



# Lavender Notes

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*May 2021 - Volume 27 Issue 5*

## STORIES OF OUR LIVES



### Marie "MariKo" Kochaver

Sexual orientation and gender identity can be very confusing, as well as very fluid, especially when you have nobody to talk about it with at an early age, when people begin making decisions about their life's direction. This month we feature a woman who feels she and other like-minded people in her generation figured out fine ways of dealing with gender variance.

Marie "MariKo" Kochaver was born in 1945 in Hibbing in the iron-mining region of Anishaanabe territory in Northern Minnesota, an Ojibwe word meaning "great flat river". Her father was manager of a laundry/dry cleaner and later Hibbing postmaster; her mother was a bookkeeper. Though they both loved math and reading, neither of them graduated from college.

"I had my parents all to myself for the first six years," MariKo recalls, "so suffered a bit from spoiled brat syndrome at first, I think. My parents even decided to make a move for our household all the way across town so that I could walk to school and church – many such things planned around me. When my two sisters were born, however – one when I was six and the other when I was eight – I fell in love with each of them and easily gave up the 'only child' status I'd held. I have always loved them very much!"



MariKo at one of MN's "10,000 Lakes"

The family was involved in the Catholic Church throughout her childhood.



Marie, Monica and Polly Ann

"We were pretty steady Catholics in the 1950s style," MariKo says. "We observed all of the Catholic holidays and sacraments. I attended parochial school for eight years. We lived in the same house from age 6 until I graduated from high school. My Dad's parents came from Slovenia. There was very little warmth in the family – for a while, I wasn't even allowed to hug my sisters, for some reason or another. The only out of the ordinary things I can recall about my childhood were that I was born the day of the first atomic blast and we lived across the street from Bobby Zimmerman, subsequently better known as Bob Dylan!"

She was involved in typical childhood activities, like being in the Brownies.

"It was in the Brownies that I made my first friend," MariKo recalls. "Since there were no girls my age in our neighborhood, I had primarily played with boys. But when I met Pammy in the Brownies, it began occurring to me that I really enjoyed the company of other girls. She and I formed a little club to do the things we liked. We called it SPAM – a combination of our two nicknames - I was 'Sparky' and she was 'Pammy'. We liked horses, camping, had shirts with those pictures on them. The summer I was turning 12, she and her family went on vacation for a week or two. For the first time in my life, I felt a big hole in my stomach, missing her so much. Around that time, I heard the term "queer" for the first time – about wearing green on Thursdays – and decided that must be the word for me – I've always felt some freedom with that word. Unfortunately, within a year, Pammy had abandoned me and our club to join the other girls, who we had once considered conceited and children trying to act like adults. I was devastated at losing my first best friend, so just focused on schoolwork. I was a junior in high school before I really had any new friends of my own, twins who are friends to this day."



The Catholic girl at First Communion

During her high school years, MariKo realized she had no desire to date, like the other girls did, and that she considered herself to be very much an "outdoorsy" woman.

"I was a loner who preferred being outside," she says. "I did a lot of snow-shoveling and liked to hike to the nearby 'dumps' – hills created by the mining operations. There were places to slide, ski and toboggan. Unfortunately, hockey was among those activities girls weren't allowed to do. In the '70s, some women started playing ice hockey, but it was strictly forbidden in my day. There was a distinct separation between what



Mother and father in Hibbing, MN

girls and boys could do. Girls wore white skates; boys wore black; boys' bikes had a bar; girls' didn't. I wore dresses through my 2<sup>nd</sup> year of college, even though I always preferred men's type clothing."

After graduating from Hibbing High School in 1963, there was a bit of a struggle between her and her parents about what her next step should be.

"They wanted me to go to a Catholic college," she recalls, "and I was interested in co-ed Marquette. I knew I didn't want to stay at home, desperately needing to get away. So the compromise was I went to the women's College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, my parents paying half and scholarships paying the other half. Nothing particularly interested me, so I just decided to drop out after two years. That summer, I went with my aunt and uncle to New York, where I enrolled in a Catholic Worker school for girls on non-violence. I had heard a man speak on why he had burned his draft card after deciding to leave another Catholic college. He said that school had actually been interfering in his education. That rang a bell for me, as well, so I joined the Peace and Freedom movement, became involved in anti-war/anti-racism activities, and became a VISTA volunteer in the 'War on Poverty'. My world was expanding and I met many people I'd never have met otherwise."

Though she had crushes before, one of the people she met while in VISTA made her realize that she might be a lesbian, a word she didn't remember hearing or reading before.

"I knew I was falling in love with one of the other women volunteers," MariKo says, "but she didn't reciprocate. So I had to stuff my feelings one more time in order to move on."

MariKo took her first plane ride – from Minnesota to Eugene, OR, where she received VISTA training before being posted to New Mexico – Gallup, Farmington and Grants.

"I was totally shocked at what I saw in Northern New Mexico, since I'd never heard about it before," she recalls. "There were so many beautiful places, things, people and rich cultural Spanish-American and Native traditions. I was smitten enough with the place that I was prepared to extend my time there for another year. But my maternal grandmother, Grammy Jones, died, so it was expected I would return home. I never knew my Slovenian grandmother, who died when I was six weeks old. My Slovenian grandfather, however, was very much in my life – he lived to be 97 years old. He had been trained as a blacksmith in the old country and his skills were perfect for the local iron-mining companies. He reportedly put together repair parts for locomotives when actual parts couldn't be located; he ran the shops where physical equipment and hardware got built and maintained. He also reportedly drank way too much!"

After Grammy's funeral, MariKo headed for Minneapolis, where she stayed with a friend from St. Catherine's. She worked as a nursing assistant in a nursing home, enrolled as the first woman in a Radio-TV Repair course, then moved to

St. Paul when she got a job as an appliance repairperson for Gillette. She got her own apartment, where her middle sister, Monica, lived with her for a while.

“One thing I soon discovered on the job market was how much inequity there was between what women and men got paid for doing the same job,” MariKo recalls. “Being the first or only woman on any job or in classroom training created unrealistic expectations and unwanted attention. I spent most of those years strictly in survival mode. I moved frequently, never very far. I never bought anything, didn’t know what equity was. There was only time for the next paycheck and no time for long-term planning.”

She began dealing with her sexuality again while in St. Paul.

“My sister, Monica – who, unfortunately died in 2007 – I miss her very much - actually went to a gay bar with me,” MariKo recalls. “Our youngest sister, Polly Ann, would also visit from time to time. After working in Hibbing for one year after high school, she went to Photographic Technology School and now lives in Louisville, KY, where I like to visit once a year. Meanwhile, I spent the better part of 20 years – 1967 until 1987 – in the Twin Cities area.”

She had begun meeting other like-minded women via various liberation groups, such as the Twin Cities Female Liberation and FREE (Freedom from Erotic Expression).

“It was through people in those groups that I first found out about the lesbian and gay bars in the area,” she says. “The first time I went by myself to a lesbian bar was in May 1970, when I was almost 25 years old. I wrote up something for the women’s liberation newsletter – using a mimeograph stencil with a friend typing it up for me. I thought it would raise something of a stink – since most of the women were straight – but there really wasn’t any feedback from anywhere! It was in that year that I formally declared to myself and the world that I was indeed a lesbian! Soon I found a few others to form Gay Women’s Liberation in Minnesota.”

When she was on a softball team with another woman named Marie, she adopted the name MariKo to tell the two of them apart. And it served for the kind of double identity practiced by many like MariKo in the gay world (though it didn’t work the same after moving to the Bay Area.)

She finally left Minnesota in 1987, though she still considers herself an upper Midwest girl.

“I was looking for almost any excuse to leave,” MariKo says. “I met a Florida woman at the Michigan Women’s Music Festival. We subsequently paired up, visiting each other and so on. When I was laid off from my job, I decided that would be the time to move to Florida and start a life with her. The plans fell through – she said she didn’t feel the same way about me – so I saved my money and visited the West Coast a few times. I switched my destination and arrived in Oakland, where I had some friends. I had some savings, a car and no job. I had been the first and only woman to finish up at a radio-tv repair



MariKo in the Eastern Sierras

school. That and subsequent work experience had taught me that I would never take another job as the first or only woman. I didn't want to be that type of 'pioneer' again. I turned down all those kinds of job offers!"



Up a utility pole, installing cable tv service

She worked at many odd jobs over the years: delivering credit card applications and directories; becoming a security guard; working with developmentally disabled adults; repairing water meters for EBMUD; repairing parking meters for the City of San Francisco (a job from which she retired and currently receives a pension and health plan). She moved from Oakland to Richmond, became involved in the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades #510, a construction union, becoming a trade show installer. She worked as a cable tv service installer, with commercial alarm services and all kinds of mechanical and electrical work.

She prefers wearing men's "more practical" clothes and performing traditionally "boy jobs" vs "girl jobs".

"I always liked working outside and with tools," MariKo recalls. "I love doing physical work that is more typically thought of as 'men's' work. Though I did briefly consider a career change – enrolling in occupational therapy school, for instance – it didn't seem like it was going to work out financially, so I let that one go. Blue collar work was just more appealing to me. I've never been very comfortable with expectations of women's clothes and styles. As a teenager, it wasn't just the look between jeans (girls' jeans needed to zip on the side or the back rather than on the front like men's jeans did, which was what I wanted!) and pedal pushers, but jeans also let me work and play in a very much more liberating way! They represent freedom for me!"

MariKo goes into a bit more detail about this distinction.

"I see layers of my identity with the other gender," she explains, "that many might not understand, different from a lot of my lesbian friends. But it's very real for me! In fact, I've done drag, one persona is 'Sparky D'. I have some very happy memories from my days belonging to what was then called ETVC – which stood for 'Educational TV - which stood for Transvestite - Channel' – and other "gender" groupings.\*\* I've spoken on behalf of Lavender Seniors to groups about cross-dressing. Other females with my height and tastes may not like variance in gender attributed to them, but it has just been part of my life."



She has also been a Friendly Visitor volunteer with Lavender Seniors – serving Contra Costa County clients – and has volunteered providing massage with the Charlotte Maxwell Clinic and with disabled people. She has also been active in Old Lesbians Organized for Change (OLOC).

Though she has never moved in and set up housekeeping with another woman, she has had a series of very meaningful relationships with women, sometimes sharing many full days with them as traveling companions. She has enjoyed visiting many parts of the United States and such places as Ciudad Juárez in México, Winnipeg and Vancouver in Canada. One of her favorite adventures was canoeing and kayaking on Lake Superior in Pukaskwa National Park in Northern Ontario.

Her current partner lives in a senior housing complex in Berkeley and they both participate in twelve-step programs.



"Since Ann no longer drives and has some health issues, it's more difficult for us to see each other these days," MariKo says. "The pandemic has probably resulted in my not going back to work, though I'm doing well physically. I'm busily wading through and clearing out my various treasure troves here in Atchison Village where I live. Though I have applied for senior housing situations – where there would be more support and awareness of aging – I'm not ready to move so far – I love my community and my neighborhood. My main hobby now is a history project here. When I look at how the world evolved in just the eight years difference between me and my youngest sister, I realize what profound changes can happen in less than a generation! In my day, boys would be kicked out of school for letting their hair grow and girls would be kicked out if they wore pants to school! Life is such an adventure!"

Thank you for sharing some of your life's adventures with Lavender Seniors, MariKo.

*\*\* [Editor's Note: Since MariKo's involvement with ETVC, the group has evolved into TGSF (TransGender San Francisco) and still holds virtual end-of-month "meet-ups" and other on-line events (see <https://www.meetup.com/TGSF-Transgender-San-Francisco/> or <https://tgsf.org/>)]*



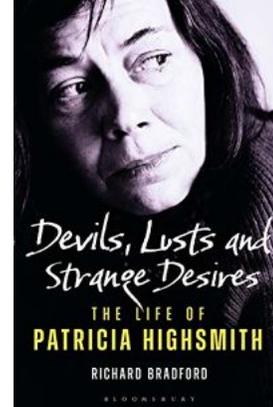
## BOOK REVIEW

**Devils, Lust and Strange Desires:  
The Life of Patricia Highsmith**  
By Richard Bradford

Highsmith was the author of psychological thrillers like *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Strangers on a Train*, Alfred Hitchcock's famed movie version.

Highsmith never hid her lesbianism and fought for gay rights. She had a wild sex life, practiced racism, anti-Semitism and self-hatred. Highsmith and her lover Caroline Besterman separated in October 1968.

Fans of Highsmith will be deeply gratified. - Reviewed by Frank J. Howell



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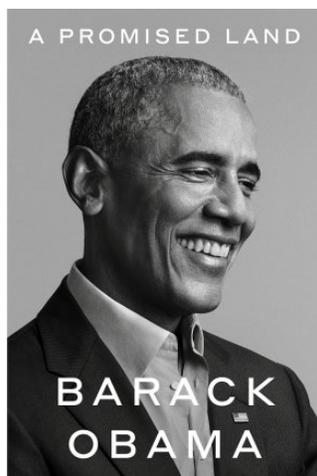
## Bonus Book Review / Opinion Piece

### A Promised Land

By Barack Obama



I'm 78+ years old. Only two people outside of my immediate family have had the power to make me cry consistently during my lifetime. They both belong to a category of Americans who have been at highest risk – since their ancestors were first brought to this country in chains 400+ years ago – for discrimination, mistreatment, abuse and mean-spirited deaths by such horrible types of lynching as being handcuffed and hung from trees, beaten to death, dragged behind pick-up trucks, killed unnecessarily by law enforcement officers or being doused with gasoline and set on fire. Some of those fates have been faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, as well, though we can try to hide who we are – a luxury most African-Americans cannot fall back on. Many of us can “pass for straight” more easily than most black or mixed-race people can pass for being white.



These two prolific and eloquent orators/leaders were both born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – one 13 years before me and the other born the year after I graduated from high school: the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and our 44<sup>th</sup> President, Barack Hussein Obama. I grew up in a small all-white Michigan village of 800 people – yes, we had “Little Italy” and “Little Poland” for diversity – but we had no black people, no Jews, Muslims or even Latinx people, except when the “Mexican nationals” showed up each year to pick the cucumbers, strawberries and cherries, dig the sugar beets and potatoes – all unbelievably difficult and back-breaking work.

My only experience of African-Americans until I was a 17-year-old college freshman was as the exotic tourist destination in the pages of *National Geographic* or across from me on the football field in high school. My ex-wife, who invited Jackie Robinson to her high school in Saginaw, MI, back in the early 60s, was much more aware of socio-cultural issues on race than I was. In 1963-64 when – having heard the “I have a dream” speech and read pieces like “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” I became something of an MLK postulant.

I actually participated in my first non-violent action when the cafeteria at my soon-to-be alma mater was paying black cafeteria workers far-below-minimum-wage (<\$1/hr), justifying it by keeping them at 39 hrs/wk, thus only "part-time" and ineligible for full-time wages and benefits. As you might imagine, my subsequent years in graduate school – devoted to this man and his beliefs – were turned upside-down when he was assassinated in Memphis on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968. The buckets of tears I shed as I finished up graduate school, assumed a professorial position and a new role of fatherhood were just the beginning of my outrage and conversion to life-time civil disobedient.

Then in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century – just as I was leaving for what turned out to be nine years in Ghana – along came MLK's successor (in my mind), Barack Obama, who floored me, being catapulted onto the national stage with his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic Convention, successful election to Illinois and U.S. Senate seats, and decision to run for President in 2008. His "A More Perfect Union" speech on race in Philadelphia on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008 clinched my devotion to this man who would carry on MLK's vital work, keeping me a teary-eyed activist for the rest of my natural life. His subsequent June 2015 eulogy for the assassinated Rev. Sen. Clementa Pinckney at Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, as well as for Rep. John Lewis at MLK's Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA, July 2020, cemented once and for all his ability – in and out of office – to bring me – and the troubled nation – to tears on behalf of such leaders for change and convincing us to continue our commitment to making "good trouble".

When "A Promise Land" (751 pages of text and 32 pages of photos – not to be picked up lightly!) was published on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020, I knew my African-American husband and I (in our 43<sup>rd</sup> year together) had to read it to each other, either through an e-book or, hopefully, with the volume itself in my hand and on my bedside table. As fate (and good rearing) would have it, when our Christmas packages arrived from kids and grandkids, among the contents – arriving from 4,000 miles away – was my copy of the book from my own descendants who had worked diligently to elect Obama back in '08 and '12. I'm proud to say they later participated in the massive 21<sup>st</sup> January 2017 "pink pussy march" organized by women in protest of the previous-day's inauguration of America's 45<sup>th</sup> (and, in my eyes, worst-ever) President.

In his usual conversational style, Obama deftly describes his evolution from somewhat-mischievous Honolulu street boy – hustling playground basketball games – his grandmother always could tell when he was arriving home by the bouncing ball on the sidewalk outside; to his history-making election as the first African-American President of the United States. In this "initial" volume, he focuses primarily on the years leading up to and including his first term (2009-13), so we will have to wait to see how he describes his second term (2013-17) and perhaps post-Presidential life in a subsequent volume two. The moods vary relentlessly from joyous to uncertain to moving/poignant, as expected.

The first of several times I cried uncontrollably in this book was 122 pages in, soon after he'd been counseled that he was carrying on the work of the "Moses" generation as part of the "Joshua" generation seeking civil rights for all. Soon afterward, he was participating in the annual re-creation of the



1965 voting-rights march from Selma to Birmingham. Prior to this 2007 march, he had been introduced to a cheering congregation at Brown Chapel AME Church. He stepped outside to find 85-year-old wheelchair-bound civil-rights colleague of MLK, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth – a survivor of Klan bombing his house, beating him and stabbing his wife when they tried to enroll their children in a Birmingham school. The man – recently diagnosed with a brain tumor – quickly struck up a conversation with the candidate. The result was that Barack Obama pushed Fred Shuttlesworth in his wheelchair for his last crossing

of the Pettis Bridge he'd first tried to cross with MLK, John Lewis, etc., 42 years earlier. Obama's thoughts during that march started my sobbing so I had to put the book down for two days:

"With each step, I imagined how these now-elderly men and women must have felt forty-some years earlier, their young hearts beating furiously as they faced down a phalanx of armed men on horseback. I was reminded of just how slight my burdens were in comparison. The fact that they were still engaged in the fight and, despite setbacks and sorrow, hadn't succumbed to bitterness showed me that I had no cause to be tired. I felt renewed in my conviction that I was where I was supposed to be and doing what needed to be done, that Rev. Lowery might be right in saying there was some kind of 'good crazy' in the air."

Rev. Shuttlesworth died three years later at the age of 89.

One of the most germane issues to our community during that first term was the controversies over "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the "Defense of Marriage Act" (DOMA), both bad policies Obama inherited from the Clinton administration. In Chapter 24 ("In the Barrel"), President Obama describes his evolution from a typical adolescent in the '70s – cracking 'fag' jokes with his buddies and accepting without discussion that his favorite Aunt Arlene – a lesbian – always had to introduce her lover as her "good friend" at family functions. Contending with several somewhat homophobic/transphobic military leaders – and some notable exceptions like Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen – Obama called for a "study" of troop readiness to accept openly LGBTQ+ service members. The bill rescinding the DADT policy was passed by the Senate 65-31 (including eight Republicans!) in December 2010. The new policy was put into practice 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Stay tuned for the forthcoming second volume, which will explore the details of how, on Obama's watch, two years later (June 26, 2013) DOMA was overturned and four years later (June 26, 2015), same-sex marriage became the law of the land. Both decisions came down on the same day during Pride Month two years apart! As most of us remember, our President made the controversial decision to decorate the White House – for the first time in history – in honor of that consequential Obergefell decision:



- John David Dupree, Tinamastes, Costa Rica

## CONNECTIONS



Have you moved out of the area, do you want to get in contact with other Lavender Seniors near you or someone you have lost contact with? [Email us](#) and we will try to help out. No information will be shared without your specific permission.

### LAVENDER SENIORS FRIENDLY VISITOR PROGRAM HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE.

Volunteers with the Lavender Seniors Friendly Visitor program are background checked, interviewed and trained, after which they are matched with a senior to visit regularly, usually for a couple hours each week. Visitors can share stories, chat about mutual interests and current events, and if both are willing and able, volunteers can take their seniors out for a walk in the park, a bite to eat, a cup of coffee, shopping or maybe a movie or a trip to the museum.

We ask volunteers to make a commitment of at least six months.

If you are in need of a Friendly Visitor, we can help with that too!

Please contact us at [karen@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:karen@lavenderseniors.org) or (510) 424-7240 and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!

## Reminder: Lavender Seniors Birthday Program

Lavender Seniors' Friendly Visitor Program – in collaboration with its "Communication Relieves Isolation" program has organized a "birthday acknowledgment" activity with one of our volunteers sending birthday cards to LGBTQ+ seniors and their allies each year.

Anyone whose birthday (year of birth is not necessary, though it is appreciated) hasn't been acknowledged should provide their full name, mailing address and date of birth (with or without year) either via [Info@LavenderSeniors.org](mailto:Info@LavenderSeniors.org) or by leaving a message at +1-510-736-LGBT and your name will be added to the list. Also, any volunteers who want to assist in this program should make contact, as well.



Letter- and card-writing may seem like a lost art to some, since it appears that many of our grandchildren are not even being taught how to write in script anymore. Many of us aging "Palmer method" script-writers, however, still enjoy seeing a nicely-written card or letter in our snail-mailboxes! It's always nice to be remembered!

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## Save the date!

We have an exciting announcement! This year, Lavender Seniors of the East Bay will be participating in Give OUT Day, a month-long fundraising campaign culminating on June 30, the only national day of giving for the LGBTQ community.

Mark your calendar! This year, Give OUT Day is June 30, but the campaign lasts all of Pride Month. That means that every donation through the month of June helps us win prizes that can expand our impact.



We hope you'll join us! We can't wait until June!

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The Bay Area Lesbian Archives

## Documenting Bay Area Lesbians

For May's Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch (there's a movement afoot to rename it the Second Saturday Brunch Bunch to match Third Friday's Lunch Bunch!), we will be hearing about a long-term effort to document the influence of individual lesbians and lesbian groups on the Greater San Francisco Bay Area. The Bay Area Lesbian Archives (BALA) may have flown under the radar from some in our community, but the role it has been playing in preserving our history becomes more and more vital as the years roll by.

Longtime BALA directors Rebecca Silverstein and Sharon de la Peña Davenport will visit the Saturday Lunch Bunch (12 noon on 8<sup>th</sup> May) to talk about the importance of a Bay Area – maybe someday Northern California!? – Lesbian archives. They will present some of their important historical findings. Come hear about the archives, the extraordinary work of founder Lenn Keller, work that continues, and interesting things that have been discovered!

The mission of the **Bay Area Lesbian Archives** is to preserve the lesbian history of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area and make it accessible to the public.

Our collections emphasize the lives and activism of courageous everyday lesbians who found ways to live open and authentic lives. These brave pioneers envisioned and created a counterculture, the magnitude of which is unprecedented in women's history. These stories are a vital addition to the histories of global freedom and social justice movements.

<http://www.bayarealesbianarchives.org>

Is your younger self – or maybe an old friend – in their collection of 70s and 80s photographs? Have questions about the archives? Want to get involved? Get your questions answered here. BALA has presented several programs over the years, movies, speakers, authors, photographers, filmmakers and performers, continuing to unearth the little things that will make us gasp in remembrance.



Bring your virtual lunch on Saturday at noon, 8<sup>th</sup> of May, and hear about the history of BALA, Lenn Keller, progress in the collections, and current work. And perhaps, what you can do to be part of this important work and, perhaps, help in finding a home for the permanent collection.

Here are the Zoom coordinates for Saturday, 8th May, from 12 noon - 2pm:

Topic: **Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch**: BALA (Bay Area Lesbian Archives)

Date/Time: Saturday, 8th May 2021 – 12 noon to 2pm Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89671026595?pwd=TGRTbkxaTzZGbWFFTTB1WWpQNFPWZz09>

Meeting ID: 896 7102 6595 – Password: 153953

Dial by your location: +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 896 7102 6595 – Password: 153953

Hope to see you then! If you don't COME with a lot of knowledge about and interest in BALA, you're sure to LEAVE with much of both!



Gay, Gorgeous and Gray in Ghana – on Zoom

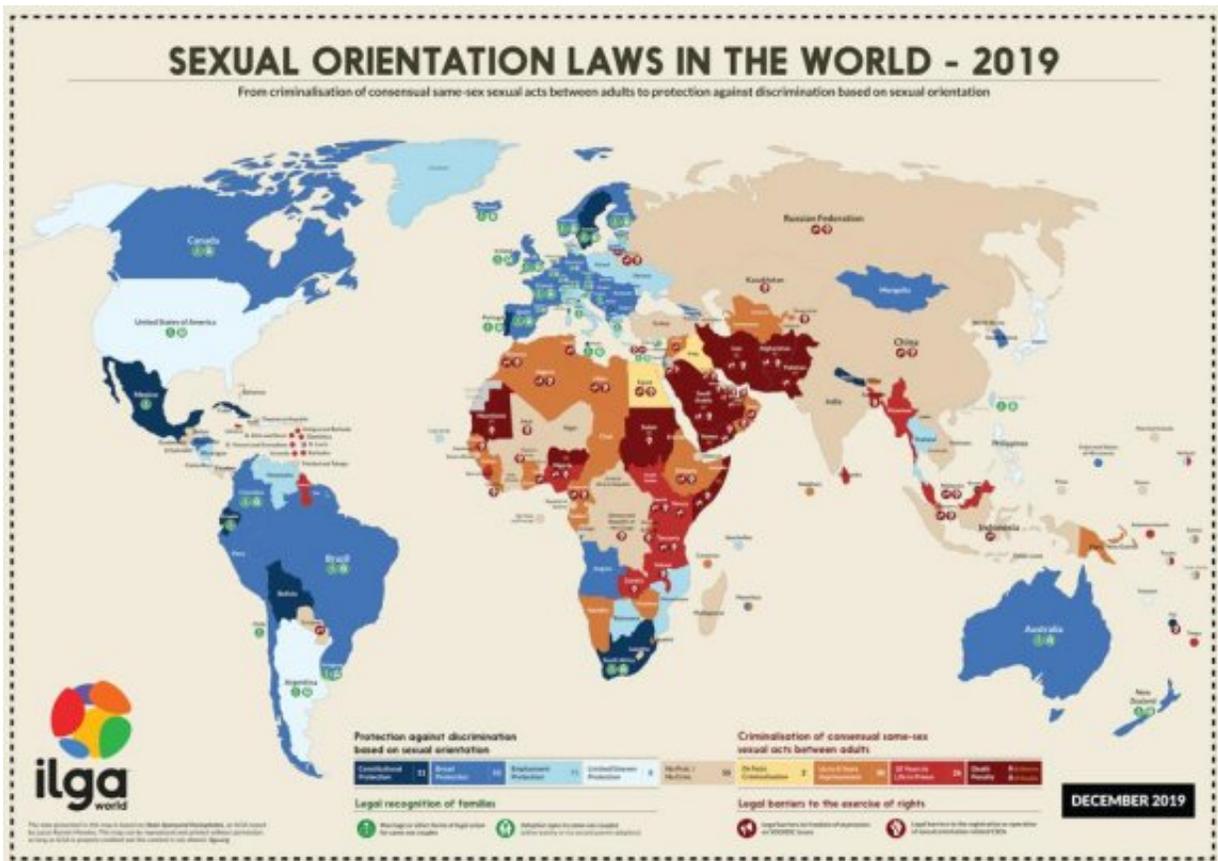
**Surviving as LGBTQ+ in the Developing World**

If you think LGBTQ+ people suffer in the U.S. (and many of us have seen a lot of hard times), consider this, from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (commonly known as ILGA):

It's still illegal to be LGBTQ+ in 70 countries, and you could be given the death penalty in 12, as the world marks over three decades since "homosexuality" was declassified as a disease.

May 17 marks IDAHOBIT (the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia), the day in 1990 when WHO declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. (Both the American Psychological Association & American Psychiatric Association did so in the 1970s).

As the world reaches 31 years since being gay was no longer an internationally-designated disease, this ILGA map shows that 65% of those living in UN countries around the world can now be, legally, in consensual same-sex relationships:



The data presented here is based on State-Sponsored Homophobia, an ILGA World report by Lucas Ramón Mendos.

The darker the blue, the more LGBTQ+ protections; the darker the red, the more LGBTQ+ repression; the darkest red, where the death penalty is still on the books.

One of the salmon-colored countries on this map is Ghana in West Africa, where the only – even oblique – mention of LGBTQ+ legal status is in Section 104(2) of the 1960 Criminal Code:

**“(2) Unnatural carnal knowledge is sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal”.**

Though there is no definition or mention of the penalty for such “unnatural carnal knowledge,” the Minister of the Western Region (there are 10 regions in the country), Paul Evans Aidoo, ordered the immediate arrest of all

homosexuals in the region in July 2011 (it flopped, but not without considerable damage). The Supreme Court of Ghana was tasked with determining the legality of same-sex relationship in July 2012. However, many in the population hold very strict anti-gay beliefs in various religious faiths: approximately 70% Christian, 20% Muslim and 10% “other” (e.g., indigenous, animism, Baha’i, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Eckankar, and Rastafarianism), there is little hope of a positive outcome being reached in the near future.

In fact, since death threats abound when someone is “known” to be LGBTQ+, many Ghanaians have successfully sought asylum in, largely, European countries like Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The only group serving the LGBTQ+ community in Ghana is known as the Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights in Ghana (CEPEHRG – pronounced SEA-peg). The group’s National Director, MacDarling Cobbinah, and a few of the men and women who participate will be on hand at the Third Friday Lunch Bunch in May to talk about growing up – and growing old - as LGBTQ+ in Ghana, a developing country considered to be one of the most progressive democracies in Africa (though it doesn’t always feel so progressive to members of the LGBTQ+ community there).



Posters for May 17th, 2021, International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

For more information on this year’s IDAHOBIT: <https://may17.org/>

Details for this month’s Zoom gathering are as follows:

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay invites you to a Zoom gathering.

Topic: Third Friday Lunch Bunch: Gay, Gorgeous and Gray in Ghana

Friday, May 21, 2021 – 12 Noon until 2pm Pacific Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85235825964?pwd=WmptRG5SU2RDVUNyQ1hFWGM2NIZOQT09>

Meeting ID: 852 3582 5964 – Passcode: 569546

Dial by your location: +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 852 3582 5964 – Passcode: 569546

Hopefully, you can join us for this interesting discussion. Whether you can join us or not, we wish you a Happy IDAHOBIT on 17<sup>th</sup> May, plus peace, health and happiness for the rest of 2021 and beyond!

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L G B T Q I 2 S Gender-nonconforming  
SEXUALITY AND GENDER ALLIANCE COMMITTEE



**SAGA Committee's  
8th Annual Celebration  
& Open House**

**Let Your Light Shine!**

**Guest Speakers**

**Education**

**Games**

**Fun**

**Music**

**Join Us**

**Friday April 30th, 2021**

**10am - 1pm**

To Register Click Here:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMscqgpzIoGdJFSk3uaDOCGHts58O2pdCp>





**HORIZONS**  
our LGBTQ foundation



Horizons was honored to host Resilience and Rebuilding: The Bay Area LGBTQ Future After COVID last week, a panel discussion bringing together major nonprofit leaders from across the Bay Area. It was an important evening to be in community with each other, and we greatly valued the time to address concerns, answer questions, and reconnect. We're now pleased to share a recording of the event, enabling us all to continue benefiting from our panelists' expertise.

### **Watch the Recording**

A special thank you to our outstanding panelists and moderator — Kiku Johnson, Aria Sa'id, Lance Toma, and Olga Talamante — for answering tough questions and providing insight into the road ahead. We left feeling more hopeful than ever and better equipped to face the massive undertaking of rebuilding our Bay Area LGBTQ community.

With the support of Horizons' emergency COVID-relief grants, grassroots nonprofits such as the ones our panelists helm have worked tirelessly this year to provide much-needed aid to the most vulnerable members of our community. Yet as this event underscored, there remains much work to be done.

In response to the ongoing devastation of COVID-19, Horizons is launching the Resilience and Recovery Fund, a second round of emergency grants for Bay Area LGBTQ nonprofits. We'll be sharing more details soon!

This event was a timely reminder of how crucial it is to support one another as we look towards the future, and we at Horizons are proud to continue supporting our community during this exceptionally challenging period.

In community,  
Roger Doughty  
President

Horizons Foundation



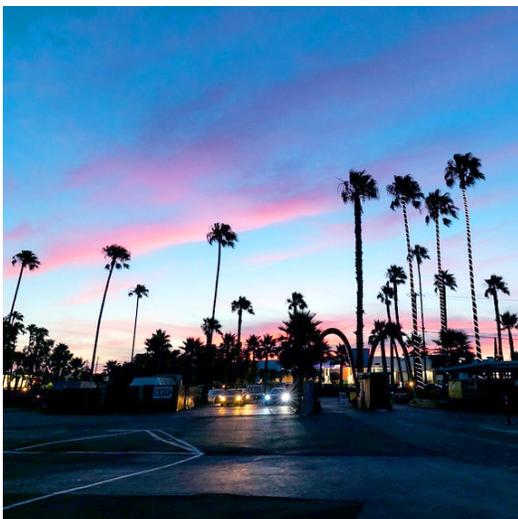
## Frameline45: Happening Online, Outdoors, and In-Person June 10–27!



We are thrilled to announce **Frameline45: The San Francisco International LGBTQ+ Film Festival, June 10–27, 2021.**

The most attended and equal longest (18 days!) festival in our history, this year's offerings will include a mix of in-person and virtual offerings—with the first week presenting only outdoor and drive-in events, and the last 11 days bringing the biggest lineup of new and virtually-accessible LGBTQ+ films in the world directly to your home (**nationally!**)

**Tickets for Frameline45 will go on sale beginning Tuesday, May 25.** For more information, visit [www.frameline.org](http://www.frameline.org).



## Frameline45 will present a number of firsts:

- The first film festival programmed by Frameline's new **Director of Programming, Allegra Madsen**.
- The first time streaming **nationwide**.
- The first time Frameline will offer a **Festival Streaming Pass**.
- Frameline45 and **SF Pride** present the first-ever **Pride Movie Night at Oracle Park**.



Frameline45's Festival Streaming Pass is your all-access entry to view all of Frameline's online streaming content this June with one simple purchase – a total of 60 presentations, including 50 films and 10 digital talks.

Passes are now on sale at a **members (\$95)** and **non-members (\$115)** price. Act fast, quantities are limited!

Some membership levels have the Festival Streaming Passes now included as a benefit.

[Get Yours](#)



## 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 [LGBT Caring Community Online Support Group](#).

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**Well Connected**  
**Enriching lives and supporting**

# well-being.

(FORMERLY SENIOR CENTER WITHOUT WALLS)

## Community Phone Calls

This award-winning program offers activities, education, support groups, and friendly conversation over the phone or online.

### Just a few of the things offered:

(The times are no longer listed in the generic catalog, once you have signed up you will get a link to a catalog with times in your time zone)

#### LGBTQ Chat 2nd and 4th Wednesdays

This group is intended for participants who identify as LGBTQ, 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 Jerry W. Brown, Covia Senior Director Affordable Housing

#### Music's Memory Lane Tuesdays

Each week we'll discuss a hit song, vintage television variety show, or a memorable musician in music history. From Big Band music to the Beatles, we'll dive into our recollections of concerts, lyricists, and pop culture. Facilitated by Steve Maraccini

#### Life Stories: Acknowledgment and Inspiration Thursdays

When we articulate our stories, we contribute to the wisdom that is generated in the group. Sharing stories can be an opportunity for learning and sharing more about ourselves and others, it can be a time for acknowledgment and inspiration, a path to transformation and growth. It can also simply be a time and place to connect with each other, share a few laughs, and appreciate those moments of connection. Facilitated by Phalguni Freeman, Counseling Student, Palo Alto University, CA

View the Current catalog of community phone calls [here](#). (As of this printing, the new catalog has not been posted yet, so check the [website](#) after May 1st to get the link to the Spring catalog.) To participate in these or other Well Connected telephone activities, or to learn more about their programs, call 877-797-7299 or email [coviaconnections@covia.org](mailto:coviaconnections@covia.org).



After a full year of online classes, the Performing Arts Institute's Spring 2021 session is a true return to form with beloved Stagebridge instructors exploring the world of Broadway & beyond! With multiple

production opportunities, we're ensuring that students are taking the lead in the rehearsal room and on stage—even online.

With favorite classes like *Stand Up Comedy*, *Writing Your Best Life*, *Playback Theatre* and *Dynamic & Effective Storytelling*, Stagebridgers who haven't joined in a while will see familiar faces. With classes like *Compassionate Tappin' (Dance)*, *A Chorus Line (Dance)*, *The Joy of the Game (Improv)* and *Intro to Theatrical Performance (Acting)*, anyone can jump into the magic of performing.



REGISTER NOW FOR  
OUR ONLINE ART CLASSES NOW AT  
[www.stagebridge.org/pai](http://www.stagebridge.org/pai)

Welcome back a familiar Stagebridge with performances like never before! Register NOW at [www.stagebridge.org](http://www.stagebridge.org)!

Julius Rea (*he, him*)  
Marketing & Communications Manager  
**STAGEBRIDGE**  
2501 Harrison Street | Oakland, CA | 94612  
(510) 210-3773



CHIKA

In case you missed the **GLAAD Media Awards**, treat yourself:  
[www.glaad.org/mediaawards/32](http://www.glaad.org/mediaawards/32)

**CHIKA** performs “FWB” and “SAVE YOU” at the 32nd Annual GLAAD Media Awards

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TphayqJ7LEA>



JESSICA BETTS

**Niecy Nash's wife Jessica Betts** performs “Catch Me” at the 32nd Annual GLAAD Media Awards

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pxmFshCNqg>

The event is also available to stream on-demand on Hulu until the end of June. For a full list of winners from the 32nd Annual GLAAD Media Awards, [click here](#).

The 32nd Annual GLAAD Media Awards honor media for fair, accurate, and inclusive representations of LGBTQ people and issues. Since its inception in 1990, the GLAAD Media Awards have grown to be

the most visible annual LGBTQ awards show in the world, sending powerful messages of acceptance to audiences globally. The 32nd Annual GLAAD Media Awards are presented by Gilead, Hyundai, and Ketel One Family Made Vodka.

For a full list of nominees for the 32nd Annual GLAAD Media Awards, [click here](#).



### **Out Standing Seniors - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

May 4 & 18, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. (1st and 3rd Tuesdays)

Meets via Zoom email [outstandingseniors2@gmail.com](mailto:outstandingseniors2@gmail.com) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

### **Living OUT in Livermore - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

May 4, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. (1st Tuesdays)

Meets via Zoom email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to safely share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

### **LezBold Peer Support Group**

May 6 & 20 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. (1st & 3rd Thursdays)

Meets via Zoom email [lezboldgroup@pacificcenter.org](mailto:lezboldgroup@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*Find support and like-minded wonderful people!*

### **Older & Out Therapy Group - Hayward - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

May 6,13,20,27 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. (Thursdays)

email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for current meeting information.

*Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+*

### **Older & Out Therapy Group - Oakland - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

May 5,12,19,26 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. (Wednesdays)

email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for current meeting information.

*Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+*

### **Older & Out Therapy Group - Berkeley - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

May 7,14,21,28 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. (Fridays)

email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for current meeting information.

*Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+*

### **Lavender Seniors Board Meeting**

May 12 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. (2nd Wednesday) via Zoom

*A portion of this meeting is open to the public.*

### **Lavender Seniors Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch**

May 8, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. (see info above for joining us via Zoom: BALA)

### **Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

May 20, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

Meets via Zoom email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

### Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging/Adult Services & Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

May 21, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. (see info above for joining us via Zoom: Ghana)

## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay Board of Directors

President: Victor Aguilar Jr

Treasurer: Carmen Chiong

Secretary: John David Dupree (on hiatus)

Founding Member: Barbara Jue

Communication Director: Melissa West

Member: Ana Bagtas

## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Message: 510-736-LGBT (510-736-5428)  
Friendly Visitor Program: (510) 424-7240 or  
[karen@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:karen@lavenderseniors.org)

Mailing Address:  
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Oakland, CA 94619

Website: <http://lavenderseniors.org>

Newsletter Editorial  
Board:  
Beckie Underwood  
John David Dupree

Contact  
Us

