



Web Site: <http://www.owlsf.org>

January - March 2020

Email: [owlsf@owlsf.org](mailto:owlsf@owlsf.org)

OWL focuses exclusively on critical issues facing women as they age. We work together to improve the status and quality of life for midlife and older women through national, state and local networks.

**JOIN OWL SF for our**

## **2020 PLANNING MEETING**

*Make older women's voices heard  
in these challenging times!*

- **Election of OWL Board Members**
- **Planning for the Year**
  - **Political Advocacy Agenda**
  - **Ongoing OWL projects:**  
Social Security and Medicare, the environment, ageism, housing, women's health, long term care
  - **Thought-provoking Topics for:**  
membership meetings, newsletter & website
  - **Social activities for new and old friends**

*Bring a Brown Bag Lunch!*

**When: Saturday, January 25th, 10am to 1pm**

**Where: Community Room, Northern Police Station**

**1125 Fillmore Street at Turk**  
Muni #5, 22, 31 & 38 (4 block walk)  
(no parking in the police parking lot)

All Welcome  
Wheelchair Accessible

OWL SF \* 870 Market Street, #905, San Francisco, Ca. 94102  
Phone 415-712-1695 \* Web site: [www.owlsf.org](http://www.owlsf.org)

## WHHOOOO will be the Board members for OWL in 2020?

Elections for Board positions will be held during our January meeting.

Please give careful thought to persons you would like to nominate for these leadership opportunities, including yourself. But be sure the person is ready to serve before you put that name in nomination. Seriously consider nominating yourself. Responsibilities include participating in one 2-hour Board meeting each month, serving on one committee or in an active role such as Board officers hold; being responsible for OWL alerts for one month (identifying a concern and sending it to Sy who formats and sends it to members.)



Board meetings include thoughtful discussion and lots of laughter. Friendships grow and deepen.

Call Glenda Hope, 415 585 4636 or email her at [sfnm@pacbell.net](mailto:sfnm@pacbell.net) if you have questions.

## The Climate Crisis and Seniors: Why Should You Care?

In the past, climate issues were not at the top of the list of concerns for many seniors. But the times they are a'changing. At the recent CARA convention, for example, climate crisis concerns were one of the priorities identified for action. I think there are three reasons for this.

1. People see for themselves what the climate crisis is delivering. They experience, read or watch on tv, the disasters that are already here or are coming. Here in California, we've seen fires, droughts, floods, and other disasters entering *our* lives. We know there are disasters worldwide.
2. We realize it is only going to get worse. And we don't want to leave a disastrous world to future generations. I think many of us feel a moral obligation to preserve our world.
3. The climate crisis is having an impact on our health, both climate itself and air pollution. There are environmental stressors like temperature extremes, floods, unfamiliar diseases etc. Air pollution also causes a huge number of premature deaths, heart disease, lung disease, and even dementia. The biggest impacts are felt by the young and seniors. We are experiencing health crises in real time.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

## OWL Responds to Closure of CCSF's Older Adult Program

The recent abrupt closure of Older Adult program classes at San Francisco Community College, 50 among approximately 345 classes cancelled in all, is truly troubling to many older adults in San Francisco who find stimulation, social connections and enrichment in continuing education. OWL SF will be investigating and advocating for the reinstatement of the program that makes CCSF a community college that serves the wider needs of older and younger San Franciscans. At our January 6<sup>th</sup> Board meeting a motion was approved unanimously that "OWL SF supports the use of Dignity Fund money to retain the 17 senior classes that take place at various Senior Centers around the City and support the funding of the teachers at comparable wages to what they received at City College as a one-time only commitment of money; in addition OWL recognizes the union issue and concern about teachers' benefits and the struggle of all City College students whose classes were cancelled."

A letter from OWL SF will be drafted expressing our position and sent to the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, CCSF Board of Trustees and Governor Newsom. We realize that the use of Dignity Fund support is only a temporary solution to save 17 classes for seniors and the move to save all the community enrichment and non-credit classes is big future issue that needs our concern and advocacy.

**Board Members**  
Maxine Anderson  
Joan Downey, Treasurer  
Melanie Grossman  
Amy Hittner  
Glenda Hope, President  
Margaret Lew  
Sheila Malkind  
Tina Martin  
Sy Russell  
Betty Traynor, Secretary

**Newsletter**  
Margaret Lew, Editor

**Political Advocacy Committee**  
Glenda Hope  
Melanie Grossman  
Co-Chairwomen

**OWL SF Board meetings:** first Monday of the month, 4:00-6:00 pm, 870 Market St.  
**Phone:** (415) 712-1695  
**Email:** [owlsf@owlsf.org](mailto:owlsf@owlsf.org)  
**Web:** [www.owlsf.org](http://www.owlsf.org)  
**Mail:** 870 Market St., Room 905, San Francisco, CA 94102

## Political Advocacy Committee Report

OWL's Political Advocacy Committee met on December 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss its agenda for 2020. The committee agreed that all issues taken up should reflect concerns of older citizens of San Francisco. For example, we intend to focus on the environment in 2020, but will especially be concerned with the effect of global warming and pollution have on the health of older people. Housing is another area that impacts older women, particularly affordable housing for those who wish to age in place, and the disappearance of board and care homes and skilled nursing beds for those who cannot live independently. Often seniors must leave San Francisco because of limited affordable options for them. The issue of homelessness also affects older people. San Franciscans 55 and older are among most at risk for homelessness.

The Political Advocacy Committee would like to remind OWL members that the next San Francisco election will be on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020. This will be an opportunity to vote in the presidential primary, as well as for candidates in local and state races. We will also vote on ballot measures, and these can be found at <https://sfelections.sfgov.org/measures>.

In 2020, we will reach out to the OWL membership in selecting and writing OWL Alerts. To date, only the board has suggested important issues for Alerts. We would like to tap into the wisdom of our membership, and make OWL Alerts something that everyone can get involved in. Come to the January Planning Meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2020 to make your voice is heard in our organization and throughout San Francisco.

—*Melanie Grossman*

## OWL Alerts

Dear Members, For the past 3 years, members of the OWL Board have taken on the work of identifying concerns in the City, State and Nation in which we live and developing OWL Alerts to give us a focus for concerted action for justice and compassion.

Many of you have found the Alerts a welcome way to help sort out and work on some of the many complex pieces of proposed legislation knowing that others were doing the same. Sending the national concerns to friends across the country has magnified our efforts.

This work is not the privileged province of OWL Board members. Every OWL member is encouraged to do this: identify your concern, especially pending legislation, make note of who should be contacted and how to do that and send it to [info@owlsf.org](mailto:info@owlsf.org).

—*Glenda Hope,*  
*OWL Board President*

## My Evolution As An Environmental Activist

I have been a social activist most of my life. But for many years this only included being a “casual environmentalist.” I used both sides of a piece of paper, had live Christmas trees, wrapped presents in newspaper, etc. I even remember, many years ago, asking for a pitchfork for Mother's Day, so that I could turn our backyard compost heap.

Then a few years ago I got serious when it hit home that future generations, including my grandchildren, were going to inherit a vastly different world than that which I had known. “Different” is putting it mildly; I was concerned that there won't be a livable planet..

I realized that the political and social issues with which I was so involved weren't going to matter very much if we didn't have a world to live in.

I got involved with several environmental groups, including 350 Bay Area. Then I rather timidly thought it a good idea to put together my interest in climate and seniors, particularly through groups like CARA and OWL. Both groups have had programs on and/or endorsed legislation relating to environmental issues. I hope both of these groups will have a much enhanced participation in the future.

Then I thought “who should be more interested in a livable world for future generations than mothers?” So I gathered up my courage and asked the busiest mother I know for help – my daughter. Together we started a local chapter of a national group called Mothers Out Front – working for a livable world for our children. It is an intergenerational group, some of whom are not mothers, but all of whom are concerned about future generations. Please join us. We would love to have more older women.

Through Mothers Out Front I have become more involved with local climate crisis issues. Right now I am part of a local climate coalition that is encouraging – demanding – that the City take more aggressive action to address climate challenges close to home.

This traces my path, but one thing I have learned is the power of collective action. When people join together, things happen. OWL has a role to play. We need everyone.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**

**Cherrill Spencer  
Leslie Stafford**

## Sing Along at the Castro—or at Your Local Library

Have you heard that singing is one of the ways we can improve our mental and physical health? It doesn't even matter if we sing off-key! In late December 2019, OWL member Marcy Valiente and I went to a Sing-along to *The Sound of Music* at the Castro Theater, where we were joined by a small group of people who attend the monthly sing-along at the Anza Public Library. We had a wonderful time! Marcy, who was a teacher (and maybe still is), brought along some snack items for us, and the Castro Theater provided a packet of movie-related items. Unlike at other theater showings where they ask us to be silent, we were advised to boo the Nazis, hiss at the baroness, and wave our little white Edelweiss flowers every time that eponymous song was sung. We were also given a party pop to send off at whatever moment we found particularly exciting, such as when the reformed nun Maria first kissed Captain Von Trapp. The words appeared on the screen in case we didn't know them by heart. All of this was preceded by a show of the costumes some people wore for the occasion. One little girl was dressed in "brown paper packages tied up with strings" and a young man was wearing the curtains Maria makes into play clothes for the Von Trapp children. Of course, there were several Marias and nuns, though one small group of children corrected the Mistress of Ceremonies when she called them sisters. "We're cousins," they said. We loved singing along with this corny movie.

The following weekend, Tony Bravo had a column on the sing-along in the *San Francisco Chronicle* saying, "Getting together to watch the movie and sing songs from *The Sound of Music* is such a simple and comforting thought that it feels almost like a radical act of personal happiness." The headline was "The Sound of Humanity: Movie sing-alongs show San Francisco at its best." It also makes us feel our best.

So do the sing-alongs at various community centers and libraries, where we don't wear costumes or pay twelve dollars. I go to the one at the Anza Library the first Saturday of the month, when we sing songs from musicals like *The Sound of Music*, *My Fair Lady*, and *The King and I* as well as songs by the Beatles, Carpenters, John Denver, and many others as well as those recorded by Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, and other singers. We baby-boomers also share our associations with the songs—the memories they bring to mind. Sometimes we're even joined by younger people and whole families. Borrowing the words of one of our songs and changing only its final word, "Sing, sing a song. / Make it simple to last your whole life long. / Don't worry that it's not good enough for anyone else to hear. / Just sing, sing along."

—Tina Martin

## Congratulations Janet Tom A SF Librarian We Love!

San Francisco reference librarian Janet Tom, invited to OWL's holiday celebration at Jannah on December 14, had just gotten some exciting news, which she shared with us. She is one of the ten librarians in the nation to win the 2019 "I Love My Librarian Award" for her leadership in the community and her commitment to transforming lives. I've attended several of the library programs she's planned and implemented, including a cooking demonstration by author Shanta Nimbark Sacharoff, (*Flavors of India*), a talk by Robert Lustig (*FAT Chance: Beating the Odds Against Sugar, Processed Food, Obesity, and Disease* and *The Hacking of the American Mind*), and a sneak preview of the Legacy Film Festival on Aging that OWL Sheila Malkind founded and runs.



But it was her program on Death and Dying (see the *OWL Newsletter* July-September 2019) that led patrons to nominate her for this award because she handled the taboo subject with sensitivity and helped attendees deal with matters of life and death in a way that was enabling and life-enhancing. Janet Tom was chosen one of ten from among almost two thousand nominees working in public, school, college, community, and university libraries. Please read more: <https://sfpl.org/releases/2019/12/10/san-francisco-librarian-receives-i-love-my-librarian-award/>

—Tina Martin

## There Is Free Software!

A few years ago I was unpleasantly surprised when my Microsoft Word for Windows would not open a MSWord file sent to me for the OWL newsletter. My version of MSWord was out of date. I was not ready to spend to upgrade it to a new version but realized that there would be more inaccessible files, so I turned to the shareware and free software resources where I found an answer. I have been using OpenOffice now for writing, editing and sharing files. Apache OpenOffice is the leading open-source office software suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases and more. It is available in many languages and works on all common computers. It is available at

<http://www.openoffice.org/>

It is always best to download software from its original source to avoid possible problems with fake or virus infected products. There are hundreds of free products for nearly every need from word processing, virus and malware checkers to photo editing. Look for free software at reputable sites such as *PC Magazine* <https://www.PCMag.com> and Tucows <https://www.tucows.com/> where you can find recommendations and links to original source sites for downloads.

—Margaret Lew

## Women 50+ May Decide 2020 Election

A December 19<sup>th</sup> AARP poll finds that Women 50 + could decide the 2020 election. Almost all plan to vote but a wide majority are undecided about how.

- 7 in 10 are undecided about candidates' support for issues that concern them, especially health care and the economy.
- 4 in 10 cannot afford health care. 26% polled report skipping medical care due to expense and 14% report going into debt because of high health care costs. Women believe older Americans are taken advantage of when it comes to health costs.
- The qualities most important for leaders are ethics and trust. Optimal for a leader: Ethics 39%, Trust 36% and Intelligence 30%
- 46% give leaders failing grades on addressing the high cost of health care and prescription drugs.
- 48% think the economy is on the wrong track. (compared with only 35% of men polled) Only a quarter of women expect their personal financial situation to improve in the next 12 months and the lack in confidence in the economy drags down women's prospects for retirement.
- 65% have unfavorable opinions on pharmaceutical companies. Many over 50 are forced to decide between medications and necessities of food and housing. 13 percent of women over 50 reported rationing their medications because of cost.
- Women 50+ make health decisions for their families. Of those women polled, 57% of women say they prioritize the health of their family over their own. Read the entire report at this link: <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/government-elections/info-2019/women-voting-poll.html>

## Vegan Mob Made The Front Page!

“To Vegan Mob!” I said, when in mid-November last year my family asked me where I’d like to go for my birthday lunch. I’d read about it in an October column by Justin Phillips, a black journalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, whose headline read “New Oakland soul food spot reminds us vegan food is part of black culture.”

Phillips had been lamenting the lack of support for restaurants run by African-Americans and I’d written to him, saying that I’d like to support black-run restaurants, but I’m a vegan as are an increasing number of blacks. I cited *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society* and Bryant Terry of The Museum of the African Diaspora and author of *Afro-Vegan*. He responded courteously, and when the article on Vegan Mob came out, I thanked him

for that. My family and I didn’t mind standing in line at the hugely popular, greatly supported Vegan Mob because the others waiting were good company—lots of young people and more than half people of color. This is basically a take-out spot, and when all three tables were occupied, those seated welcomed us to join them. The food was good, and my family—at first reticent because the place looked like a fast-food joint—said they were glad I’d chosen that place. Then in late December Justin Phillips had a front-page article “Around Lake Merritt, Oakland is quietly finding its culinary soul,” which featured Vegan Mob. I love the logo too. In place of the Tommy-gun mobsters are usually shown holding, the mobster depicted on the logo has a cooking fork and a spatula!

—*Tina Martin*

## Kudos to Sheila Malkind And Her Fabulous Festival

*This Film Festival is the Answer to Those Okay Boomer Naysayers*, Lois Alter Mark’s article on Malkind’s wonderful 3 day festival was published recently in *Forbes*. Mark covers travel and attended the *LFFOA* 9<sup>th</sup> edition summing up her experience: “If you think a film festival about aging would be dull or depressing or conservative, you’ve obviously never attended the *Legacy Film Festival On Aging*.” The article includes an entertaining and insightful interview with Sheila about her life and this beloved project. Read it on the *Forbes* website. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/loisaltermark/2019/12/19/this-film-festival-is-the-answer-to-those-okay-boomer-naysayers/#7f4e229a783f>

## Stretching Body, Mind And Spirit to Embrace Aging & Reject Ageism

OWL members got up and active at OWL’s November membership meeting which featured easy low impact exercise and some techniques for stress reduction presented by Kyrie Boprie, of Always Active, who leads exercise at St Anne and Cayuga. Many types of practice offer benefits to our mind and body and Kyrie explained each one. After exercising the physical the members broke into small groups to tackle the mind and spirit with a discussion of our purpose in life, the limits we encounter filling it and ways we find success overcoming them.

**Like OWL SF on Facebook!**  
<https://facebook.com/OWLSF/>

## Aging and the Brain

OWL's October 26<sup>th</sup> 2019 monthly membership meeting on Aging and the Brain focused on a topic of the frequent concern to older women as they and their loved ones continue to age. Dr. Mary De May, the Hellman Family Distinguished Professor of Neurology and a Master Clinician at UCSF's Memory and Aging Center spoke to us in laymen's terms for over an hour and a half. The question and answer format of the meeting facilitated a conversational and inclusive tone as Dr. De May took questions from the interviewer, Melanie Grossman, PhD, but also frequently directly from the audience.

Defining dementia was the first question explored. Dr. De May explained that dementia was an umbrella term used to describe a group of symptoms related to the brain, including short-term memory loss, confusion, difficulty with problem solving or completing multi-step activities like preparing a meal or balancing a checkbook. Dementia is not a disease. It is also not a normal part of aging. It is a symptom of various conditions, and thus should be evaluated by a doctor. Some forms of dementia are reversible. These can be due to medication side-effects, vitamin deficiencies, emotional distress or metabolic abnormalities. Other dementias, known as degenerative dementias, are not reversible, but can be managed so that quality of life for the patient and their families can be optimized.

The degenerative dementias are: 1) Alzheimer's Disease, the most common cause of dementia; 2) vascular dementia which occurs when blood flow to the brain is lessened or blocked; 3) Lewy Body disease with visual hallucinations, fluctuation in lucidity, and tremors; 4) frontotemporal dementia caused by cell deterioration and shrinkage in the brain's frontal lobes; 5) traumatic brain injury from repetitive head trauma; and 6) Parkinson's Disease where the disease begins to spread within the brain. Currently there are only limited treatments for degenerative dementias. Aricept is often the drug of choice for Alzheimer's Disease because it increases focus, but it does not cure the disease.

OWL members wanted to know the difference between dementia and changes in the brain due to aging. Dr. De May noted that it is normal for our brains to slow as we age. Difficulty in recalling names or in multi-tasking is often seen in aging. If we can't remember the plot of a movie we saw last night, this is not a sign of dementia. However, if we don't remember that we even went to the movies, that is cause for concern. First contact should be our primary care physician who can give us a simple memory test and then decide if a referral to a neurologist is needed.

Dr. De May had some tips for improving brain health. Exercising regularly is the best thing we can do for our brains. Waking is an excellent exercise, but walking in nature is even better because we must be aware of speed, balance and challenging terrain. Walking on a treadmill does not offer the same benefits. Another tip is to stay socially active and engaged. Regarding nutrition, Dr. De May advised eating plenty of colorful fruits and vegetable and minimizing consumption of red meats, salt, sugar and highly processed food. The doctor also reminded us that what's good for the heart is good for the brain!

—*Melanie Grossman*



## Life Cycle

*Sigh.* . . I have a phone which attempts to print out what my caller is saying, sometimes with hilarious results. Mine abruptly quit printing. Called the company and was told "you have one of our oldest models and it is at the end of its life cycle." Who knew phones had life cycles too? Good news is that this is a service funded by a surcharge on our phone bills for years and I will get a new phone installed for free this week. If you have trouble hearing on your phone, check out Caption Call. Right after learning that my print-out phone was never going to print again, I called AT&T because my internet service was in and out. After 2 long calls and lots of wait time, I learned that my modem is dying. *Hmmmmmm.* . .

—*Glenda Hope*



Above: Melanie Grossman and Dr. Mary De May, below: engaged audience. Photos by Tina Martin

## What Are You Reading?

Surprise charmer of the year for me: *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio*, by Terry Ryan. Written like a novel, this true story traces many years of Terry's mother supporting a family of 10 plus an alcoholic abusive husband/father by winning mail-in contests (jingles, last lines for product buildups, 25 words or less product testimonials, etc.) in the 1950s and '60's. You will laugh and be uplifted by the spirit of this amazing woman. I encourage you to find a copy and pass it around after you have read it. This book came to me when I appealed to neighbors for books "featuring strong women" which could go to the new Hope Center in the Tenderloin, an outreach center to homeless sex trafficked, prostituted women seeking at least a respite from the streets but also a life transformation through therapy, education, case management, nutritious food, and more offered there. Look up SF SafeHouse to get a fuller description of the Center. Drop books off at 255 Hyde Street, between Eddy and Turk.

I also recommend *Gutsy Women* by Hillary and Chelsea Clinton. This holds scores of brief bios of – well – gutsy women. Many names you will recognize such as Harriet Tubman but others you might not, such as Alice Min Soo Chun. You will learn new things about women whose names are familiar in this well researched book. You will read a few of these bios late at night or just when you need a spiritual uplift. Great Christmas gift.

## Delicious December Holiday Meeting

In December OWLs with friends and family gathered to celebrate the holiday season at Jannah restaurant with delicious Persian food, lots of good conversation and entertainment – topical songs – presented by Hallie Hammer and Pat Wynn. OWL SF provided the lunch and OWLs provided the good cheer to celebrate the end of the year and prepare for the new one.



Owls and friends enjoy food and at Jannah.

*The Library Book* by Susan Orleans. At Christmas, I had a visit with Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, a friend for the last 51 years. (I was a seminary student who rented a studio apt. over a house inhabited by a woman on welfare with 3 small children. Hers is an inspirational story.) Anyway, Lynn was enthusiastic in her recommendation of *The Library Book*. I confess I have not read Orleans's previous works and probably would not have looked twice at this one. On Lynn's recommendation, I now have the book but have not read it. Since the *OWL Newsletter* is ready for print, I must hastily pass on to you a couple of comments from critics, though Lynn's opinion is enough for me.

"...she's always brilliant. But *The Library Book* is a particularly beautiful and soul-expanding book - even by Orleanian standards." Elizabeth Gilbert

"Mesmerizing. . .A riveting mix of true crime, history, biography, and Immersion journalism" *Booklist* (starred review)

Let's discover this book together.

Now it is time for you, dear OWL member, to send Margaret Lew, the Newsletter Editor, some book reviews of your own. The book exchanges at our monthly membership meetings prove that there are a lot of readers among our members; so, please, help us choose good books. Mystery books are welcome.

—Glenda Hope



Juliette and Helene with appetizers.  
Photos by Tina Martin

## Calendar

For a complete and up to date listing see the OWL website: <http://www.owlsf.org/calendar/>

**January 6 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 3:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)**

**January 25 Saturday — OWL General Meeting 10:00-1:00 Annual Planning Meeting & Election of Board (Northern Police Station Community Room) (See cover for details.)**

**February 3 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)**

**February 22 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 10:00-Noon Topic and details to be announced.**

**March 2 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)**

**March 21 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 10:00-Noon 10:00-Noon Topic and details to be announced.**

YES! I WANT TO JOIN OWL SF!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues of \$50 are recommended. (If you are unable to pay the recommended amount, OWL has established a sliding fee scale from \$50 –\$5.) Members receive the quarterly OWL SF Newsletter.

***OWL SF will not share or sell our membership list or any information about our members.***

Make a check out to and mail to:

OWL SF  
870 Market Street, Room 905  
San Francisco, CA 94102

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870 Market Street, #905  
San Francisco, CA 94102

### **The Founding of OWL**

OWL was born in 1980 in Des Moines, Iowa, during one of the pre-conferences held around the county in preparation for the third White House Conference on Aging, which was held in 1981 in Washington, DC. At the pre-conference in Des Moines, TISH SOMMERS noted that little attention was being paid to the ways in which aging was different for women. She called for a special “ad hoc” meeting to discuss this concern. OWL has been a voice for the special concerns of midlife and older women ever since.

Comments or questions? Please contact the SF OWL Office at (415) 712-1695;  
e-mail: [owlsf@owlsf.org](mailto:owlsf@owlsf.org)