

# GRAY MATTERS

News of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
Sonoma State University



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## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

**HAPPY 2022!**

**It's a new year, a new OLLI season, and an opportunity to take a look at what we are grateful for as we enter this season of renewal. There is a reason that animals hibernate this time of year. Like animals who rest and rejuvenate during these chillier months,**

**consider this time as a way to renew yourself, both mentally, and physically.** It is a time to take stock of the good things in our lives, to set goals, make plans, and find the experiences that renew us. Whether your path is to treat yourself better, rid yourself of bad habits, or to open your mind, we hope OLLI will provide you with some inspiration to guide you through the days ahead. We are continuing with Zoom classes, being flexible to keep everyone safe. May the New Year bring you good health, inspiration and mindfulness, whether it is through OLLI, a much-loved book, beautiful music, a walk during a sunset, and don't forget to enjoy the beauty that surrounds you. Stay curious, explore with OLLI@SSU this winter.

Leslie Brutocao, Director

## From Boomer to Zoomer.

Fascinating courses, seminars and events—online and in-person.

### Stay Curious.



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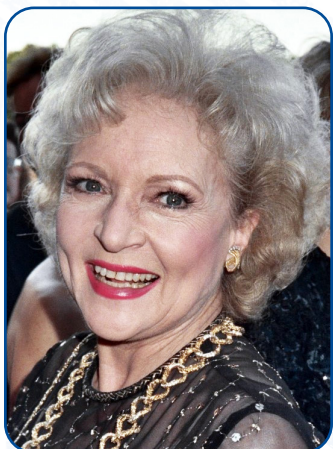
## EXTRAORDINARY LIVES SHARED

**Barbara Spear, OLLI instructor**

The pandemic has certainly been difficult for all of us, so now it seems like a good time to look toward something positive and uplifting. Specifically, I'm thinking of the recent news about the passing of two of our most beloved entertainers, Betty White and Sidney Poitier. Their deaths are sad but reading obituaries and reactions from people who loved them has made me reflect on the impact these two extraordinary individuals have had on our world.

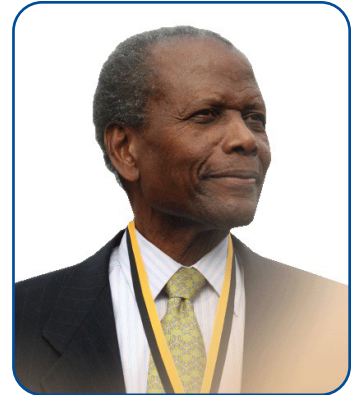
**“..it takes courage and love to survive a cruel world.”**

By the time Betty White died on the last day of 2021, her TV career spanned eight decades. From *Life with Elizabeth* in the 1950s through *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *The Golden Girls*, *Saturday Night Live* and so many more appearances, she made us laugh and she made us think. She was blessed with perfect comic timing. Her personality was sweet but with a definite twist of lemon, and she had that twinkle in her eye. White was a pioneer, not just of early television, but also of equal rights for Blacks (insisting in the early 1950s on retaining an African American cast member in her TV show when stations in the South threatened to boycott it) and for women



(forming a production company to maintain creative control both in front of and behind the cameras at a time when television was dominated by men). She was a lover of animals, advocating for their welfare, and

supported LGBTQ rights. White was fearless --- and she was so funny! Just thinking about her makes me smile. She'll always be a true Golden Girl.



Sidney Poitier, who died just one week after Betty

White, had a career in movies that lasted more than sixty years. He was, of course, the first Black man to be awarded a Best Actor Oscar, but *Lilies of the Field* was only one of many memorable performances. Do you remember *The Defiant Ones*, where he's chained to another escaped prisoner, a white man (Tony Curtis)? The hatred they have for each other slowly fades away and turns into true brotherly love as, at the end of the film, Poitier jumps off the train that will take him to freedom because Curtis can't climb aboard. He scored in *In the Heat of the Night* by returning the slap across the face given him by a bigoted white Southern man, and in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* By being seen as an acceptable husband for the daughter of Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. Poitier was also a fine director and a diplomat, receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom and a knighthood, among many other honors. He opened doors for so many who came after him and showed the world what Black men were and could be.

It's true that Betty White and Sidney Poitier no longer breathe that same air we do, but they're still with us, providing inspiration as role models, reminding us that it takes courage and love to survive a cruel world. We are very lucky they shared so much of themselves with us.

## UPCOMING WINTER CLASSES

**Inner Geographies: Cave of Secrets with River La Moreaux** –  
Fridays, February 18 – March 4 (on Zoom)

**Marc Chagall with Linda Reid** – Friday, March 11 (\*In Person at SSU)

**Custer's Luck: The Life and Times of the Son of the Morning  
Star with John Stephen Futini** – Friday, March 18 (\*In Person at SSU)

\* The classes on March 11 and 18 are planned for in person.

For updates visit: [oli.sonoma.edu](http://oli.sonoma.edu).

Did you miss registering for a class? Contact OLLI at [oli@sonoma.edu](mailto:oli@sonoma.edu) or call **707-664-2691**. We will email you the recordings of classes you missed.

## JOIN SSU'S WINTER "NATURALIST EDUCATOR SERIES: BECOME AN OSBORN NATURALIST"

Learn how to share nature's secrets with others while exploring the stunning ecosystems of Sonoma Mountain with university faculty and other experts. Topics include amphibians, plants, human history, birds, ethnobotany and more! The first event in the series is January 30, 2022. Join an "Environmentally Ready" community working to eradicate Nature Deficit Disorder in the North Bay! Center for Environmental Inquiry Calendar events here: <https://cei.sonoma.edu/calendar>.

## BOOKS FOR COLD WEATHER STAY INDOORS TIMES.... TO CURE THE WINTER BLAHS

Here are some good reads recommended by Penguin Random House, Barnes & Noble, and even our local bookstore, Copperfield's Books:

Do you love human history and evolution? Consider: **The Dawn of Everything, A New History of Humanity** by David Graeber and David Wengrow – A NYTimes Bestseller

**The 1619 Project a new origin story** by Nicole Hannah-Jones, "one of the Best Books of the Year – The Washington Post, NPR

For laughs **All About me! My Remarkable Life in Show Business** by Mel Brooks, who at age 95, continues to make us laugh! Considered one of the best books of the year by the New York Post.

If you are a Mitch Albom fan, consider **The Stranger in the Lifeboat**, his latest inspirational story.



## SSU BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS

During February, SSU will be hosting special events for Black History Month, also called National African American History Month, to celebrate achievements by African Americans and recognize the central role of African Americans in our history. Consider this upcoming event:

**Fred Galloway**, Director of the Team Security for the Brooklyn Nets, formerly with the New York City Police Department and FBI Counter terrorism unit - *Thursday, February 3, 7-8pm*. This will be a Livestream event. For details and to register: <http://diversity.sonoma.edu/2022-black-history-month-celebration>.



If you have enjoyed Stanley Tucci's popular CNN food series, Searching for Italy, taking you on culinary tour of Italy, you will love his new book, **Taste: My Life through Food.**

Enjoy a collection of poems by the presidential inaugural poet, Amanda Gorman, with her newly released book **Call Us What We Carry.**

If you are a Paul McCartney fan, his newest book **The Lyrics: 1956 to the Present**, will provide you with musical inspiration and a view into the world famous and prolific songwriter. Time to pull out that dusty guitar!

## OLLI ART CLUB UPDATES

Linda Reid

**Galleries and museums are open, with COVID precautions. Here are some events to put on your calendar:**

**The SebArts (Sebastopol Center for the Arts Portrait Show** is now open. The work is wonderful, and I encourage you to drop by the gallery. I bought one of the big sculptures and can't wait to get it home to enjoy! Additional events coming up on **February 9** and **March 9**. *Register at: [sebarts.org](http://sebarts.org) or contact Linda Reid at [LindaLovelandReid.com](http://LindaLovelandReid.com)*

### **Rialto Cinema: Hermitage the Power of Art**

February 9 at 1pm and 7pm

A spectacular tour through St. Petersburg's State Hermitage Museum, the largest collection of paintings in the world, to retrace two and a half centuries. Audiences pass through the magnificent interiors that provided a meeting point for foreign artists, architects, and intellectuals creating connections through art and culture.

### **Watch for the new Immersive Exhibit: Imagine Picasso Coming to San**

**Francisco** beginning Feb 22. If it is anywhere near as exciting as the Van Gogh show, you will not want to miss it!

**For OLLI Art Club updates:** Go to: <http://olli.sonoma.edu/olli-activities-and-events>, or contact Linda Reid at [lindalreid100@gmail.com](mailto:lindalreid100@gmail.com)

## SSU CONCERTS AND EVENTS

**The Pirates of Penzance**  
February 10–20, 2022

Person Theater | Sonoma State University  
Online or in person.  
Information at:  
[music.sonoma.edu/events](http://music.sonoma.edu/events)

### **Save The Date: Agency:**

#### **Feminist Art and Power**

Thursday, April 21, 2022,

at the Museums of Sonoma County

Agency: *Feminist Art and Power*

brings together the work of

a wide spectrum of womxn identified artists, representing

diverse cultural backgrounds, generations, sexualities, gender

identities, and geographic locations.

Presented in collaboration with

The Feminist Art Project

- Curated by Karen Gutfreund.

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