



The New York Women's Foundation
Activist Philanthropist

Photo Credit: United Community Center's East NY Farm

Contents > Features

February 2016 · Volume 2, Issue 1



Panelists from the Hurricane Sandy: Community Recovery & Resilience in Partnership with NYU Wagner

- 3** **Welcome**
By Ana L. Oliveira

- 4** **Without Impunity: Sexual Abuse as Police Brutality**
By C. Nicole Mason

- 6** **The Older Sisters, Caregivers II**
By Susan Leicher

- 8** **Leadership Through Giving: A Profile on Rhonda Joy McLean**
By Humera Afridi

- 10** **Earning a Degree and Charting a New Course: Hudson Link's College Education Program in Prison**
By Humera Afridi

- 13** **The Time is Now: How Philanthropy Can Build with Girls, Young Women and Gender-Fluid Youth of Color**
By Jennifer Agmi

- 15** **A Plan for More Affordable Senior Housing**
By Bobbie Sackman

- 17** **Radiance Photo Corner**

Dear Friend,

Welcome to The New York Women's Foundation's first **Activist Philanthropist** issue of 2016! A forum for inspiring change, this e-zine celebrates philanthropy in action—highlighting the work of our grantee partners, as well as the many individuals and organizations transforming New York City into a vibrant, just, and equitable place.

Looking back at 2015, NYWF is heartened by the great strides made. Through our support of grantee partners' work, we spurred legislative advancements in the areas of equal pay, family-friendly workplace policies, and dignity for incarcerated women. We convened expert panels, published reports, and advanced several initiatives, such as IGNITE!, a seven-year initiative to accelerate gender and racial equity in NYC. We also fostered new partnerships, including our involvement as a co-chair of the New York City Council's Young Women's Initiative, under the leadership of Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. As the largest public women's fund in the U.S., NYWF is an unstoppable force—and a voice—for positive change in the lives of women, girls and gender-fluid individuals. In 2016, NYWF will continue to take bold actions to enhance economic security and safety for women and families in NYC through sustainable and effective solutions.

This issue of **Activist Philanthropist** includes the second in a series of articles on caregiving, in which Susan Leicher brings forward an unspoken issue that shapes the lives of girls and young women by highlighting the consequences of teenage girls becoming early caregivers for their families. Nicole Mason writes about police brutality in the form of sexual abuse, and the struggle for justice and accountability. Humera Afridi highlights the leadership of former Board Chair Rhonda Joy McLean, and the importance of leadership through giving.

We wish you a very Happy New Year—a year of continued transformation, collaboration, and inspiration!

Warm regards,



Ana L. Oliveira
President & CEO

In Depth:

Without Impunity: Sexual Abuse as Police Brutality

“If the most vulnerable in our society are bravely speaking up, surely we can lend our voices to ensure their stories are heard and changes are made in this system to protect us all.”

– OKC Artists for Justice on Holtzclaw Case

BY C. NICOLE MASON



#SayHerName rally. Photo Credit: African American Policy Forum

On January 21, 2016, Daniel Holtzclaw, a former police officer convicted of sexually assaulting eight low-income, African-American women while on duty was sentenced to 263 years in prison. Community and anti-violence advocates from across the country including New York City-based Black Women’s Blueprint, converged in Oklahoma City for the sentencing phase of the trial. The advocates came to ensure that justice was served, to support the thirteen victims in the case and to raise awareness about an issue often ignored by mainstream media: violence against women and girls of color by law enforcement.

In a year-long investigation by the

Associated Press, nearly 1,000 officers lost their badges because of sex crimes, including rape or other sexual misconduct. That number, while significant, is considered low and not a true reflection of the magnitude of the problem. A recent study by the Cato Institute found that sexual abuse and misconduct is the number two complaint against police officers, second only to excessive force.

Sexual abuse and violence by law enforcement are often treated as isolated incidences rather than as acts of excessive force or violence against women. Police Brutality, defined as the use of excessive physical violence or deadly force

by law enforcement, has rarely been applied to instances of sexual misconduct or abuse. However, framing sexual abuse by law enforcement as a type of police brutality would help to close gaps in terms of reporting, accountability, support and recourse for victims.

One of the biggest hurdles in addressing sexual abuse by law enforcement officials is that these crimes are largely unreported or tracked by city agencies or local government. Across the 50 states, there is no uniform reporting mechanism or decertification process that assures the swift removal of police officers once they are accused of sexual assault or to track the prevalence of such crimes. As a result, officers who are accused of misconduct are free to look for a job on another police force or continue to assault without consequence.

In most states, revoking law enforcement licenses can take years and in some jurisdictions, officers are allowed to voluntarily resign rather than be fired for misconduct. In at least a half dozen states—including New York, California, New Jersey and Massachusetts—police officers are not decertified, meaning their license to serve is not revoked, for sexual misconduct.

In Officer Holtzclaw's case once his behavior was reported, he was allowed to continue to patrol the very streets where many of his victims lived.

What We Know

Victims of sexual abuse by law enforcement fear they won't be believed

"They pretty much have the power in the palm of their hand. And it's your word against theirs."

-Woman in the neighborhood patrolled by Holtzclaw

Women and girls that are targeted by law enforcement for sexual abuse are often on the margins of society, have criminal records or are seen as vulnerable or less credible. They may also fear retaliation by police. Holtzclaw, for example, preyed upon women in a predominantly low-income African-American community in the northeastern part of Oklahoma City. Many of them had previous

criminal records or a history of drug abuse—all women Holtzclaw assumed would never be deemed as credible or would report the crime.

Accountability and convictions of police officers are rare in sexual misconduct cases

"Many cops arrested for sexual misconduct are, like Holtzclaw, repeat offenders. Multiple victims of the accused often come forward once a case has been publicized and other never report the crimes against them, making justice elusive."

-The Police Violence We Aren't Talking About, The Nation

Police officers are rarely convicted or serve jail time for sexual abuse or violence. For liability or other reasons, these cases are often swept under the rug. Many of the victims in Holtzclaw's case were only discovered because of an internal investigation by the department after a victim bravely came forward to report the assault.

What We Can Do

To support victims of violence and identify perpetrators, there should be mechanisms at the local, state and federal levels to report sexual misconduct committed by officers. States and localities should also be required to participate in a national declassification registry that would prevent officers banned from licensure from seeking a post in a different state or locality.

Next, advocates should also push for mandatory and on-going training for law enforcement on sexual abuse and violence. Senior level law enforcement officials should receive training on identifying problem officers, reporting and investigating crimes of sexual abuse.

Sexual violence by police officers and other officials is a serious issue in need of concrete solutions. Daniel Holtzclaw's trial and subsequent conviction is a rare instance of accountability in regard to sexual abuse and misconduct by law enforcement.

In Depth

This is the second in a series of articles about the ways in which women (particularly low-income women of color and immigrant women) are limited and challenged at all stages of their lives by the entrenched assumption that they are society's 'natural' caregivers and that they should shoulder that responsibility without adequate recognition, preparation or remuneration.

The Older Sisters, Caregivers II

BY SUSAN LEICHER

“Society puts us young women in boxes and those boxes are mostly about taking care of other people. Taking care of kids—yours and everyone else’s—that’s, like, considered the most ‘female’ thing of all.”

“I’ve been taking care of my little sister for forever and it is hard work, believe me. It’s being a role model, making decisions, setting priorities, saying what the limits are and getting things done for someone else. It’s time to think of caregiving as leadership training.”

- Participants in a series of black and Latina teen focus groups

Policy experts typically raise four main issues in any discussion of the deficits of NYC’s publicly-funded childcare, early childhood education or workforce development programs:

- Hundreds of thousands of low-income working mothers remain ineligible for quality subsidized childcare and are thereby caught in a relentless, draining process of cobbling together the arrangements that will permit them to support their families.
- Our economy suffers because this critical segment of the workforce is constrained and exhausted by that process.
- Millions of low-income young children receive inadequate emotional, intellectual, and social support throughout the most critical years of their development.
- Tens of thousands of childcare and early education workers are denied appropriate pay, training, support and protections for their vitally important work.

But one last—and huge—casualty of those systems is almost never mentioned:

- The tens of thousands of pre-teen and teenage girls who lose out on key educational, career and personal opportunities because they are stuck providing care for younger siblings.

Top youth providers across NYC’s low-income immigrant communities and communities of color typically characterize the girls with whom they work in similar terms. Self-reliant. Dynamic. Curious. Socially-responsible. Hard-working. Ambitious. They stress that many of those girls are left to negotiate the City’s complicated and challenging school system without the benefit of English-speaking or educated parents. That they are often the main translators, interpreters and advocates for their foreign-born families. That they almost invariably manage to out-perform their male counterparts in school. And that—given the opportunity to explore new fields—they are naturally passionate about social justice issues, deeply fascinated by scientific and technological challenges, and wonderfully gifted in a range of athletic and artistic arenas.

“The girls with whom I work really ‘get it’ that there are things in our society that need to be changed,” asserts the director of an Asian-American community action program.

“They are unfailingly the first ones to take charge—and the ones best equipped to make things happen.”

“Do you know what my girls say about science and technology?” remarks the director of a South-Bronx-based science program for Latina pre-teens. “They say: ‘It is such fun to figure out how things work! Can’t we do more?’ And someone always adds: ‘It’s more than just fun—it’s a way to make the world a better place!’”

Those same providers, however, invariably note that the girls they serve regularly forfeit precious educational and developmental opportunities because they are expected to assume the caregiving responsibilities that their mothers can’t manage, their male relatives won’t take on, and no public program covers.

“I can’t tell you how often our girls miss practice because they have to mind younger siblings till their mothers come home,” recounts the director of a premiere athletic program for low-income black and Latina girls. “Or how often they show up for practice with younger siblings in tow—and can’t really concentrate on what they are doing.”

“If a South Asian girl wants to apply to an out-of-town college rather than to a branch of CUNY, her parents will ask: ‘But who will take care of your little sisters?’” recounts the director of a youth agency that serves that community. “And that will be that. The girl will go to a CUNY college. Those parents would never ask that of her brother. And if—by some strange chance—they were to ask him, he would answer: ‘I dunno.’ And off he would go to the college of his choice.”

There are many reasons to better structure and fund the city’s publicly-funded childcare, early childhood, and work support programs. A stronger workforce. Better-prepared pre-schoolers. Families less stressed and less financially-debilitated. But we should also be motivated by the goal of helping girls from low-income communities to step out of the “box” of being society’s un-acknowledged, under-respected, unpaid caregivers. Of freeing them to pursue whatever leadership tracks are best suited to their talents and interests—adequately appreciated, supported and remunerated.

To learn more about the situations of New York’s low-income girls and young women, see The New York Women’s Foundation’s latest *Voices from the Field* report, “Blueprint for Investing in Girls and Young Women”: <http://www.nywf.org/voices-from-the-field/>

To learn more about The New York Women’s Foundation’s groundbreaking work in the field of Girls and Young Women—including its exciting new *IGNITE!* initiative—see: www.nywf.org/ignite/

Philanthropy in Action

Leadership Through Giving: A Profile on Rhonda Joy McLean

BY HUMERA AFRIDI

Rhonda Joy McLean, Deputy Counsel General at Time Inc., has served as a co-chair of The New York Women's Foundation Board and, prior to that, on the Grants Advisory Committee. She was one of the founding members of the Circle of Sisters for Social Change at NYWF, a group of socially conscious women who harness their financial resources and networks to build a voice for social change philanthropy in New York City. NYWF spoke with Rhonda about philanthropy and her personal investment in giving.

"You *don't* have to be a millionaire to be a philanthropist!" states Rhonda Joy McLean. "I talk about this a lot. I don't think we ever thought—my family, church and I—that what we were doing is philanthropy. I think the greatest giving is this effortless sharing of *you*, not just your things."

Rhonda Joy McLean grew up in segregated Smithfield, North Carolina, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement. At 13, she was among the first of four Black students to enroll in a Whites-only high school. "Three girls and one boy enlisted for what was really a war. And it was unrelenting..." she wrote in a testimony for *Essence* magazine in 2008.

Enduring racist jokes and pranks and witnessing heart-breaking inequality everywhere, Rhonda became a warrior against injustice. She admonished the bullies who threw rocks at a six year old and insisted on the right to a vigil after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., despite threats of expulsion from the principal. It was courage that Rhonda and her family subscribed to, even as fear pervaded nearly every aspect of daily life in her town.

Rhonda's parents—schoolteachers from

Buffalo and Chicago, the first in their families to attend college—filled their home with music and hosted dinners for students, many of whom were rural, most of whom had never seen a black professional man before Rhonda's father. And there was Mrs. Boyd—"a typical example of a beautiful, brilliant well-educated black woman"—a surrogate grandmother to Rhonda, who taught her how to read and encouraged her through her growing years.

"Very early on I came to understand that one-on-one sharing is high-quality giving, because giving of yourself to another person is one of the best things you can do," says Rhonda.

Receiving her J.D. from Yale Law School in 1983, Rhonda was the first Black woman attorney to be hired at Time Inc. Today, she serves as Deputy General Counsel at Time Inc., managing a third of the legal department. Rhonda is also the chair of the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan New York and President of the Greater New York

Chapter of The Links, a Black professional women's organization that, amongst other initiatives, sends people to college, usually women whose lives have been interrupted by challenges. With The Links, Rhonda's primary mission has been a multi-year partnership with the Urban Women's Retreat, a Black-founded and Black-run women's shelter in Manhattan.



women's organization that, amongst other initiatives, sends people to college, usually women whose lives have been interrupted by challenges. With The Links, Rhonda's primary mission has been a multi-year partnership with the Urban Women's Retreat, a Black-founded and Black-run women's shelter in Manhattan.

The visionary behind the creation of Circle of Sisters at NYWF, Rhonda is an active and vocal Board alumna, consistently highlighting the important role of nontraditional philanthropy. When Rhonda attended her first NYWF Celebrating Women® Breakfast in the early 90's, she was captivated by the notion of a cross-cultural alliance of women working on behalf of women in great need. "I'd been in New York for several years already, but I wasn't aware of the level of poverty and despair. I was so impressed by what I call this 'army of women' coming together!"

Rhonda credits The Foundation for a key learning—women are really at the core of everything. "I really believe if I could give every girl the right to an education all the way through college, I truly think it would change the world—and for her to understand that she really deserved this opportunity," declares Rhonda, adding, "Women plus knowledge plus opportunity equals power and economic security!"

Rhonda's first job as an NYWF volunteer was welcoming guests to the breakfast at 6.30 a.m. She participated for a number of years in the Grants Advisory Committee and was, in time, invited to join the board. "The training I received at the board level at NYWF—we work very hard to be inclusive; it's democratic which means we have to listen to a lot of points of view to get to the decision-making—has been very helpful to me as a leader in my field and also as a not-for-profit person." Today, Rhonda's relationship with NYWF spans over twenty years. "Once you're part of this family, you never leave it!" she affirms.

Idealism grounded in hard work has been an early characteristic of Rhonda's. Before attending Yale Law School, Rhonda pursued many passions, including piano for which she won awards and setting up Head Start Programs

around the country. "I thought we were going to fix the world!" "I still do believe in leaving the world a better place than you found it—and doing whatever you can, whatever that is," says the NYWF trailblazer, who exudes joy and a can-do optimism.

"In my community, it was just understood that on Thanksgiving if you had some extra cans in your pantry, you'd bring them to a location. It didn't have to be organized by the Salvation Army. Similarly, there was a lot of fostering in my community. Lots of black families went undocumented as foster parents. People didn't call it anything. You just took in a niece, a nephew, someone whose mother died. Because it's undocumented, people think we don't do it. It's the same way about giving. We underestimate what we do. We think we're not philanthropists because it isn't organized or formal," she explains.

Following in her parents' footsteps, Rhonda mentors women and men, some of whom are seeking to make a transition in their careers, or their

personal lives. The Yale Black Law Students Association awarded her the Hon. Jane Matilda Bolin award for mentoring hundreds of young lawyers and law students and for her community service. "People say, 'Why do you take this time, you're so busy?' But people did it for me and I want to pass it forward," Rhonda says enthusiastically.

Sharing of herself, her knowledge and experience, Rhonda has co-authored *The Little Black Book of Success. Laws of Leadership for Black Women*—addressing the unique challenges faced by women of color who are executive leaders as well as strategies for success. "In 2007, there were thousands of books on leadership, but not one that related to Black women as leaders. We see the book as inclusive, not exclusive. We speak about cultural duality," says Rhonda whose second book is forthcoming in 2016.

"I feel I have a richer life because I share some of who I am with others. Part of the way I define myself is gratitude. Much has been given to me—many people whom I didn't know, and who didn't know me, have been very helpful and extended themselves."

In Focus

Earning a Degree and Charting a New Course: Hudson Link's College Education Program in Prison



From left to right: Shantai R., Talisha C., Shauna K., Jesse H., and Rosa O..
Photo credit: Babita Patel / Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison

BY HUMERA AFRIDI

NYWF grantee partner Hudson Link for Higher Education provides college education, training, and reentry support programs for women currently in or leaving prison.

On December 8, 2015, an air of excitement filled the visiting room of the Taconic Correctional Facility, a medium security prison for women in Bedford Hills, New York. Posters of caps and gowns and messages of congratulations adorned the hall's cinderblock walls. Over 70 women—representing a third of the inmate population—were being recognized for their successful participation in a college education program stewarded by Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison.

Hudson Link coordinates college education in five prisons in New York— Fishkill, Greene, Sing Sing, Sullivan and Taconic

Correctional Facilities—in partnership with several colleges including Marymount College, Mercy College, and Vassar College.

“I’ve been in the program for a year,” said Taisha S., a member of the Student Advisory Committee at Taconic. “In the beginning, I just wanted to make my 24 credits of college, make my board so that I could go home. I was in that mindset. But I’m getting more than credits! This is my life right here! This program is a big encouragement to me and my family, given that I was a high school dropout. I’ll be out on May 20, 2017. I want to go down a different path. I want to be a role model for my sisters and nieces.”

Often, it is in adversity that the seeds of creative potential are sown. In 1994, when Congress abolished Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals and, soon after, New York State cancelled college degree programs in correctional facilities, those inside who were depending on college education to transform their lives were suddenly at a loss.

Inspired by the women at Bedford Correctional Facility who launched The Center of Redirection Through Education, a group of incarcerated individuals at Sing Sing, college educators, and community leaders came together in 1998 to create the not-for-profit Hudson Link for Higher Education.

“It was the creation of something more than *just* another academic program,” emphasized Sean Pica, Executive Director of Hudson Link. “The idea was that this program would be a community builder, a new door to the future that held promise and hope—the promise of a different direction for their families and children.”

In addition to college education, Hudson Link provides invaluable life skills and re-entry support to incarcerated women and men, helping them to change the course of their lives. Offering a continuum of support that extends from life within walls to life outside, the alumni services department provides students with support letters for the parole board, academic mentoring, and career coaching. It also distributes laptops and gently used business attire for job interviews. Forty percent of Hudson Link’s staff have been through the justice system and understand first-hand the obstacles and challenges faced by people in prison. The staff

and academic coordinators are guides, illuminating the way towards the opportunities and growth that are possible after release, inspiring students with their own lived examples of having become contributing members of society.

Women face unique challenges in the prison system, and upon re-entry into society. These women, who are often mothers, experience a great deal of guilt and judgement, despite their efforts to create a better life for themselves and their family. This is a tremendous barrier to creating an environment of support and success upon re-entry. Confidence-building is a great part of the work

that Hudson Link is committed to. The Student Advisory Committee, run by women who have completed the college program, is an example. The Committee gives students a voice and an outlet to express themselves. “It’s empowering because the incarcerated are a voiceless



Lucy Jo T. and Mary Donnelly. Photo Credit: Babita Patel/
Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison

population and they come from voiceless, impoverished

communities that traditionally don’t go to college,” said Pica.

Distinguishing this particular recognition ceremony at Taconic was the granting of an Associate’s Degree from Marymount College to Lucy Jo T. who is the first Hudson Link student to receive a degree while there.

“I’m thrilled and overwhelmed that this has finally happened,” exclaimed Lucy Jo who despite a series of health challenges persevered for 13 years and completed her degree. She is already pursuing her bachelor’s. Lucy Jo was able to carry over credits that she’d earned at the maximum-security Bedford Correctional Facility before being transferred to Taconic. “I’m so

thankful Hudson Link was able to do this for me. Now other women can complete their degrees here,” she said.

Indeed, while Lucy Jo is a pioneer in receiving her Associate’s Degree at Taconic, she is followed by a queue of women almost ready to graduate. Ruth D. will graduate in March 2016 and plans to attend SUNY Albany after release. “I can’t imagine being in prison without going to school,” she shared.

Shelly L. will also complete her Associate’s Degree in 2016. Jaime C., who is passionate about writing, has nine classes left to attain hers. “Knowing my voice is validated means so much,” she said. And, Jeanette M. who runs a dependency program at Taconic is already planning a Ph.D. in Psychology and Chemical Dependency with Capella University.

The hall resounded with applause as names were announced and, one by one, each student walked to the podium to receive her certificate. Hudson Link Academic Coordinator, Mary Donnolly, well-loved by the students, addressed them directly in her comments: “I want you to succeed. I want you to become the women you were meant to be... What we are given is the present of today.... Our job is to make the most of what you have today. I want you to remember there was someone here who fought for you and for your access to higher education.”

Hudson Link’s initiative has resulted in remarkably low rates of recidivism. A large number of alumni emerge as leaders and community builders who, in turn, serve as volunteers and coordinators with Hudson Link, helping graduates thrive upon reentry. “These women exemplify that a mistake doesn’t define you. What you do afterwards defines you,” stated Facility Chaplain, Sister Jennah, who delivered the closing benediction of the Commencement ceremony.



Kimberly C and Denise W. Photo Credit: Babita Patel/Hudson Link for Higher Education

Philanthropy in Action

The Time is Now: How Philanthropy Can Build With Girls, Young Women, and Gender-Fluid Youth of Color

BY JENNIFER AGMI

Imagine a city in which girls, young women, and gender-fluid youth of color do more than survive. A city in which they are safe, healthy, and economically secure. A city in which their voices are heard, their needs are prioritized, and their leadership fully recognized and supported.

How can we, as funders, help build this type of city? How can we help create a world in which all girls, young women, and gender-fluid youth are free to reach their full potential?

We can do it through a powerful, multi-front effort that brings together a full array of resources to achieve this common goal. We can do it with girls, young women, and gender-fluid youth of color leading the way.

For 28 years, The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF)'s grantmaking, advocacy, and community-building efforts have served women, girls, and gender-fluid individuals with authenticity and success. Recognizing the need for deeper and more targeted investment, last spring, we launched IGNITE!, a 7-year, multi-pronged, multi-million dollar initiative that unites the power of community, government, philanthropy and – most importantly – girls, young women, and gender-fluid youth of color themselves to radically change the way that society views and supports the strengths of this vital population.

NYWF's recent report, [Blueprint for Investing in Girls and Young Women](#) highlights both the urgent need for and the vast potential of the IGNITE! initiative. The report notes that 75%

of NYC's 800,000 girls and young women, ages 9-24, are members of communities of color or immigrant communities. It highlights that most of those girls and young women live in serious poverty; many are sexually abused; many battle ill-health; few receive the support required to graduate high school or succeed in college; and thousands are pushed into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems or are victims of commercial sex trafficking.

Despite all of those significant challenges, this is a group of huge resilience and incredible strengths. Girls in low-income communities fill huge wage-earning and caregiving roles from a very early age. They take care of younger siblings and serve as irreplaceable translators and interpreters for their families. And – given the chance and the forum – they are articulate spokespeople and energetic leaders on behalf of themselves, their peers, and their communities.

Knowing this, how can we, as funders, create a platform that allows them to lead the way on addressing the most critical challenges that they and their families face everyday?

At the NYWF, this question is at the forefront of all of our work. One of the guiding principles of IGNITE! is that philanthropy needs to support solutions that come from the communities impacted. IGNITE!'s ultimate goal is to equip an ecosystem of girls, young women and gender-fluid youth of color leaders with the resources and voice to achieve significant and permanent individual, community and systemic change.

Another guiding principle of our work is the need for inclusion and collaboration, as both are the surest path to and the chief hallmark of success. Our key partnerships and collaborative efforts begin with the leaders of community-based organizations, who blaze this path and remain on the ground every single day championing the voices and success of this crucial group of New Yorkers. IGNITE! exemplifies that conviction. It is an umbrella effort for a range of cutting-edge, population-led, inter-related collaborations with the public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors.

One such collaboration is our partnership with the NYC Council's Young Women's Initiative (YWI). Under the leadership of Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, YWI is the nation's first municipal effort solely dedicated to creating policy, legislative and funding recommendations in support of young women of color. YWI is convening a variety of experts, including young cis and transgender women and gender-fluid youth, through focus groups and participation in working groups to shape the direction and recommendations of the Initiative.

Another partnership is the NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color, a philanthropic effort seeded with funds from The New York Women's Foundation and the NoVo Foundation. The Fund, which is part of a broader Philanthropic Table, hopes to spur discussion and leverage diverse resources, expertise, and insight towards promoting community-based solutions to the structural inequities facing girls, young women, and gender-fluid youth of color.



NYWF grantee partner, Brotherhood/Sister Sol. Photo Credit: Emmanuel Andre

Philanthropy is ready to join the community efforts that focus on the needs of a population that has long been ignored and underinvested. The time is now for all of us to do our part in building a society in which girls, young women and gender-fluid youth of color are free from all the intersecting barriers that impede their progress, downplay their contributions, and ignore their extraordinary gifts.

[Click here](#) for more information on The New York Women's Foundation's IGNITE! with Girls, Young Women, and Gender-Fluid Youth of Color Initiative.

Jennifer Agmi is a Program Director at The New York Women's Foundation.

This article was previously published on GrantCraft.org.

Op-Ed

A Plan for More Affordable Senior Housing

BY BOBBIE SACKMAN

If there was available land to build affordable senior housing across the city, would you use it? There is. And we must.

The key to using it is passing the de Blasio administration's Zoning for Quality and Affordability plan, which calls for independent senior buildings. There are several reasons this plan makes sense for New Yorkers, of all ages.

LiveOn NY, a leading advocacy organization for older New Yorkers, released *Paving the Way for New Senior Housing* in May, identifying feasible land that could house 2000 New Yorkers. The city needs to a plan to move forward now - at a certain age, you can't wait.

Why are seniors constantly calling their local City Council members and other elected officials, desperate for affordable housing? Older New Yorkers, the fastest growing demographic in New York City, will comprise an estimated 1.84 million city residents by 2030. Senior households are smaller and poorer on average than the general population. About one in five older New Yorkers live in poverty (below \$11,170/year) with many surviving on Social Security alone.

How are seniors impacted by the housing affordability crisis? A shocking 65 percent of senior households living in rent regulated housing, including thousands on SCRIE, spend more than half their income on rent. For those in unregulated buildings the burden is greater. Insufficient affordable housing forces seniors to remain isolated in unsafe or inappropriate housing. This includes living on upper floors of walk-ups or in spaces unable to accommodate a wheelchair.

Tens of thousands of seniors languish on waiting lists in Section 202 buildings for 5-10 years. There are waiting lists to get on waiting lists as primary lists are closed. There are no waiting lists for parking. The choice seems obvious.

Why is utilizing 202-building parking lots one part of the solution to the affordable housing crisis? Land scarcity is the greatest challenge confronting senior housing providers. In the face of a dwindling stock of city-owned land and soaring acquisition costs, 202 parking lots are an untapped source of new land. The lots are owned by local non-profit housing providers mission-driven to provide appropriately sized apartments ensuring senior independence.

Zoning changes would not require eliminating parking, but it becomes a powerful option if in the best interest of the community's elders. Local non-profits have been an integral community partner for decades, providing senior housing and services, and relied upon by local residents and elected officials.

Through the *Paving the Way* study, Live-On NY's coalition comprised of leading NYC non-profit senior housing providers, operating 20,000 apartments, found solutions. The knowledge coalition members have of the challenges in building affordable senior housing informed the study. It is critical to understand that the parking lots in question can be used only by residents of the corresponding buildings.

Based on carefully determined criteria, 39 lots in all five boroughs were identified as potentially feasible sites. These sites could be home to at least 2,000 new apartments. With tens of

thousands on waiting lists, the potential to house 2,000 seniors cannot be ignored.

Utilizing parking lot land for housing will not take away needed parking spaces. A Department of City Planning analysis found extremely low car ownership rates among 202-building residents, at only five cars per 100 residents in areas near public transportation and 11 cars per 100 residents in areas further from transit.

Many residents have incomes below \$15,000 and have aged in place and no longer drive. They are unable to maintain car ownership or have stopped driving. There are waiting lists for apartments; not for parking. Non-profit managers provide vans to assist residents with their daily needs.

Why is the city's Zoning for Quality and Affordability plan necessary to move senior housing forward? Without the enactment of ZQA, the parking lots will sit underutilized - outdated requirements no longer reflect the reality of demand. Nonprofits will be unable to build new housing, whereas ZQA provides options for nonprofits to build more units. It costs \$20,000-\$50,000 to develop each parking spot. That money could be used for additional apartments, allowing the provider to go deeper into affordability.

Allowing for increased height of one or two floors provides more apartments and ground-floor commercial space. It prevents apartments being on street level, a particularly unsafe practice learned again during Hurricane Sandy.

Accessory amenities are a key component in the neighborhood development approach to keep seniors housed with services. Seniors throughout the community could benefit from using smaller parking lots for medical facilities or senior centers. ZQA facilitates the co-location of services.

How can the city "pave the way" for more senior housing? By enacting ZQA, zoning regulations will be updated to meet the growing need in the coming years and underutilized land – a scarcity in this city – can be used to house 2000 or more seniors.

The need is there. The land is there. Waiting is not an option.

Bobbie Sackman is Director of Public Policy, LiveOn NY, a nonprofit organization that makes New York a better place to age. On Twitter: @LiveOnNY.

This piece was previously published on GothamGazette.com.



LiveOn NY Staff Photo

Janice from Smart University:
I'm a grassroots person, I advocate for those who have not achieved,
who cannot achieve. As a
principle, I try to find ways to uplift.



In March 2015, NYWF released **RADIANCE**, a striking photo book celebrating 46 grantee partners of The New York Women's Foundation – some of the most powerful and daring activists, visionaries and community leaders transforming and illuminating New York City. In an inspired partnership with renowned photographer Emmanuel Andre, NYWF embarked on a journey to honor and raise the visibility of leaders who work valiantly to create a better New York City for all. Visit www.nywf.org/radiance for more information.

THE NEW YORK WOMEN'S FOUNDATION®

The New York Women's Foundation is a voice for women and a force for change. We are a cross-cultural alliance of women catalyzing partnerships and leveraging human and financial capital to achieve sustained economic security and justice for women and girls. With fierce determination, we mobilize hearts, minds and resources to create an equitable and just future for women, families and communities in New York City.

39 Broadway, 23 Floor, New
York, NY 10006

tel: 647-564-5981 **email:** info@nywf.org

Twitter: @NYWomensFdn

Facebook: NewYorkWomensFoundation

Instagram: @nywomensfdn