



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

*January - March 2022*

*Email:* [info@owlsf.org](mailto:info@owlsf.org) <[info@owlsf.org](mailto:info@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**  
**2022 Planning Meeting**  
**The Future of OWL-SF**

**Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**11:00 am to 12:30 pm**

ZOOM Meeting with phone access

*We need new people to step up and help lead us into the future, to keep our mission relevant, and continue to make our organization one that uniquely serves midlife and older women.*

**\* Join us to plan for 2022 and beyond**

**\* Share your thinking and commitment to our work for midlife and older women**

Zoom link and telephone number to follow in e-mail

**OWL SF \* PO Box 170622, San Francisco, Ca. 94117**  
**Phone 415-712-1695 \* Web site: [www.owlsf.org](http://www.owlsf.org)**

## Why Is Global Vaccine Equity Important to Seniors?

Global vaccine equity is the right thing to do, but it also is in the interest of ourselves. According to the UN's World Health Organization, worldwide vaccination will accelerate the end of the pandemic. Viruses constantly change through natural mutations. As the Omicron variant spreads, the virus has innumerable opportunities to create dangerous new variants. One of these mutations could be even more deadly or result in the loss of any benefit from our current vaccines.

Wealthy countries have vaccinated significant percentages of their populations, while in low-income countries, large percentages of populations remain unvaccinated, creating more opportunities for the virus to spread and to mutate. Worldwide vaccination is one of the most powerful tools available to prevent variants from showing up in newly mutated form globally.



President Biden called for world leaders to focus on global vaccine equity at last year's United Nations General Assembly. More recently, the World Health Organization called for wealthy countries and manufacturers to facilitate the sharing of technology and intellectual property rights to support regional vaccine production.

Many US-based companies developed vaccines through the support of the US government, which spent billions of tax dollars to help facilitate research, development, and distribution. These companies have been slow to temporarily waive intellectual property rights or share technology. This limits the ability of manufacturers in other parts of world to produce vaccines locally, quickly, and cheaply.

Vaccine shortages are not the only problem faced by poorer countries. Infrastructure difficulties also play a role. Many face challenges due to lack of refrigeration, transportation, and medical staff. Our government could help by using a bottom-up approach in which communities become the experts in saying what is needed and what would work in their area. And why not use our military budget to provide what is needed and fight the war against Covid-19?

There is some good news on the horizon. A new article appearing in *Scientific American* reports that a new vaccine (CORBEVAX), developed by Texas Children's Hospital and Center for Vaccine Development and Baylor College of Medicine, is ready to be deployed. It is reported to be safe, easy to store and could be inexpensively produced all over the world. Best of all, it requires no patents, because this vaccine is licensed only. Trial results are currently being prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Despite this promising news, global vaccination is still many months, and possibly years away. Infrastructure and many other barriers remain. Because our tax money supported companies profiting from the sale of vaccines, we urge OWL members to contact their representatives and tell them to support temporary sharing of patents and intellectual property rights. The need is still urgent.

In the meantime, thinking outside the box, OWL might write to the Board of Directors of companies that took taxpayer money to express concern (outrage?) over their paltry donations of vaccines to low-income countries and their refusal to help them make their own vaccine. Boycotting some of their products and getting other like-minded organizations to join in may be another option. Many products such as baby shampoos, Chapstick, Centrum and analgesics like Advil are sold over the counter throughout the United States and are manufactured by the same "big pharma" companies that refuse to support global vaccine equity.

Delay puts world population at risk. Until everyone is safe, no one is safe. To protect our own health, we need to continue to raise awareness, educate ourselves, and advocate for global vaccine equity, a cause which benefits the whole world, including ourselves.

—*Melanie Grossman & Lela Harris*

**Board Members**  
**Glenda Hope, President**  
**Maxine Anderson, co-VP**  
**Louise DiMattio**  
**Joan Downey, Treasurer**  
**Melanie Grossman, co-VP**  
**Lela Harris**  
**Margaret Lew**  
**Sheila Malkind**  
**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, Currently held on Zoom, link available on request

**Phone:** (415) 712-1695  
**Email:** [info@owlsf.org](mailto:info@owlsf.org) <[info@owlsf.org](mailto:info@owlsf.org)>  
**Web:** [www.owlsf.org](http://www.owlsf.org)  
**Mail:** Post Office Box 170622, San Francisco, CA 94117

## Important OWL Membership Meeting Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022

The upcoming January meeting might very well decide the future of OWL-SF. Like many organizations in these changing times, we are at a crossroads. Our members and leadership have served us well, most for a very long time. Although they are doing a better than ever job, they can't go on indefinitely. It is time to face some hard truths: we need new people to step up and help lead us into the future, keep our mission relevant, and continue to make our organization one that uniquely serves midlife and older women.

OWL's mission has always been to **advocate for critical issues** faced by women in midlife and beyond, locally, state-wide, and nationally. These issues include **financial security** (keeping Social Security viable and safe from privatization, opportunities for work, pensions), **health care** (Medicare, health insurance, women's health information), and **quality of life** (housing, social connections, combating ageism, end of life decisions).

We have always been more than our mission and goals. We are also about friendship and being part of a very special group of like-minded women. Most of OWL-SF's work is carried on by board members and a few others who donate their time. We have one part-time staff member. To continue to fulfill our mission, we need our membership to commit to keeping OWL-SF sustainable and vibrant by becoming a board member, joining a committee, or taking on a specific job to sustain our organization.

Without change, we will have to make some hard choices. One might be to continue our work under the umbrella of a larger organization like the Community Living Campaign or others which have funding and staff; another is dissolving OWL-SF as many national and state chapters have done, donating our assets to another organization. Most recently, the San Diego OWL Chapter closed and sent remaining funds to OWL-SF. Dissolving OWL-SF and sending assets to another non-profit would not be simple and certainly not our first choice. We look forward to other alternatives suggested by our membership. These matters are not easy ones to address. Much wisdom from all members is needed to find solutions and continue our work.

Please reserve January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 11 to 12:30, to share your thinking and commitment to our work for midlife and older women.

### OWL-SF Has a New Address

OWL-SF  
PO Box 170622  
San Francisco, CA 94117

## Strength in Numbers: Hopeful Signs

The brief article below is about "shareholders' activity" but it carries a "strength in numbers" which is widely relevant. Dr. Arbore, when he did a program for OWL, a few months ago, talked about our "communal lament" and the need to recognize and deal with our communal grief about so many things ranging from the loss of a favorite store or restaurant due to Covid to the climate crisis. When I am asked to engage in some action to effect social justice change, perhaps from those weekly **OWL Alerts**, it is tempting to turn the page or hit delete. I confess to having done that myself.

Will my email, phone call, postcard, really make any difference? All we can be sure about is that it will not make a difference if I don't. Don't turn the page just yet. We have to make some thoughtful decisions about where to focus our energies if we are to be effective and to follow through on those decisions. Simply flitting from one cause to another dissipates one's energy. Stay grateful that there are so many good people with whom I am allying myself, as well as so many working on concerns I care about but simply cannot take on. Acting on the information, the connection with others, the **OWL Alerts** provide is the easiest of justice actions to take. Once a week. From the comfort of your own home. There truly is "strength in numbers." One by one by one those numbers build until ultimately the Tipping Point is reached. The article below documents that fact.

—*Glenda Hope*

### There Are Some Hopeful Signs

In May 2021, oil major ExxonMobil, for so long dismissive of global warming, was forced by its own shareholders to shake up its board to include climate experts. The same month, Shell was ordered by a Dutch court to reduce its carbon emissions by 45% by the end of this decade. Last year, Procter & Gamble's management saw two-thirds of its shareholders condemn it for the deforestation it is causing through its use of palm oil. Shareholder activism is now helping to drive the impact revolution.

[Snipped from Time]



## Grab your favorite beverage and Let's talk about Musicals

Join your fearless reader/leader, Louise DiMattio, for a pop up discussion of your favorite musical, when you saw it, who was in it and why you liked it. Can you remember all the words? Perhaps you'd like to hum a tune...or maybe not. Let's meet on Friday, January 28th at 4:00 pm, on Zoom. It will be fun. Email Louise at [ladimat@aol.com](mailto:ladimat@aol.com) for the Zoom link. BYOB - Champagne preferred.

## Year End Political Advocacy Report

Looking back on the many topics taken up by the Political Advocacy Committee in 2021 is a reminder of how much work always needs to be done to make the world a better place. Over the past year, the Political Advocacy Committee (PAC) focused nationally on the environment, health care for all through single payer, immigration, racial justice, voting rights, global vaccine equity (see article on page 2 in this issue of the newsletter), preserving Medicare and many other issues.

Locally, among the issues we advocated for were rental subsidies for SF seniors, paid leave for caregivers, restoration of programs for seniors at City College, transportation, free Wi-Fi for older people, keeping guns off our streets, and police reform, including supporting the CART plan which replaces police response to some 911 calls with trained peer counselors and service professionals.

Also, this year, the committee assisted OWL members learn more about the debate on closing JFK Drive in Golden Gate Park and the Great Highway to cars. PAC members helped recruit diverse speakers for a panel discussion offering members a broad array of information so that they could decide for themselves which side of the issue they would like to support.

There were some advocacy wins and some losses this year. Even after victories such as the Bay Area Air Quality District Board's vote to install "scrubbers" to remove harmful particles and chemical byproducts from the smokestacks of the Bay Area's oil refineries. Despite this wonderful win, big oil has tied up any movement in court so that the scrubbers cannot be installed until this lawsuit is settled. And so the work continues among many organizations, including OWL, advocating for good causes continually until the work is complete.

—*Melanie Grossman*

### Save the Date

**February Membership Meeting**  
**Saturday February 26th**  
**10am**

### COVID-19 Updates

Mark your calendars for OWL's February Membership Meeting. The topic will include the latest updates on the Covid-19 virus, variants, vaccines and what to expect in the future. A faculty member from UCSF will share their expertise with us and there will be time for OWL members and guests to discuss their own concerns and questions. This 10am meeting will be held on Zoom with telephone call-in for those who don't do Zoom. More information to follow in e-mail and by postcard.

## OWL-SF Needs You...on the Board

We are seeking additional members for the OWL Board, nominations will be accepted in January and election to the Board will be held at the February Membership Meeting (February 26th). Do you know someone who would like to join the Board? Would you like to join the Board yourself? Learn leadership skills, practice talents you have acquired over years of work, join a group of like-minded active women to work on programs educating the membership and the public. The Board meets once a month, presently on Zoom. Members share the work of planning and managing monthly membership meetings. We send OWL Alerts, write Occasional Pieces to be mailed between Newsletter editions, write and collect material for the OWL-SF Newsletter, the OWL-SF Webpage and our FaceBook page.

We want your help, expertise and ideas. If you have questions about Board membership contact OWL for information. Here are the experiences of a few members:

**Melanie Grossman:** I presently serve as Vice President of OWL. My job is to preside at board meetings if the President is unavailable. Some familiarity with the Roberts Rules of Order is helpful, but other members present at the meeting pitch in and help, making it a group effort, even when called upon to take over on short notice. Occasionally I assist the President in other ways, such as carrying out her role of opening and closing membership meetings or providing an ear for talking things over. I have learned a lot as Vice President, have met many wonderful people and feel that I play a part in accomplishing OWL's mission.

**Glenda Hope:** I have been on the Board about 11 years, President for much of that time. My time has included sending out the agenda for Board meetings and facilitating said meetings, facilitating some membership meetings, being responsible for 2 months of OWL Alerts, some correspondence, some tasks related to funding, serving on Political Advocacy Committee, writing letters to relevant elected officials, etc, when the Board endorses a proposed action, writing articles for the Newsletter and Occasional Pieces and others things that arise. This has been a rich learning time for me, as well as the experience of working with some amazing, caring, active women. I intend to continue being an active member of OWL but it is time for me to leave the Board so that someone else can have this privilege. It has indeed been a privilege and a gift, not a burden to be on the OWL Board and participating in much decision making re actions for improving the lives of midlife and older women.

**Margaret Lew:** I joined the OWL Board in 2010 and have enjoyed being in the group to help solve problems and revise the OWL by-laws, help with redesign of the web page, plan membership meetings, edit the OWL-Newsletter. Getting together with the Board members is a positive addition to the month – whether in person or on Zoom. It has been good to keep my computer and editing skills alive in support of our programs.

## OWL-SF Moves Office

In early November we received notice from the Flood Building management that our request to terminate our lease had been approved and the OWL Board got busy with the clearing of the little office that we had occupied for many years. I will miss the pretty California marble, the bronze trim and the turn of the century elegance of the the historic building – the site of so many good meetings with sister OWLs but it is time to turn in our keys and move on.

Glenda writes: Extra blessings, Joan, for arranging all this. It was a sad occasion – so many meetings, so many wonderful women associated with that space – but being with the 3 of you took the sting out. Everything went smoothly. the guys who came were very nice. Handsome, too. Sigh.

Thanks from all the Board to Joan, Betty, Glenda, Louise and Melanie for doing the unglamorous but necessary sorting, selling, donating and clearing away of the remaining OWL office files, supplies and equipment during two last visits to Room 905 of the Flood Building. Thanks to member Kim Boyd Bermingham's son Aodhan Bermingham and his assistant Victor for helping with the heavy moving on the final day.

Louise writes of the last hour: You would have loved the scene. Only Glenda and I were still in the office. Melanie and Joan had just left for appointments. So two damsels in distress were sitting on broken chairs trying to console ourselves when two handsome masked knights in shining armor came swooping in. One thing I can tell you...they seemed so efficient and incredibly strong. They had that stupid filing cabinet out the door and onto the elevator before we even noticed it was gone. Next they whisked the computer and peripherals out of there. Then came the broken down chairs and bags of miscellaneous junk. I finally had a chance to notice them and have a quick chat. They were so nice and, of course, both very dashing. Since they were completely masked, I can't completely vouch for their looks but Victor did have the most beautiful dark brown curly hair ever. I so appreciated their kindness and efficiency. Glenda and I closed the door behind us and I drove her home just before the first rain really got going. ALL DONE!! And we did have a chance to process all of the wonderful events OWL has hosted in the past as well as get ideas about things still left to be done. Nothing says that we can't repeat things that have already been done but are still important to do. I'm glad that I was a part of the process of cleaning out the office because I really knew very little about OWL's history.



Shedding a tear.  
Photo by Louise DiMatteo

## OWL Meets For A Holiday Luncheon

In person, vaccinated and masked OWL members and guests celebrated the Holiday season and saw the old year out with a luncheon at Jannah restaurant. The agenda was simple: delicious food, introductions all around, much good conversation, and a book exchange.

**Maxine Anderson & Eunice Rosenberg; Marty Maricle, Tina Martin & Judy Goddess; the OWLs and remains of lunch; Louise captures a conversation, note the owl mask.**

**Photos by Joan Downey, Louise Di Matteo.**



All Women's Issues Were Not Resolved In 1920

All Women Activists Are Not Wild-Eyed Radicals

Women's Health Care Is Not Adequately Covered

Women's Economic Security Is Not Based On The Charity Of Men

Everything You Need To Know About "The System" Was Not Taught In School

## There is Truth in Fiction

On Saturday morning, November 20<sup>th</sup>, OWL was privileged to host an in-depth presentation on current immigration policies and issues by Rev Deborah Lee from the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity. Reverend Lee's presentation was unique in the sense that she spoke with first-hand knowledge about immediate local problems and challenges, citing immigration stories as that are currently unfolding in the Bay Area. She also spoke about national issues such as existing immigration laws and their ramifications for so many families at our borders. In addition, Rev Lee spoke about international issues with thousands of people on the move throughout the world seeking relief from violence, oppression and danger. She challenged us to understand the difference between the root causes of migration and the symptoms we see. For example, a symptom can be economic chaos, poverty, gangs and warfare. The root cause can be, and often is, unequal land distribution, unequal or no access to healthcare, housing, education and opportunity. To quote Rev Lee, "as long as inequity exists, people will move."

Since hearing this comprehensive presentation, I have been reflecting on the stories that the OWL Book Group has read throughout these pandemic months in a volume entitled *Immigrant Voices, 21st Century Stories*. Our most recent story is by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat, entitled "Hot-Air Balloons". This story focuses on the chaos in Haiti seen through the eyes of first-generation Haitian immigrant, Polly, who works at a rape crisis clinic in Florida. This clinic serves the poor women in Haiti who are frequently subjected to sexual violence. Rev Lee told us that migrant women can expect to be raped and are often pregnant and horribly traumatized. I realized that rape and sexual trauma is often the overriding reason that many women want to leave their homeland. Certainly, rape and sexual trauma should entitle women to the status of refugee in this country. (Rev Lee told us that refugee status allows for special treatment by immigration officials at our borders.)

Reverend Lee addressed the methods by which various types of immigration occur in the United States. A common example of this is when visitors overstay their visas and simply disappear anonymously into the large, amorphous cities of this country. Part of the reason for this is the length of the wait to obtain resident status – often up to twenty years. Compassionate requests for longer visas or another status for compassionate reasons, such as needing to care for sick relatives, are usually denied.

This example brought to mind a story entitled "Absence" by Peruvian-American writer Daniel Alarcon which addresses this issue. An artist receives a temporary, two-week visa for his art show in New York City. A roundtrip ticket for his trip was the only option he was allowed. It became clear as the story progressed that this twenty-seven year old artist planned to remain in the US in spite of great uncertainty about housing, employment or legal status. Returning to his homeland where there was little or no opportunity was not an option in spite of family and friends left behind. This type of "immigration" is problematic for those who are still waiting for help at the border. Is this a symptom or a cause?

One of the most telling parts of Rev Lee's presentation was learning about the growth of the prison and detention economy in California and throughout the US. Currently California has 150,000 prison guards on the payroll in the State alone. There is a lot of money to be made at the borders which makes immigration problems (AKA human beings) rapidly becoming an entrenched industry. California passed a law, AB 32, in 2019 which would not renew private, for profit prison contracts. However, the enactment of this law is currently held up in court in suits filed by the GEO Corporation and the then Trump Administration.

We had only an hour and fifteen minutes with Reverend Lee and we are grateful for that! There was so much to consider. Like Rev Lee's stories and the stories we are reading and discussing together every month, each one of those huge numbers of people is a person with a story and a desire to improve the only life they will ever have. Reverend Lee was able to provide us with ways to become informed and involved in these issues. Watch for OWL Alerts and updates!

—*Louise DiMattio*

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

**Bruce Bartlett  
Ellen Brown  
Patrice Kleinberg  
Bickley Simpson**

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

### Missed an OWL Meeting? Listen to Audio Recordings

Audio recordings of OWL's monthly membership meetings are now available on the OWL SF web pages for our more recent Zoom enabled events: go to Events find the meeting, where you will find a link to the audio recording made for you.

## What Are You Reading?

I've reduced my big stack of bedside reading by one, and a good one it was. *Hamnet*, by Maggie O'Farrell, is a very good book on so many levels.

First of all, it's a historical novel, set in an interesting time, 16<sup>th</sup> century England. It's a good story, made more interesting in that setting, giving us glimpses of family, property, medicine, morals, etc. at that time and place. It also takes place during the time of the plague—an interesting comparison to our current COVID.

But the highlight of the book is the portrayal of the central character, Agnes. She is such an interesting woman, and the many sides of her character are drawn so completely. It is easy to identify with her as well as to admire her and to ache and rejoice with her through life's tides.

Now, of course, the questions remain: There is no doubt that the story is at least loosely (and plausibly) based on the life of Shakespeare and his wife. Where fact and fiction depart is unclear. I just know it made me want to go back to my forgotten English major roots and do some rereading. It's a story worth telling, and a book well worth reading. A page-turner with substance.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

*After the last border: Two Families and the Story of Refuge in America* by Jessica Goudeau. Excellent book about two families affected by immigration policies. Focuses on two women from Myanmar and Syria. Recommended at OWL's November meeting about US Immigration policies and problems.

—*Sheila Malkind*.

*A is for Activist* by Innosanto Nagara is a book for teaching ABCs to youngsters in an interesting manner which engages them also in a deep meaning of each word beginning with each letter. It is far more important than books which associate each letter only with alligators or armadillos, much as I love animals. It is good for kids to learn J is for jaguar but also that J is for justice. Medea Benjamin, founder of Global Exchange and Code Pink wrote: "Fun, Funny, exquisitely illustrated...May a thousand young activists bloom".

—*Glenda Hope*

*The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein is a delightful book featuring an old soul dog. If you have ever been favored with one of these special animals in your life—dog, cat, horse—you will find yourself nodding in recognition in several places as you read. If you have not been that lucky, or did not realize it at the time, you will still enjoy this book about life and unconditional love. Who knows? Perhaps this book will prepare you for this "silent intimacy" yet to grace your life. Lots of wonderful animals out there dreaming of a home where they can give and receive that kind of love.

Louise DiMattio who facilitates OWL's book club brought this book to my attention and I thank her for that. Louise has a good eye for who will enjoy what book. Book Club meetings take place on Zoom one hour before we convene in one of OWL's monthly membership meetings. Consider joining.

—*Glenda Hope*

## Helpful Hint

Are you frustrated by all those childproof caps which only children can open? Do you not have a child handy to help you? Do they taunt you with "press down and turn" yielding no results?

Here is how you can triumph over these fiendish things (caps, not kids) Take a hammer in your hand. Lay the container on its side and give a good solid whack on the side of the cap. Voila! Do not pound on the top as they tend to be very hard and this will only add to your frustration. Frustration can be dangerous when you are wielding a hammer.

## Warning

Do not do this if the contents of the container are liquid. Go out and find a child.

You might want to read Dr. Louise Aronson's thoughts about these caps as found in her book *Elderhood*. However, only here will you find relief from that particular frustration.

—*Glenda Hope*

**Like OWL SF on Facebook!**

<https://facebook.com/OWLSF/>

## Calendar

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

**January 3 Monday** — OWL Board Meeting, 3:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

**January 22 Saturday**— OWL General Meeting 11-12:15 *The Future of OWL-SF* (see article page 3)

**February 7 Monday** — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

**February 26 Saturday**— OWL General Meeting 11-Noon *The Pandemic* (see page 4) (via Zoom)

**March 7 Monday** — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-5:00pm

**March 26 Saturday**— OWL General Meeting 11-Noon (Details to follow)

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 \$10 –\$50.) 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  
PO Box 170622  
San Francisco, CA 94117

OWL SF  
PO Box 170622  
San Francisco, CA 94117

### **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: [info@owlsf.org](mailto:info@owlsf.org) <[info@owlsf.org](mailto:info@owlsf.org)>