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plus  
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Ask The Expert  
and more.



photography ©Donna F. Aceto

*Michael Adams, Executive Director, SAGE; Alejandro Garcia, AARP New York Executive Council; Jenny Chin-Hansen, President, AARP; Percil Stanford, Chief Diversity Officer, AARP*

## SAGE, AARP AND LGBT AGING— “IT’S ABOUT TIME!”

By Sunny Bjerk

In 2008, SAGE and AARP stepped onto the national stage together through AARP’s sponsorship of SAGE’s Fourth National Conference on LGBT Aging. This partnership, developed through a series of invigorating inter-agency discussions, marks an important moment in SAGE’s national advocacy efforts as the leading voice addressing the issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults. Consistent with the Conference’s theme, “It’s About Time: LGBT Aging in a Changing World,” SAGE stands ready to leverage its three decades of experience to provide skilled, reality-based assistance for all efforts to transform this country’s aging policies to encompass the needs, interests, and contributions of our nation’s LGBT older adults.

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# SAGE, AARP AND LGBT AGING—“IT”S ABOUT TIME!”

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Nearly six hundred people attended SAGE’s Fourth National Conference, where ideas, advocacy, and research about LGBT aging were shared and expounded upon. Presenters and participants for the Conference came from as far away as Australia and London, and also included attendees from all over the United States—Florida, Maine, California, Washington State, and nearly every place in between. Most importantly, the Conference brought together professionals in the field with older LGBT people themselves. Over and over again, presenters emphasized the need to develop and enforce policies that



Attendees at SAGE’s Fourth National Conference  
*“It’s About Time: LGBT Aging in a Changing World”*

*photography ©Donna F. Aceto*

outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression or identity; support important innovations that effectively address the needs of LGBT older adults; and provide

relevant training, data collection and research that includes the LGBT community. AARP’s co-sponsorship of the conference thus directly reflects the state of LGBT issues to date—although there are reasons to celebrate progress, SAGE is ready to forge a new direction by leading with AARP. Indeed, as one AARP State Executive Council Member noted, “I was struck by how much is being done to meet the needs of the [LGBT elder] community and how much more there needs to be done as the silver tsunami hits full force.”

The Conference also attracted plenty of agencies and professionals relatively new to LGBT aging issues, indicating an increasing awareness that advocacy for America’s older adults must become more diverse. AARP’s President, Jennie Chin Hansen, gave a rousing keynote address that reminded attendees within our rapidly aging population there are facets of older adults (including LGBT people) who face particular challenges and whose well-being requires a concentrated policy focus. Leaders of a half dozen national minority aging organizations including the National Center & Caucus on Black Aged, the National Hispanic Council on Aging, and the National Center on Asian Pacific Aging, also addressed the Conference, pledging to “join arms” with SAGE and LGBT leaders in pursuit of shared advocacy goals.

As a follow up to the Conference, SAGE is preparing to launch a Conference Briefing to ensure increased attention to the issues affecting older LGBT people by policymakers and other key stakeholders. The Briefing will include policy recommendations that reflect SAGE’s strategic agenda in four key areas: overcoming barriers and increasing access to services, financial and health security, caregiving, and community engagement. SAGE hopes that the Conference Briefing will help forge a national advocacy agenda that will promote federal, state, and local recognition of LGBT older adults as a specific population with particular needs, which will result in policy breakthroughs that address those needs.

With its new partnerships, growing ranks of allies, and leadership on behalf of older LGBT people, SAGE stands poised to help change the national landscape on LGBT aging. Indeed, with SAGE - the nation’s oldest and largest LGBT aging organization - now joining forces with AARP, the outlook for LGBT older adults has never been brighter! At AARP’s “Diversity and Aging” Conference coming up this June, SAGE will continue its work across coalitions by illuminating the universal need to recognize the many faces, and experiences, of aging. □



# “SAGETALK”

## How will the OBAMA Administration affect the issues facing LGBT elders?

Michael Adams, Executive Director of SAGE talks to

Kerry Eleveld, Senior Political Correspondent for *The Advocate* magazine

**Michael Adams:** On election night, many of us who work on LGBT aging issues were euphoric to see Barack Obama elected and to watch the ranks of LGBT-friendly allies in the U.S. Senate and House grow substantially. The excitement transcended party lines for people who are committed to progress for LGBT people. We've all seen what a wasteland the past eight years have been in terms of federal policy on LGBT issues. So the dawning of a new day, including the election of a President who spoke so consistently and positively during the campaign about LGBT people, was electrifying. Three months have passed since then. Should we still feel euphoric?

**Kerry Eleveld:** Euphoria sometimes induces complacency and that's not a state I think the LGBT community should indulge in at the moment. I do think we can employ a good dose of optimism tempered with vigilance.

President Obama's choice of Rick Warren to deliver his inaugural invocation signaled that



Michael Adams, SAGE's Executive Director targets in on questions that impact older LGBT people.

gays may not like or agree with every decision the incoming commander in chief will make. However, America's response to Mr. Warren – and I intentionally reference the whole of our country – highlighted the fact that LGBT equality is no longer a concern that beats solely in the hearts of LGBT people. Mainstream America demonstrated an equal amount of outrage and indignation about the insensitivity that underlay that decision.

There is no question that President Obama has an unprecedented opportunity to enact

more pro-gay policies and legislation. The Hate Crimes bill, which Congress has already passed several times, is ripe and ready to go. With a little more education about transgender issues, the Employment Non-discrimination Act will probably not be far behind it. Even on something like “don't ask, don't tell,” we are seeing the groundwork for repeal being laid by the likes of General Colin Powell and Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen, both of whom made public comments in December about revisiting the policy.

So I think we have cause to be optimistic and, at the same time, we must not fall asleep at the wheel.

**MA:** Part of what is exciting for those of us at SAGE is the prospect that there might finally be some attention to LGBT issues in Washington, including long-overdue investment of government funds to address some of our community's acute needs. Unfortunately, we're also facing the greatest economic crisis

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# The Obama Administration and LGBT issues.

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since the Great Depression. Is there going to be room for the federal government to spend funds on pressing social needs?

**KE:** Clearly we are facing tough times and serious shortfalls and I cannot possibly predict which programs exactly will be hit hardest. However, these unprecedented times also offer unprecedented opportunities to the LGBT community.

Since the incoming administration is researching ways to overhaul the healthcare system, we can push for specific policies to address the health concerns of our population. For starters, the Department of Health and Human Services could decide to support specific research and data collection on the needs of LGBT people. Or, as the Obama Administration considers massive tax changes, provisions could be included in the legislation that help to equalize tax treatment for same-sex couples.

So the good news is that we can find openings that wouldn't normally exist.

**MA:** What should LGBT people be on the lookout for during the first year of the Obama Administration? What do you see as some potential early opportunities for progress?

**KE:** My reporting suggests that Hate Crimes will come quickly and ENDA will follow. Machinations are in the works for scrapping "don't ask, don't tell." In fact, in a video on the transition website, Obama press secretary



President Barack Obama's administration will hopefully look at issues of aging in the U.S.

Robert Gibbs recently answered a question about whether the President-elect plans to repeal the policy by simply saying, "Yes."

It's also worth noting that having gay friendly allies in the cabinet bodes well for the community. For example, the Secretary of State can affect policies concerning the same-sex partners of Foreign Service workers and whether their relocation is subsidized or they can access healthcare and language training in the same way that spouses can. The Department of Justice is tasked with enforcing all laws enacted by

Congress, collecting hate crimes statistics, and prosecuting bias crimes, among other things. Having people like Hillary Clinton, Tom Daschle and Eric Holder in charge of critical departmental policies could usher in a cascade of changes that don't necessarily require legislative action.

Areas where we are less likely to see direct action are relationship recognition and the Defense of Marriage Act. Nonetheless, many analysts predict that we will see a slow but steady chipping away at the inequities LGBT couples face.

**MA:** The needs of seniors – LGBT or not – did not receive much attention during the 2008 Presidential campaign. This seems ironic given the rapid aging of our population – what some are calling the "silver tsunami." Do you think the needs of seniors will be a priority for the Obama Administration, particularly with regard to health care. And more broadly, are we likely to see policy innovations when it comes to addressing the needs of this country's older adults?

**KE:** One thing President Obama demonstrated throughout the campaign is that he is an assiduous planner with a firm grasp of math (electoral math, to be specific). I have little doubt that he



and his advisors are anticipating the silver tsunami you reference and preparing for it. Of course I cannot speak for the Administration. But as President Obama and the Congress attempt to overhaul our health care system and bring more Americans into the fold, older Americans will undoubtedly be a high-priority constituency for Mr. Obama.

**MA:** LGBT seniors face some acute challenges that could be addressed by appropriate federal aging policies. I'm thinking of things like the denial of Social Security and Medicaid benefits to older same-sex couples, the disregard of LGBT seniors in federal research on aging, and our woefully inadequate health care system, which creates such severe problems for this country's seniors across the board. What are the prospects for progress on these fronts over the next four years?

**KE:** I think many of these concerns have a chance of being addressed. Normalizing the treatment of gay couples in areas such as Social Security benefits is something that organizations like Human Rights Campaign are pushing for. This is part of a host of inequities that fall under the umbrella of relationship recognition and DOMA. While I don't think we'll see those two issues taken on directly, I believe many concerns in the areas of tax and health care policy may

be addressed by smaller individual bills or even attachments to larger bills. This is also true for Medicaid. One problem is that, in some cases, low-income people can only access HIV treatment if they have full-blown AIDS. Activists are working to change this practice too.



Kerry Eleveld, *The Advocate's* Senior Political Correspondent shares her views on the Obama Administration.

**MA:** What should an organization like SAGE, which focuses on both service provision and policy reform on behalf of LGBT older adults, be doing at the federal level over the next four years? How important is SAGE's growing relationship with AARP and organizations like the National Center & Caucus on Black Aged and the National Hispanic Council on Aging in this regard?

**KE:** Coalition building is one of the most strategic ways for you to advance the cause of LGBT seniors. There's power in num-

bers and the gay community has found ways to maximize its impact politically through befriending groups with similar interests. The help of Planned Parenthood, for example, has sometimes been enlisted in certain states by LGBT organizations that were doing outreach on gay-specific bills and ballot initiatives. So that's a fantastic way to build support for our issues and leverage more political influence.

**MA:** It's not often that we get to hear from a leading reporter in the LGBT media on the pages of SAGE Matters! Do you have any final words of wisdom for us?

**KE:** Well, first off, I so appreciate your interest and having this opportunity to relay what I am learning through my reporting. My read so far on this nascent Administration is that its relationship with the LGBT community will not be perfectly smooth but it will likely bear fruit for our equality at the end of the day. So I guess I would say that it's important for you to register your hopes for LGBT seniors as well as your disappointments through as many channels as possible. But don't let setbacks on one particular issue or initiative prevent you from retooling and trying a different approach. Persistence and ingenuity will rule the day with the Obama administration. □

## SAGE RECEIVES MAJOR GRANTS TO ADVANCE WORK

In the last six months, SAGE has received two major grants totaling \$1.5 million - one from the Calamus Foundation and the other from The Atlantic Philanthropies. Each grant represents a multi-year commitment and a major investment in SAGE's future.

The four-year \$1 million matching grant from the Calamus Foundation - one of the country's leading LGBT funders -- represents a major milestone for SAGE and is one of the largest awards the Foundation has given to date. The grant is very much a "two-way street" and is designed to strengthen SAGE's program and fundraising efforts over the long haul. Proceeds from the Calamus Challenge grant will be used to create a new generation of services for LGBT older adults in New York City and enhance efforts to provide technical assistance for replication of SAGE's service programs across the country.

According to Louis Bradbury, President of Calamus, the Foundation was "impressed by the substance of SAGE's Vision and wanted to partner at a significant level to support this vanguard work. SAGE fulfills a unique role in both aging services and LGBT advocacy, and this investment in SAGE's future will impact generations to come."



The Atlantic Philanthropies grant of just under \$500,000 is the Foundation's first in the LGBT aging field. The two-year grant from Atlantic will be used by SAGE in part to strengthen SAGE organizationally by funding the creation of a multi-year Business Plan for the agency and supporting a special capacity-building project for the SAGE Board of Directors. In addition, funds from the Atlantic Philanthropies are also dedicated to SAGE's National Conference and to other efforts by the agency to build a stronger LGBT aging field.

According to Stacey Easterling, program executive at The Atlantic Philanthropies, "SAGE's pioneering work in the field is key to insuring that LGBT Americans can obtain a reasonable quality of life in their later years. The Atlantic Philanthropies is proud to award this anchor investment in building an organization that so many rely on both to address daily basic needs and to advocate for systemic change at the local and national levels."

"We are honored by this generous and visionary support from both the Calamus Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies," said Michael Adams, executive director of SAGE. "As SAGE continues

to expand its work on behalf of LGBT older adults, it's important to think about both today and the longer-term. These multi-year grants will help SAGE build a long, successful future of service and advocacy for LGBT older people. SAGE and LGBT older adults are extremely fortunate to have the Calamus Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies as our partners and supporters." □



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# CALAMUS CHALLENGE INSPIRES NEW DONORS IN SUPPORT OF **SAGE**

by Kerry Fristoe

*In June of last year, SAGE was awarded a four-year \$1 million matching grant by The Calamus Foundation. The Calamus Foundation provides critical funding to organizations promoting the health, wellbeing and legal rights of the LGBT community and people with HIV. The Calamus Challenge has generated a new level of excitement, passion and commitment from SAGE supporters and has inspired them to raise funds for LGBT older adults in creative and innovative ways, as you'll see from the following stories.*

Eyal Feldman is the owner of Boy Butter Personal Lubricants – a popular lubricant for men and women. He's also a very accomplished (and fit, and tall, and handsome!) amateur swimmer. Even though Eyal is quite busy running his very successful business, he still finds time to volunteer as a SAGE "friendly visitor." Eyal visits SAGE senior Larry Murphy at least twice a week after work, hangs out with him, and helps him with errands.



*Eyal Feldman swam the St. Lawrence River for SAGE.*

When the Calamus Challenge came along, it gave Eyal the chance to do even more. He had always wanted to swim the St. Lawrence River, in the Great Lakes. So he organized a charity swim down the St. Lawrence and asked friends and family to support him by making donations to SAGE. Eyal raised \$875 in the effort! And because his friends and family members were first-time donors to SAGE, their gifts were matched by the

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# Calamus Challenge Inspires New Donors for SAGE.

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Calamus Foundation and the fruits of Eyal's efforts on behalf of LGBT older adults doubled to \$1,950!

Eyal Feldman jumped into the water for the Calamus Challenge. But it's SAGE's Board of Directors that has jumped into the fire. It was the SAGE Board that agreed to raise at least \$150,000 in new contributions last summer in order to demonstrate to the Calamus Foundation that SAGE was up to the challenge. To say that they rose to the occasion would be an understatement.

For example, SAGE Board Co-Chair Judith Turkel contacted a lesbian couple who had been SAGE donors for many years. "They were my first Calamus 'ask,'" Judith recalls. After learning about the Calamus Challenge and talking with Judith about SAGE's critically important work, the couple agreed to write a check for \$5,000, a remarkable 233% over their previous year's gift! "It was a great start for me in this special fundraising effort," says Judith. She adds, "Of course there have been many such conversations since then. After all, the Calamus Challenge is a four-year commitment!"



Judith Turkel, SAGE Board Co-Chair

Another Board member, Larry Chanen, reached out to friends and colleagues alike about the



Larry Chanen, SAGE Board Member

Calamus Grant, and received a tremendously positive response. Because of Larry's extensive fundraising efforts, SAGE has received 28 gifts totaling over \$118,050.

When Lisa Garcia was approached by her sister, SAGE Board member Carol Garcia, she didn't have to think long. Recently, Lisa explained her thinking: "charitable organizations -- especially those like SAGE that help people not traditionally supported by the general population -- are so necessary in the delivery of services. And I'm committed to supporting the needs of our aging population." In making a gift to SAGE that qualified for the Calamus Challenge, Lisa was able to support a cause she really believes in and at the same time support and encourage the hard fundraising work being done by her sister Carol.

SAGE staffers and their families have also jumped in to help. Catherine Thurston is SAGE's new Deputy Director for Programs. Her daughter Olivia is only eight years old, but she is already very

well-informed about her mom's work with LGBT seniors. Catherine recalls, "As a social worker I don't have many friends who have much extra money, so I was struggling trying to figure out how I could help out in the Calamus Challenge. One night at home my daughter asked me what I had done at work that day, so I told her about Calamus. And the rest is history as they say." That's because a few days later Olivia set up a lemonade stand in Brooklyn and raised \$37 for SAGE! Since Olivia is a new donor to SAGE, her gift will be doubled by the Calamus Foundation to \$74. Says Catherine, "I know Olivia's lemonade stand profits are one of the smaller gifts to SAGE for Calamus, but it came with a lot of heart. And I think it's one of those lessons of life that she'll hang on to, which is a wonderful thing for Olivia and for SAGE!"



Olivia Thurston sold lemonade for SAGE.

Thanks to efforts like these, and many, many more, SAGE was successful in reaching its initial fundraising goals under the Calamus Challenge by raising more than \$300,000 in new and increased gifts for its programs in 2008. The work, of course, has just begun. In 2009, we must repeat its fundraising successes of the previous year in order to continue to rise to the



Calamus Challenge. Even though economic times are bleak, we are determined to be successful because the need for SAGE's services and programs is so great. We need your help for the long run! So come join the people written about here as well as SAGE's many other donors, old and new, and show your support for older people by helping SAGE meet the Calamus Challenge. Visit SAGE's website at [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org) and click on the "Calamus Foundation Matching Grant Program." Know that a gift to SAGE today is an investment in a future of dignity, respect and opportunity for all of us! ☐

*Welcome to the new **SAGE** Matters. Our format has changed to provide you a publication that is more manageable and easier to read. Let us know what you think.*

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Or e-mail us at  
[info@sageusa.org](mailto:info@sageusa.org)*

## New Appointments at **SAGE**



*Frank Stark, new co-chair of SAGE's Board of Directors.*

SAGE is pleased to announce that Frank Stark has been appointed the new co-chair of the agency's Board of Directors. Frank served on SAGE's Board of Directors from 2000 to 2004, and rejoined the Board in 2007. Since returning to SAGE, Stark has been instrumental in creating and chairing the SAGE Investors Circle (SAGE's enhanced major donor program), as well as chairing and restructuring the SAGE Board's Development Committee. He has previously served on the board of directors of The Fund For Human Dignity and The LGBT Community Center. Frank said "One of the tenets of my philosophy is that the value of a person's life is partly measured by how he or she has affected the world around them. Being involved with

SAGE and its mission has allowed me this opportunity."

SAGE is also happy to announce that Catherine Thurston has been appointed SAGE's new Deputy Director for Programs. Catherine joined SAGE's staff in January 2005, bringing with her nineteen years of experience in social work with senior and homebound populations. "I am honored and excited to begin my new role as Deputy Director for Programs at SAGE," Catherine said. "I look forward to helping SAGE expand its caregiving programs and services, strengthening our HIV programming, and enhancing SAGE's strategic partnerships."



*Catherine Thurston, SAGE's new Deputy Director of Programs*

Congratulations to both Frank and Catherine in their new roles.

# You'd be surprised at everything **SAGE** is.

**SAGE** provides dozens of activities, groups, and programs to encourage LGBT seniors to stay connected with each other and the community.

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Friendship Circle  
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Older Men  
Women  
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## Discussion

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Beyond Retirement  
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Men's 50+  
Women's Birthday  
75+  
Women's Spiritual

## Community

Monthly Drop-In  
Program Planning

## Caregivers

Respite  
Support Group  
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Friendly Visiting  
Home Care  
Adult Day Care

## Arts & Culture

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Art Studio  
Booklovers  
Book Readers  
Creative Writing  
Discount Theatre  
Drama Class  
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Harlem Culture  
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Movement & Dance  
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Singing  
Women's Music Salon

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Bus Trips  
Dating & Relationship  
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Holiday Parties  
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Socials  
Walks  
Exercise  
Scrabble & Bridge  
Women's Dances

## SAGE Positive

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Case Management  
Men's 50+  
Harlem Men's 50+  
HIV Testing  
HIV Prevention

## Helping Services

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Friendly Visitors  
Legal Clinic  
Lend-a-Hand

## Information

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Heritage & History  
Money & Finance  
Safety & the Law

## Clinical Services

Case Management  
Individual Counseling  
HIV Related  
Group  
Benefits  
Legal  
Walk-In Clinic  
Finding Homecare

## Advocacy

HIV & Aging  
LGBT Aging  
SAGE Connect  
Senior Summit

## Volunteer Services

Friendly Visitor  
Training & Support  
Orientation  
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## SAGEMATTERS

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- *Be sparing with your personal information. Give out only what's necessary and never use your social security number to make a purchase.*
- *Buy only from a trusted, reputable seller. Don't buy from a stranger who just sent you an email.*
- *If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you see a fancy watch for \$1 or a fortune that can be yours for \$5, it's almost certainly a fraud.*
- *Use a credit card. Credit cards give you the most protection when shopping and can even help you get a refund.*
- *Use a secure website. Look for "https://" in the web address when you are about to enter your personal information.*
- *Check the shipping costs and return policy before you finalize the purchase.*
- *Save and print your receipt.*
- *Inspect your purchase when it arrives.*
- *Trust your common sense at all times, even when you're on the Internet.*

For more about staying safe online, visit [onguardonline.gov](http://onguardonline.gov).

## ASK THE EXPERT

### Finding Lost Property Online

This Issue's Expert: *Thomas Sciacca, PLLC*



No, this article is not about those emails you get from alleged former kings of war-torn countries seeking your Social Security and bank account numbers so you can receive millions of dollars. This is legit: New York State is currently holding billions (yes, billions) of dollars in unclaimed funds for New York residents (or former New York residents).

Where does this money come from? New York State law requires entities that hold inactive funds (referred to as "stakeholders") to deposit them with the Office of the New York State Comptroller. These funds come from sources such as dormant bank accounts, unclaimed stock dividends, and tax rebate checks that have never been cashed.

To check if the state is holding funds payable to you, visit the website of the Office of the State Comptroller at [www.osc.state.ny.us](http://www.osc.state.ny.us) and click on "Unclaimed Funds" in the left-hand column. When the page loads, it will prompt you for your name and the city in New York in which you live. To perform a thorough search, you should include any former names or former City/Town of residence. Please note, the search will return all results for the name and City/Town, so if you have a common name, be prepared to sort through a long list. Each of the listings will provide the last known address of the payee, so you should be able to identify any listings that correspond to you.

To file a claim for these funds, click

on the account number for the individual listing. This will direct you to a claim form that you can fill out online and print. If you have multiple accounts, you must complete a separate claim form for each account. After completing all of the information on the form, you must sign it before a Notary Public and submit it to the Comptroller's Office using the address provided on the form.

Unfortunately, the website does not provide you with the amount of your claim. So unless you have information concerning the underlying source of the funds, there is no way to tell whether your claim is worth \$0.01 or \$10,000.00, until you receive your payment check. Payment checks can sometimes take months to process. However, this money is "found money," and it is always worth it to inquire.

The only way to search for these funds is on-line so if you do not have a computer, visit SAGE's Cyber Center or your local library. The SAGE Cyber Center is at 305 Seventh Avenue, 6th Floor, and is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 am to 12 pm and 1 pm to 3:30 pm, and Fridays 10:00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 5 pm.

Even if you are the most careful person when it comes to money, it would be prudent to check with the Comptroller's Office annually to see if funds have been placed on deposit for you. After all, checks get lost in the mail, and who couldn't use a few extra dollars?

To submit your own question to our experts, visit <http://ask.sageusa.org>

This month one of the greatest modern love stories will reclaim its rightful home—*West Side Story* is returning to Broadway at the Palace Theater. On Monday, February 23rd, fifty-two years after it opened in 1957, audiences will be treated to a revamped and reworked revival of the Tony Award-winning musical. To celebrate this special evening, SAGE, along with the Imperial Court of New York, will host a pre-show reception at the W Hotel on Broadway and 47<sup>th</sup> St, on February 26 from 6:00-7:30 pm.

The revival stars Matt Cavanaugh (*A Catered Affair*, *Grey Gardens*) as Tony, Karen Olivo (*In the Heights*) as Anita, Cody Green (*Movin' Out*) as Riff and George Akram (*Stuck on You*) as Bernardo. Josefina Scaglione, who created the role of Amber Von Tussle in the Argentinian production of *Hairspray*, will be making her Broadway debut as Maria.

Arthur Laurents, who wrote the libretto for *West Side Story* in the '50's, returns as director. Laurents, age 91, says: "I see no point in doing a revival of anything, unless you have a fresh look at it," he explains. And so, for the first time ever, certain songs and scenes will be sung in Spanish. Laurents has asked for the help of Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of *In the Heights*, to translate these parts of the show; the result will be "radically different."

Laurents, the Tony Award-winning director, radiates an intense passion for the new production. Matt Cavanaugh, who will reprise the role of Tony, says of the director:

## SAGE FEELS PRETTY, OH SO PRETTY

by Alex Schecter

"He cuts right through it. It sometimes can be tough to hear, but hey, you know, it focuses you." Laurents hopes to bring in new audiences by refocusing the show.

By calling in Joey McKneely (*The Boy from Oz*, *The Life*) to restage the original choreography, and casting twenty-one-year-old Argentinian actress Josefina Scaglione as Maria, the director has demonstrated a keen interest in making sure the show does not seem dated or one-dimensional. He aims to keep the core of the musical intact, while breathing



Josephina Scaglione (Maria) & Matt Cavanaugh (Tony) star in the much-anticipated Broadway revival of *West Side Story*.

new life into it with Spanish lyrics, new choreography, and critically-acclaimed actors and actresses.

"I'm going for the emotion," de-

clares Laurents, who has been in Washington DC, for the show's out-of-town tryout at the National Theater. The production will begin previews on February 23rd, and opening night is set for March 19th. During its original Broadway run, *West Side Story* played a total of 732 shows.

Many of SAGE's theater aficionados will recall the opening of the original *West Side Story* at the Winter Garden Theater, or its Academy Award-winning film adaptation in 1961 starring Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer. Director Arthur Laurents and Broadway legend Chita Rivera, who played Anita in the original production, will join other distinguished guests at SAGE's Theater Event on February 26. Rivera says: "Fifty years ago, *West Side Story* opened a new era on Broadway... I'm thrilled that Arthur is bringing this landmark musical back!"

Broadway theater goers can now contribute to SAGE in a unique way: just log on to [www.givenik.com](http://www.givenik.com). When you buy your tickets for any show, just click on the foundations list to direct your contribution to SAGE.

Whether you find yourself at SAGE's Theater Event, or at opening night, or simply at one of the scheduled running dates later on in March, this classic love story by Laurents is sure to go down in Broadway history... again. Log onto [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org) for more information on tickets to SAGE's Theater Event, donations to SAGE, and *West Side Story*.



# Nine...Ten...And Out!

## The Two Worlds of Emile Griffith BY RON ROSS

Reviewed by Kevin Jenkins

What LGBT person hasn't at some time in their life experienced the sting of a public verbal assault? At some point we all are that proverbial young boy or girl being mocked in the locker room or by the schoolyard bullies. How many of us, in retrospect, have not been haunted by questions or even fantasies of a more powerful response than we were able to muster at the time.

In 1962, former five-time welterweight boxing champion Emile Griffith was called a faggot by reigning champion Reuben Paret in the locker room at Madison Square Garden immediately prior to a rematch, and was threatened with "I'm going to get you and your husband."

Fast forward to later that evening. In the 12th round of their rematch, before a live television audience, "fourteen million people watched as within the space of a few short seconds, with 21 full-force blows, Griffith pounded the hapless champion. It all happened so quickly that referee Ruby Goldstein never had the chance to respond."

Paret never regained consciousness and died nine days later. Griffith was never charged with any crime. He was, by some measure, just doing his job and he stopped the assault immediately upon the referee's intervention. But the result of his actions haunted Griffith for life and the vivid horror of the televised assault caused the ban-

ishment of boxing from television for a decade. A video clip is available on YouTube. Search for 'Griffith vs Paret (fatal KO)'.

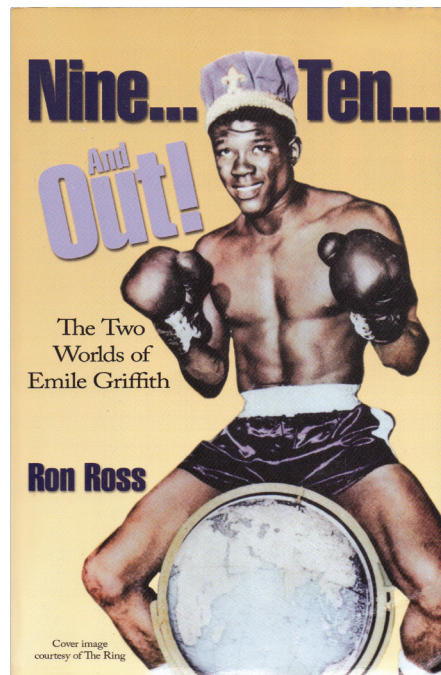
Griffith was known for being a relentless fighter, so it will never be known whether the locker room taunts pushed him over the brink of rage. But what makes this story especially interesting to an LGBT readership is that Griffith was not just the target of standard pre-match jeering. For in fact hard as it might have been to imagine at the time, Griffith was in fact gay and

time, Griffith was a "dandy" who loved to sing and dance and dress outrageously and was even an accomplished women's hat designer.

Ron Ross writes this biography from the perspective of a devoted boxing aficionado. But for most LGBT readers this is much more than a sports story. Instead it unfolds an unfamiliar story wrapped up in a far-too familiar theme – a theme of double lives and struggles to be true to oneself when a simple stereotype doesn't fit.

The duality of Griffith's biography is borne out by the abundance of photographs from the prize fighter's own personal collection that are found in the book. Many are of his professional life, including from the fatal fight. But perhaps what will most resonate with LGBT readers are Griffith's personal photos. These photos capture Griffith's family, and his "bodyguard" and first true love Matthew. There are group photos with members of the Stonewall Veterans Association (where he became vice-president), and perhaps most endearingly, a recent photo of Griffith in a boxing stance with fists at the ready, in front of New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center.

In 1992, Griffith was viciously beaten and almost killed on a New York City street, after leaving a gay bar. Today, Griffith requires full time care and suffers from pugilistic



didn't seem to do all that much to bow to the mores of the time to hide it. In fact, Griffith frequented Times Square gay bars and wore flashy over-the-top clothes that set him apart from other fighters at the time. To observers at the

dementia. Griffith admits that he has had nightmares for forty years about the tragic bout and still feels tremendous guilt over the death of Reuben Paret. In 2005 a documentary directed by Ron Berger, "Ring Of Fire: The Story of Emile Griffith" was released. In the last scene of "Ring Of Fire", Griffith was introduced to Paret's son. The son embraced the elderly fighter and told him he was forgiven. □



Emile Griffith strikes a pose in front of the LGBT Center in Manhattan in a photo by Lisa Ross.

Kevin Jenkins had an opportunity to speak with Ron Ross via telephone and ask him a few questions about Griffith's current situation and how he thought Griffith's homosexuality may have affected his career and the world of boxing in general.

*"Generally [Emile is] pretty good and very well cared for by his adopted son Louis who is very devoted. Another old boxing friend takes him two or three times a week to some of the local gyms in NYC*

*to visit and watch the young boxers train. But his mental state comes and goes. He's better one-on-one but in groups or public places he gets confused. Most of his expenses are taken care of by Ring 8 Veteran Boxers Association."*

*I'm curious as to how widely known his homosexuality was during his career, and how is he received in the gyms today?*

*In the old days the diehard boxing fans certainly knew. It was an open secret. The younger boxers in the local gyms today all know. It doesn't matter. They see him as a boxing champion who happens to be gay. Boxing is not as homophobic as you might think. Emile has a lot to do with that. He's very charming and they all greet him warmly.*

*Is he comfortable in the gay community as well?*

*The last couple of years he has wanted to step out more in the gay community. He would love to be able to do motivational talks with young LGBT students. It's tragic that because of his in-and-out lucidity he really can't. But he's comfortable now with being public about his homosexuality. After the premiere of "Ring of Fire" at the Beekman Theatre, he turned to his son Louis and said "They like me!"*

Ron Ross will read from his book "Nine...Ten...and Out!" at the LGBT Center in April. Check our calendar or website for details. [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org)

## SAGE's

### Creative Members Display their Talents at the Whitney Museum

By David Rubeo

Twenty-five years ago, social worker Susan Perlstein started Elders Share the Arts (ESTA), a community-based organization dedicated to linking generations and cultures through the creativity of art. With the belief that the arts promote self-discovery and growth at any age, she nurtured the program until it spread across the country. And in 1998, the National Endowment for the Arts asked Perlstein's organization to serve as a resource center for the creative aging community.

About a year and a half ago, Elders Share the Arts and SAGE teamed up on an art class at SAGE for LGBT older adults inspired by the theme "A Long Way Home." The ten-week class, led by an ESTA instructor, was extraordinarily popular among SAGE constituents. When it concluded, all the art pieces created by the class participants were collected for a very special purpose. Artwork from the SAGE-ESTA program, along with pieces from other elder art programs across New York City, was reviewed for potential inclusion in a one-evening show at the Whitney Museum of American Art. We're proud to report that the work of five SAGE artists – Barbara Police, Pat Slone, Arlene Spunt, Roni Saunders and Joy Epstein -- was chosen for exhibition at the Whitney!

The "A Long Way Home" exhibit was presented at the Whitney on

*continued on page 16*



305 Seventh Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Fl  
New York, NY 10001

*continued from page 15*

November 17, followed by a beautiful reception sponsored by New York City's Department for the Aging and Department of Cultural Affairs and the Isaac Tuttle Fund. The elegant reception and exhibit was open to the artists and invited guests, and included members of the Whitney's Board of Directors. The evening featured much mingling and praise for the artists' work.

For SAGE's artists, the evening brought many memorable moments. For example, Barbara Police reported that the President of the Whitney Board of Directors heaped praise on her painting and encouraged her to keep at it (something she fully intends to do.)

While exhibiting at the Whitney is undoubtedly a "lifetime achievement," it was but one of many

highlights from this fabulous artistic partnership between SAGE and Elders Share the Arts. Indeed, all of the SAGE artists from the class -- many of whom had never painted before -- discovered their own creativity and a new sense of pride in their work. And along the way, we were all reminded that it's never too late to search for that Frida Kahlo or Diego Rivera within each of us!

To find out more about Elders Share the Arts and see if there is a program in your area, contact the National Center for Creative Aging at <http://www.creativeaging.org> or call (202) 895-9456

*"A Long Way Home" the exhibit is on display at St. Peter's Church in the Citicorp Building, 54th Street and Lexington Avenue, now through March 11th, 2009.*



*Clyde Floyd, artist and SAGE service recipient with one of his paintings. To see a full list of SAGE cultural programs log onto [www.sageusa.org](http://www.sageusa.org)  
photograph: Janette Beckman*