

'Papicha' – when women fight for their freedom

By Sophie Braccini

The film now available online through the International Film Showcase is the autobiographically inspired story of Algerian director Mounia Meddour. Set in the 1990s during Algerian "Black Decade," the movie portrays a group of pretty young women (Papicha: the friendly slang word for these girls) who refuse to conform to the tightening grip of Muslim fundamentalism, literally risking their lives as a result. "Papicha" is a beautiful compilation, sometimes tragic, also full of warmth and humor, about women's solidarity and complicity in the face of adversity.

Nedjma, 18, is a student living in a university girls-only dorm. She dreams of becoming a recognized fashion stylist. At night, she escapes from the locked-up dorm with her friends to go to the night clubs where she sells her creations to the papichas. Meanwhile the political situation is worsening, daily bombings

kill bystanders, and religious rigorism becomes more prevalent and threatening. Nedjma and her friends decide to defy all the rules to organize a catwalk show.

Deliberately paced, the film follows a variety of powerful and suspenseful events. Lyna Khoudri and Shirine Boutella as the two main rebellious papichas play their part very convincingly.

With this first full-length movie, Meddour denounces the religious fundamentalism's oppression of the woman's body with power and anger.

Meddour left her country in 1996 with her parents, fleeing the Islamist oppression that threatened her father. Like the girls in the movie, she lived in a dorm in Alger when the terrorist attacks exploded everywhere. She said in an interview that she remembers that when a woman wanted to be free and beautiful, she could lose her life.

The movie is a hymn to all the Algerian women who, as Meddour describes them,

have always resisted adversity. It shows a feminine world of solidarity and support, compassion and tolerance. Set in a time of unrest, it includes some violent scenes.

"Papicha" was presented at the Cannes Film Festival in 2019 where it was awarded the Best First Feature Film award, and the Best Arab Narrative Film at the El Gouna Film Festival in Egypt. The film was to represent Algeria at the Oscars. But the current regime refused to let the movie be distributed in Algeria (a condition to be included in the selection). Meddour, who now lives in France, said she was saddened by the exclusion, but that the movie secretly makes the rounds in her country of origin, and that it is what counts.

To view the movie, access it this month on the internet through the International Film Showcase website (<http://internationalshowcase.org/>) using the Chrome platform (viewers using Firefox reported difficulty accessing the movie).



2020 writing contest winners announced

By Sora O'Doherty

Four high school students will be awarded \$500 each as winners of the 2020 Poul Anderson writing contest underwritten by the Friends of the Orinda Library. Six students were also awarded honorable mentions for their entries.

Two of the four prize winners also won the contest last year: Audrey Lambert and Julia Lima. This year Lambert won for her entry, "Ode to Grandma's House" in the Essay/Memoir/Biography category, and Lima also won in that category for her piece, "Dear Class of 2020." The other two winners are Sophia Kofoed, for her poem, "Al-

abaster Skulls" and Emma Leibowitz, for her short story, "That Night."

Five of the six honorable mentions were awarded to Miramonte students and one to Matthew Muren of Orinda Academy, who took honorable mention for his poem, "The Light." Honorable mentions were awarded for short stories to Eloise Anagnost, "The Curse of Chance" and Casey Marriner, "Not Good Enough." Two entries in the Science Fiction/Fantasy category won honorable mentions: Laura Boifort for "Invisibility" and Emma Leibowitz for "Conversations with Satan." Jenna Foster also took honorable mention for her poem, "Run-

ning Through the Neighborhood."

The writing contest is named in memory of Orinda resident Poul Anderson, a popular science fiction writer of over 80 books. Open to all Orinda high school students, the contest recognizes winning entries selected by a panel of judges who are involved professionally in reading, writing, or publishing. This year's contest was judged by Sally Hogarty, executive editor of Orinda News; Campolindo librarian Sarah Morgan; Glorietta librarian and author Anne Lowell; and Elizabeth Perlman, founder of the Intuitive Writing Project.

The winning entries can be read on the Friends of the Orinda Library website: <http://friendsoftheorindalibrary.org/2020/06/01/2020-writing-contest-winners-announced/>

A small return to normal



Photos Sora O'Doherty



With Contra Costa health orders being relaxed, allowing for more businesses to reopen, and small groups to gather while keeping social distancing and wearing face coverings when warranted, a Danville couple enjoyed takeout from Siam Thai on the Orinda Library terraces while other local residents gathered at Loard's Ice Cream for a cool treat.

– S. O'Doherty

Fine Jewelry Repairs & Custom Designs



CG DESIGNS
The Designer Goldsmith

Catherine Dining- Goldsmith
3416 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette
(925) 937-9570 | www.cgdesignsinc.com



LIVING TRUST

\$895 COMPLETE
Valid until July 22, 2020

FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION

Law Offices of **Lauren Smykowski**

Plan Includes:

- Trust Agreement
- Pour Over Will
- Guardianship of Minor Children
- Power of Attorney for Finance
- Transfer of Real Property
- Advanced Health Care Directive

Notary Services Included!

(925) 257-4277
www.smykowskilaw.com
laurensmy@gmail.com
Office Located in Walnut Creek

YOUR SMILE IS EVERYTHING

Mary H. Smith D.D.S.
A Professional Corporation
Family & Cosmetic Dentistry



We are celebrating our 25th anniversary of making and maintaining beautiful smiles. We always welcome new patients. Our office delivers the highest quality and service. Consults are always complementary.



1 Bates Blvd. Ste. 210, Orinda, 925.254.0824