



Lavender Notes

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September 2019 - Volume 26 Issue 9

**STORIES
OF OUR LIVES**

Lenn Keller

The founder of the Bay Area Lesbian Archives is a well-known photographer, filmmaker and writer, in addition to perfecting her skills as an archivist. Turning 68 this month, she has been a California resident for nearly 45 years.

Born in Evanston, Illinois, Lenn was the first of three children. At birth, she was named Helen Keller after the acclaimed deaf-blind author later celebrated in the 1962 film, "The Miracle Worker", which won Academy Awards for both Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke.

"It was both an honor and a burden to carry the name of such a great woman," Lenn recalls. "Growing up, I read books about her and saw 'The Miracle Worker' which came out when I was 11 years old. I always thought it was cool to have her name. When she died in 1968, some of my crazy friends sent me condolence cards saying things like, 'so sorry to hear that you're dead'. I had become accustomed to Helen Keller jokes and thought it was funny, but it was probably the beginning of my questioning whether this name was a legitimate legacy for me."



Lenn (aka Helen) as an eight-year-old in Evanston, IL

Lenn lost her mother – also named Helen – when she was eight years old.

"My mother had 'successful' heart surgery, by all accounts, but developed an infection while in the hospital," Lenn recalls. "She went into a coma, and never came out of it. My grandmother moved in to help take care of us. Unfortunately, she died of colon cancer within a year or so."

Grieving the double loss of both his wife and mother in less than two years, there was a short period where Lenn's father began drinking heavily. Lenn decided to take action.

"One day, I screwed up the courage to gather up all of the liquor bottles in the house," she recalls. "I went down to the basement laundry room and poured all of them down the drain. I lined all the empty bottles up on a shelf, plain to see, fully prepared to accept my punishment. When he came home from work and saw the bottles lined up, he questioned me. I put my finger in his face like I was his grandmother and said, 'You're our father and you have to raise us!' – he got this 'omigod' look on his face. From that point on, he only drank socially."

Lenn's father had been a World War II veteran in a very segregated U.S. Army, a munitions transporter who worked his way up to Sergeant. He was one of the few black men "allowed" on the front lines involved in hand-to-hand combat when there were no more white men available.

"He described battling to the death with Nazis – many of them teenagers – taking a heavy toll on him," Lenn recounts. "After the war, lynchings of black men increased in response to the returning black veterans' demands for voting and other basic civil rights. When he returned to civilian life, he decided not to go back to South Carolina, but to instead join his mother in Evanston. He was one of few black vets able to access the newly-created GI Bill in order to buy a house. Unfortunately for black home buyers, most could only buy with a 'contract deed,' instead of a mortgage, so the buyer had no legal protections or equity. If they missed even one payment, the owner or lender could reclaim the house with no equity earned for the buyer."

Lenn's father had also co-signed earlier for his mother's house in Evanston. It was a struggle to meet two mortgages on a meager cemetery worker's salary. With the family members who were tenants in his mother's house sometimes late with their rent, Lenn's father, too, became late in the house payments. So,

in 1965, when Lenn was 14 years old, he lost both houses.

"My father decided to move the family to a newly-built apartment building in a nearby wealthy, white suburb," Lenn recalls. "He believed the best schools are where the wealthy live. He valued education and wanted to make it possible for me and my two younger brothers to go to the best schools."

Lenn was a freshman in high school, a lifelong tomboy. Mounting pressures and expectations of performing as a female and compulsory heterosexuality made her increasingly anxious.

"At the new school, there were very few other black students," Lenn remembers laughingly. "One year there were 17 in all the grades – four (two girls, two boys) in my class of over a thousand. I often tell people that, in some ways, racism saved my life, because at that time, white boys just didn't date black girls."



Lenn, age 15, with a group of high-school friends (mostly boys)

Once when she was in high school, she was playing in the park with some of the other black kids in the neighborhood. They had a foot race. When Lenn won the race – even beating two members of the track team – everyone seemed really mad at her, even one of her best friends.

"They all looked at me like, 'How **could** you?!'" Lenn recalls. "It was a lesson in propping up the male ego and the importance of women putting themselves down to keep patriarchy intact. When I told my Dad about winning the race, and everybody being mad at me, I was stunned when – as he was preparing dinner – he turned around and angrily said to me, 'That's what you get! You ain't got no business goin' out there beatin' them boys.' I felt really hurt, but at least my two brothers understood and supported me. They looked up to me as their big sister who'd taught them how to bat and throw a ball. They agreed it was unfair."

By the time Lenn was a junior in high school, she began resonating with the black liberation, women's and hippie movements. Starting in junior high and escalating in high school, Lenn and her father began to fight regularly about politics and religion. They had very different perspectives and Lenn's father was growing increasingly uncomfortable with her bohemian outlook, as well as, perhaps more importantly, her tomboy presentation and behavior.

"He had become very controlling and authoritarian," Lenn recalls. "Our relationship had become a constant battle. It was like Amazon daughter meets the patriarchy. Dad would often attribute his virtues to being 'a man'! So, I

started saying in reference to my virtues, '...because I'm a woman,' and he'd look at me in amazement. I'd look back at him like, 'Yep, I have just as much pride in myself as a female as you have in yourself as a male.' I'm grateful for those arguments, because they helped me see that males are not superior to females. It helped me to see the patriarchy clearly. Though fighting with my father was very painful – because I craved his affection, support and affirmation – I'm forever grateful to him for all that I learned from him."

By Lenn's senior year, she had decided she wouldn't go to college right away. Her father wanted her to go to a junior college and commute. Lenn knew she couldn't survive emotionally in his house any longer. She and her best friend spent that year planning their escape. It was 1969 and there were a lot of political movements and unrest. Many of the nation's runaways wound up in Haight-Ashbury. Though she and her friend were attracted to the hippie life, they sensed that the Haight would not be a good place for them to go. They were more drawn to New York City and what was going on there. Lenn and her friend saved their baby-sitting money and bought one-way Greyhound bus tickets to Manhattan, with only about \$500 between them. They didn't tell any of their friends where they were going and led everybody to believe they were headed for California, because they didn't want to be found.

"In June, 1969, we arrived at New York's Port Authority not knowing a soul around the time Stonewall was happening," Lenn recounts. "We met some black activists who were protesting the construction of what later became the State Building on 125th Street in Harlem. They invited us to stay in one of the empty buildings where some of the activists were squatting."

Soon after they joined the squatters in that building, the two girls were targeted and Lenn was raped. Shortly after that incident, they met five black guys in their twenties who were living in an artist's collective. There was an instant connection.

"They invited us to live at the collective and declared us their 'wards'," Lenn remembers. "They took good care of us, even giving us small allowances. In that collective household, I received my first exposure to jazz and to photography, including one of our new friends teaching me how to develop and print film in his darkroom. That was a life-changing time for me!"

When Lenn turned eighteen, she got into a relationship with one of the artists, a man who was writing poetry, and doing photography. They developed a mentor-confidante relationship – he was her mentor and she his confidante. Though the relationship was not often sexual, Lenn became pregnant, which she was in denial about for some time.

"I had missed a period or two," she recalls. "I had been very regular and I wasn't feeling well, so I kept going back to the clinic getting re-tested. One woman who hung out at the collective finally said to me one day, 'Look, ain't nothin' wrong with you but pregnant...' That forced me out of denial. I was very freaked out initially, thinking it was unfair, since I felt too young to be a mom. One day I went to a prenatal clinic on Harlem's upper east side and was counseled by this wonderful Puerto Rican woman. Soon afterward, I decided that being a parent would be an amazing opportunity. I realized I would have the chance to raise a revolutionary!"

The baby's father disappeared from their lives – until years later – and she got involved with an openly bisexual man, who she was living with when her daughter was born in July, 1970. She stayed in New York for another year. After trying to find a place to live on her own, however, she decided she didn't really want to raise her daughter in New York.

"Any buildings I could afford were full of junkies and drama," she recalls, "and I wanted a place to raise my daughter where she could be safe, have space to play, ride her bike, climb trees, and so on, like I'd been able to do as a kid."

Lenn returned to the Chicago area in 1971 for a few years, landing a job in the copyright department of a publishing house, linking up with artists and musicians and getting involved with an eastern religion. It was during this time that she really began to struggle with if, when and how to acknowledge her sexual orientation. She remembers a particular turning point.

"One day I saw two beautiful black lesbians walking down the street holding hands and it was like I'd been struck by lightning! I said to myself 'That's right! That's who I am!' That was one of the best days of my life – I felt completely liberated! I started haunting bookstores and found lesbian literature like 'Sappho was a Right-on Woman,' which influenced my thinking a lot."

Soon after that revelation, Lenn met her first girlfriend.

"She was a black woman born and raised in my hometown," she recalls. "I'd hung out with her brother and cousin, but never knew her. It was an incredible connection! When she and I were first dating, the friend I'd run away with five years earlier was visiting me from New York. She walked in and saw us kissing. She acted cool, but was apparently so freaked out that she split while I was at work and went to her parents' house. I tried to get in touch with her, but I never saw or heard from her again. I lost a lot of my childhood friends in my coming-out process."

Lenn decided she wanted to move to Northern California with her new girlfriend. She gave up her apartment, got a second job and she and her daughter moved back in with Lenn's father for a few months to save money. The father-daughter firestorm started again, but Lenn decided to focus forward on how happy she was going to be, starting a new life on the west coast.

"Right after Christmas 1974, we loaded up my car and my daughter," Lenn recounts. "My girlfriend and I drove cross-country to a women's collective in Santa Cruz. Being in California was an incredible culture shock! The whole vibe was so laid back, there were so many lesbian households and so much lesbian culture! It soon occurred to me, though, that my daughter was starting kindergarten and there were very few black people in Santa Cruz. I didn't want her to be the only black kid in an all-white school. I decided I had to re-locate to the Bay area."

During this process, Lenn and her first girlfriend broke up and she met her second girlfriend.

"My daughter and I moved to a women's collective household in the Haight," Lenn recalls. "I soon discovered the East Bay and decided it would be even better for us. After a brief stay in an Oakland hills house, we found a delightful

lesbian collective household with several musicians in Berkeley. We lived there for 4-5 years, until we were displaced when the house was sold. As I look back, neither the owner nor the realtor offered to sell it to us. It didn't occur to us to make a bid on it, even though we were all working and probably could have bought it. We felt like outliers, believing that people like us couldn't own property. Maybe my Dad's experience losing two houses when I was a teenager figured into my obliviousness on that issue, I don't know."



Lenn, age 26, with second girlfriend and housemate after a Gay and Lesbian Association event at Laney College

In 1981, Lenn was bartending at Ollie's, a popular lesbian bar in Oakland. She spoke with a customer who was a camerawoman for a local TV station. The woman encouraged her to take up photography again, which she almost instantly decided to do. She soon inherited a camera. She took a couple courses at Laney, but her instructors were not encouraging, so she was mostly a self-taught photographer. She later enrolled in the television production program, and as she was finishing up her AA degree, her counselor suggested she should continue her education. She applied to three schools: CCAC, SFAI and Mills College. She was accepted at all three, but Mills offered a full academic scholarship. She was going to college!

"I learned a lot at Mills," Lenn says. "I graduated in 1984 with a BA in Visual Communication, with courses in media communications theory, film criticism, photography, filmmaking, and sociology, with an ethnic studies minor. But it was a pretty traumatizing time in my life. Though I got excellent grades, graduating cum laude, there was little support for being either black or lesbian. Many professors seemed to be threatened by who I was and the campus felt hostile. I had several really bad experiences, which has made me phobic about academia to this day."

After graduating from Mills, Lenn became a free-lance photographer shooting portraiture primarily, though she also shot in many other genres. She became committed to documenting the lesbian community, arts, activists and other marginalized communities. In the early '90s, she became interested in filmmaking, working on independent productions, producing and directing two short films, *"Ifé"* and *"Sightings"*. Both films premiered at the Frameline International LGBTQ Film Festival in San Francisco and also screened internationally.

After Lenn became a musician – playing sax in the 1970s – and a photographer in the 1980s – she began to feel that her given name might be inappropriate. She became troubled by the possibility that people might think she was making fun of one of her heroes.

"I wanted to know what people really thought," Lenn says. "Maybe they

thought I was being an unpolitically-correct smart ass, so I asked my friends and they'd always say things like, 'Oh it's a wonderful name – it's so memorable.' But one day in the late 80s, I was waiting for a friend at the Brick Hut restaurant, when I overheard a guy remark to his friend in response to a flyer posted of one of my photo exhibits. 'Helen Keller? I bet she wonders why she doesn't get much work as a photographer,' then laughter. I was very grateful to that guy. I finally had confirmed what I'd suspected people really thought, so I immediately decided to ditch the name, at least in my professional life, though many people from my past still might call me Helen."

Soon after that incident, Lenn changed her photographer name – first to H.L. Keller; then in the '90s to H. Len Keller. But when she saw her name on the Castro Theater screen as her first film, *"Ifé"*, was being shown at Frameline, she realized it was important to her that people know she is a woman, so she added another "N", changing the spelling to its current Lenn.



Lenn, age 45 – around the time of producing and directing *Ifé*

Lenn worked at Berkeley's Pacific Center, 1977-80, as Women's Program Coordinator, producing lesbian community events. She was Assistant to the Executive Director from 1985-88, when Pacific Center almost went under and had to lay off most of its staff. Lenn has been a volunteer in the PC Speaker's Bureau for over 30 years, as well as on the Crisis Switchboard. She has also been a support group facilitator – most recently for a butch support group from 2011 – 2013.

Lenn worked off-and-on from 1989 in social research with various studies, many through UCSF – including Urban Health Study – as well as at Cal Research in Richmond, and The Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies through SF State. Alternating between freelancing, research and media, Lenn also was a Production Manager on the "Nash Bridges" TV show. In 1997, Lenn started a business, Ear to the Ground Transcription, and re-located to Sonoma County, where she lived for seven years, first in Guerneville and later in Sebastopol.

In 2007, Lenn became ill with Lyme Disease and was debilitated for months. During that time, her housemate-landlord asked her to leave, and she experienced eighteen months of not having a place to live. She did a series of housesits, live-in caregiving and occasionally couch-surfed.

During her illness, she got behind in storage payments. Her personal archives, photography and film work were threatened with being auctioned off in 2009. To try to save this irreplaceable community history, she launched a Facebook campaign, 'Save Lenn's Lesbian of Color Archives'.

"I received donations from all over the country and even internationally," Lenn says. "I began to be contacted by researchers. I was asked to co-curate an exhibit on disabled lesbians at the San Francisco Public Library. This led to a discussion with the James Hormel LGBTQIA Center about buying some of my photographs for their permanent collection and having a solo exhibit there, which was successfully mounted in 2010. I was invited and flown to present at CUNY in New York at a conference on 1970s lesbians called 'In Amerika, They Call Us Dykes.' At that event, I led a workshop, met some archivists from the June Mazer Lesbian Archives in LA, and, together, we realized how little lesbian of color history exists in archives anywhere."

It started becoming clear that even Bay Area lesbian history, particularly from the 1970s and 1980s, had not been preserved. In 2014, Lenn conducted a public needs assessment by producing an event at La Peña called, "Preserving Our Bay Area Lesbian Legacies: Will History Remember Us?" The event was well-attended, including a panel of well-known lesbian archivists, historians, and media makers. Lenn reflects about what happened after the event:

"In 2014, a core group of folks supported me in getting Bay Area Lesbian Archives off the ground. By 2015, we had incorporated. In 2017, we received our 501(c)(3) non-profit status. We now have a climate-controlled storage unit for continually-growing collections and we have embarked on processing and cataloguing them. We're getting more and more requests all the time. We're amping up our fundraising efforts and our next move is to find a place to house the archives, which will include an administrative office, a space for researchers and the general public via on-site computer terminals, and a space for holding events."



Lenn with BALA board members,
Rebecca Silverstein and Sharon Davenport



Lenn passing the "symbolic torch" to a younger black lesbian

Most recently, Lenn was featured in the Oakland Museum's "Queer California: Untold Stories" exhibit that was displayed there from April 13th to August 11th, 2019.



Lenn in front of the Oakland Museum's "Queer California" exhibit, where she had photos displayed

We wish you the best of luck, Lenn, with BALA and all of your other future endeavors. Thank you for helping document our communities and for giving so much of yourself to LGBTQ issues over the years!



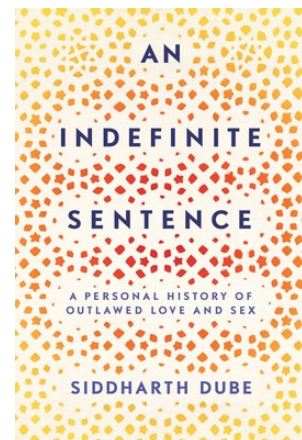
BOOK REVIEW

An Indefinite Sentence: A Personal History of Outlawed Love & Sex

By Siddharth Dube

Readers will be overwhelmed by the awesome achievements of Siddharth Dube. His style is quite appealing to any reader.

Dube was born in India. He crusaded in many areas, including AIDS, public health and poverty. His academic background is not to be sneezed at. He is a graduate of Tufts University, University of Minnesota's School of Journalism and Harvard School of Public Health.



He recalls the pain of growing up. "I became aware that I was a girly-boy, a sissy, different from other boys and despised and ostracized by them."

Dube was determined to be a regular boy and hide his soft side but was drawn to men and boys. In America he really confronted his gayness by reading books in the college library.

Dube confronts his gayness and we rejoice with him. Don't skip this one.

- Frank J. Howell

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 or (510) 424-7240 and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!



Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch September 14 , Noon-2:00 pm

All Saints Episcopal Church
911 Dowling Blvd, San Leandro

Program: **What is a Fiduciary, Anyway?**

Maybe we've heard the term before – and maybe we've even been told that, as we age, we might need to have one. But what exactly does it mean? And how will we know if and when we should designate a fiduciary?

The Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch speaker this month will be Iris Hecker, who is a Fiduciary. She is an Enrolled Agent, licensed to practice before the IRS, with over 25 years of experience. Upon discovering that one of her clients was being abused, for instance, she realized that it was important to become a California Licensed Professional Fiduciary. With a strong tax and accounting background, becoming a Fiduciary was a natural transition for her.

If you ever had a desire to know what a fiduciary is and why one would think of using one, Iris will be on hand Saturday, September 14, to present on the issue and to answer all of your questions about the concept.

A catered buffet luncheon will begin at noon, followed by announcements and

the program at approximately 1:00. Feel free to bring a potluck dish to share if you wish.

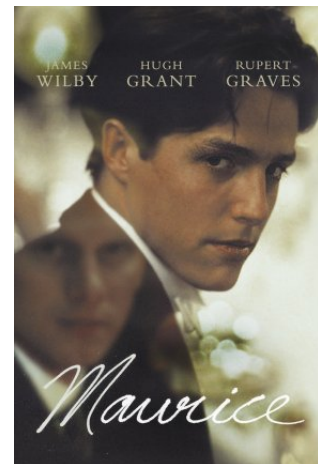


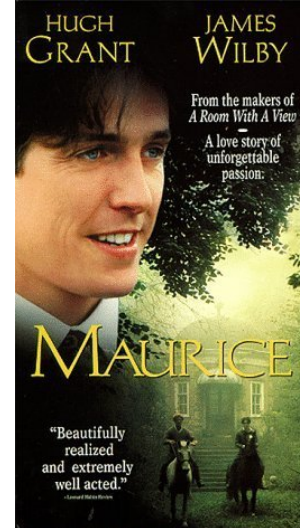
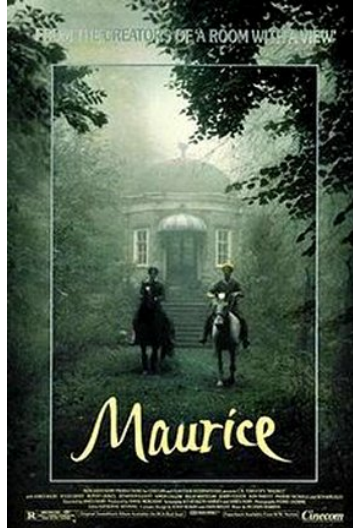
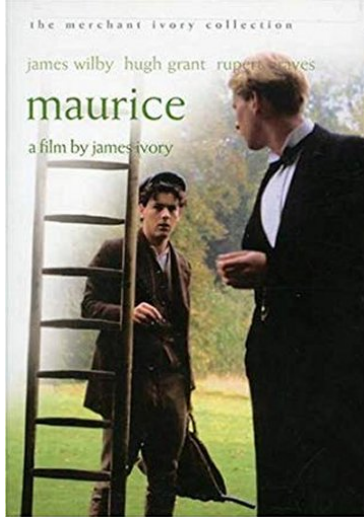
Maurice

In 1913, E.M. Forster – one of the great gay novelists of the 20th century – spent less than a year writing his only overtly homosexual novel, “Maurice”. He refused to have it published for the remainder of his life (he died 57 years later in 1970). It was only released posthumously in 1971, per his instructions. He felt the societal – and perhaps legal – strictures against homosexuality of the time so constraining that he didn’t want to experience the potential rejection – perhaps even prison time, in his mind – if it were to be published during his lifetime.

When producer Ismail Merchant and director James Ivory decided – 15 years after the novel was published – to mount another collaboration putting a second E.M. Forster novel to film in 1987, it was still quite controversial. The pair demanded that – in the casting process – they would find the most believable stars to play the three leads in the film. And believable stars they got in James Wilby, Hugh Grant and Rupert Graves. (Those of you who saw last month’s film – “Different for Girls,” also co-starring Rupert Graves – will see him in a different light in this month’s film – as the love interest of Maurice, for whom the novel and film are named).

Four different versions of DVD jacket covers for the 1987 award-winning film





"Maurice" is a tale of gay romance in early 20th-century England, based on Forster's novel of the same name. The story follows its main character, Maurice Hall, from childhood through university, a tumultuous relationship, struggling to fit into society, and finally the happy ending that the author insisted on. Given that this award-winning film was released in the first decade of the AIDS epidemic, many gay historians see it as giving a nod to happy endings still being possible amidst such devastation in the community.



Maurice and Clive – the bittersweetness of first love

Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* wrote in his review:

Merchant and Ivory tell this story in a film so handsome to look at and so intelligently acted that it is worth seeing just to regard the production. Scene after scene is perfectly created: a languorous afternoon floating on the river behind the Cambridge colleges; a desultory cricket game between masters and servants; the daily routine of college life; visits to country estates and town homes; the settings of the rooms... Although some might find Wilby unfocused in the title role, I thought he made the right choices, portraying a man whose real thoughts were nearly always elsewhere.

One of the most famous lines in the film reflects the pre-WWI Edwardian era depicted in the novel. When Maurice seeks help from the family doctor for his "affliction," he describes himself as being "an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort." One must remember that Oscar Wilde's fate came to symbolize society's attitudes toward homosexuality at the time. Wilde had been jailed for his "crime" from 1895-97 and died a poor wretched man at age 46 in 1900 – when Forster was just 21 years old and fearful of being discovered himself. He was particularly afraid that his mother would find out about his sexuality, another reason for sitting on the novel for over a half-century, though he revised it twice during that time.



Maurice and Alec Scudder, the under-gamekeeper on Clive's estate, getting to know each other

Those who are familiar with the BBC serial version of Evelyn Waugh's "Brideshead Revisited" will recognize Clive's face-saving choice of his bride, Ann, in Phoebe Nicholl, who portrayed Cordelia in that series.



Clive, not-so-happily married to Ann, reminiscing about his time with Maurice

The film will be shown at 1pm on the Third Wednesday, 18th September, in the fully-accessible Carnegie Lecture Hall at the San Leandro Public Library, 300 Estudillo. Following the showing, there will be a brief evaluation and discussion of the film.

Attendees are reminded that the theater is frequently chilly, so that a sweater or light jacket is recommended. Library staff are now telling us that – if the room is too cold – there may be something to be done about it if it is reported to them immediately. Stay tuned on that.

The library can be reached via BART (five blocks above the San Leandro station), AC-Transit (two blocks above the E. 14th and Estudillo bus-stop), Bancroft Avenue, Highways 580 or 880. Ample two- and three-hour parking is available.



Oakland LifeFire / InterPlay

This month's Third Friday Lunch Bunch will find us experiencing a hybrid of well-known activities intended to inspire light-heartedness and, goddess-forbid, **happiness** as we face the joys and sorrows of aging!

A two-person team that some of us are familiar with – Annie Goglia and Amos Lans – will be on hand to lead us in a number of physical and mental maneuvers proven to help lift the spirits of even people who might feel they have too many “un-fun” things on their mind to enjoy this.

From Oakland LifeFire – Annie – a founder of LifeFire – has worked with seniors throughout her 20+ years of service, facilitating such workshops as “Lightening Up about Growing Older”:

Come get healthier and happier with us! Laughter is scientifically shown to reduce stress, normalize blood pressure, relieve pain and more. Willingness to laugh and connect with other people are all that’s required. Not in the mood? We’ll help you laugh even when you don’t feel like it.



Join us for fun warm ups, playful laughter exercises, a rollicking laughter flow, and a relaxation that will leave you blissed out! No Yoga mats, jokes, or even a sense of humor needed.

From InterPlay – in addition to planning and leading LifeFire for 8 years, Amos has been a teacher of regular day-long InterPlay classes for men:

InterPlay is an active, creative way to unlock the wisdom of the body.



InterPlay is easy, fun, and life changing. It is based on a series of incremental “forms” that lead participants to movement and stories, silence and song, ease and amusement. In the process, we discover the wisdom in ourselves & our communities.

InterPlay integrates body, mind, heart and spirit. Life has become so fragmented. InterPlay helps to pull everything back together so we get more of what we want.

InterPlay is devoted to fun. It teaches the language and ethic of play in a

deep and powerful way. If you are convinced that seriousness is the path to inner wisdom, then you might want to look elsewhere. If you would like to become a "recovering serious person," then InterPlay might be for you.

InterPlay is firmly based in affirmation and looking for the good. You don't have to think of yourself as creative in order to do InterPlay. We can teach you that part easily. We get far too much criticism in our lives already. We need to spend more time in the warm bath of acceptance.

The Third Friday Lunch Bunch will be held from 12-2pm on Friday, 20th September, at the North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 MLK Jr Way (corner 58th Street). Lunch (vegetarian options available) is served promptly at 12 noon. The program begins at 12:45-50. Ample parking and entrance are in the back of the building (off 58th Street).

Please come and join us.



SAVE THE DATE

Join us in celebrating our Silver Anniversary
Going strong for 25 years and counting!

Eve's Waterfront Restaurant
15 Embarcadero West, Oakland, CA 94607
Saturday, November 9, 2019
11:30 am – 3:00 pm

MC:

Peggy Moore

Training and Development Director
California Democratic Party

Live Entertainment:

Oakland Gay Men's Chorus

VOICES Lesbian A Cappella for Justice

Mothertongue Feminist Readers Theater

Tickets:

\$25.00 General Admission (No tickets sold at the door)

Available through the Lavender Seniors

Website: www.lavenderseniors.org/25Years

Or mail your check to: Lavender Seniors, 4123 Broadway #818, Oakland, CA 9461

Sponsorship and Advertising opportunities are available!

For more information please email: gwen@lavenderseniors.org



Pride is in the Air...let us know about your celebrations!

Oakland, September 8, PARADE kicks off 11:00 am at Broadway & 14th St.,
FESTIVAL 11:00 am-7:00 pm.

Editors Note: Hyperlinks to websites available in blue



An intergenerational gathering &
conversation with LGBTQ elders

****Free Lunch Will Be Provided (12:30pm)****

Friday, September 6
12pm-3:30pm



For more information on Oakland Pride and related activities at the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center,
see <https://www.oaklandlgbtqcenter.org/anniversary-pride>

Notes from OSF-Out Weekend in Ashland

Intimacy Director, Anyone?

For the second year in a row, a group of Lavender Seniors ventured up to Ashland, Oregon, last month for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, where they participated in the Fifth Annual OSF-Out Weekend, celebrating LGBTQ themes in theater and LGBTQ actors on the stage.

The World We Portray: LGBTQ+

Shayna Blass, Christian Bufford, Christiana Clark,
Rebecca S'Manga Frank, Kimberly Monks, & Román Zaragoza

OUT Weekend 2019

One of the several events planned for that celebration this year was a six-member panel of actors discussing "The World We Portray: LGBTQ+" on stage and in film. The panel was moderated by the OSF Production Script Coordinator, J Ching, a transman who seemed to know virtually everything about theater.

A new concept for our group – introduced during this panel – was the role of Intimacy Director in this year's festival and becoming common in theaters and film studios everywhere.

In addition to the moderator, the panel consisted of three pairs who had portrayed same-sex couples on the OSF stage:

Shayna Blass and Rebecca S'Manga Frank, who played the lesbian couple in "Indecent", launching a decades-long scandal with the first-ever same-sex kiss on Broadway during a Yiddish theater production in 1923 (true story) – opened on 4th of July weekend.

Christiana Clark and Kimberly Monks, who played a lesbian couple in the West Coast Premiere of "How to Catch Creation", which opened during OSF-Out Weekend

Christian Bufford and Román Zaragoza, who portrayed a gay male couple in last year's LGBTQ production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!"

The theory behind Intimacy Direction is that, in order to be as convincing as possible in make-out, groping and love-making scenes depicted on stage or on the screen, each actor must feel comfortable that his/her boundaries are being respected by the other partner(s) in the scene – no surprises! The Intimacy Director/Consultant at OSF this season was Sarah Lozoff, a dancer, choreographer and ballet teacher, trained via Intimacy Directors International (who knew there was such an organization)...?

"We found Sarah's help to be invaluable in developing our scenes," Kimberly reported. "Christiana and I were much more comfortable in our romantic scenes because Intimacy Direction was provided from our very first rehearsals, when we were just getting to know each other. We were as dependent on Sarah's guidance as we were on our Director, Nataki Garrett, who guided us through the staging, timing and other aspects of a successful performance."

The pair demonstrated for the audience how an Intimacy Direction session might go. They stood facing each other with hands extended – Kim with her palms up and Christiana's hands hovering (but not touching) palms-down over

Kim's. During the session, they would indicate to each other which body parts could be touched comfortably and which movements would be unacceptable.

"First of all, no 'keeners,'" Kim said, as they both laughed, indicating their nickname for those body parts that would be covered by a two-piece bikini (e.g., breasts, genital area and buttocks). "Then other red-light areas are the top and back of my head, my lips and my ears. My arms, thighs and legs would be okay, but I'm not so sure about my feet."

Members of the other couples chimed in at various points during and after the demonstration.

"One thing that has emerged from the 'Me, Too' movement," Rebecca interjected, "is that if, for instance, I asked Shayna whether brushing her left breast might be okay in the scene and there was even the slightest hesitation, that must be taken as a NO! There must be an enthusiastic YES during Intimacy Direction! That way both parties feel respected in the scene and are less likely to wince at some unexpected movement, making the scene less believable!"

Another issue that arose during this panel involved "discordant" couples – when one member of the couple is straight, in real life, and the other is LGBTQ+. Might the lesbian in such an on-stage couple be fearful that the straight woman would think she was "coming on" to her? Might the straight man in such an on-stage couple think that the gay man is indeed enjoying this scene too much?

"When you're on stage, you're a professional playing a role," Román reminded the audience and other panel members. "Gay men have been making out with women on stage and in film for generations; lesbians have portrayed love-making scenes with straight men over the years. We're all just doing a better job under the supervision of Intimacy Directors like Sarah, making us more comfortable in the roles we play and becoming more believable in the process."

This is the same Román, by the way, who one hour later was playing the very demanding nearly three-hour role as Orlando in "As You Like It", replete with shirtless wrestling matches and gender-bending galore! What a talent to be able to shift gears that quickly and effectively!

Fielding a question from the audience: "Has Intimacy Direction played any role in your personal life?" brought out peals of laughter from the panelists as they looked knowingly at each other.

"Yes, this process has given me AGENCY, has made me a stronger woman who can say no and not feel any guilt about it," Kim volunteered, while some of the other panelists seemed to laugh nervously. "Women are often trained in our society to be submissive to men, fearing rejection or feeling guilty if they say no to something he might want to do. Now that I've accepted that I have agency to set up clear boundaries around my own body, I feel like the strong woman I was meant to be."

We are grateful to the moderator, the panelists and the OSF-Out organizers for this inspiring session. We also appreciated having the opportunity to spend

time with outgoing Artistic Director, Bill Rauch, and his husband, Christopher Liam Moore, before they headed east for the challenges at the upcoming opening of the Perelman Center for the Performing Arts at the World Trade Center, as well as last-minute requests from the Lincoln Center, as it turns out.



Six of the group of intrepid Lavender Seniors with Bill Rauch (center) during OSF-Out Weekend

"Getting to see the video of last year's fabulous LGBTQ version of 'Oklahoma!' in Bill's office was also an amazing treat," said Bill Campisi, one of the Lavender Seniors troop that headed north for the occasion. "Seeing the performance so up close and personal was a remarkable way to confirm, for instance, that some of the same-sex lip-locks we saw from Row G were even more convincing with the camera's zoom-in lens. I wouldn't have missed this for the world."

And finally, the last of several OSF-Out Weekend special events was called the "Mis-Cast Concert" from 11pm Sunday until 1:30am at the Black Swan Theater. Singing their hearts out to a packed house were LGBTQ+ performers and allies belting out show tunes in solo, duet and trio renditions, accompanied by a very talented and flexible keyboardist.

We'll definitely be back again for OSF-Out Weekend in 2020! Thanks to all who organized such a special weekend, along with amazing performances on stage!

[Editor's Note: Though we took photos of the entire panel and moderator, we were informed that some Actor's Equity Association and/or Screen Actors Guild guidelines discourage taking their photos, much less publishing them even in non-profit newsletters like ours. Anyone interested in seeing what these panelists look like can go to the www.osfashland.org website and see their photos in this season's Playbill (or contact JohnDavid@LavenderSeniors.org and he'll likely share privately some of these "illicit" photos)...

Lavender Seniors 10% Discount Available

Stagebridge Fall Classes Beginning

Stagebridge, an old friend/sister organization of Lavender Seniors, has begun enrollment for fall classes (beginning 23rd September), offering a 10% discount to Lavender Seniors. The 41-year-old non-profit has many followers in the LGBTQ senior community. As some may remember, one of our long-time participants, the late Jerry Fishman, was involved for decades in the acting, singing and dancing promoted by Stagebridge and targeting keeping

seniors (sometimes literally) on our toes.

Among the programs offered by Stagebridge are the following:

Never Too Late

As Stagebridge's longest running show, *Never Too Late* entertains Bay Area groups throughout the year. Its talented cast offers a topical mix of skits and songs that treat every day experiences with compassion, wisdom, harmony, and a healthy dose of humor. Led by Artistic Director Joanne Grimm and Musical Director Scrumby Koldewyn on the piano, the stars shine brighter each year, and their winks and nods to memory lane leave audiences with a laugh and a smile.

Never Too Late is presented in various public and host-sponsored venues. Shows typically run from 40-60 minutes and can be customized for seasonal, holiday or special occasion themes.

Playback Theatre

Personal stories shared by audience members are instantly transformed by the ensemble into improvised theater pieces using movement, ritual, dramatic spoken word and music. Audience participation and interaction is an essential component of the program. The experience proves to be cathartic, fun, challenging and meaningful! Playback is especially suitable for staff trainings, memory care settings, and caregiver support.

Performances and trainings are 45 to 90 minutes.

Storytelling

Stagebridge storytellers captivate audiences with witty, charming, personal and fictional stories, based in the oral tradition of world wisdom. Tellers invite the audience to relax, listen, enjoy and share in the exciting tales as they are revealed. A storytelling concert, featuring 2-4 tellers and lasting between 30-60 minutes, allows audiences to enjoy a variety of stories and styles.

Here's the kind of activity you might be involved in if you start hanging out with folks at Stagebridge (a production of "Hair" by seniors a few years ago)...! Looks like fun, que no?!





Anyone interested in the Stagebridge classes, please feel free to contact Lily at 510-444-4755, x122 or Lily@stagebridge.org. Using the promo code LAVENDER at checkout gets a 10% discount on class fees for Lavender Seniors participants!



Bay Area OLOC (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change) welcomes any interested lesbian 60+ to join us Friday-Sunday, SEPTEMBER 13-15, 2019 at our twice-yearly retreat at "Enchanted Hills Camp" north of Napa.

Lovely woodsy setting, small cabins, fully wheelchair accessible, a large heated clothing-optional pool, great food, workshops, discussions, structured and unstructured time, sliding scale. A weekend to unwind, socialize, be energized, be peaceful ...

If you're interested, please email reeann1@gmail.com with your email address, and you'll receive our current newsletter, with full information and registration details.

Thank you!

NOTE: Please act soon, deadline to register is August 30!

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SAVE THE DATE

A Special Showing of Films Made by Queer Women of Color, Saturday October 5, 2019, 3-5 pm at the Berkeley Unitarian Fellowship, 1606 Bonita Avenue at Cedar Street. Donation \$5-20, light refreshments included. Everyone welcome.

For several years, Bay Area Old Lesbians Organizing for Change (OLOC) has been honored to be a supporter and community partner of QWOCCMAP, Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project (www.qwocmap.org). The Project offers entirely free filmmaking "boot camps" inside and outside California, as well as a free annual film festival in San Francisco, highlighting these films.

This is a special opportunity to see selected diverse films – poignant, dramatic, powerful, memorable – in an East Bay location. Filmmakers will be present to discuss their work and you will learn more about this

inspiring organization. All films will be captioned. The event is co-sponsored by Bay Area OLOC and by QWOCCMAP, and is a benefit for QWOCCMAP's programs.

Come enjoy the films and support QWOCCMAP's programs! Questions: msslaura@earthlink.net.

7th Annual Musical Extravaganza to Benefit the Charlotte Maxwell Clinic

(free acupuncture and other integrative care for low income women with cancer)

www.charlottemaxwell.org

Sunday September 15th, 2019
Freight and Salvage
2020 Addison Street, Berkeley CA
2:00 PM (doors open at 1:00 PM)

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### **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BLUES**

#### **Direct from Atlanta, Georgia Lola Gulley**

A dynamic blues singer and keyboard player  
who is named among "Atlanta's Queens of the Blues"

#### **The Bay Area's Own Pat Wilder**

An internationally known guitar sensation  
and one of the most colorful performers in the Bay Area

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Tickets available at the Brown Paper Tickets
<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4200696>

**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:

LGBTQ Chat 2nd and 4th Mondays, 1:00pm - 2:00pm

This group is open to all LGBTQ older adults to connect with others socially in a supportive environment where participants can share individual and collective experiences. Facilitated by Ariel Mellinger, ASW, Support and Wellness Coordinator, Openhouse SF

Music's Memory Lane Tuesdays, 6:00pm – 6:45pm

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

Perplexing Questions Sundays, 2:00pm – 2:30pm

Have you ever wondered how a fly can walk upside down on the ceiling? Or how a camel can go so long without water? Find out the answers to some head-scratching questions. Facilitated by Sharon Schwartz

View the Current catalog of community phone calls [here](#). Check the [website](#) for more information. 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.



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](#).



THIS MONTH'S EVENTS

Out Standing Seniors - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Sept 3 & 17 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. (1st and 3rd Tuesdays)
Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

[Join Meet-Up](#)

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

LezBold Peer Support Group

Sept 5 & 19, 1:30 p.m. (1st and 3rd Thursdays)
The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue (at Derby), Berkeley

Find support and like-minded wonderful people!

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

Sept 6, 13, 20, 27, 3:00 p.m. (Fridays)
North Berkeley Senior Center, 901 Hearst Ave, Berkeley

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

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

Sept 6, 13, 20, 27 2:00 p.m. (Fridays)
Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, 3207 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland

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

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

Sept 9, 16, 23, 30 1:00 p.m. (Mondays)
Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

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

Caring for Our Senior Partners/Friends/Ourselves

Sept 9, 16, 30 2:30 p.m. (Mondays)

Registration required.

Rainbow Seniors - Sponsored by Pacific Center & Lavender Seniors

Sept 10 & 24, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)
San Leandro Senior Center, 13909 E 14th St, San Leandro

A safe and confidential 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

Sept 3, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. (1st Tuesdays)
Robert Livermore Community Center Senior Services, 4444 East Avenue, Livermore 94550 [Join Meet-Up](#)

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

Lavender Seniors Board Meeting

Sept 11, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. (2nd Wednesday)
4300 Bermuda, Oakland

A portion of this meeting is open to the public.

Senior Gay Men's Group

Sept 4, 11, 18, 25 1:30 p.m. (Weekly on 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!*

Lavender Seniors Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch

Sept 14, noon - 2:00 p.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church, 911 Dowling Blvd., San Leandro

This month's program: "Iris Hecker, Fiduciary" (see info above)

Lavender Seniors LGBTQ Film Series

July 18, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (3rd Wednesday)

San Leandro Library, 300 Estudillo, San Leandro

This month's movie: "Maurice" (see info above)

Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center

Sept 19, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

City of Dublin Senior Center, 7600 Amador Valley Blvd., Dublin 94568

Join Meet-up

A Peer Support Group is a safe & confidential space for LGBT Seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information & to support one another.

Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

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

Sept 20, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland

This month's program: "Oakland LifeFire/InterPlay" (see info above)

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay Board of Directors

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