N Street Village, and with district law.

N Street Village seeks to foster purposeful inclusion by providing a welcoming community where all feel valued. Further, it is the policy of N Street Village to prohibit all forms of harassment and discrimination of (or by) clients and employees, including harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

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# LIVED EXPERIENCE

BY LOTUS HOUSE

*Lotus House* where hope blossoms  
sundari foundation, inc.

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# SHARONEE DELEVANTE

## FROM SHELTERED TO DIRECTOR

- **Director of Operations (5 years)**
- **2017: Resident (5 months)**
- **2018: Operations Manager**
- **2019: Assistant Director of Operations**
- **2020: Director of Operations**
- **2021: Certified Behavioral Health Tech**



# VALUING LIVED EXPERIENCE - PATHWAYS TO INCLUSION AND SUCCESS



- **Education Opportunities**
- **Certifications**
- **Paid internship Opportunities in different fields**
- **Built In Pathways for Growth in each position**
- **Hire, advance and compensate based on lived experience**
- **We recognize "Lived Experience and Successful Transition as PhD in homelessness and what we do!"**
- **Why does this make a difference?**



# SHELTER, TEAM AND BOARD DEMOGRAPHICS



## GUESTS

- 40% Hispanic
- 59% Non-Hispanic
- 62% Black or African American
- 36% White

## TEAM

- 38% Hispanic
- 54% Black
- 8% White/Other
- 37% alumni of the program

## BOARD

- 73% Women
- 45% Black and Hispanic
- 27.5% Black and 17.5% Hispanic
- 15% alumni of the program
- 15% identify as LGBTQ+



# PEER SPECIALISTS AND ALUMNI POSITIONS

- **37% of the team are alumni including:**
  - **28% of Directors**
  - **15% of Asst Directors**
- **Positions for alumni with lived experience in each department**
  - **Operations**
  - **Guest Relations**
  - **Clinical Team Natural Helpers**
  - **Employment and Education**
  - **Programming**
  - **Culinary**
  - **Donations Center**
  - **Administrative**



# GEORGETTE MADISON

## FROM SHELTERED TO DIRECTOR

- **Guest Service Director (8 years)**
- **2013: Family resident/Thrift Internship**
- **2015: Hired Assistant Operations Manager**
- **2018: Maintenance Supervisor**
- **2020: Assistant Director of Operations**
- **2022: Guest Services Director**



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**THANK YOU!**

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