

FHEO Table Talks Series: Advancing LGBTQIA+ Fair Housing and Equity

Moderator: **James M. Roberts**, Director, Education and Outreach Division, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, HUD

Speakers: **Kim L. Hunt**, Pride Action Tank; **Imani Rupert-Gordon**, National Center for Lesbian Rights

James M. Roberts: Hello and welcome to another episode of FHEO Table Talk Series. I am your host James M. Roberts. The Table Talk Series was created to foster partnerships with trusted community voices. These trusted voices help uplift and advocate for the communities they serve. We want to listen and we want to learn from you. Pride Month commemorates the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising on June 28, 1969. In June of 1970, gay rights activists celebrated Stonewall's first anniversary by marching in Central Park. This was the first pride parade and galvanized the LGBTQIA movement. Each June, the LGBTQIA+ community celebrates the milestones and historical victories achieved since 1969. While there have been inroads in attaining equality, more work still needs to be done. Today's episode explores the intersection between our work in fair housing and the work being done by LGBTQIA+ advocacy and policy organizations to advance equality.

I have the honor of speaking with Kim L. Hunt, Executive Director of Pride Action Tank and Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy operations at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, and Imani Rupert-Gordan, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

Let's go ahead and get started. We usually kick off each episode with an icebreaker question. This question is for both panelists but since you are new to the Table Talk Series Kim, I will give you the opportunity to answer first followed by Imani. So, here's the question: What is your favorite magical or mythological animal?

Kim L. Hunt: Thank you James. I appreciate being given that question, first, I would actually rather go second but that's okay. My favorite mythical animal would be the unicorn and with the rainbow horns in particular. A friend of mine referred to LGBTQIA+ folks as magical rainbow unicorns once and that is something that I've just taken to heart with me.

James M. Roberts: Awesome! And now Imani I am going to throw it to you.

Imani Rupert-Gordon: You know I can't actually think of an animal, I think yours is a good one Kim. But I will say, actually Kim you know this, my favorite character who is not human is Mystique from the X-Men. And she is the one that is in the blue scaly skin, and she has the robot-like voice. She's my favorite because there is this part in X-Men Two, that is a comic as well, but the quote was something like, you know "why don't you stay in disguise all the time?" Because she can look like anyone else, she can sound like anyone else. Then she responds, "because we shouldn't have to." And I just love that because it is kind of the reason we do this work, you know, because we really shouldn't have to be like everyone else or not be ourselves to have all of the...to experience justice and to live freely in this world. And so, she's my favorite character.

James M. Roberts: I wholeheartedly agree, and X-Men is actually one of my favorite comic book series, between X-Men, and X-Factor, and X-Force. So, it is always good to hear what our panelists have to say

because these icebreakers actually open so many different ideas of how we can learn more about you guys.

The next question is for both panelists. I will start with you Imani and then I will pass it to Kim. Please introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your organization.

Imani Rupert-Gordon: Sure. So, my name is Imani-Rupert Gordon, my pronouns are she, her, and hers, and I'm the Executive Director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights. And we are a national legal organization that works to achieve and advance civil and human rights for all LGBTQ people and our families. Our team is primarily made up of lawyers and so a large part of the work we do is litigation. But we know that justice takes a lot of ways to get there and so we also work to, uh, do legislation, strategic public policy work, and also engage in public education. So, we are advocates for the LGBTQ community and we try to do this as intersectionally as possible and so looking at not only LGBTQ people but also economic justice, and gender justice, and racial justice, and making sure we are considering all of those things at once.

James M. Roberts: Thank you Imani. You're up next Kim.

Kim L. Hunt: Okay, so my name is Kim L. Hunt. I am, uh, Executive Director of Pride Action Tank, which is a project of AIDS Foundation Chicago and there I also serve as the Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy Operations and I use she/her pronouns. Pride Action Tank is a project incubator and think tank on LGBTQ issues and we use convenings as a way to create a platform for folks with lived experience as well as other experiences to work on the issues that are important to our community which fall for us under six broad categories: aging, financial security, health, housing, safety, and youth. And we do this under the Policy and Advocacy Department of the AIDS Foundation Chicago, which is an organization that has been around over 35 years at this point and mobilizes communities to create equity and justice for people living with and vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. And through that work we take a very intersectional, as well as social determinants of health type of focus. So, we do a lot of things in addition to making sure that there is a safety net for LGBTQ folks and folks living with HIV and AIDS. We do a lot of work using that lens that wounds up helping others access affordable housing, health care, and other services that are needed.

James M. Roberts: I want you both to know that your organizations are doing fantastic work advocating for the community. This next question is for both panelists and I will start with you Kim and then again I will pass it to you Imani. What do you consider to be the most pressing and urgent issue facing LGBTQIA community?

Kim L. Hunt: That is always such a hard question. It's hard to say what is the most. We've done work at Pride Action Tank that really hones in on BIPOC, black, indigenous, people of color, folks who identify as LGBTQ, as well as folks living with HIV and AIDS. And the issues that come up over and over again include quality affordable housing, access to healthcare, economic justice, having culturally competent services and resources, and honestly feeling like folks are...have a way to engage in change. I think there's a lot of, you know, how do we make the changes that we want to see in the world kind of angst in our community and others. We try to provide ways to make that happen as we work with folks who are most impacted by the issues that we work on to advance, um, public policy changes, as well as changes in resources and designing programs that center the people who are most impacted by those issues. To name one issue that is most important is really tough especially when you think about the

intersectional lives that we all live. There is just not one thing that rises to the top, but I would say among the top three, housing, access to good healthcare, and economic justice are among them.

James M. Roberts: Next up Imani.

Imani Rupert-Gordon: Uh, thank you so much Kim, and you know I want to echo that too. It is such a hard question to say that any one issue...but what we see is that the same issues that affect everyone affect the LGBTQ community and because they are, we are, a part of an intersectional community that experiences marginalization at higher levels that those are just going to be exacerbated for us. And so, I think something that's really important is you know, um, the part about how HUD can help address these issues. And so, for folks in the LGBTQ community we have a long history of being discriminated against and so often times our community is so used to discrimination that we are sadly accustomed to not having the support that we need and so our communities don't always know that the discrimination that we experience is actually illegal because it hasn't always been and I think that's something that's really important. Folks don't know that they can actually go, and they can go to HUD for help, they can go and seek support. So we know that people still experience discrimination even when there are protections in place and so there are people that are right now living in housing that have been told that they can't use the gym or they can't go in the hot tub, they can't go in the pool, they can't have their friends or their families be out in public areas because of their LGBTQ identity or because of their HIV status. Um, but people need to know that you can call HUD because that is actually illegal. And so, I think something that would be really, really helpful is for HUD to provide some trainings and talk about real life examples that people experience and how much support HUD is able to provide for folks. Because much of what we hear about LGBTQ support is through litigation efforts like the Equality Act, which is incredibly important, but it would also be really great for folks to realize that agencies like HUD, the way that you interpret rules can have the exact same result as passing laws. And we don't always recognize that. That the way something is interpreted, the way that it is rolled out, will provide the same sort of protections and right now we have quite a few of them and you know some things that have come up from HUD and has been very, very, um...this administration has been very supportive of LGBTQ communities and we see that reflected. And so, executive orders, and interpretations of laws are something that's incredibly important. So, finding more ways to get that information out because it's not always readily available if you are not following this stuff really closely.

Kim L. Hunt: And I'd like to add to what Imani is saying and definitely concur. I think monitoring of existing laws and practices is also important as well. I remember HUD did a listening tour in Chicago and other parts of the United States, probably about 10 years ago focused on LGBTQ folks, and, um, you know there was some testing that happened with, uh, mixed pairs and all the things that you need to do to test fair housing laws. That kind of work needs to be supported and updated as well, because I think we miss a lot in the years in between those kinds of tests. And sometimes we think that that isn't happening in 2022 but we know that, anecdotally, and with the, um, bit of research that is available to us that no matter what the income level, LGBTQ folks are the recipients, if you will, of housing discrimination. Whether it is same sex couples being, having a much narrower range of rental properties to look at then say mixed sex couples. Or, uh, same-sex couples being quoted higher rents, um, we've seen studies where this has occurred and then when we look at the, I would say ongoing, uh, effects of discrimination on LGBTQ folks, uh, we see this happening to in terms of mortgages and just the financial security that folks are able to obtain or not obtain because they haven't had the opportunities that allow them to have the types of incomes that help them live in the types of housing that that is needed. So, in

addition to that monitoring of existing laws is super important to make sure that folks are getting what they need in terms of housing. And we look at that of course, housing is a health care issue at AIDS Foundation Chicago. We know that folks cannot focus on taking their medication if they are worried about where they are going to lay their head at night. So those two things are very, very much connected to us.

James M. Roberts: Thank you both for your responses. Remember, our audience, we are listening and we want to learn from this discussion.

Kim, the next question is for you. The Pride Action Tank focuses on six overlapping issues areas: housing, health, safety, financial security, youth, and aging. What housing challenges do LGBTQIA+ individuals experience? And how is your organization addressing them?

Kim L. Hunt: Yeah, I want to pick up on some of the things that Imani mentioned earlier. Uh, the LGBTQ+ community is a microcosm of the larger society. So, we have every, uh, racial and ethnic group, we have folks living with HIV and AIDS, we have folks with disabilities, everything that is a broader society is within the LGBTQ community. And then when you look at various groups within the LGBTQ community some of the issues become a little more pronounced. So, for example, with older adults, what we see there is higher rates of social isolation than straight couples. We see higher incidences of poverty. We see folks being so concerned that they are going to be discriminated against that when they enter long term care or other senior housing, they go back into the closet or at least feel like they have to go back into the closet to receive the treatment that they need to receive. So, these things get exacerbated, as Imani mentioned. I also want to highlight that for youth, um, about 40% nationally of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ. So, that over representation among some of the harms that befall folks who are extremely vulnerable when it comes to needing the safety net are...can be really pronounced within the LGBTQ community. So, we look at work on this from a number of angles, one, and we did, uh, for example, a summit with LGBTQ older adults a few years ago. Folks want to be seen. They want to share their stories, they want people to be able to hear their stories, they want people to be able to understand their experience, and they want to be a part of solution making. So, we've created opportunities, for example for LGBTQ older adults, to do that through storytelling trainings, through advocacy 101 training, so that they know how to speak truth to power or get that refreshed because some of them have been doing this for decades. We also work on public policy changes with our colleagues within the Policy and Advocacy Department. We look for housing solutions whether they, it is additional funding like the need for additional HOPWA funding for example, that our housing apartment and sister agency, The Center for Housing and Health, have identified. We also look at potential additions to the housing toolbox. So, we have worked on an initiative around tiny homes looking at that as one additional solution for addressing youth homelessness, but it could also work for other populations. Um, so, we do a range of things and all of our work is centered on the people who are impacted by the issue so solutions are dependent upon what people tell us they need and together we work to make it happen. We do a lot of work around public policy change and that could be legislative changes within Illinois as well as administrative changes with the many agencies that we work with.

James M. Roberts: Thank you for your response and showcasing your organization's efforts for our audience.

This next question is for you Imani. How is the National Center for Lesbian Rights working to advance lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender equality?

Imani Rupert-Gordon: Sure. So, I guess to start off it's important to note that NCLR was created to be intersectional. When the needs of LGBTQ women were left out of both the Women's Rights Movement and then what was also then known as the Gay Rights Movement, NCLR was created. And we are thinking a lot about that right now because this is our 45th anniversary, um, so we're thinking a lot about our history. The early work that NCLR did really was around family law and specifically supporting LGBTQ women and that was really the first of its kind. But even then, we had the foresight to know that parenting laws that were...that we were helping to establish would support all families. And so, whenever you see adoption for LGBTQ parents or birth certificates for more than two parents or parental supports for non-married parents, you're seeing some of NCLR's early work. And I think that is important to note because we are a relatively small national organization, but we have a really large footprint. And part of the work that we do is really pushing the movement, I think, to be more inclusive. And so, we were the first national LGBTQ organization with an immigration and asylum program to support LGBTQ people specifically that didn't have citizenship status in this country. We started an LGBTQ sports program and the NCAA didn't have a rule to allow transgender athletes to play until NCLR helped them create one. We were the first organization, LGBTQ organization, to establish a Conversion Therapy Program and we continue to lead through our Born Perfect Program. And so that's work that we see people doing all through the movement now and we, our co-founders and the coordinator for the LGBTQ anti-poverty network so that we can ensure that everyone can benefit from the work that is happening out there. Not just folks that have the most economic power in this country, um, and right now you know we are submitting a lot of time because with our partners we filed the only challenge to Florida's discriminatory "Don't Say Gay or Trans" Bill. So, we are litigating cases across the country, uh, that will allow kids to play sports, use restrooms, receive life-saving healthcare that everyone needs and deserves and so we're also just making sure that the cases that we choose will support everyone so that we are sensitive to how race and racism show up, how sexism and transphobia shows up. And we work to ensure that everyone can benefit from our work. And I believe that NCLR encourages other national organizations to do that as well.

James M. Roberts: Thank you for sharing your organization's vision and how it is working hard to advance equality. The next question is for you Kim. How does housing impact the health outcomes of people living with HIV/AIDS?

Kim L. Hunt: Yeah, you know I want to go back to something I mentioned earlier. It is so hard for folks to think about being adherent to medication when they don't have a stable place to stay. We know through the work of the Center for Housing and Health, that is a sister agency for our AIDS Foundation Chicago, that that housing influences everything. Housing is one of the social determinants of health and I think a lot of people don't really understand that most of the health outcomes that people encounter or have, are way more influenced by other factors than encounters in the healthcare system themselves. The World Health Organization attributes about 20% of health outcome influence to be healthcare, the rest is all the other stuff. Where we live, where we work, if we work, where we went to school, um, what we're eating, what's in our communities. Those are the kinds of things that have a huge impact on health. And housing is...it cannot be overstated how important having stable housing is both for I would say adherence, in terms of medications for HIV and in AIDS, but also just a person's mental health and ability to be up in the morning and thrive and do all the things that they want to do and define success for themselves, without that stable housing is just so tough to do. We've done work with colleges and universities, many of which did not even know that they had students who were

experiencing massive housing instability, and that instability had an impact on those student's ability to perform, to do their work, to even enjoy a college life. And once we were able to work with partners, uh, partner organizations and colleges and universities in the Chicago area to, uh, not just uplift that awareness but also through one of our advisory council members create toolkits for colleges and universities to even take the things that they were...already have, like opening up their gym showers to all students whether you had a gym class or not. Those little things did so much to improve the outcomes and college life and experiences for, um, for their students. And the same is true across the board for anyone experiencing housing instability. Once that is settled, the rest of the factors related to health, uh, can come together and be addressed, but without knowing where folks are going to sleep at night, it is hard to do the rest of it.

James M. Roberts: Thank you Kim. I've said this before and I will say it again, we are listening and we are definitely learning.

Imani, you're up next. What do you see as the biggest challenge to protecting and advancing the fair housing rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals?

Imani Rupert-Gordon: I think so often when we look to solve a problem, we actually start at that problem. So, when we look at something like housing rights, we often look to why people are unstably housed in that moment. And so, the answers we come up with are things like affordable housing or eliminating barriers like credit checks and things like that. And these are all true and they're all very important, but it doesn't get you the whole story. So, LGBTQ people experience unique barriers that contribute to housing instability making something like affordable housing the last in a very long laundry list of problems. And so, at the end of March I mentioned earlier, NCLR challenged Florida's HB 1557 which is commonly known as the "Don't Say Gay and Don't Say Trans" bill. Among other things, this bill would open schools up to lawsuits if LGBTQ students, professors, teachers, guest speakers, or anyone were to talk about their LGBTQ identities or LGBTQ identities in general. And it would do a lot more than that, but you know for the purposes here I will just leave it there. But already what we're seeing is that teachers are taking down posters that would show support for LGBTQ people. There are teachers that are no longer having conversations with students about their GSA networks with, or Gender and Sexuality Alliance, or those of us that are a little older remember those as Gay Straight Alliances. But when LGBTQ people as well as people of color are intentionally left out of our history books, out of our curriculums, and our classrooms, it's not neutral. It's not that we just find out about this later, it means that LGBTQ students don't grow up understanding that they have this rich history in creating this country. But also, that means that non-LGBTQ students also don't know this, on the amazing contributions of LGBTQ people. And this gets back to your question, when we don't see the beauty, the humanity, the contributions of LGBTQ people, it makes it easier for states like Texas to criminalize doctors and parents for just taking care of their trans kids. It sends this message very early on and consistently that there's something shameful about being LGBTQ and it is that, that makes it easier to discriminate. So, these bills that are intentionally shaming LGBTQ people and leave us out, it's part of a system that creates barriers for LGBTQ people. When parents and doctors can't provide lifesaving healthcare that trans kids needs. When we're keeping kids out of bathrooms and from playing sports. These all contribute to fewer support systems making it much more likely for LGBTQ students to end up in systems and have more experiences of homelessness or being unstably housed. Right now, we are looking at the potential end of Roe or, um, Roe v. Wade, and not having access to abortion and other essential healthcare will absolutely contribute to poverty and more people will experience

homelessness. So, I know this was a long lead up, but if we are able to decrease discrimination in schools among other things then we're able to prevent the exact barriers that encourage people to experience homelessness and live in poverty. If we can do this effectively then looking at fair housing could be a function of last resort as opposed to the first response that we see. And so, this would be a way to provide more holistic support to more individuals that need it. And I think that's really important because there's a lot of things that need to be fixed here but the things that we're seeing around that are discriminating against LGBTQ people, all of those are part of a system making things more difficult for folks.

James M. Roberts: Thank you Imani for your response. If you believe that your rights have been violated, we encourage you to file a complaint with HUD.

Kim, you're up next. What are the unique barriers that transgender and non-binary people face when assessing or living in homeless shelters?

Kim L. Hunt: I just want to say amen to everything that Imani just said, um, and it goes right to this question as well. The biggest barrier is our society's bias to the binary, the gender binary. Anything outside of male or female many folks just don't know how to deal with, and our systems are set up that way. So when it comes to providing folks what they need at the most vulnerable point in their lives like when they are seeking, uh, housing in a shelter situation or any other need that they are facing, and then having to deal with other people's issues around, uh, what they should "claim to be", uh, male or female or how they should do that, what they should look like, what their gender expression should be. These are barriers that keep people from living their best lives and these are not the kinds of roadblocks that we should be throwing up for folks ever, but particularly when they're at the most vulnerable point in their lives. So, you know, that is the biggest barrier when it comes to how folks are treated in shelters sometimes. And you know, we have seen throughout the years, and this is like ongoing advocacy around this with...unfortunately different administrations focus on different things when it comes to federal policy or even looking at the governmental layers below, and so not having consistent policies, enforced policies, that treat people like human beings and allow folks to be in the shelter in accordance to the gender or non-gender that they select, they just want a place to sleep for that period of time and then making sure that they have the other resources they need longer term for housing and those are the issues. We can name all the policies that we want to name and should to help circumvent that, but the big issue is our, uh, bias in this country and elsewhere towards a gender binary. And, um, in lieu of changing hearts and minds right now we need to make sure that we are talking to folks who identify as trans or non-binary to see what they need, to see what type of housing they need, and let the policy roll up from there. I just want to echo what Imani says about, you know a lot of times we start with the tools we know instead of actually connecting with the people who are experiencing the harm on the other end of that. I think there is a lot of listening to be done before we start shaping policies. That doesn't mean we can't move and chew gum at the same time so to speak, but if we don't have the right people in the room when policies are being formed it's...we're going to fall short many times. So, I encourage more listening sessions, I encourage more opportunities for, in this case trans and non-binary folks, to be at the table when policies are being discussed and when issues are being discussed around shelters.

James M. Roberts: Thank you for highlighting the issues that transgendered and non-binary people face when assessing temporary housing.

This next question is for you Imani. How has the pandemic worsened housing barriers for LGBTQIA+ individuals?

Imani Rupert-Gordon: Sure. So, we know that barriers are going to be exacerbated during a pandemic and while there are many people that believe that we're really at the tail end of this pandemic, there are still folks that are having very negative outcomes as a result of the pandemic and the state of the world right now. So much of the news that we hear really is around the Great Resignation and how people are finding better paying jobs with better hours, but this actually isn't the reality for many people. In fact, it's not the reality for most people. Many people are trying desperately to make ends meet and we hear a lot about gas prices going up, but honestly the cost of living has grown exponentially and even over this past year not everyone's paycheck is able to keep up with this. And so, you know, we've seen solutions like the rent moratorium was an excellent solution and it provided a lot of support to many folks in this country, um, but it did require that people have a certain skill set and are comfortable advocating for themselves and we know this is not true for everyone. This is not true for everyone specifically thinking about folks experiencing race and racism, people like depending on their income level, their citizenship status, their disability status, and a variety of other factors. You know people are really afraid about losing housing and so, there are people that needed this solution that weren't able to fully benefit from it because they live at the intersections and are experiencing the highest levels of marginalization. And we know that this money has to be paid back, you know, most people don't have two months of rent sitting around that they can just pay back, let alone 7-8 months, over a year, to pay back. And so, this is going to be something that prevents, I'm sorry, presents another challenge for folks and so...but you know I think the most important thing or maybe the larger issue is really how this has highlighted to us how we haven't had any structure in place to really help support our community during a pandemic or when something isn't business as usual. And so, some of the things we tried to address at NCLR were some of those things. What can we actually do to create some institutional change? And so, one of the things we did at the start of the pandemic was in California, um, we started working with youth justice advocates, um, to create statewide policies and procedures that would protect incarcerated youth or youth that are in juvenile detention. And so, we worked with the Governor's Office, the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, Chief Probation Officers, the Board of State, and uh, Community Corrections. And we did all of this with the goal of reducing the population of young people that were in these facilities and this would help protect the staff and youth from exposure to COVID. What ended up happening was pretty remarkable and that is that we...the requirements that were issued, uh, by state officials actually resulted in a 30% reduction of state, of uh, youth in juvenile detention across the entire state. And that's something pretty amazing because it really shows what we can do when we work in coalition with each other and we also know that because LGBTQ youth are significantly overrepresented in these facilities that this was an important victory in our community and it also means keeping young people out of systems, um, it's going to be less likely for them to be in systems again and studies show that, um, that's going to help folks not be in poverty and keep folks from being unstably housed. So that was something that we were really happy to have participated in. And then like I mentioned before, economic justice is a really important part of the work that we do and so NCLR is incredibly proud to be a co-founder of the National LGBTQ Anti-Poverty Action Network. The Action Network created LGBTQ priorities for this administration outlining how we can address LGBTQ poverty in the United States. And we also provided webinars about how to take advantage of some of the safety nets that are specifically related to COVID. As well as advocating for the passage of important legislation like President Biden's Build Back Better that would provide social

supports for people that need it most. So, the pandemic hasn't changed the type of work we do, but we intentionally addressed how the effects of COVID were touching parts of our community and make sure that we are concentrating our efforts there.

James M. Roberts: I have a follow-up too. Have you seen an increase in demand for your services over the past two years?

Imani Rupert-Gordon: We absolutely have, and you know it's not something that you can attribute specifically to COVID, which I know that...though that is something every time that obviously this is going to affect folks more when we're going through a pandemic. But we're also seeing an attack on LGBTQ communities, specifically on trans communities right now, and so there has been an increase in our, um, services. You know last year was a record number of anti-LGBTQ bills and this year is even more. There's over 300 anti-LGBTQ bills right now and we're seeing those through things like Florida's "Don't Say Gay or Trans" bill, but there is like 15 other bills just like that across the country. There are bills across the country keeping young people from playing sports, keeping folks from getting the healthcare they need. And so there has definitely been an intake in, an uptick, and we are desperately trying to help protect our community because we are seeing a great deal of...folks are certainly coming after our community right now.

James M. Roberts: The pandemic has truly impacted housing and health barriers for the LGBTQIA community. Thank you for highlighting the barriers and giving us an overview of how your organization is addressing them.

This next question is for you Kim. How would you define cultural competency?

Kim L. Hunt: Great question. When I talk about cultural competency one of the first things I let folks know is that you can never truly be competent in another person's culture. Cultural competency is really about a practice. It is about trying. It is about trying with intention. It is about being open to being wrong but trying not to do harm as you are learning yourself and creating, um, an environment of safety and bravery. And that is both for the organization that is trying to, um, put their best foot forward in terms of making sure that folks are truly seen as full human beings in all of their identity. As well as putting folks at ease that they can trust to be themselves and also understand that folks are earnestly trying to do it right. So, it is important. And I've been a person who has had varying opinions on folks, or, leadership in organizations just focusing on training. Because a lot of times the focus is on one training, check off the box, we've done that, we can move on. But training is important, but it's important as a package. It's important as an ongoing effort. It's important as the conversations that happen between trainings. It's also important to have those tough conversations within your organization to make sure that you are creating a culture that is welcoming and inviting and helps people thrive and that's both the employees as well as the people you are serving, your clients, and your constituents. So, when I talk about cultural competency it is much more expansive than you know the, the June LGBTQ cultural competency that a lot of organizations want to hone in on and nothing else. It's got to be everything. And it's also a recognition, and Imani has used this word a lot, about the intersectional identities within the LGBTQ community. A lot of times when we talk about this community folks, the image that comes up for folks, is a cisgender white, gay man, who might be buff, going to the gym all the time. But that is only a small microcosm of the community. There is everybody else as well. When we don't lift up those other identities as we practice this idea of inclusion and welcoming and creating brave spaces, then we are not doing what we need to do in terms of creating a culture within our organizations that is needed

to make sure that we are giving people the support they need to put their best foot forward. Whether it's the employee or the patient or the client or the constituent.

James M. Roberts: Thank you Kim and I have a follow-up question. Why is cultural competency needed for housing providers and how can we help to ensure that they are culturally competent?

Kim L. Hunt: Cultural competency is needed for housing providers because they are dealing with people who are all kinds of people. And if you are not prepared to deal with all kinds of people, sometimes what you are offering or how you are offering is not giving people what they need. And, you know when we talk about housing there is such a range of housing. There is temporary housing and shelters, there is supportive housing and there's affordable housing. This is hitting people at different points along their life trajectory and different people with different vulnerabilities or life issues going on. And sometimes folks are at a point where they, they can't take one more thing. You dealing with your own stuff around their identity is not helping them get the housing that they need, is not helping them get the success that they need on their own terms, or how they defined it. And it is not moving the, I think the intention of your programs and services ahead. We all carry biases with us. We all do. And it's important for us to recognize them, especially those of us in the service industry so that we can properly serve the people who are coming to us for...in whatever way that they're coming and also prevents, or creates an awareness I'll say, so that we are offering folks what they need and, and not doing a one size fits all because that's not always what's needed. And so, this idea of cultural competency to me is really about seeing the humanity of the person in front of it. We call it training, we call it competency, we call it practices. Whatever you want to call it, it is really about making the connection with that person who is in front of us. The person who is filling out a mortgage application, the person who is filling out an intake form to get in a shelter, to make sure that success is being delivered to them the way they define success in that moment. And so, it is really about living up to the ideal of why this country was created and we can have all kinds of comment about that, but there are words in our constitution that lead me to believe at some level it really is about helping people achieve happiness and that is often related to providing them the services that they need when it comes to housing.

James M. Roberts: Thank you Kim. The Education and Outreach Division is developing fair housing 101 and cultural competency training for the LGBTQIA+ community. We plan to release the content later this year.

This next question is for you Imani. On June 15, 2020, the Supreme Court issued a decision in *Bostock vs. Clayton* which held that Title VII's prohibition against sex discrimination includes sexual orientation and gender identity. The final question is for you Imani. Following the Supreme Court's *Bostock vs. Clayton* decision, President Biden issued an executive order on preventing and combating discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. Pursuant to the executive order, HUD issued a memorandum in 2021 announcing that it would administer and enforce the Fair Housing Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. How will this impact your organization's litigation, policy, and advocacy work?

Imani Rupert-Gordon: Sure. Thanks so much James for the question. So as a reminder, the *Bostock Decision* was a decision that came down from the Supreme Court that held that LGBTQ people would be protected from employment discrimination under Title VII, so basically protected by sex discrimination. Then this is something that is incredibly significant, but then President Biden's executive order that extended, um it extended that ruling to cover more than just employment and this actually the most far-

reaching executive order ever afforded to LGBTQ people. So that's something that's really important. So, that means that right now under this executive order, the same protections that LGBTQ people will experience because of employment, because of Bostock, will be extended to education, housing, and healthcare, as well as some other areas. And then one of the most significant decisions that HUD has made under this administration is without a doubt withdrawing the rule that would have made it, I mean not only possible, but likely that shelters would deny services to LGBTQ people, but specifically to transgender folks. NCLR was really excited to see this because when this rule was initially created it was NCLR that was working very, very closely with HUD in 2015 and 2016 to see this happen so that it would in fact support trans folks. We know that trans folks are much more likely to have lower incomes and to experience instances of housing instability than non-transgender people. And so, access to shelters is a critical resource, it is going to be something that's really, really important. In 2016, a study by CAP, or the Center for American Progress, found that only 30% of shelters were willing to appropriately house transgender residents and then only 1 in 5 refused to house transgender residents at all. And so, this is something that we know is specifically hurting this population. And this is alarming because it would mean that there's already only a few instances where a shelter would house a trans person and then we know that trans people would experience violence and discrimination even once inside the shelter. And this isn't something that works and so we have to make sure that our solutions to house people aren't only helping cis folks or non-LGBTQ folks. We have to make sure that our solutions work for everyone so that everyone can take advantage of them. Obviously, this would be discriminatory and then it hurts the people that are experiencing the highest levels of discrimination again and these are the folks that are going to need these supports the most. And we know that those were exacerbated again during the pandemic. But like I mentioned before, having this as a support that works as a safety net allows us to focus on root causes and early barriers. And so, you know our work to help pass the Equality Act would provide federal protections for LGBTQ people. And those are things that we've never had before. NCLR is working to litigate cases to create safer and more inclusive schools that would help end discrimination and that would make it easier to point to when something like this is happening. And then we also do work to make prisons more affirming to better able to support all LGBTQ people, specifically trans prisoners that are part of...and these would be part of solutions that would help end discrimination and help reduce homelessness. And so, it's important to note this rule isn't just a one off, it's legitimately saving lives and that means that organizations like NCLR, like Pride Action Tank, can work on eliminating the additional barriers that are affecting our community.

James M. Roberts: Thank you Imani for your response. Are there any last thoughts any of you would like to briefly share with our audience?

Imani Rupert-Gordon: You know I was going to say, Kim had said earlier, um, she was talking about training in particular and I think that's actually something that's really important and I think always pushing ourselves to do better. You know, when we find we're looking to find out how LGBTQ people are experiencing discrimination it is really important to look at all the ways that happens. And in the LGBTQ community, very often we think about lesbians, we think about gay individuals, but we often leave out folks that are queer or, um, transgender, or bisexual. And so, to make sure that when we are testing and doing these things that they can account for folks that, um, are part of our community but maybe don't show up in the same way that lesbian and gay people do, and so I think that's something that would be really important.

James M. Roberts: Thank you all for joining us today. Until our next table talks remember, fair housing is more than just words it's the law. Take care everyone.