



# 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

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## Dear Friends of San Francisco SafeHouse:



What a challenging year! The pandemic, disastrous fires and unhealthy air quality, and our chaotic national political life have taken a toll on all of us. Yet, as 2020 comes to a close, we on the SafeHouse board are proud to share the accomplishments of our staff and the women we serve; they provide us steady hope for the future.

First, congratulations again to Toni Eby, our wonderful Executive Director, for receiving her Masters of Social Work degree last spring! It is a well-deserved honor, witnessing to her hard work and indefatigable energy as she attended school and worked full-time for our SafeHouse clients.

Second, we are proud of how SafeHouse staff and clients have weathered the pandemic crisis. The house continued to operate and most residents thrived, many finding permanent housing and new work opportunities despite COVID-19. And the Hope Center, while having to close for a period of time, continued in spite of that to support our clients in creative and new ways. The Hope Center is now open again, and homeless, sexually exploited women come by every day for services and encouragement from our dedicated staff.

Third, SafeHouse took on significant new responsibilities when San Francisco implemented Project RoomKey, a program to house the homeless in hotel rooms during the pandemic. We are proud to report that over 20 women experiencing homelessness and violence, some referred through the Hope Center, now receive our “signature” services through this new collaboration. And we recently received new funds to place even more trafficked women into housing.

Finally, under Toni’s leadership and advisement we revised the SafeHouse mission statement to better signal the organization’s commitment to inclusivity. “Women” is now “womxn,” an alternate spelling used to foreground trans, non-binary and other historically marginalized women.

On behalf of the board, we send you our heartfelt thanks for supporting the womxn of SafeHouse. Many have started on new paths to healing and hope, and we thank you for walking alongside them.

With deep gratitude,

Betsy Dodd  
Outgoing Board President



Julietta Hua  
Incoming Board President



# PREPARING FOR THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF COVID-19

BY: TONI EBY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year started off with some amazing highs: we had just completed our first quarter at the Hope Center, and we were able to serve more women than ever before, providing them with services and safe housing. We had high hopes for 2020, but even then we recognized that we were fighting an uphill battle and that we had limited resources for the volume of women seeking services and housing. Then COVID-19 hit and all our well laid plans were upended in trying to respond to a crisis that was impacting not only all of our program participants, but all of the staff as well.

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*WE SAW THE BEAUTY AND RESILIENCE THAT IS INHERENTLY HUMAN*

However, out of these most unprecedented of times, we saw the beauty and resilience that is inherently human. We saw a staff member make the huge sacrifice of staying two months straight in a shelter-in-place hotel, so she could provide services and support to clients and avoid exposing her elderly parents and children to COVID-19. We saw women at the Hope Center enter our hotel program and start looking for work and permanent housing. We saw half of our hotel participants and five graduates from the house find permanent housing in the middle of a health crisis. We saw new partnerships arise as community based agencies and local governments worked together to provide for our most vulnerable residents. Don't get me wrong; there were tears, episodes of depression, frustration with being stuck inside, and health scares. However, through it all, program participants greeted me with a smile when I came in the house, excited to tell me about the latest antics of Spartacus, the support kitty, or the new recipe they were cooking, or just about their dreams and future plans. Despite going through years of their own trauma, for the most part these amazing women were able to cope with the support of staff and each other.



## We are looking to the future

Now that we have a firm handle on moving through this crisis, we at SafeHouse are once again looking to the future. We have seen reports of alarming increases in the rates of interpersonal violence as a direct result of isolation due to COVID-19. Additionally, in an area where housing is already unaffordable, there are thousands of people struggling to pay rent, and are only currently housed because of moratoriums on evictions. We know that both domestic violence and homelessness are pathways into sexual exploitation and are concerned that we do not yet fully comprehend the long-term impact of COVID-19. We are bracing for a sharp increase in the number women experiencing sexual exploitation and homelessness in the coming years as a direct result of this crisis. Because of the increase in the rates of violence and the potential sharp increase in homelessness, SafeHouse will continue to prepare and advocate for more resources and housing for this vulnerable population of women.

We feel confident that our advocacy and future preparations will be successful because of the passion of our staff, the dedication of our wonderful board of directors, and the support from people like you. Your dollars go directly toward ensuring that we can serve all women that come through our doors regardless of what barriers they face, that we can provide safe and dignified housing, mental health support, and education and work force development. These are the elements that make SafeHouse successful because of supporters like you. So, as we look to the future, thank you for being part of our journey; we can't wait to share with you what we have planned next.



# Donor Spotlight: Rev. Keenan Kelsey

Each year, SafeHouse recognizes a donor who exemplifies the SafeHouse mission and values. This year we are honored to highlight Reverend Keenan Kelsey of Noe Valley Ministry. Reverend Kelsey has been supporting SafeHouse and the San Francisco Network Ministries for years and is considered a SafeHouse Champion. She has an amazing story to share.

My name is Keenan Kelsey, Presbyterian Minister, Honorably Retired-- although do ministers ever really retire? Ordination at age 50 was a second, or third, career for me. I graduated an English major; worked on a Forestry magazine and freelance in Washington, DC; moved to San Francisco and ended up running my own bird store (quite a trip, very fun!); married, had two babies, and fell into terrible drug and alcohol addiction. The call to ministry came directly out of the recovery experience.

Securely sober, newly divorced, with two 'tweens, I needed to make up for so much time lost to addiction. I did not want retail any longer. Teaching? Social work? Law? One day I happened upon a Church Town Hall at Old First Presbyterian. The topic was "the church's response to AIDS" and Glenda Hope was among the presenters. As I listened, my eyes widened. These presenters were doing what I wanted to do, make a difference, and they were doing it through the church. As this settled in, I felt the equivalent of an inner gasp, the proverbial light bulb. Church people would say, a call. I realized I could take my inner flame of faith and belief, pull it out into the open, and offer it, as a torch, to the world. All the options I'd been juggling fell into one basket. I could make a difference, and I could do it through the church.

I offer this background, because the question was, "How did I become involved in SafeHouse and why do I keep involved?" As a new pastor at Noe Valley Ministry PC (USA) I embraced their on-going support of Network Ministries. I served at the Tenderloin Ambassador Hotel, was a longtime board member for Religious Witness for the Homeless, and worked with Fr. River Sims in street ministry. When Glenda founded SafeHouse, it touched on all my experiences as a drug addict/alcoholic, a woman, a mother, an activist, a caretaker; my ministry already had a strong justice focus, and SafeHouse satisfied my call to embrace both the church and the needs of the city. SafeHouse is where I can make a difference. I can help not just to save lives, but to make those lives useful, healthy and happy.

I have supported SafeHouse for many years. But three years ago, when revising my will, I realized that with the hope of SafeHouse and with the changing times, SafeHouse needed any bequest monies now, not in the future. So, I made a pledge over three years. I hope to extend that again this year, because SafeHouse says to women escaping sexual exploitation, "There really is no place like home, and we are going to show you what that is like."

This is a unique and beautiful program. The work fits perfectly with my own yearnings for the world. This is an underserved population; they are victims of society; they are women of value. God bless SafeHouse and all who make it happen.



**"SafeHouse is where I can make a difference"**

# THE HOPE CENTER

## Coming Together as a Community

BY ALI CHIU, PROGRAM MANAGER

It seemed only yesterday we embraced, shared laughter, meals and tearful whispers as sisters do. We watched the blue sky turn purple orange sending the sun to set wishing the day was longer. Yet as I peeled off the February calendar in my kitchen and we entered mid-March, I slowly realized the world was going to be very unusual for a while. We had no way of knowing back then that it would not only be unusual but totally upside down. This is clear as we now are in the middle of Fall 2020 and things keep getting stranger.

*We wrapped food, sent them with hugs and well wishes to our clients, “be safe, be well, take good care...”*



Here at the Hope Center, as we took in the impact of COVID-19 back at the beginning of March, we first put our brains together and made plans to both protect the Center and provide as much service as possible for as long as we could. We wrapped food, sent them with hugs and well wishes to our clients, “be safe, be well, take good care...” We had no idea we would all need to wear masks, limit the number of participants coming through the door, and check everyone’s temperature at each entry. We didn’t know, as many got sick in New York and Seattle, what it would be like for San Franciscans. Then, the shelter-in-place order came. We closed our front door and provided services through telephone calls, emails and online group support.

We placed many of our homeless clients in hotels that provided meals and onsite support. But problems remained for many. Cleaning stations, testing sites, Wi-Fi, computer access, bathrooms, clean clothes, needle exchange, and a warm smile were hard to come by in the Tenderloin. Most importantly, we lacked a respectful and safe space to address the traumatic lives of our clients and to challenge the deep stigma towards homeless people. Clients continued to be exposed to COVID-19. Our telephone calls often went unanswered because clients couldn’t charge their phones. Attendance suffered. Some were still living with abusive partners and had no confidential space to talk with us. For many, illness, depression, isolation and fear of catching the virus consumed all their energy.





## Our work during COVID-19

As for the Hope Center staff, some of us were dealing with COVID-19 positive family members, personal loss, and our own feelings of powerlessness and isolation. In May, however, we began to gather information, public health knowledge, PPE and other supplies as we made plans to reopen our doors. We made cleaning schedules, taped our carpet into “distancing” squares, put up clear dividers and rearranged common spaces, acquired donations of much needed underwear and bras, and secured food from Food Runners.



At the beginning of June, we reopened the Hope Center and jumped right back into providing in-person services. We know our safe space and the person-to-person relationships are the most essential aspects of meeting client needs, especially during this difficult time. The women we serve everyday have already faced tremendous hurdles in their lives, both before and during the first few months of COVID-19. With a basic understanding of the power and control dynamics of domestic and gender violence, we knew it could be hard for our clients to be constantly reminded of the “new rules” at the Center - to wear a mask, not eat or drink inside the building, not to give us a hug when a rare good news of possible housing placement happened. Yet our clients took this new direction in stride and are grateful to have the space and the staff available to them once again.

At the Hope Center our focus has always been a client centered approach, meeting them where they are. As COVID-19 thunders through our communities, we are proud of the work we do. Although we still cannot share meals, offer lady’s night for singing, or board games and small writing groups, we do offer case management and vital one-on-one support. We distribute clothing, masks, food and drinks, provide computer access, have safe needle exchange, and offer a safe and comfortable space for our clients to relax and “recharge.” We are grateful to our SafeHouse leaders and the many donors who have stepped up with support, so we can provide these services.

This writing is a call for reflection on the past eight months and also an invitation to build a better future. Please check on your families, neighbors, housed and unhoused, ask questions and reach out. Also, please let us not forget to take care of ourselves physically and emotionally. We can’t serve if we are not well ourselves. Please let us know if you are well and let us know if you would be able to support our work in whatever ways you can. We look forward to hearing from you.

# Our Work

SAFEHOUSE PROGRAMS HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON WOMEN'S LIVES

## 1 Where we work:

San Francisco Bay Area.

## 2 Founding Goals for 2021

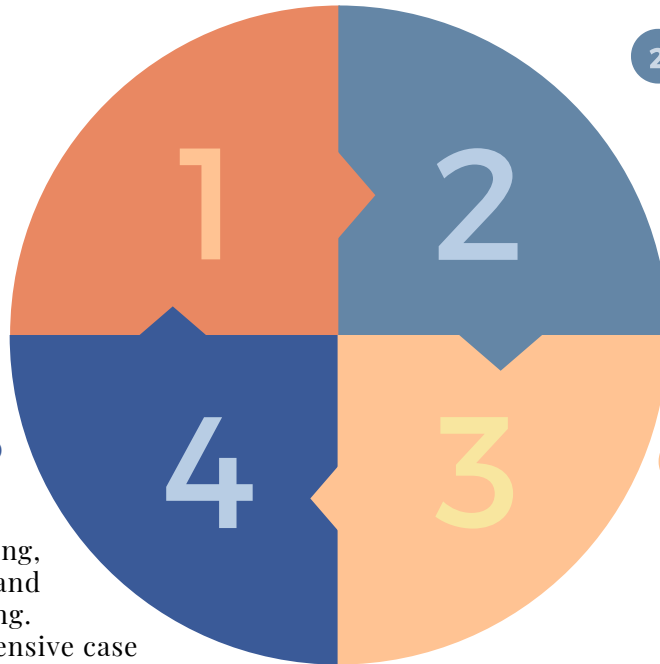
- City & State Government Grants Covering 56% of Programming.
- Private Donations from Donors Like You Covering 44% of Programming.

## 4 How we do our work:

- Transitional housing, rental subsidies, and emergency housing.
- Individualized intensive case management.
- Accompaniment to appointments/ advocacy.
- Individual therapy.
- Support groups.
- Food and basic necessities
- Community training.

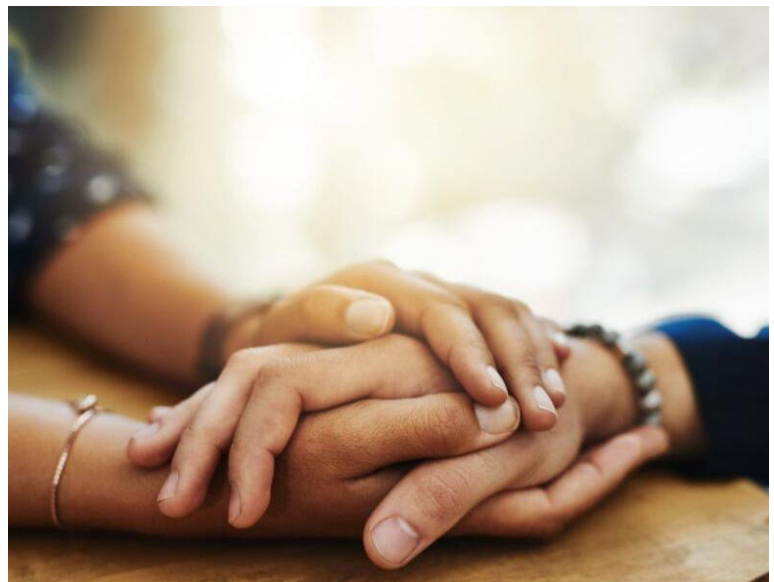
## 3 Who we served

Womxn experiencing homelessness and some form of sexual exploitation.



## What we do:

SafeHouse works to empower and support womxn who are experiencing housing instability and sexual exploitation or trafficking, by creating survivor-centered spaces, services, advocacy, and community education.





# WHO WE SERVED

## COURAGEOUS WOMEN WITH HOPE



All of the women who enter SafeHouse have experienced sexual exploitation at the hands of a trafficker or abuser. For many, it is dangerous and difficult to leave this situation-- the road to SafeHouse is not an easy one. Accessing safe and confidential housing through SafeHouse gives women the foundation needed to work toward healing and independence.

The women we serve are often victims of multiple marginalizations due to factors like gender identity, race and disability, and have traditionally faced barriers to getting services. Many have experienced trauma, have histories of substance use or may need mental health support.

100%

of women are homeless or marginally housed

100%

have experienced some form of commercial sexual exploitation

88%

have experienced multiple overlapping forms of violence

43%

have a disability

29%

are immigrant women

85%

are women of color

28%

are transgender or gender non-conforming



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*We are all continuously inspired by these women's capabilities and determination*

Over the past several months six women transitioned from the program into permanent housing, seven obtained full or part-time employment, and all have engaged in mental and emotional support practices consistently. All of the women currently at the transitional house are continuing to work towards their career, housing, and personal goals and healing from their trauma. As a staff, we are all continuously inspired by these women's capabilities and determination to utilize this difficult time to effect powerful change and growth in their lives.

## THE HOUSE

### Inspiration from Within

*By Jazmyn Brown, Program Manager*

The crises we've been watching unfold in our communities over the recent months are the type that bring unexpected but inevitable and compelling change. This has been clearly demonstrated by the women residing at SafeHouse's transitional housing program.

As they've navigated this new reality of lost jobs, increased health complications, and social justice issues that hit too close to home, they're also still navigating how to survive without the things so many of us take for granted: long term permanent housing, job stability, a support system of loved ones, and the peace of mind that comes from not having endured a lifetime of sexual, emotional, and physical trauma.

## THEIR STRENGTH

Still, these women have displayed a strength and resiliency that only women like them can. During the initial quarantine, like everyone else, the women at SafeHouse had to shelter in place and wait to learn when the world would open back up. As they experienced a wide range of emotions after spending months together primarily indoors, their focus and energy shifted to plan for life after quarantine. The fruits of that labor are still being recognized as the women reach personal milestones, go back to work, enroll in school, and prepare to move into permanent housing.







# SAFEHOUSE AND ANTI-RACISM

By: Kristen Moore, MFT  
Director of Programs

SafeHouse was founded on the principle that the most marginalized in our community are deserving of safe and dignified housing and freedom from sexual exploitation. This is the vision that has guided our organization forward over the last 22 years and it is why it is necessary to ground our ongoing advocacy in anti-racist work. It is critical to center the narratives of those most impacted by structures of oppression and white supremacy and speak out for racial justice—without it we will never reach our goal of reducing homelessness, sexual exploitation and violence against womxn.

Data shows that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) are disproportionately impacted by both homelessness and trafficking. Locally collected data demonstrates that these issues hit our Black community members the hardest. In San Francisco, Black people make up 37% of the population experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in our city, and 34% of identified trafficking survivors-- despite making up less than 6% of the general population. This overrepresentation should be a part of every conversation we have about housing and anti-violence work.

*"The vision that has guided our organization"*



## OUR WORK

The racist nature of discriminatory and exclusionary housing policies (historic and current), income inequality, and the impact of the prison-industrial complex have created barriers to safety for the Black community on every level. Our agency is committed to prioritizing services for the people most impacted by these issues. We are committed as a team to do our own personal and collective anti-racist work and to continually refine our programming to reflect this value. Importantly, we also look to the leadership and wisdom of Black and Brown members of our community to guide our advocacy and interventions.

## THANK YOU

We know that the way forward can seem overwhelming, but community care and connection are drivers of change and we are lucky to have you as part of our community. Thank you for supporting SafeHouse and this important work. By donating your time, energy, or financial resources to SafeHouse you are supporting anti-racist services, advocacy and education. We hope you will stand with us in educating others about the intersection of racism, homelessness and sexual exploitation. Social justice movements focused on these areas are not simply co-existing—they are deeply intertwined.

## LEAD BY EXAMPLE

By Yves-Langston Barthaud,  
Development & Outreach Manager

Since the founding of SafeHouse in 1998, the city of San Francisco has undergone numerous transformations. While change has become expected, we have not always known what shape it would take. The Covid-19 pandemic swept across the world at breakneck speed. Before we knew it, it was here at our doorstep forcing local leaders, businesses, and residents to redesign how they live their daily lives and, in many cases, how to survive. SafeHouse, like so many other organizations, had to adapt to this new reality and reshape our game plan.



With many residents returning to the streets SafeHouse immediately took action and worked with local hotels to provide clients on its waitlist with emergency vouchers to get them off the streets and into a safe place. It was the first step in figuring out solutions to help survivors get into secure spaces during a pandemic. As the only San Francisco organization dedicated to providing transitional housing and safe spaces to womxn survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, SafeHouse is the prime advocate in ensuring that this underrepresented demographic gets the services that are so desperately needed.

SafeHouse has most recently begun a partnership with the City and County of San Francisco through the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to help provide the opportunity for high risk individuals experiencing homelessness to shelter in place. Due to the current health crisis this temporary program includes both women and men, something that we at SafeHouse discussed endlessly, finally deciding that the importance of providing a safe space to all individuals experiencing homelessness during a global health crisis was aligned with our mission.

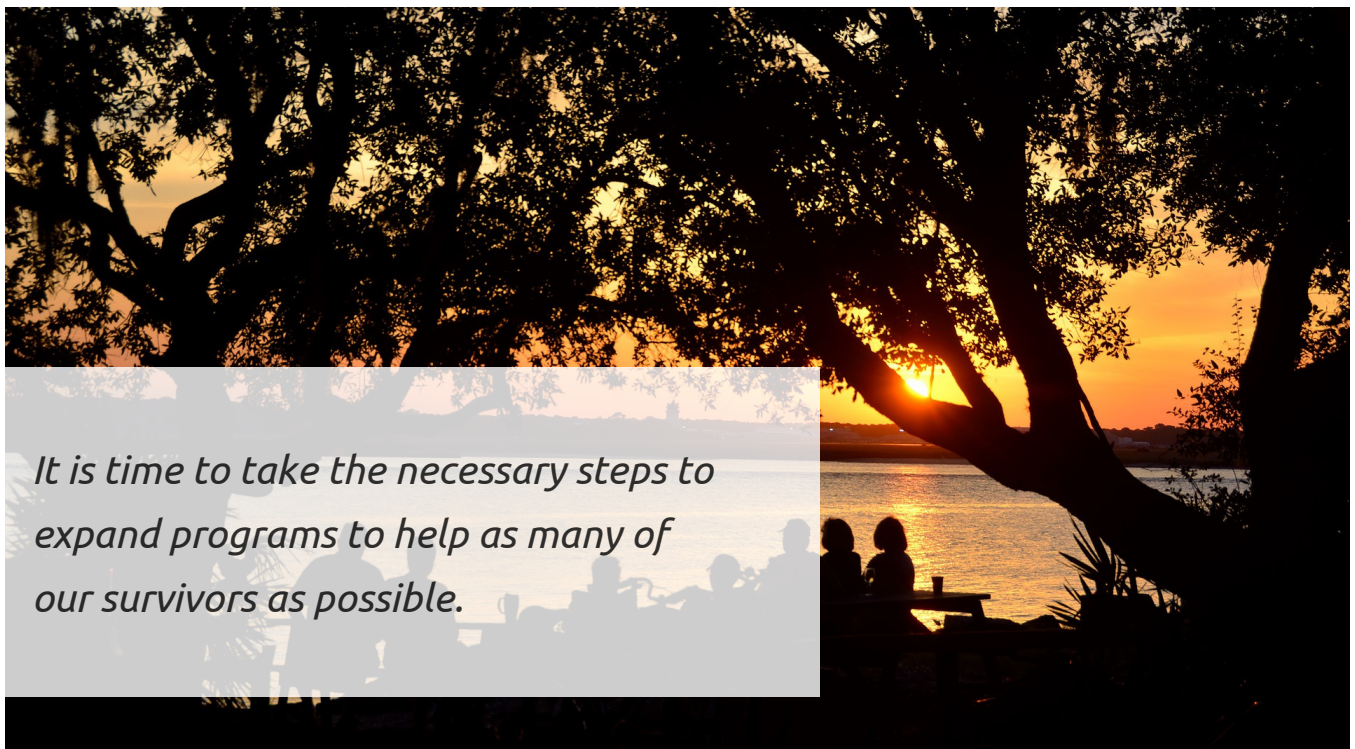
**"SAFEHOUSE IS THE PRIME ADVOCATE IN ENSURING THAT THIS UNDERREPRESENTED DEMOGRAPHIC GETS THE SERVICES THAT ARE SO DESPERATELY NEEDED".**



We met with City departments, City officials, and elected leaders to advocate for the inclusion of shelter in place options for womxn survivors of violence as they are one of the most vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness. As many shelter residents are predominantly male, placing womxn survivors of violence in those spaces can feel unsafe. Thankfully, the City heard us and agreed. We were able to advocate for the prioritization of womxn experiencing violence – an incredible step to permanently house these womxn.

Successfully moving through a global health crisis and taking on new projects took a concerted, concentrated effort by everyone at SafeHouse, led tirelessly by our Executive Director, Toni Eby. Case managers, such as Janice Higuera, stepped up to take larger roles; our Director of Programs, Kristen Moore, worked late into the evenings increasing our staffing levels in just two weeks. Program Managers, such as Ali Chiu and Jazmyn Brown led all other programs to meet and exceed the needs of our clients while still providing support to other departments. Each member of SafeHouse sprang into action to ensure that prioritizing shelter in place options for this vulnerable population would be safe and effective. From advocacy, to action, to results, the SafeHouse team came together at every level to execute this massive undertaking in a timely manner.

As the year winds down with nothing but more change in sight, and we at SafeHouse continue to move forward, it is not acceptable to become complacent and rest on our laurels. It is not enough to hope that others will take action. It is time to take the necessary steps to expand programs to help as many of our survivors as possible, and an opportunity to come up with creative ways to do so. My first year with SafeHouse has been an incredible experience, deepening my understanding of one of humanity's darker corners. The womxn here lead with their heart; work tirelessly to help and support their sisters each and every day. They are role models and mentors to many. It's been 22 years since our founding. And though many changes have occurred, one thing hasn't: the SafeHouse team has and will always lead by example.



*It is time to take the necessary steps to expand programs to help as many of our survivors as possible.*

# BOARD SPOTLIGHT

*Each year, SafeHouse wishes to thank our board members, and highlight a member for our Year End newsletter. This year SafeHouse is proud to highlight incoming Board President, Julietta Hua. Julie has been a part of the SafeHouse board since January of this year and has been a key contributor to its mission and growth.*

*Tell us a little bit about yourself. What are your activities and what do they involve?*

*My paying job is at San Francisco State University, where I've been teaching Women and Gender Studies since 2006. That's also where I met Toni Eby and learned about the work of SafeHouse. I wanted to teach because I had teachers all throughout my life who always encouraged me, and helped me find a sense of self, especially when I was younger, growing up in a mostly white community, as the child of (not-white) immigrants.*

*I got lucky because my job has always been meaningful to me since it's allowed me to think and research issues tied to structural racism and patriarchy, which I've also recognized as always shaping my life experiences. Working at the university gives me an opportunity to form relationships with all kinds of very awesome people (like Toni), even if it's just for one term. It's really those relationships with people, built around mutual interest and dedication to making life more livable for more people more of the time, that both drew me to SafeHouse and keeps me excited about the work that takes place there.*

*In your opinion, what is the most important work that this organization does?*

*In Women and Gender Studies, we think a lot about how people become vulnerable to violence, and especially what kinds of social structures facilitate vulnerability. We also think about how best to support survivors of violence in ways that center survivor needs, respect the fact that survivors have their own processes of recovery and healing, and address the larger social and structural issues that exacerbate (and sometimes cause) violence in the first place. This is exactly the orientation that the staff of SafeHouse seems to center in their work, and what I think is the most important aspect of the support work that SafeHouse provides.*

*What contribution or achievement of the organization are you most proud of?*

*I'm really impressed with the way SafeHouse has taken care of its staff. An organization is only as amazing as the staff that make it happen, and SafeHouse seems to really practice its values around respect, reciprocity and self-care not just in the ways it approaches programming and clients, but also in how staff are treated. That requires real dedication from everyone involved in the organization; it's something I think everyone should be proud of.*

*What do you hope the organization will achieve in the near future? In the long term?*

*The organization has really responded in amazing ways to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, and I'm certain these challenges will help make the organization stronger and also more agile in terms of continuing to provide services to unsheltered women who experience violence.*

*Do you have a message to share?*

*Just thank you to everyone who supports and makes the work happen. I think a world where we would all have access to safe shelter, food security and the ability to flourish our lives is actually a very realistic goal for the present; SafeHouse is evidence of that.*







## HOW CAN YOU HELP?



- Make a donation at <https://www.sfsafehouse.org>.
- Send a gift card for Home Depot, Amazon, Costco.
- Go to [safehouse.org](https://www.safehouse.org) and click on Wish List. You will find everything from PJ's to cookware to toothbrushes.
- Have an item on the list or something else you wish to donate? Send us an email to [info@sfsafehouse.org](mailto:info@sfsafehouse.org) or [kaylena@sfsafehouse.org](mailto:kaylena@sfsafehouse.org).
- Organize a fundraiser for SafeHouse.



SafeHouse accepts very gently used, high quality donations of furniture and household items. We are also always looking for professional volunteers with skills in facility maintenance such as plumbing and electrical or general contractors.



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