PILLARS helps the Church advocate for housing justice in Miami

Adrian Alberto Madriz's commitment to housing justice was shaped by three pivotal experiences of housing insecurity.

SMASH

His work is also a matter of faith.

As a child, he was displaced after Hurricane Andrew destroyed his family's apartment in Miami, Florida, leaving behind vivid memories of loss.

"When we came back to Miami, all of the windows in our apartment house had been completely destroyed," Madriz recalled. "The furniture that was inside had been sucked out because of the enormous amount of pressure from the wind."

At 17, he was forced to leave home after coming out to his conservative parents, discovering firsthand the lack of safe housing resources for LGBTQIA+ youth.

"Since I was told at the time that God was not going to accept me," Madriz said, "I had to choose between my 'lifestyle' and being someone who believed in God and was a good Christian."

Because he couldn't give up his faith, he ran away from home.

Years later, working as an organizer in Miami's Liberty City neighborhood, he encountered families living in deeply unsafe conditions—mold, sewage, and infestations—despite the city's wealth.

Determined to act, Madriz co-founded SMASH (Struggle for Miami's Affordable and Sustainable Housing), a community land trust that creates permanently affordable, resident-controlled housing while training tenants to become housing justice organizers. Since 2015, SMASH has acquired multiple properties and launched its first cooperative, with plans to expand, including housing that affirms LGBTQIA+ residents.

SMASH's work has been made possible in part through a grant from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and partnership with ministries like the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, which are partially funded by recurring gifts to the Churchwide Special Offerings Impact Fund. Recurring gifts help sustain ministries like SMASH that address root causes of injustice—like housing insecurity—empowering communities to build dignity, stability and long-term change. This is what our faith asks of us, as the prophet Micah says: to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God.

Read the original story by Emily Enders Odom of the Presbyterian News Service: https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/3/17/making-just-housing-human-right