Social Justice and Advocacy for Homeless LGBTQ+ Individuals: Exploring Rainbow Homestead©

Raevyn Kremer

Delta College

ENG 201HW: Honors Colloquy

Dr. Starkey

April 20, 2025

Student Research Conference, University of Michigan-Flint, 2025

Contents

Abstract 3

Introduction 4

Literature Review 6

Methodology 10

Data Collection 12

Focus Groups 12

Interviews 12

Surveys 13

Data Analysis 13

Ethical Considerations 16

Proposed Solution 17

Raevyn's Books & Apothecary 17

The Rainbow Homestead Initiative 18

Key Initiatives: 18

Community Outreach 19

Holistic Impact 19

Conclusion 19

References 22

Abstract

This research addresses the pressing social justice issue of homelessness and the lack of support for LGBTQ+ individuals. LGBTQ+ community members face unique challenges, including family rejection, discrimination, and mental health issues, which significantly contribute to their risk of homelessness. This study investigates these contributing factors through surveys and evaluates the physical and mental health consequences, emphasizing the heightened risks caused by societal rejection and the absence of safe, affirming spaces.

The study also examines existing interventions—such as transitional housing, street outreach, mental health services, and community support programs—while identifying gaps in current services. Through these findings, the research proposes Rainbow Homestead, an innovative, community-centered solution designed to increase access to affordable housing, mental health care, and LGBTQ+-affirming primary care.

Rainbow Homestead envisions a supportive, sustainable community where LGBTQ+ individuals can thrive. This initiative emphasizes creating inclusive, welcoming spaces to address their unique needs while fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. The findings underscore the urgent need for effective and holistic interventions to support marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals and provide actionable recommendations to drive meaningful, long-term change.

Introduction

The issue of homelessness and lack of support for LGBTQ+ individuals is a significant social justice concern. Many LGBTQ+ individuals face unique challenges that contribute to their homelessness, including family rejection, discrimination, and mental health issues. This research aims to shed light on these challenges and explore a potential solution.

The objectives of this research are to investigate the contributing factors to homelessness and lack of support among the LGBTQ+ community, such as family rejection, discrimination, state laws, poverty, and mental health issues. Additionally, it aims to assess the physical and mental health consequences faced by marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals, including increased risk of substance abuse, violence, suicide, and loss of children or parental rights. The research will also evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions, including transitional housing programs, street outreach initiatives, mental health services, and community support services for LGBTQ+ individuals. Furthermore, it will identify the specific needs of LGBTQ+ individuals that are not being adequately addressed by existing services and interventions. Finally, the research will develop policy recommendations to expand access to affordable housing, mental health services, and LGBTQ+ gender-affirming care/primary care, without imposing additional financial burdens on individuals.

Going without food, and facing discrimination are also mentioned in the survey, "30% of LGBTQ youth experienced food insecurity in the past month…. 75% of LGBT Youth reported they experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime." (Paley, p.2) For many LGBTQ youth and

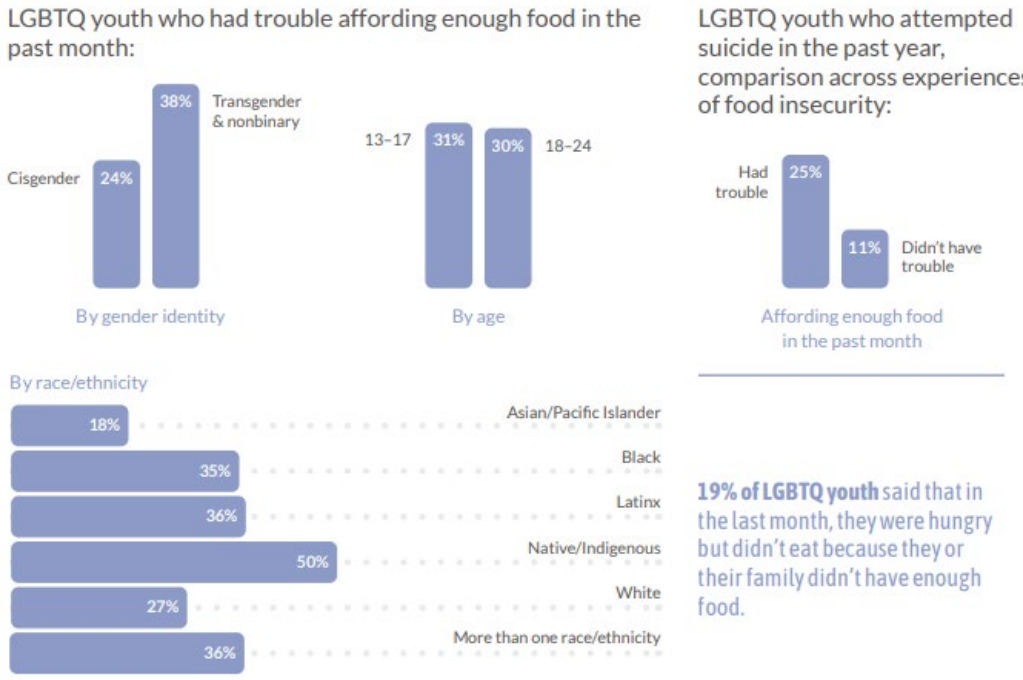
adult community members having a home that is gender-affirming, or welcoming to LGBTQ+ members is important, and knowing that only 1 in 3 LGBTQ youth found their homes to be affirming, raises concerns. If this is the data from 2021, it's only a small percentage of those who were youth in year prior, or have now grown out of the age range to work with The Trevor Project. The age limit is 24, or the end of being a young adult, so all the adults over 24 that didn't have access to resources like the Trevor Project when they were younger, or didn't know about them aren't included in this study. But knowing that from 2012 – 2023 the percentage of Adults in the U.S. who identified as LGBTQ+ jumped from 2,3 to 7.6 percent. Knowing this amount of adults that are LGBTQ in the United States, and that 1 in 3 children don't have affirming homes, imagine the number of adults that don't have affirming homes or that didn't when they were younger. A place needs to be provided that is welcoming to LGBTQ+ community members and their families, and Rainbow Homesteads hopes to be that for them.

This research aims to identify the key factors contributing to homelessness, discrimination, and mental health challenges among marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals, evaluate the effectiveness of existing interventions, identify gaps in services, and propose policy recommendations for creating inclusive and supportive communities such as Rainbow Homesteads that address the unique needs of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Literature Review

In recent years, there has been a growing body of research focused on the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing homelessness. Studies have highlighted several key factors contributing to this issue, including family rejection, discrimination, and lack of access to supportive services.

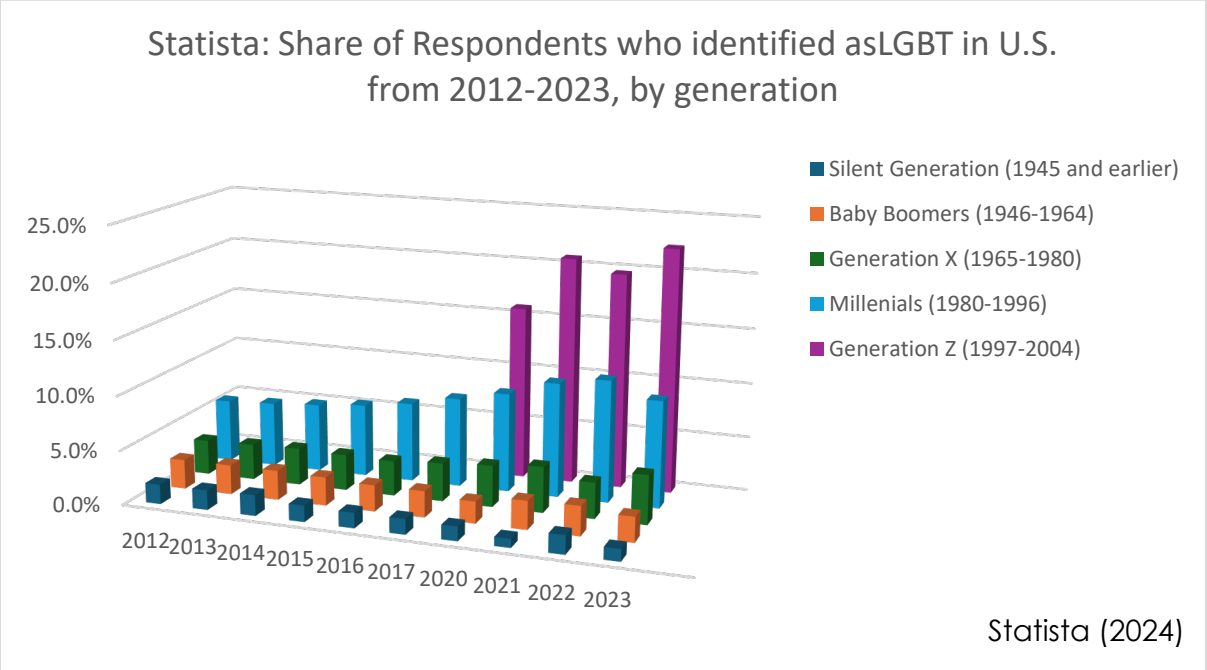
The Trevor Project's National Survey Results (2021) further emphasize the mental health challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth. According to the survey, 42% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, with higher rates among transgender and nonbinary youth. This highlights the urgent need for mental health support and interventions for this vulnerable population, the results of this survey include far more than the mental health aspect, but also include discrimination, food insecurity, utilizing pronouns, and what methods or interventions have helped LGBTQ+ youth. This survey only highlights the Youth, and not the adults, however, Statista and Williams Institute capture the Adults and what they have experienced. Food Insecurity and Suicide Graphs are shown below.



A study by the Williams Institute (2020) found that LGBTQ+ individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness when compared to their non-LGBTQ+ neighbors. The study showed that 17% of LGBTQ+ adults have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, compared to 6% of non-LGBTQ+ adults. This disparity underscores the need for targeted interventions and support services for LGBTQ+ individuals. To go a step further 8.3% of these individuals were under the Transgender Umbrella (Trans, Non-binary, Asexual, etc.) These individuals had reported having experienced homelessness at some point in the 12 months leading up to the survey. To emphasize the necessity for helping LGTBQ+ adults, 71% of the respondents in this survey experienced homelessness as an adult, not a child.

According to Statista, the LGBTQ+ community in the U.S. faces significant challenges in various aspects of life, including mental health, discrimination, and

economic stability. The data shows that LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience mental health issues and discrimination in the workplace. These challenges further exacerbate the difficulties faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, including those experiencing homelessness. When viewing the number of People who identified as LGBTQ+ in the U.S from 2012 to 2023, we can see how new generations are starting to be more aware and accepting of the community, while older generations are not. Following a survey from Statista, the percentage of responses identifying as LGBTQ+ grew from 0.8% to 22.3% throughout the years.



According to the Movement Advancement Project (MAP), LGBTQ+ community centers in the U.S. serve more than 40,000 people each week. These centers provide a wide range of services, including mental health support, housing assistance, and social services, which are crucial for addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing homelessness.

Recent actions by the U.S. government, such as the removal of transgender and intersex references from federal websites, have raised significant concerns about the accessibility of information and resources for transgender individuals (Villagran, 2025; NBC News, 2025). These changes have made it more difficult for transgender individuals to find relevant support services, further exacerbating their vulnerability to homelessness.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has been working to improve access to quality behavioral health services for the LGBTQ+ community. However, despite these efforts, there remain significant disparities in mental health outcomes and access to care for LGBTQ+ individuals. SAMHSA's efforts highlight the importance of equitable and inclusive behavioral health services to support the well-being of the LGBTQ+ community (SAMHSA, n.d..).

Additionally, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reports that legislative attacks on LGBTQ+ rights, particularly those targeting transgender individuals, have been increasing. In 2024 alone, there were 533 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced in state legislatures across the United States, many of which specifically target transgender individuals. These legislative actions create an environment of fear and hostility, further marginalizing transgender people and complicating their access to essential services (ACLU, 2024).

Despite their critical role in providing support services, LGBTQ+ community centers often face challenges such as being underfunded and understaffed. According to the Movement Advancement Project (MAP), these centers serve over 40,000 individuals each week, providing crucial mental health support, housing

assistance, and social services. These centers' resilience and effectiveness in supporting LGBTQ+ individuals underscore the need for continued investment and support for community-based services (Movement Advancement Project, n.d..).

While the existing research provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals and the effectiveness of specific support services, there are still significant gaps in the literature. For example, there is limited research on the long-term outcomes of LGBTQ+ individuals who have experienced homelessness and the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and LGBTQ+ identity in this context. The attacks on the LGBTQ+ community are only increasing with the new Trump Administration, and it is time for their community to have the support it so desperately needs and a sense of peace and pride in their identities without the fear of discrimination and hate.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to explore the challenges faced by homeless LGBTQ+ individuals and evaluate the potential impact of the Rainbow Homestead Initiative as a proposed solution.

Participants: Participants include LGBTQ+ individuals who have experienced homelessness and key stakeholders such as social workers, community leaders, and representatives from LGBTQ+ organizations. These individuals were or will be recruited through local LGBTQ+ support centers, social media, community outreach efforts, and direct connections with established organizations. The sample population is designed to reflect diverse demographics, including different age groups, genders, sexual orientations, and ethnic backgrounds.

Planned Focus Groups: Focus groups are being organized as part of this study to gather firsthand perspectives and explore the lived experiences, needs, and challenges of homeless LGBTQ+ individuals. Participants will be recruited through outreach with LGBTQ+ organizations and community centers. Each focus group will consist of 6–8 individuals, moderated by a trained facilitator, and will last approximately 90 minutes. Focus group sessions will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis, with findings to be integrated into future updates of this study.

Interviews: The study features semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders who work closely with or advocate for LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing homelessness. These interviews are designed to collect personal narratives and professional insights into the gaps in existing services, challenges in providing inclusive housing, and opportunities for collaboration. For example, an interview was conducted with Andrea Foster, Board Treasurer of Great Lakes Bay Pride, whose insights into community expectations, resource constraints, and strategic planning greatly informed the study's analysis. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes and actionable recommendations.

Surveys: An online survey will also be used to gather broader quantitative data from LGBTQ+ individuals and stakeholders. This survey aims to identify trends, patterns, and the scope of homelessness among LGBTQ+ individuals. It will include multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale items, and open-ended responses to collect diverse perspectives and actionable feedback.

Data Collection

Focus Groups

Purpose: To gather in-depth insights into the experiences, needs, and perspectives of homeless LGBTQ+ individuals.

Procedure: Conduct focus groups with 6-8 participants per group, facilitated by a trained moderator. Focus group sessions will last approximately 90 minutes and will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis.

Sample Questions:

- What challenges have you faced as an LGBTQ+ individual experiencing homelessness?
- How do you perceive the existing support services available to you?
- What are your thoughts on the proposed Rainbow Homestead initiative?

Interviews

Purpose: To collect detailed, personal narratives and expert opinions on the issue of LGBTQ+ homelessness and the proposed solution.

Procedure: Conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including social workers, community leaders, and representatives from LGBTQ+ organizations. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis.

Example Application: Insights from Andrea Foster emphasize gaps in housing, healthcare, and community collaboration, offering actionable advice for incremental development of the Rainbow Homestead Initiative.

Sample Questions:

- Can you describe your experience working with homeless LGBTQ+ individuals?
- What gaps do you see in the current support services for this population?
- How do you think the Rainbow Homestead initiative could address these gaps?

Surveys

Purpose: To gather quantitative data on the experiences and needs of homeless LGBTQ+ individuals and to identify trends and patterns.

Procedure: Distribute online surveys to a broader population of LGBTQ+ individuals and stakeholders. The survey will include multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale items, and open-ended questions.

Sample Questions:

- Have you ever experienced homelessness as an LGBTQ+ individual? (Yes/No)
- On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the adequacy of existing support services for homeless LGBTQ+ individuals?
- What additional services or resources do you think are needed?

Data Analysis

During the months of January and February of 2025, I began a survey titled "Social Justice and Advocacy for LGBTQ+ Individuals and Families: Exploring Rainbow

Homestead" (Kremer, R 2025). This survey has been running for 38 days and has garnered 15 responses. Its objective is to gain deeper clarity and understanding of the challenges faced by individuals currently living in Michigan, United States. The respondent pool includes individuals from both the LGBTQ+ community and allies.

Currently, the data reveals that approximately 67% of respondents identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Of these, 14% identify as gay/lesbian, 7% as non-binary, 14% as transgender male/female, 7% as bisexual transgender female, and 7% as bisexual female. Notably, only 30% of LGBTQ+ respondents reported utilizing any LGBTQ+ services, while 50% indicated that finding these services was either difficult or required significant searching. This underscores the critical importance of accessible resources in addressing housing instability, as every moment counts when trying to either prevent homelessness or secure new housing.

The survey data also highlighted the prevalence of discrimination, with 60% of LGBTQ+ respondents reporting experiences of rejection and bias based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Family rejection emerged as a more significant source of discrimination than workplace bias, further compounding housing instability. Of the LGBTQ+ respondents, 10% have experienced homelessness, including one individual who identified as a 45–54-year-old bisexual transgender woman. Echoing findings from similar studies such as the Trevor Project's, only 20% of respondents reported good mental health over the past year.

In addition to the quantitative findings, qualitative insights from Andrea Foster, Board Treasurer of Great Lakes Bay Pride, added depth to the analysis. Foster identified critical gaps in services such as accessible housing, large-scale community gathering

spaces, and gender-confirming healthcare for LGBTQ+ individuals. She emphasized the systemic barriers posed by unrealistic expectations and resource constraints within the community, noting, "Many people want change but don't want to help be the change or provide resources for the change to occur." Foster's remarks align with survey responses highlighting the difficulty in finding supportive relationships and safe living environments, as well as the urgent need for unity within and outside the LGBTQ+ community. (Andrea Foster, personal communication, April 4, 2025)

Among the survey's open-ended responses, participants repeatedly called for safe spaces, communication resources, job support, and protective measures in temporary housing to safeguard against external threats. Foster's advice to take incremental steps in developing the Rainbow Homestead Initiative complements these findings, as she highlighted the importance of starting small and focusing on foundational elements like housing for adults before expanding to more complex initiatives. This strategic approach is reflected in the urgency expressed by respondents for accessible, community-based solutions to improve mental health and housing stability.

The survey also invited participants to share their perspectives on the role that community-based initiatives like Rainbow Homestead could play in supporting LGBTQ+ individuals and families. Responses indicate strong support for its vision, describing it as a source of hope for a community under attack. As the founder of this organization, it is profoundly meaningful to know that Rainbow Homestead Initiative can provide a beacon of light for those most in need during these challenging times. One respondent's comment—"Thanks for all you guys do btw!"—serves as a reminder of why

this work matters. The initiative aims to provide holistic services that address not just housing instability, but the broader systemic barriers faced by LGBTQ+ individuals.

Further survey responses, as well as additional interviews with stakeholders like Andrea Foster, will continue to inform future updates to this study. Plans to organize focus groups and collaborative meetings remain underway to ensure a comprehensive understanding of community needs and the development of inclusive solutions through Rainbow Homestead Initiative.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: All participants will provide informed consent before participating in the study. This includes an explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. For interviews, consent will also cover recording and transcribing conversations to ensure accurate data collection. Release forms will be provided to participants when their responses are intended for public inclusion in the study, ensuring their comfort and understanding of how their input will be used.

Confidentiality: Participants' confidentiality will be maintained by anonymizing all responses and securely storing both qualitative and quantitative data. Personal information, such as names and contact details, will only be used for the study's communication purposes (e.g., email updates) and will be stored in encrypted databases to prevent unauthorized access.

Ethical Approval: Ethical approval will be obtained from the relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to any data collection. The study will adhere to all IRB-approved protocols and guidelines to ensure participant rights are respected and protected.

Transparency and Participant Autonomy: Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences, and their data will be excluded from further analysis if requested. Additionally, participants will be informed of how they can access the study's findings once published.

Proposed Solution

To address the challenges faced by homeless LGBTQIA+ individuals, the establishment of Raevyn's Books & Apothecary, a for-profit business, and the Rainbow Homestead Initiative, a nonprofit organization, serves as an innovative, collaborative solution. Together, these ventures aim to provide holistic support, sustainable living solutions, and create welcoming spaces for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Raevyn's Books & Apothecary

Raevyn's Books & Apothecary will offer healing and spiritual growth through services such as tarot readings, mediumship, Reiki, and holistic handmade products. The business will generate revenue by offering these services and selling handcrafted items, donating 20% of monthly profits to the Rainbow Homestead Initiative. Products will include reusable rice packs, crystals, herbs, and metaphysical items. Future plans include expanding the apothecary to include a cozy café, a reading room/bookstore, and a showcase for local artists' creations.

In addition to being a hub for holistic products and services, Raevyn's Books & Apothecary will act as a storefront for community members living on the homestead to sell their handmade items. These members will receive 60% of the proceeds, with 40% reinvested into the homestead. Community members will also contribute by assisting with homestead activities, further fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration.

The Rainbow Homestead Initiative

The Rainbow Homestead Initiative focuses on addressing homelessness within the LGBTQIA+ community by creating sustainable living solutions and providing essential resources. This includes building ADA-accessible tiny homes near the apothecary, offering safe and supportive housing for individuals facing discrimination or housing instability. The homestead will also feature a small farm and garden to promote access to healthy foods and provide experiential education in sustainability.

Collaborations with local universities and colleges, including Delta College, Saginaw Valley State University, and others, will enable students to gain professional experience while supporting the initiative. Trades programs will assist in building tiny homes, while agricultural students will contribute to the creation of gardens and farms. These partnerships will provide mutual benefits for the LGBTQIA+ community and the surrounding area.

Key Initiatives:

1. **Stable Housing**: Residents of tiny homes will gain a stable address, enabling access to employment, healthcare, and identification documents.
2. **Job Assistance**: Rainbow Homestead will offer job training programs, resume-building workshops, and connections to local employers to empower residents.
3. **Mentorship Programs**: LGBTQIA+ mentors will lead field trips, camps, and workshops, fostering positive relationships and providing role models for younger generations.
4. **Education and Virtual Schooling**: Residents will have access to virtual schooling and on-site educational programs to support academic success.

5. **Community Building**: Weekly meals, gardening, and workshops will foster self-sufficiency and strengthen ties within the homestead and the larger community.

Community Outreach

The homestead's community kitchen will serve as a hub for weekly meals, providing food for members and surrounding communities. These meals will also offer opportunities for volunteers and connections between homestead residents and the broader community. Residents will have the chance to apply for mentorship roles, receiving stipends and contributing their skills to sustain the initiative.

By providing hands-on experience through roles like social media management, cashiering, stocking, and meal creation, Rainbow Homestead will prepare residents for reintegration into the workforce while fostering self-sufficiency.

Holistic Impact

This integrated approach bridges immediate needs with long-term goals, addressing housing instability, mental health, and social inclusion for marginalized individuals. Raevyn's Books & Apothecary will act as a funding engine for the Rainbow Homestead Initiative, ensuring its sustainability while building a sense of community and empowerment.

Conclusion

The findings of this research underscore the pressing need for effective and comprehensive interventions to support marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals. By analyzing contributing factors to homelessness and the lack of adequate support within the LGBTQ+ community, this study highlights the significant challenges these individuals

face, including family rejection, societal discrimination, and mental health struggles. The proposed solution, Rainbow Homestead, offers a multifaceted approach to addressing these challenges through sustainable living solutions, mental health support, and the creation of an affirming community space.

The Rainbow Homestead Initiative is designed to promote long-term stability for LGBTQ+ individuals by providing safe housing, job training, educational resources, mentorship programs, and opportunities for meaningful community engagement. Strategic partnerships with local universities, colleges, and businesses will amplify the initiative's impact, enabling collaboration that offers field experience and volunteer opportunities while fostering inclusivity across communities.

This study remains a living document, with ongoing research, data collection, and stakeholder interviews ensuring updates that reflect new findings and insights. Such a commitment to continuous improvement allows Rainbow Homestead to stay responsive to the evolving needs of the LGBTQ+ community, while adapting to address emerging challenges and opportunities effectively.

In conclusion, the establishment of Raevyn's Books & Apothecary and the Rainbow Homestead Initiative represents an innovative and holistic solution to the hardships faced by homeless LGBTQ+ individuals. This integrated approach not only addresses immediate needs such as housing and mental health support but also promotes long-term well-being, empowerment, and social inclusion. The success of this initiative will exemplify the transformative power of community-driven efforts to combat social justice issues and support marginalized populations. As this vision moves closer to implementation, continued research and collaboration with stakeholders will play an

essential role in advancing sustainable and impactful strategies for the LGBTQ+ community.

References

Kremer, R. (2025, January 23). Social Justice for LGBTQ+ Individuals and Families: Exploring Rainbow Homestead. [Survey ongoing]. Rainbow Homestead Initiative. https://forms.office.com/r/D58kX3VgLr

Government agencies scrub LGBTQ web pages and remove info about trans, intersex people. (2025, February 3). NBC News. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-politics-and-policy/government-agencies-scrub-lgbtq-web-pages-remove-info-trans-intersex-p-rcna190519?form=MG0AV3

LGB Community. (n.d.). SAMHSA. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from https://www.samhsa.gov/communities/underserved-communities/lgb?form=MG0AV3#

Mapping attacks on LGBTQ rights in U.S. state legislatures in 2024 | American Civil Liberties Union. (2024, December 6). American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2024?form=MG0AV3

Movement Advancement Project | Around the country, LGBT community centers serve more than 40,000 people each week. (n.d.). Retrieved February 13, 2025, from https://www.lgbtmap.org/news/lgbt-community-centers-serve-more-than-40000-people-each-week?form=MG0AV3

Paley, A. & The Trevor Project. (2021). 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health (pp. 1–6). https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2021.pdf

Schafer, J., & Blair, C. (2025, February 13). The truth about Gender-Affirming care — and why it's under attack. Honolulu Civil Beat. https://www.civilbeat.org/2025/02/the-truth-about-gender-affirming-care-and-why-its-under-attack/?form=MG0AV3

Statista. (2024, July 5). LGBT identification in the U.S. 2012-2023, by generation. Retrieved February 14, 2025, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/719685/american-adults-who-identify-as-homosexual-bisexual-transgender-by-generation/

Topic: LGBTQ+ in the U.S. (2024, July 3). Statista. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from https://www.statista.com/topics/10961/lgbtq-in-the-us/#topicOverview

Villagran, L. (2025, February 1). "Page not found": Trump administration scrubs webpages of gender reference. USA TODAY. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/01/31/government-webpages-scrub-gender-dei/78093721007/?form=MG0AV3

Wilson, B. D. M., Choi, S. K., Harper, G. W., Lightfoot, M., Russell, S., & Meyer, I. H. (2020). Homelessness among LGBT adults in the US. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Homelessness-May-2020.pdf