



Lavender Notes

*Improving the lives of LGBT older adults
through community building, education, and advocacy.*

December 2016

Celebrating 20+ years of service and positive change

Volume 23, Issue 12

[Stories of Our Lives, December 2016](#)

Victor Aguilar Jr.

What to do when you're young, gay, Latino, living in a Roman Catholic family unaccepting of gayness, and needing desperately to deal with your sexuality? Move nearly 3,000 miles away from Los Angeles suburbs to Hawaii! That was the decision our newest Lavender Seniors board member felt forced to make at a young age in order to survive his transition to adulthood. More recently, he made a similar decision to be far away for another important landmark in his life.

Born 37 years ago in El Monte, CA, Victor Aguilar Jr. was the first-born of four siblings - two boys and two girls. Though his childhood was relatively happy - active in Little League baseball coached by his father, participating in his First Communion and the Catholic Youth Group - he was a teenager when he realized he was attracted to men rather than women.



Graduating pre-school, 1984;



Arroyo High School Tackle and Guard 1996

"I was learning about working as a team, but also found myself falling in love with my other teammates," Victor recalls, "which was definitely not something I could talk about with anybody. Once I was aware of how different I was from all of those teammates and other people in my life, I soon felt all alone in my family, my church, my school and my community."

His mellow baritone voice helped broaden his world for him. He auditioned for, sang and traveled with an international vocal ensemble, an a cappella group and chamber singers, which involved tours of Europe, beginning at age 16 and lasting through the next decade of his life.

When he was 18, Victor was chosen as one of the many "disadvantaged" first-generation students to enter the UC Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), which whisked him away from LA initially to Santa Cruz, which would conditionally provide him with a college education, the first in his family to achieve that. When that placement didn't work out - for a number of reasons - he returned to his parents' home in El Monte.

During his late teens, he developed his first intimate gay relationship with another teenager, also a "Chicano" who grew up as a somewhat neglected latch-key kid in LA suburbs. Though that boyfriend subsequently came to visit him once in Hawaii,

any magic that there ever was had dissipated by the time that visit happened. In fact, when the boyfriend found out Victor had also been seeing other men, he returned to El Monte and "outed" him to his family.

"He suggested to my mother that - because of my 'fast living' - I should be 'checked for AIDS', which, of course, freaked her out," he recalls. "He basically implied that I was a slut for seeing anybody but him."

The fallout from various such episodes convinced him that he had to leave El Monte.



In Hawaii as an undergraduate, 2002;



In Hawaii with Nolan, 2014

"It was unbearable for me to be living back at home," he recalls. "Though my sisters and brother were always supportive, my parents began noticing that many of my friends were gay, which made them uncomfortable. When my Mom 'guessed' that I, too, was gay - and I admitted it was true - her first response was to demand, 'What doctor told you that?!', which pretty much set the scene for my departure from that inhospitable environment."

When he decided to put a few thousand miles between him and his family (supported totally by his siblings and his mother's youngest sister), Victor only had enough money to stay a couple nights in a hotel, enrolling at Hawaii Pacific University. Cobbling together student loans and grants, applying briefly for food stamps, plus auditioning for and receiving a scholarship for participating in a vocal ensemble, he was able to finish his degree between 1997 and 2003, including considerable touring with the ensemble.

In addition to European tours with his singing groups, Victor went with two friends on a three-month Asian tour, visiting Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Malaysia, Laos and Myanmar.

One of the most significant things that happened during those years, however, was finally coming to terms with his sexuality.

"When I left California for Hawaii, I told my parents that I needed to live an openly gay life with no restrictions, like I felt at home," he explained. "Finally breaking free from how stifling it felt to be judged by the people I loved most actually saved my life."

After his 7+ years of relative independence in Hawaii, Victor found himself in New York, enrolled at Columbia University's School of Law. Though he stayed in New York for four months, he dropped out of Columbia after one week, realizing that law school was not what he really wanted to do.

Out of desperation - and a serious lack of money - he reluctantly returned to El Monte, where he went through several dead-end jobs, including work at The Spaghetti Factory, which didn't help much in paying off his considerable student loan debt. After an extensive period of unemployment, he finally landed a job working in the legal field with Esquire.

As luck would have it, he met Nolan, the man he considers to be his life partner, in November of 2009. Nolan, a Hawaii native, interestingly enough, soon finished his coursework for a doctorate in Physical Therapy (DPT), but was stuck in a low-paying job at the Long Beach Sports Physical Therapy while he studied to pass the board exams required for his certification. When he passed the boards in 2011 and got a job with Vibrant Care in San Leandro, Nolan moved north with Victor, who continued his work in the E-Legal field as a legal technician. They bought their house in the Floresta neighborhood of San Leandro in 2013.

Since their move to Alameda County, Victor has become President of the Floresta Neighborhood Association, has run a close (but unsuccessful) race for City Council as an openly gay Latino, was appointed to the San Leandro Human Services Commission (where he was chosen chair) and successfully ran for the District 6 School Board Trustees position, which he will be sworn into within a couple of weeks.



So why join the board of Lavender Seniors when he is active in so many arenas?

"When I went to Oakland Pride in September and saw the Lavender Seniors booth, it was like a long-overdue connection for me," Victor explains. "I instantly wanted to get involved in any way I could - perhaps helping acquire funding for the agency's programs. All of us LGBT people - if we're lucky enough - will live to an age where we need to feel secure. We must make certain that our community is always treated with respect and dignity, unlike the way some of us grew up or experienced repression or invisibility as young people."

A few months ago - when the couple began their seventh year together - Victor decided to ask for Nolan's hand in marriage.

"Though his mother died a few months after we met, I felt like I should reach out to the rest of Nolan's family to make sure it was okay with them that we marry," Victor recalls. "I'm pretty old-fashioned. I also checked it out with my own family, getting the approval of my mother, my father and my siblings."

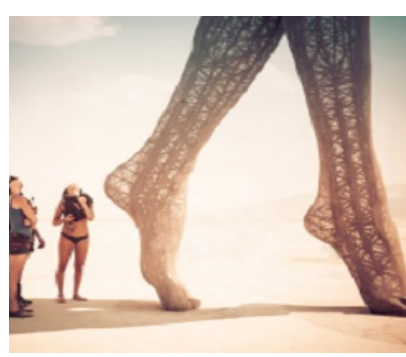
Once he'd received all the necessary green lights for his proposal, he looked around the internet to find the ideal place to make his move. He decided on Dubai, an 8,000-mile trip from home this time. As it turned out, one of his co-workers was on the same flight from San Francisco!



Victor and Nolan on their Engagement Trip to Dubai, February 2016

"I was watching the National Geographic Discovery Channel and saw a documentary on Dubai," he recalls, "and found it so fascinating that I immediately began looking around for airfares, hotels, appropriate venues for this highlight in my life. Yes, I wasn't sure how they would receive a gay Latino in a Muslim country, but it just felt right. I decided on the Burj Khalifa, the highest building in the world - over 160 stories high, nearly a half-mile up in the air! Though I was afraid to do the whole down-on-one-knee thing, I did screw up the courage - up in the top of that amazing building - to ask Nolan to marry me. And I'm happy to say he said YES!"

The couple is considering the possibility of being married in the near future at the San Leandro Tech campus on Alvarado, in the shadow of the semi-controversial 55-foot-high "Truth is Beauty" statue that graces the facility.



Two photos to put the "Truth is Beauty" statue on San Leandro Tech campus in rainbow perspective

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay wishes its newest board member and his soon-to-be-husband all of the happiness in the world!

Lavender Seniors Celebrates 22 years

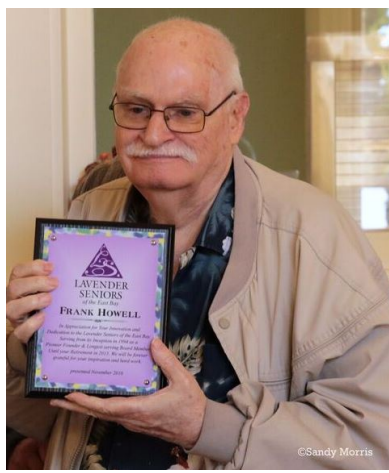
Lavender Seniors of the East Bay celebrated its 22nd anniversary at the North Oakland Senior Center on Friday, 18th November, with a gathering of friends highlighted by a performance of the Lesbian group Mothertongue Feminist Readers Theater.



Judith Masur, Corky Wick and Ruth Hurvitz performing as Mothertongue Feminist Readers Theater

Mothertongue members Corky Wick, Judith Masur and Ruth Hurvitz - using the theme "Lost and Found" - shared their enlightened, humorous and sometimes painful recognitions of personal growth reciting their writings to an appreciative audience.

The Lavender Seniors awarded an appreciation plaque to the longest-serving active pioneer founder and activist Frank Howell who reminded the audience that it was a coalition of men and women from the LGBTQ community that met and brought this concept of mutual caring and sharing to the programs of today. Indeed, one of the pioneer and founders still contributing is BJ Jarvis - currently living in Hayward - who was unable to make it to the gathering.



Lavender Seniors also recognized Dan Ashbrook, former Executive Director for 9 years, for his innovative leadership, including production of a cultural competency video on LGBTQ Seniors offering a one-unit CME to health-care professionals upon completion of the free online course found on the Lavender Seniors website.

Lavender Seniors received a Community Award from the Alameda County Behavioral Health Services for the 2016 year, and received a significant grant from the Long foundation which will fund a second video aimed at educating hands-on care providers on the cultural competency needed for seniors of the LGBTQ community.

With the leadership of Patricia Osage, Executive Director of Life Elder Care, Lavender Seniors initiated a lesbian couples support group to help couples navigate through challenges that come when one member of a couple experiences life altering disabilities.

Future initiatives will include creating and exhibiting updated Lavender Scrolls throughout the library and museum systems to acquaint the population with the multicultural and diverse Lavender Seniors living among them.

Book Review:

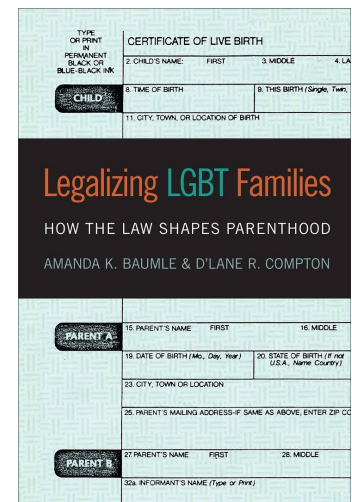
Legalizing LGBT Families: How The Law Shapes Parenthood

By Amanda Baumle

Being a successful gay parent can be largely shaped by geography. In California there isn't much difficulty but in the South and Midwest there can be a host of legal and social challenges. Baumle interviews a number of gay parents.

Acceptance of children and their parents is vital. The author concentrates on the laws in the various states. Nineteen states and the District of Columbia allow marriage to gays. The Supreme Court decision favoring gay marriage has been important but in some areas problems still remain. The couples want marriage but not civil unions. Adoption is prohibited in some states. The role of local judges can be a deciding factor. Eighteen per cent of the families in the sample searched for judges who were pro-gay. Thirty-three per cent of the sample lived in legally positive states.

The author is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Houston. Her book covers all possible aspects of gay parenting. Lavender parents will find a wealth of practical tips and legal advice. Nothing is left out.



VOLUNTEERS WANTED

December 6th

ACRIA, is conducting a nationwide study of older adults living with HIV to inform policy and programmatic development. In 2017, we will be surveying close to 500 members of this population in San Francisco and Alameda County, but our first step for the local sub-study is holding a series of focus groups.

The focus group that would be most relevant to Lavender Seniors members is our focus group for gay and bisexual men (MSM = Men who have Sex with Other Men, however they self-identify) diagnosed prior to 1996 who are HIV positive, living in Alameda County and age 50 or older. It will be held December 6 at 1000 Broadway, Oakland.

HIV & Aging Focus Group for Gay and Bisexual Men Diagnosed pre-1996

Participants must register in advance: Call 628-235-7228

Compensation: \$25 gift card and a meal

Duration: 1.5 to 2 hours

Location: Office of AIDS Administration, 1000 Broadway, Oakland

Day and time: Tuesday, Dec. 6, 12:30 pm

Location: Office of AIDS Administration, 1000 Broadway, Oakland

Eligibility requirements:

- HIV positive
- Age 50 or older
- Male who identifies as gay, bisexual or otherwise same-sex loving
- Diagnosed with HIV prior to 1996
- Lives or receives services in Alameda County

Get more information about ACRIA [here](#)



*NEW CONSERVATORY THEATRE CENTER
CELEBRATES 35 YEARS*

2016-2017 Season Presentations

+ **SONS OF THE PROPHET** Nov 11- Dec 18, 2016
by Stephen Karam
Regional Premiere

- + AVENUE Q Dec 2, 2016 - Jan 15, 2017
Music, Lyrics and Original Concept by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, book by jeff Whitty

- + DANIEL'S HUSBAND - Jan 20 - Feb 26, 2017
West Coast Premiere
by Michael McKeever

- + LEAVING THE BLUES Mar 3- April 2, 2017
A Play with Music by Jewelle Gomez
World Premiere

- + EVERYTHING THAT'S BEAUTIFUL March 17 - April 23, 2017
by Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder
World Premiere

- + SORDID LIVES May 12 - Jun 11, 2017
by Del Shores
SF Premiere

- + WARPLAY Jun 2- Jul 2, 2017
by JC Lee
World Premiere

Subscription Packages provide heavy discounts.
Go to NCTCSF.ORG/SUBSCRIBE for more details.
25 Van Ness Ave. San Francisco, CA 94102
415.861.8972

[Frameline Encore: Holiday Film at Piedmont Theater, Thursday, 8th December, 7-9pm](#)

"A Holy Mess"

"En Underbar Jävla Jul" in Swedish

San Francisco's Frameline Film Festival (the oldest and largest LGBTQ Film Festival in the world) is bringing another of its free encore film showings to the East Bay at 7pm on Thursday evening, 8th December.



Based on a well-known Swedish novel, this delightful comedy (with English sub-titles) revolves around a gay male couple, who have engaged a woman to be surrogate mother for their first child. Unfortunately, as Christmas Eve celebrations roll around, it turns out the men haven't informed either set of parents about their upcoming grandparenthood. All (mostly comedic) hell breaks loose as it becomes time to tell them all the truth.

This 2015 film was shown at the June festival this year, receiving laudatory reviews there and at other film festivals around the globe. It's a great way to kick off the holiday season!



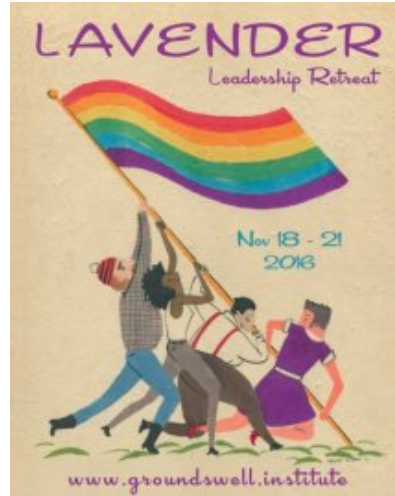
Plan to come early, as early evening parking (meters only operate until 6pm) is scarce (even when holiday shopping isn't an issue!). Also, the main theater of Oakland's oldest operating theater - opening 99 years ago! - at 4186 Piedmont - can fill up quickly.

As usual, Lavender Seniors will be co-sponsoring two or three films during next year's Frameline Film Festival in June.

[Lavender Seniors at Groundswell Institute](#)

Queer Leadership Retreat

Lavender Seniors was invited to participate in the 18-21st November "Queer Leadership Retreat" at the Groundswell Institute, an LGBTQ retreat center near Yorkville in Mendocino County. Titled, appropriately enough, "Lavender", the three-day gathering promoted inter-generational understanding of the hurdles we've had to leap as an LGBTQ community in the past, as well as in the present and future.



Approximately 70 women, men, transgendered and cis-people - with identifications ranging from the usual LGBTQI-2S and beyond - gathered in this scenic location to share ideas, to workshop various coping strategies and to develop a draft "Queer-iculum" for the future.

More information about Groundswell's Retreat Center and EcoVillage - which has cabin and dormitory-like accommodations for people needing a break from the city or wanting to participate in a retreat like this one - can be found at <http://groundswell.institute/>. They produce much of their own food on the land and have created a rural environment complete with barnyard animals you might only expect to see driving through the Midwest. In fact, the year-round residents regularly disappeared from the gathering to do chores like milking the goats or mucking the stalls, along with kitchen duty.



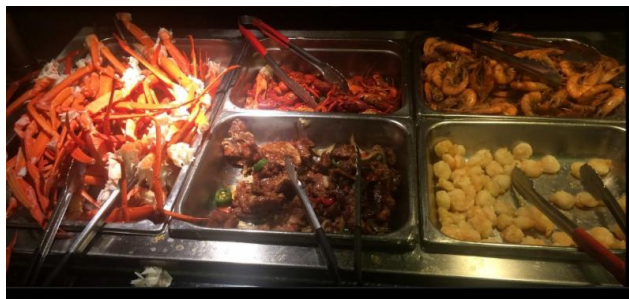
Lavender Seniors was represented by Dr. John David Dupree (board secretary) and Jumaane Makalani (his partner for 38 years; husband for 8 years since pre-Proposition 8 marriage). John David emphasized at one point that - even in the "social media" age - much is still to be gained by person-to-person contact via such programs as speaker's bureaus making presentations (and answering burning questions) in schools, religious organizations, civic groups and the like. He and Jumaane also led the group - many of whom were unfamiliar with it - in eight verses of Holly Near's "Singing for our Lives" during the Saturday night "talent show".

During his workshop presentation, John David attempted to help people understand how the "unlearning" work developed by the late Ricky Sherover-Marcuse in the 1970s-80s applies in spades to the struggles we currently face with the racist-misogynist-homophobic-antisemitic group that seems to be coming into power in this country. He also made a plea for us - as less repressed than in those 78 countries where gayness is still illegal - to keep our less-fortunate developing-country LGBTQ sisters and brothers in mind when we're looking for causes to support, perhaps even joining groups trying to relocate those who are at risk of being persecuted, prosecuted, jailed or executed overseas.

Anyone interested in receiving a copy of Ricky's two-page "Towards a Perspective on Eliminating Racism/Sexism/Homophobia: 12 Working Assumptions" - distributed at the retreat - can send a request to JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org and he will e-mail you a copy. He considers this approach vital to making a continuing dent in these ultra-conservative-leaning times.

San Leandro Pot Luck

December 10, noon-2:00pm



Due to the unavailability of the church, the Dec. 10 "potluck" will be at the New Dragon Buffet, 15073 East 14th Street, San Leandro 94578 from Noon - 2 pm. Located .7 mile from the Bayfair BART station, the buffet includes Chinese, Sushi and Mongolian BBQ.

Total Cost including drink, tax and gratuity is \$13.75 per person. Lavender Seniors will be picking up \$5.75 of the cost for each person. We will be collecting your share (\$8.00) at the door. Please be on time and bring cash & exact change, if possible, to help with the process. Nobody will be turned away for lack of funds.

THERE WILL NOT BE A POTLUCK.

Reservations are required. There are only 25 spaces for lunch, make your reservation now, call Barbara Jue at 510 755-5691. If you leave a message, please state your name, phone number and how many are coming. Reservation deadline is December 7th or when spaces are filled.

We will resume our regular Second Saturday potlucks at All Saints Episcopal Church, 911 Dowling, San Leandro, at noon on January 14.

We are looking for ideas that may pique the interest of Lavender Seniors participants, send your suggestions to info@lavenderseniors.org.

[Fallen LGBTQ Heroes: More Details on Gay Life and HIV with Lead Singer of "Queen"](#)

The Life, Death and Legacy of Freddie Mercury

[Meanderings of the Lavender Seniors Board Secretary]

Those of us who came out or came of age to "Bohemian Rhapsody", "We Are the Champions" and other mega-hits by "Queen" - featuring Zanzibar-born pop-star Freddie Mercury - may have always heard allusions to his gayness/bisexuality. For a man so comfortable strutting his stuff in front of thousands of people in a stadium, arena or park, however, he was very private about his personal life right to the end.

We were living with our then-six-year-old son in South Africa - where I was working in the AIDS epidemic - when we first

heard the story of his performances with operatic Spanish soprano, Montserrat Caballé. Discovering that he was HIV positive and "looking through the wrong end of a telescope," he decided to reach out and complete as many life-dreams as possible in whatever time he had left. One item on his "bucket list" was to sing with her. He sent her a demo tape of the kinds of things he'd like to sing with her in a "crossover" recording. She was impressed. Her alleged response was: "Yes, I'll do it, as long as you write a song about my birthplace, Barcelona!"

The result was the magnificent album, "Barcelona", the title song of which became the theme song for the 1992 Olympics, the year after Mercury's death (he only "came out" with AIDS publicly the day before his death in 1991). To watch their powerful rendition of this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=RDq0wdxj8-mAU&v=IHRd0R-uKHc>

Another song Mercury wrote for and sung with Caballé on that album - which became an anthem of the AIDS crisis - was called "How Can I Go On?"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CjUvbSjyPY>

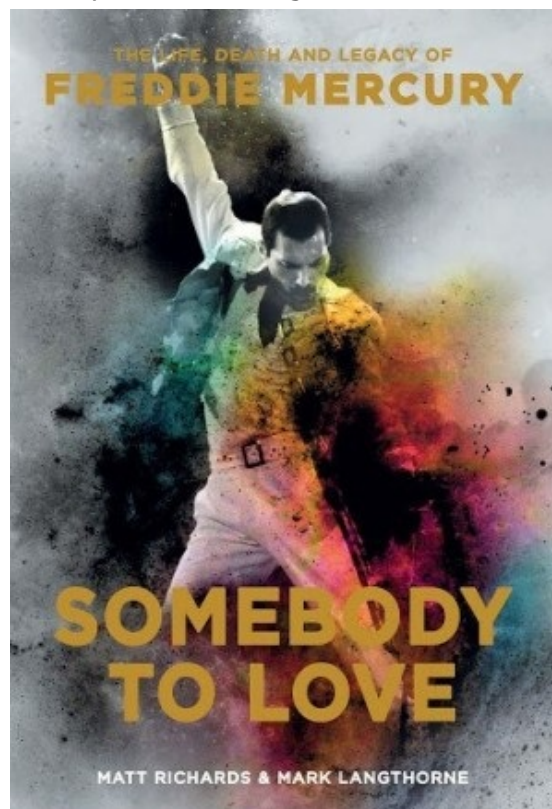
As you might imagine, she was devastated after his death and frequently mentions how important he was to her, one of the reigning operatic divas of the 20th century:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWO8nNkVym4>

And finally, the official "Queen" version of "Bohemian Rhapsody" can be seen using this hyperlink:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJ9rUzIMcZQ>

I, for one, will be trying to find this latest biography of Freddie Mercury, "Somebody to Love", as a holiday/birthday/loving gift for people in my life who were as fond of him, his music, his charisma and his legend as I was. This biography has just come out this month on the 25th anniversary of his death at age 46.



See a review and interview from "Poz" magazine of this newly-released biography [here](#).

JDD



LGBT Online Support Group for Caregivers

If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender and caring for someone with ongoing health problems . . . **you are not alone!** Family Caregiver Alliance's online LGBT Caring Community Support Group

connects you with others facing the day-to-day challenges of caregiving. If you're assisting someone with Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's, traumatic brain injury, or other chronic health problems, you can get support from the convenience of your home.

Share experiences, resources, and ideas in a supportive, caring environment. Available 24 hours a day, all you need is e-mail, and it's free! Visit www.caregiver.org.



Community Phone Calls

Just a few of the things offered:

LGBTQ Chat, 2nd and 4th Mondays, 12/12, 12/26 12:30pm - 1:30pm This group is open to all LGBTQ seniors and is an opportunity to connect with others socially in a supportive environment where participants can share individual and collective experiences. We will create an inclusive place to share our stories with each other and build a sense of community. Facilitated by Sylvia Vargas, Openhouse Friendly Visitor Manager

Cultural Literacy Meltdown Fridays, 12/2 - 1/6 5:00pm - 5:45pm Cultural literacy is the phrase coined by educators to describe a body of knowledge held in common by those brought up in a society. Few know every item but most of us know something about most subjects. Each week, we will pick thirty or so subjects from the Dictionary of Cultural Literacy to see what we know as a group. Participants are encouraged to bring topics of their own. Facilitated by Lynn Rayburn

Living with Chronic Pain Thursdays, 12/1 - 12/15 2:00pm - 2:30pm Those of us living with chronic pain know that it can affect every area of our lives - disrupting our activities, our appetite, our personal relationships, and our overall emotional health. Share your experiences, your challenges, and successes with others dealing with chronic pain in a supportive, caring environment. Facilitated by Tom Norris, Retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, and American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA) Facilitator who has been living with chronic pain for over 25 years.

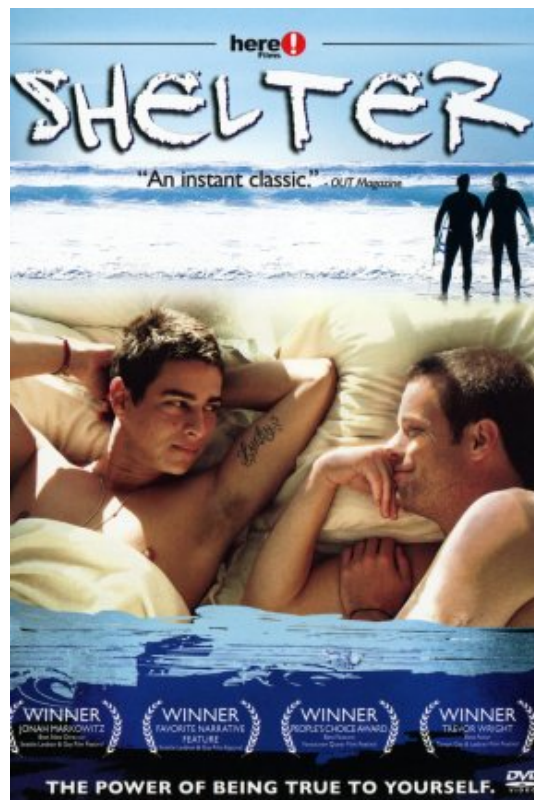
View the **Fall catalog** of community phone calls [here](#). To participate in these or other Senior Center Without Walls (SCWW) telephone activities, or to learn more about SCWW programs, call 877-797-7299 or email info@seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org.

Film Series Moved Back One Week, Wednesday, 14th December, 1-3pm

Shelter

Because the San Leandro Public Library will be closed for renovation from 16th December until 23rd January, the Lavender Seniors Monthly Film series (scheduled for the third Wednesday) had to be moved back one week to the second Wednesday, December 14th from 1-3pm.

This month's movie, "Shelter", is a romantic, family-based 2007 drama about a young man torn between his responsibilities as brother/uncle and his own destiny after he discovers he's falling in love with another man for the first time. Set in the working-class neighborhood of San Pedro, California, Zach is an aspiring artist, skateboarder and surfer, whose best friend comes from a well-to-do family "across the bridge" in a glitzier part of town.



Forced to give up his dreams of art school, Zach spends his days working a dead-end job and helping his sister raise her five-year-old son, Cody. When he meets up with his best friend's older brother for the first time in years, however, his life takes a dramatic and emotional turn! Be there to follow how this hour-and-a-half film - recipient of countless awards on the festival circuit - is resolved!



Zach, Sean and Cody become an alternative family; Zach must choose between girlfriend, Tori, and boyfriend, Sean

The film will be shown at 1pm on Wednesday, 14th December (remember **one week early!**), in the Lecture Hall at San Leandro Public Library, 300 Estudillo, a ten-minute walk up Estudillo from the San Leandro BART station - or a five-minute walk from the AC-Transit stop at E. 14th and Estudillo. For those with mobility issues, pick-up from the San Leandro BART station can be arranged (for 12:30) by e-mailing JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org or calling John David (510-532-8951) at least 24 hours in advance.

Lavender Seniors will provide popcorn, bottled water, Martinelli's apple juice (both sparkling and regular), plus miniature Reese's peanut butter cups. After the showing, there will be a brief discussion and evaluation of the film and the issues it brings up for LGBTQ Seniors and their allies. We will also be discussing whether to try to find another venue (Marina's Thunderbolt Theater?) for January film, since San Leandro Library will be closed and unavailable.

For people who are driving, the library is on Estudillo two blocks below Bancroft Avenue in San Leandro. It is accessible via either I-880 or I-580, as well.

From I-880, get off at the Davis exit and head east toward the hills. Davis eventually becomes Callan, which passes the north side of the library two blocks above East 14th.

Coming on I-580, get off at the Estudillo Exit (#31B) and follow that street down toward the Bay until you reach 300 Estudillo.

There is ample free parking - some three-hour and some two-hour - at the library.

Ecumenical Holiday Celebration

In keeping with Lavender Seniors policy of inclusiveness, the Third Friday Lunch Bunch this month will attempt to acknowledge and honor at least a few of the world's religions in both song and text. We will be open to anyone wanting to share their holiday traditions and songs during the "program" period after lunch. As usual, lunch will be served at 12 noon in the small dining room at North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK Jr Way (corner 58th) with an ecumenical holiday celebration, LGBTQ style.

Here is a bit of information about just a few of the religious holidays (some already past for this year) celebrated in tradition and song by diverse populations in the U.S. and around the world:

Hanukkah is an eight-day Jewish festival also known as the Festival of Lights. Jews observe the festival by lighting one candle on a nine-branched menorah - or 'hanukiah candelabrum' - each day. In the western calendar, Hanukkah is celebrated in November or December.

The holiday begins on the 25th day of Kislev - the ninth month of the ecclesiastical year on the Hebrew calendar - and is celebrated for eight days. This year, Hanukkah will begin on the evening of **Saturday December 24th** and end on the evening of **Sunday January 1st**.

Hanukkah (Jewish Festival of Lights): from evening 24th December until evening 1st January

<http://www.reformjudaism.org/11-great-modern-hanukkah-songs>

Ramadan is the ninth month of Islam's lunar calendar, a system which sees each month begin at the sighting of the new moon. According to some scholars, the month is said to be the one in which the Qur'an was first revealed, making it the holiest and most sacred month for millions of Muslims around the world.

It is the period when Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sunset, and is one of the five pillars - or duties - of Islam. Not only do Muslims abstain from food and drink, it is also a time of deep contemplation and prayer to Allah, and also charitable generosity.

All able-bodied Muslims are required to take part in Ramadan. Although there is some debate over the age at which young Muslims should begin to take part, it is typically at around ten to 12-years-old.

The holy month began on or around 7 June 2016 this year, depending on the sighting of the new moon which tells when the ninth month begins. In the UK, and in many other countries, confirmation of the new moon comes from Saudi Arabia's highest court, the Supreme Court.

[http://www.lyrics.cat/lyrics+ramadan+\(english+version\)](http://www.lyrics.cat/lyrics+ramadan+(english+version))

Kwanzaa is a week-long holiday honoring African culture and traditions. It falls between December 26 and January 1 each year. Maulana Karenga, an African-American leader, proposed this observance and it was first celebrated between December 1966 and January 1967.

The main symbols of Kwanzaa are a mat, on which to put the things needed for the celebration, the unity cup used to pour libations, a candle stick holding seven candles, the seven candles, ears of corn, the Kwanzaa flag and a poster depicting the seven principles of Kwanzaa. The seven principles of Kwanzaa are: unity; self-determination; collective work and responsibility; co-operative economics; purpose; creativity; and earth.

The colors of Kwanzaa are red, black and green. The Kwanzaa flag consists of three blocks, one in each of these colors. Three of the seven candles are red, three are green and one is black. Each candle represents one of the principles of Kwanzaa. The candle holder is carved from a single piece of wood and its shape was inspired by the form of the Ashanti royal throne.

In 1997 and 2004, the United States Postal Service honored Kwanzaa by issuing stamps depicting an aspect of the festival. In 1997, the stamp was designed by Synthia Saint James and showed an African-American family observing the

celebrations. In 2004, the stamp was designed by Daniel Minter and shows seven figures representing the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa gained popularity quite quickly. It is now estimated that about 13 percent of African-Americans (nearly five million people) celebrate the festival in some way.

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/kwanzaasongs/>

Diwali or Deepavali is the Festival of Lights celebrated every year in autumn in the northern hemisphere. This involves Diya (lamps and candles) and lighting, home decoration, shopping, fireworks, puja (prayers), gifts, feast and sweets. This religious celebration is featured in Hinduism, Sikhism and Jainism.

One of the major festivals of Hinduism, it spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair. Its celebration includes millions of lights shining on housetops, outside doors and windows, around temples and other buildings in the communities and countries where it is observed. The festival preparations and rituals typically extend over a five-day period, but the main festival night of Diwali coincides with the darkest, new moon night of the [Hindu Lunisolar](#) month [Kartika](#) in [Bikram Sambat](#) calendar. In the [Gregorian calendar](#), Diwali night falls between mid-October and mid-November. This year it began on 30th October.

Before Diwali night, people clean, renovate, and decorate their homes and offices. On Diwali night, people dress up in new clothes or their best outfit, light up [diyas](#) inside and outside their home, participate in family [puja](#) (prayers) typically to [Lakshmi](#) - the goddess of fertility and prosperity. After [puja](#), fireworks follow, then a family feast including [mithai](#) ([sweets](#)), and an exchange of gifts between family members and close friends. Deepavali also marks a major shopping period in nations where it is celebrated.

<http://www.diwalifestival.org/diwali-songs.html>

Christmas or Christmas Day is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, observed most commonly on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration among billions of people around the world. Christmas Day is a public [holiday](#) in [many of the world's nations](#), is celebrated culturally by a large number of non-Christian people, and is an integral part of the [holiday season](#), while some Christian groups reject the celebration. In several countries, celebrating [Christmas Eve](#) on December 24 has the main focus rather than December 25, with gift-giving and sharing a traditional meal with the family.

<http://www.41051.com/xmaslyrics/>



Subject: Shocked, sad, confused, and ready to fight?

Dear Friend,

November 29, 2016

Are you scared, sad or in dismay over the outcome of the national election?

None of us could have predicted the election of a President who is a threat to our values and our future. I know he hasn't taken office yet but I'm ready to fight against his policies. How about you?

One thing you can be sure about is that CARA is going to do everything we can to stop him from trampling over our rights and the causes that we champion.

We will do everything we can to protect the programs we depend on from proposals to privatize, voucherize and cut Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, pensions, housing and more.

You might have thought CARA was busy this year with our statewide, in district lobby day, legislative advocacy on key senior bills, 14 town hall forums, protests, movie-showings, panel discussions and organizing meetings. Unfortunately, this next

year will require even more work and organizing from all of us.

We will have to stand up more. Speak up more.
Take to the streets more. Protest more and louder.

That's exactly why I love this organization. Unlike other groups that stay home and don't try to rattle the powers that be, we do the exact opposite.

You speak up. You chant. You even sing. You visit elected officials. You hold them accountable. You organize.

With the help of our small and mighty staff, CARA continues to do great work in California, the nation, and in our local communities. We continue to organize around issues like drug-take back and affordable drug prices, to protecting Medicare and Social Security.

In this dark world of 2- 4 years of devastating, mean-spirited proposals and policies, you are the light. Each and every one of you will help us lead the way, organize and fight, like you've done all your life. We must be ready to build our senior movement and fight like we never have before. We must look at this time as an opportunity to build coalitions, rally our forces, and engage the public in the important debates.

Monthly Events

Queerly Aging Lesbians

December 1 & 15, 1:30 p.m. (1st and 3rd Thursdays)
The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue (at Derby), Berkeley
Find support and like-minded wonderful people!

Out Standing Seniors, Hayward

December 6 & 20 11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.(1st and 3rd Tuesdays)
Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward
A safe and confidential space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Lavender Seniors Advisory Board Meeting

December 7, 6:00-8:00 p.m. (Wed before San Leandro Potluck Lunch)
San Leandro Public Library, 300 Estudillo, Meeting Room C, San Leandro
A portion of this meeting is open to the public.

Senior Men's Group

December 8 & 22, 1:30 p.m. (2nd and 4th Thursdays)
The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley
Co-sponsor: The Pacific Center, 510-548-8283
Feel alone? Need to find space to be yourself and chat with others? Join us!

San Leandro Potluck - this month only

December 10 noon-2:00pm
New Dragon Buffet, 15073 East 14th Street, San Leandro 94578
Reservations Required. No Potluck. Please see information above for details.
Come relax for a couple of hours. Share the love, meet others, talk and laugh!

Rainbow Seniors

December 13 & 27 12:30-2:00 (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)
San Leandro Senior Center, 13909 E 14th St, San Leandro
A safe and confidential space for LGBT seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Lavender Seniors Film Series

December 14, 1:00-3:00 p.m. (changed to 2nd Wednesday this month)
San Leandro Public Library, 300 Estudillo, lecture hall, San Leandro
This month's movie is: "Shelter" info above.

Our Space Intergenerational Community Dinner



December 15, 5:30-7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday of each month)
Our Space, 22245 Main St in Hayward
[Contact stephanie@baycyouth.org for information](mailto:stephanie@baycyouth.org)

Oakland Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging & Adult Services
December 16, 12:00-2:00 p.m. (3rd Friday of each month)
North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland
This month's program: (see info above)

Women caring for their woman partners

Every other Friday at 1pm
Please R.S.V.P. to Patricia at patricia@LavenderSeniors.org (510) 574-2091
Facilitated by Dr. Shannon Dubach
2041 Bancroft Way, Suite 307 Berkeley
If you are a woman caring for a sick elderly or disabled woman partner, join us.

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay Board of Advisors

Chair: D'Anne Bruetsch

Secretary: John David Dupree

Treasurer: Carmen Chiong
Victor Aguilar Jr.

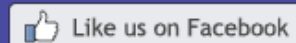
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