

NOTE FROM THE DEPUTY COORDINATOR

Mother House Nurtures Community Engagement

By Laura Jimenez, Deputy Coordinator, SisterSong



SisterSong Advocacy & Membership Coordinator Heidi Williamson and SisterSong Deputy Coordinator Laura Jimenez help facilitate the recent debut of the organization's Reproductive Justice 101 & 102 Series training. Serena Garcia, SisterSong's first Communications Coordinator is pictured in the background.

In late summer of 2007, SisterSong purchased the beautiful Mother House jointly with SisterLove and moved into our new home. Now that we have been in our home for over a year now, we have been able to hold many wonderful activities and events for our own agencies, and offer the beautiful space to other organizations for their use.

This year, SisterLove has conducted the following events:

Eight workshops in collaboration with Messages of Empowerment Productions, LLC. This was an HIV prevention intersection training program targeting domestic violence and substance abuse organizations that counsel female survivors of domestic violence and substance abuse. The program aimed to help them incorporate HIV Prevention information in their group and individual sessions for women at high risk for acquiring HIV.

A two-day HIV Testing and Counseling Training to enable SisterLove and its volunteers to provide testing and counseling for high risk participants that live in the census track where the Mother House is located. They will continue to offer testing and counseling (with results in 20 minutes) at the Mother House Monday through Thursday by appointment only.

Two lunch-and-learn workshops sponsored by Gilead and Merck Pharmaceutical Companies on new and innovative HIV treatment regimens for positive clients;

A think tank for positive women to let us know what type of programs they would like to have to help develop their leadership and advocacy skill in the Reproductive Justice area at the intersection of HIV/AIDS;

Two computer classes for positive women and their families to teach basic computer and research skills to learn more about their HIV and treatment diagnosis;

A photo shoot using the outside and inside of the MotherHouse for the state of Georgia prevention education campaign for HIV positive men who have sex with men and HIV positive/high risk negative African Americans.

Additionally, both SisterLove and SisterSong have been able to hold our own board meetings in the conference room. It has been a wonderful experience for us to be able to welcome our board members warmly in our home and share our space as we

meet.

SisterSong has opened the Mother House to our community partners for the following activities:

In January, Project Single Moms came in to the Mother House on a weekend in January to hold a program for their clients, single mothers who are being supported in continuing their education;

Covenant Empowerment Ministries, an LGBTQ ministry, holds their Sunday Sacred Services, and recently were able to host the ordination of their Pastor, Brother Bryan Edney. Over 50 people attended the occasion at the house, bringing food and song to celebrate.

The Dignity and Justice US Solidarity Tour of the Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano visited in March, as a Women's History Month event. Two of its leaders, Emily Blais and Doris Pizarro conducted a lunchtime presentation entitled: "Human Rights & Self-Determination for Puerto Rico: Women Led Struggles". They shared with SisterSong staff and community members the history of the struggle for the Independence of Puerto Rico, including the current status of that struggle within the United Nations. This event was also sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Community Center and Project South.

In May, one of SisterSong's Management Circle members, Juanita Williams, began hosting bi-monthly crafting circles on Tuesdays as a way of connecting and being creative. These circles will be ongoing.

SisterSong held a Reproductive Justice training on July 10 at the Mother House – for local community members who are interested in learning more about the RJ framework and how it applies to your work.

Remember, nuestra casa es su casa: our home is your home. If you would like more information on using the community space at the Mother House, please contact Laura at SisterSong, 404-756-2680 or laura@sistersong.net.



Shemeka Clayton, SisterLove Positive Connections/ Program Assistant and Damaris Henderson, SisterLove ISIA Research Assistant/Peer Advocate Facilitator participate in SisterSong's Reproductive Justice 101 & 102 Series training at the Mother House in Atlanta.