



ALEXA JUSTICE & ALEIA WHITE

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

# PARITY NOT CHARITY:

DEVELOPING SAFE & EQUITABLE  
HOUSING FOR/WITH LGBTQ+  
STUDENTS

# ROADMAP

---

Who we are and why we're here

---

A brief history of LGBTQ+ campus housing

---

Research, trends, and discourses of safety

---

Putting GIH into practice (a case study!)

---

Where we're going



Alexa Justice, she/they



Aleia White, she/her

# WHO WE ARE

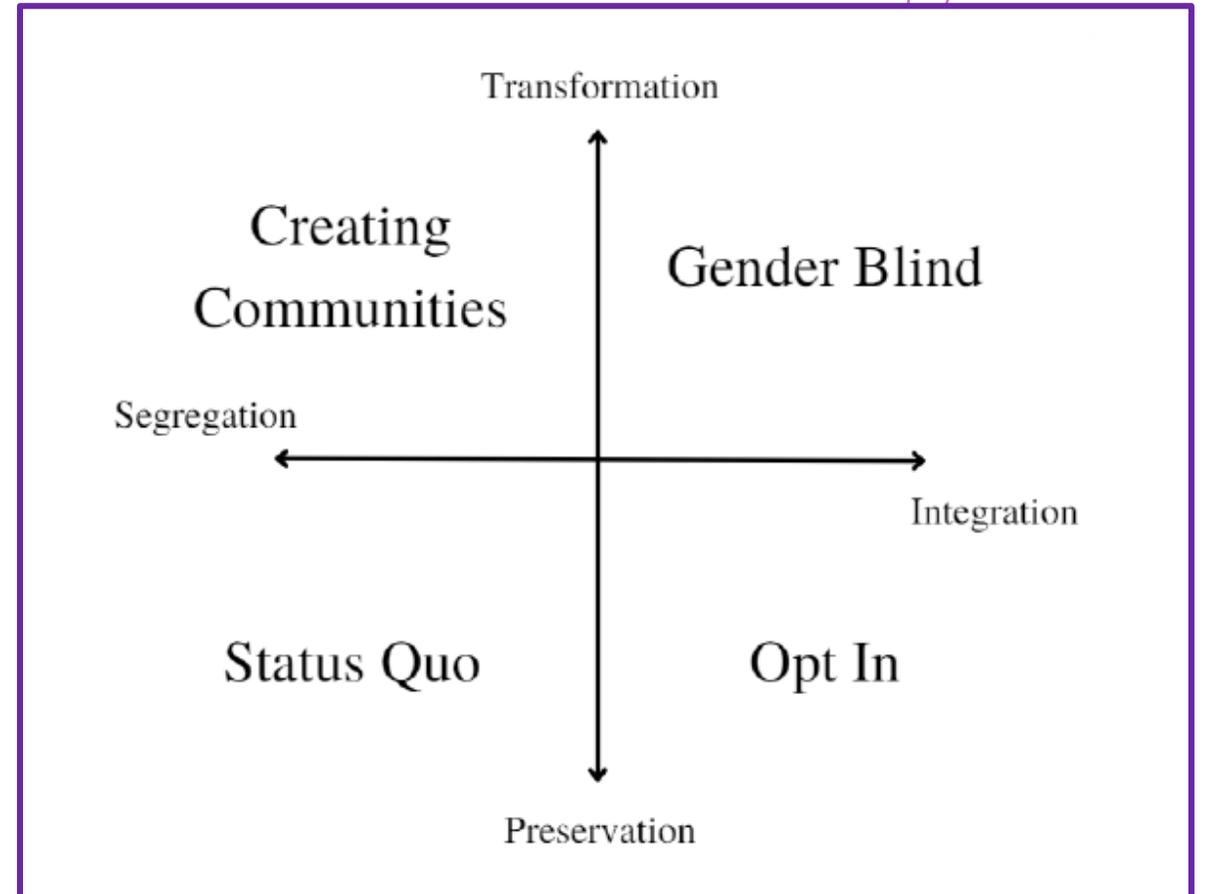
# WHAT IS GENDER INCLUSIVE HOUSING (GIH)?

- Housing that is not arranged based on biological sex
- Bathrooms, binaries, and gendered spaces on campus
- Can take many different forms

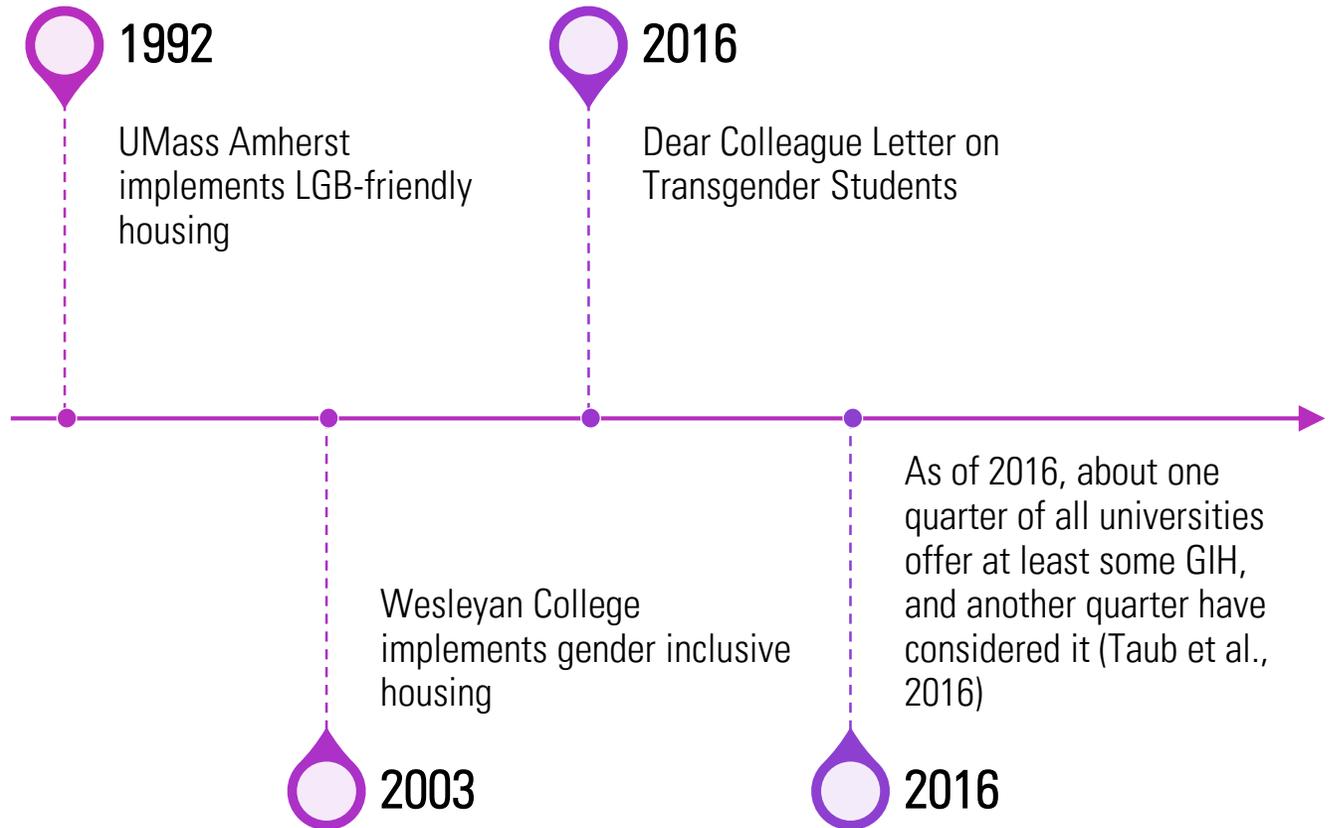


# TYPES OF GIH

- Same room, different sex
- Apartment style
- Based on gender
- Self-contained singles
- Etc.



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF GIH





## *“WHY DOES THIS MATTER?”*

“The time [students] spend in their residence hall is exponentially larger than any one classroom... This is the place where they come to relax, to feel comfortable, to live their lives,” and “That’s why it is so important to get it right.”

*John Nugent* (in Edwards, 2019)

Assistant Director of Staffing and Programs for Housing  
University of Montana

# “WHY DOES THIS MATTER?” CONT.

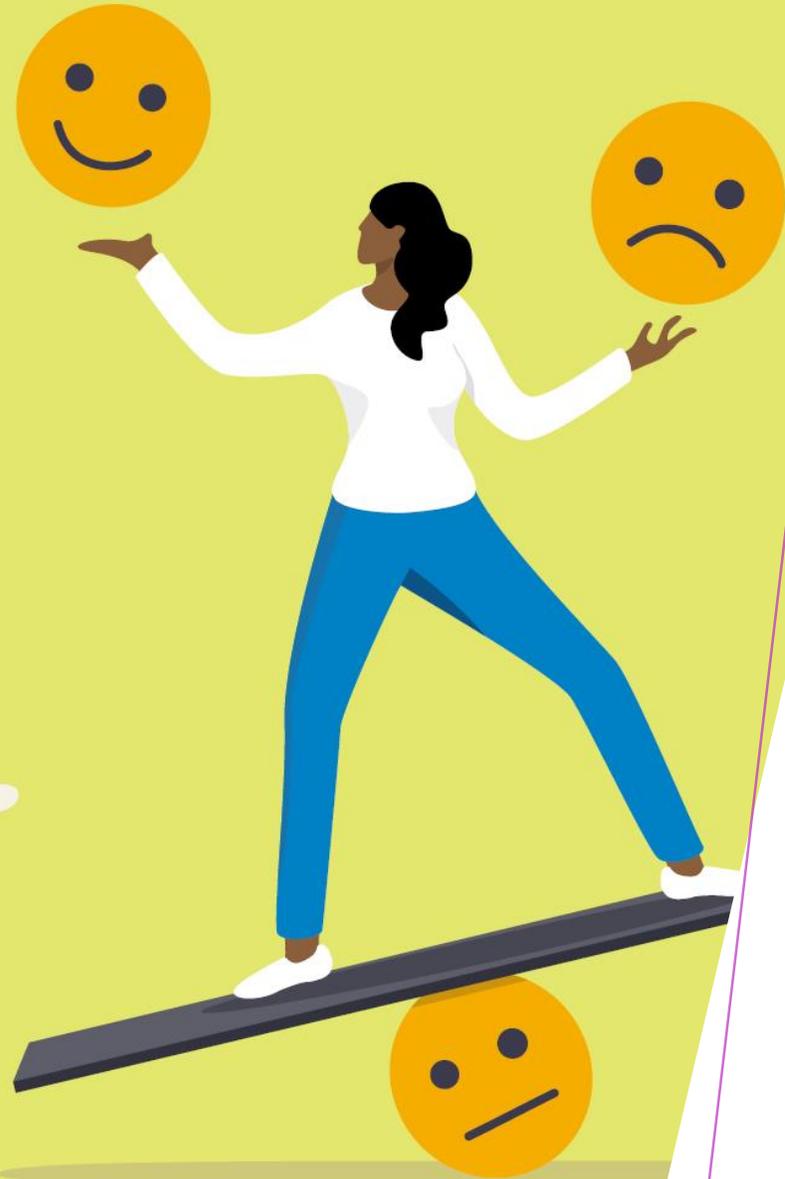
On-campus housing helps with student “growth and development” while fostering “a sense of belonging” and exploration (Amos et al., 2021, p. 44)

Traditional housing options offer “minimal safety and comfort for trans\* students” (Nicolazzo, 2017)

Trans students are more likely to experience sexual assault and harassment (Coulter et al., 2017; Seelman, 2016)

GIH helps those “who may feel uncomfortable or be unsafe rooming with students of their legal sex” (Krum et al., 2013, p. 65)

Universities frequently don't/can't track LGBTQ+ students, so retention is an issue



# WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS

- Gender inclusive spaces have been identified as a “key policy lever” (Farley & Leonardi, 2021)
- Civil rights vs. individual rights
- Competing discourses of safety and privacy (Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015)
- Falling back on benevolent sexism (Blumell et al., 2019)

# TRENDS IN HOUSING

Many campuses still treat GH as “a charitable act, rather than an essential service” (Marine et al., 2019, p. 222)

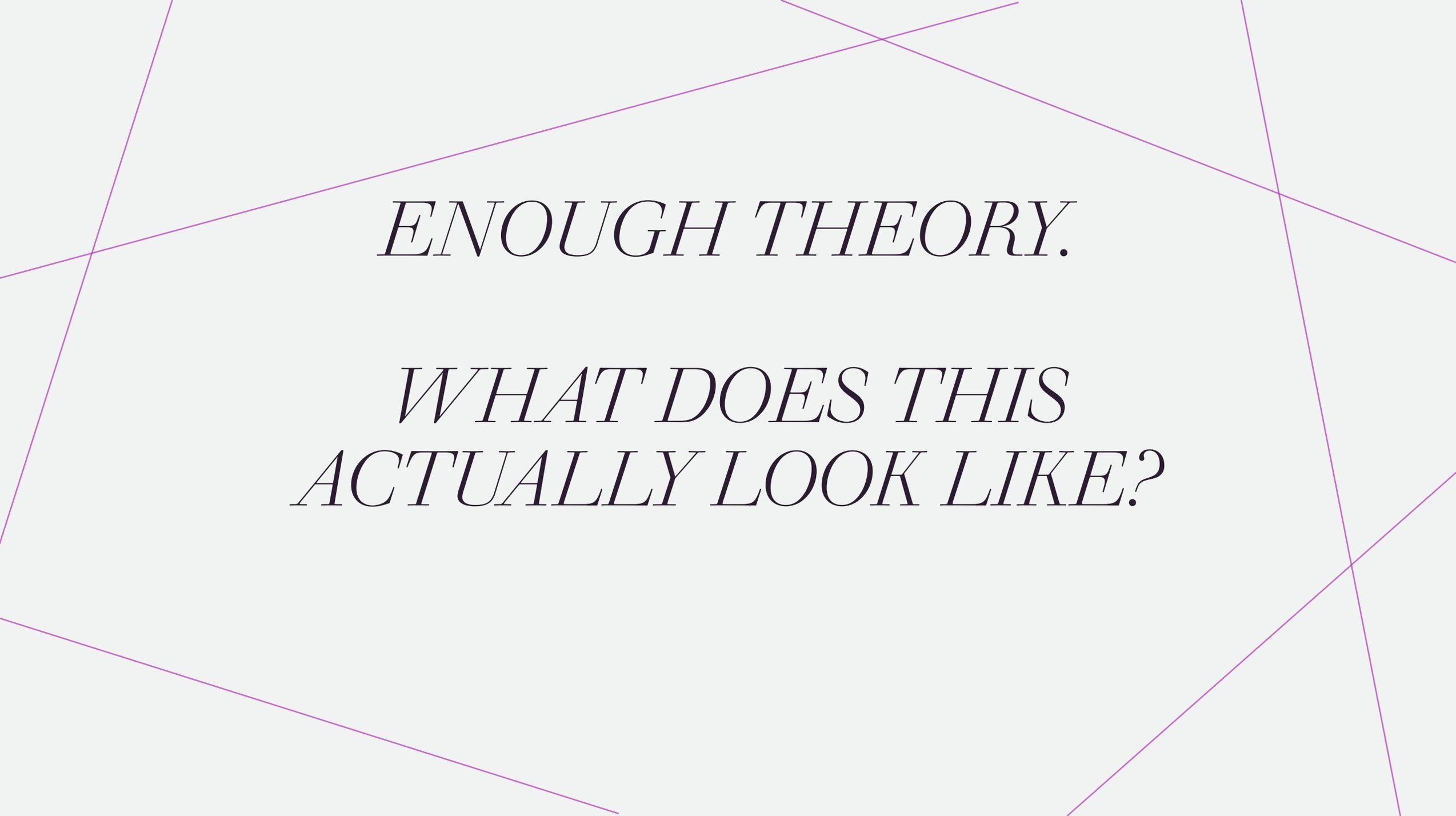
Generally student-driven, a “trickle-up approach” (Spade, 2015)

1/5 of trans students have been denied GH (Seelman, 2016)

Frequently treated as an accommodation rather than the norm

# POTENTIAL BARRIERS

- Access: students having to 'out' themselves to gain access or pay fees
- Physical limitations
- Multiple pulls on gender neutral housing
- Majority vs. minority: parents and students viewed as consumers (Horsford et al., 2019; Marine et al., 2019)
- Policies may not address systemic issues (Farley & Leonardi, 2021)
- Good intentions can still reinforce binaries (Nicolazzo, 2017)



*ENOUGH THEORY.*

*WHAT DOES THIS  
ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?*

# PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Pre 2017:

- Policy was created in roughly 2015/2016 for what was then called 'Gender Neutral Housing'.
  - Hard to find on the website and did not include all areas of campus.
- Audre Lorde Social Justice House identified as the gender-inclusive housing building for students.
  - No additional support provided.
- Students could contact a staff member in University Housing for assistance.
  - Hard to find on the website.
  - No knowledge, background, or training on the LGBTQ+ community.

# PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Post 2017:

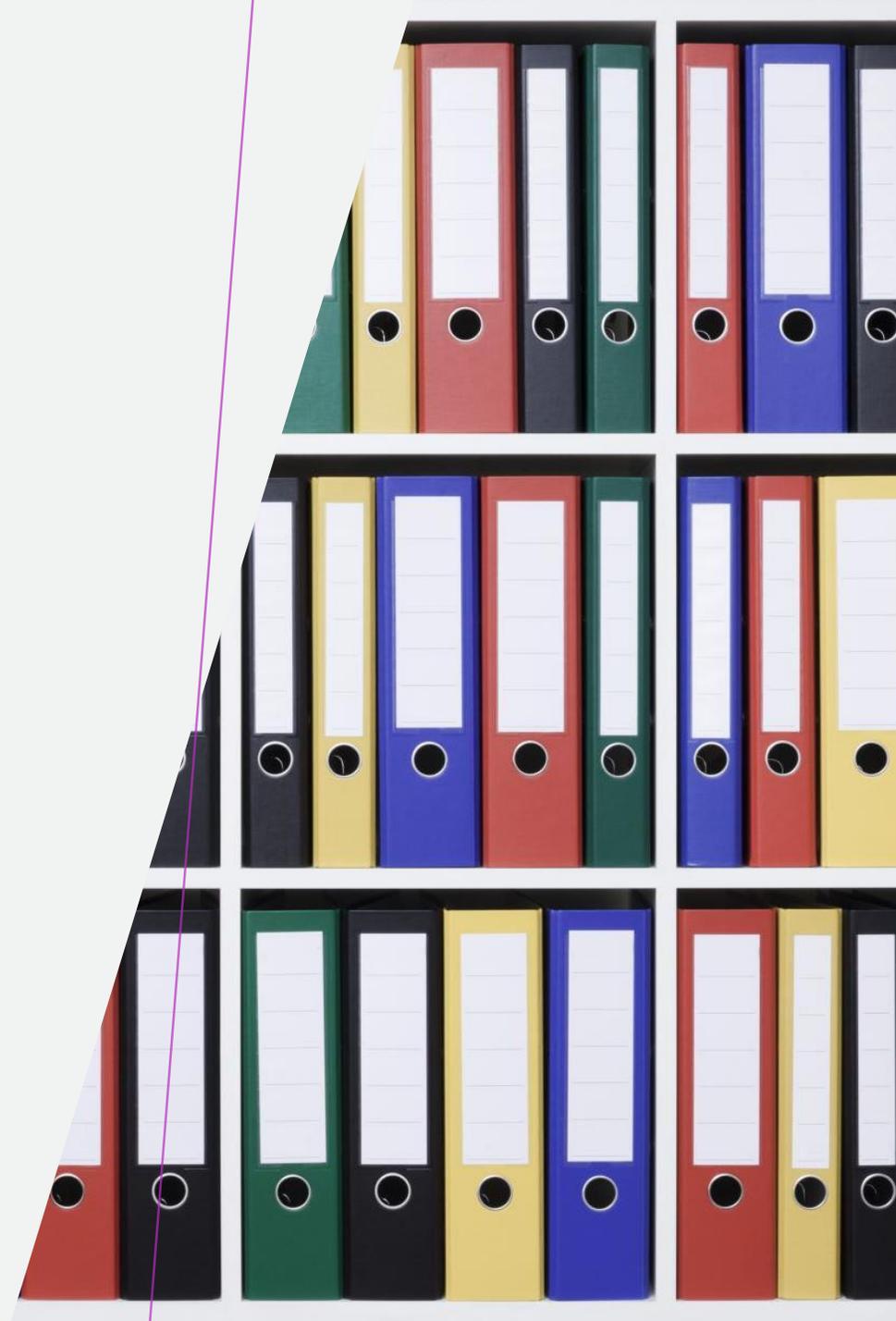
- Audre Lorde Social Justice House became a Living-Learning Community for any student interested in social justice.
  - One option for gender-inclusive housing.
  - GA hired to support the community.
- Students contact a staff member in Resident Education & Development.
  - Individualized per student.
  - Partnership w/ LGBTQ+ Center.
- Gender-inclusive housing options across campus in all room types/communities.
- Gender-inclusive bathrooms identified in most residential communities.

# WHAT WE HOPE TO SEE

- GIH easier to access.
  - Highlighted on the website.
  - Able to self-select a space without having to seek assistance.
- Housing system allowing more flexibility in names, genders, etc.
- Better system for students to identify roommates with similar backgrounds.
  - Roommate matching for GIH.
  - Roommate matching for members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies.
- Stronger partnership with offices across campus for better support.

# CONCLUSIONS AND TAKEAWAYS

- Collect data and identify stakeholders
- Revisit your institution's diversity statement and housing policies
- Establish inclusive policies
- Listen to students' wants and needs
- Market what is available



# CONTACT INFORMATION



Alexa Justice, she/they  
Investigator/Specialist  
Office of Gender Equity & Inclusion (Title IX)  
University of Cincinnati  
alexa.justice@uc.edu



Aleia White, she/her  
Assistant Director  
Resident Education and Development  
University of Cincinnati  
aleia.white@uc.edu

# REFERENCES

Amos, S.N.; Latz, A.O; & Mulvihill, T.M. (2021). Implementing gender-inclusive housing: A narrative inquiry. *College Student Affairs Journal, 39*(1), 43-58.

Blumell, L.E., Huemmer, J., Sternadori, M. (2019). Protecting the ladies: Benevolent sexism, heteronormativity, and partisanship in online discussions of gender-neutral bathrooms. *Mass Communication and Society, 22*. 365-388.

Coulter, R.W., Mair, C., Miller, E., Blosnich, J.R., & Matthews, D.D. (2017, August). Prevalence of past-year sexual assault victimization among undergraduate students: Exploring differences by and intersections of gender identity, sexual identity, and race/ethnicity. *Prevention Science, 18*(6). 726-736.

Edwards, S. (2019, January 14). Gender-inclusive housing promotes safe, welcoming campus for all students. *Insight into diversity*.

Farley, A.N. & Leonardi, B. (2021) Beyond bathroom bills and the gender identity debate: Complicating the policy conversation about supporting trans students in schools. *Educational policy, 35*(2). 274-303.

Horsford, S.D., Scott, J.T., Anderson, G.L. (2019). *The politics of education policy in an era of inequality*. Routledge.

Krum, T.E.; Davis, K.S.; Galupo, M.P. (2013). Gender-inclusive housing preferences: A survey of college-aged transgender students. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 10*(1-2), 64-82.

Marine, S.B.; Nicolazzo, Z.; Wagner, R. (2019). Student affairs professionals' roles in advancing gender inclusive housing: Discourses of dominance and resistance. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 12*(3), 219-229.

Nicolazzo, Z. (2017). *Trans\* in college: Transgender students' strategies for navigating campus life and the institutional politics of inclusion*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Nicolazzo, Z. & Marine, S.B. (2015). "It will change if people keep talking": Trans\* students in college and university housing. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing, 42*(1). 160-177.

Seelman, K.L. (2016). Transgender adults' access to college bathrooms and housing and the relationship to suicidality. *Journal of Homosexuality, 63*(10). 1378-1399.

Spade, D. (2015). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limitations of law* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Duke University Press.

Taub, D.J.; Johnson, R.B.; Reynolds, T. (2016). The implementation of gender-neutral housing: A mixed-methods study across ACUHO-I member institutions. *Journal of College & University Student Housing, 42*(2), 76-93.