

# Letters to the editor

## Leveling the playing field for all

White people sometimes say "I'm not a racist; I'm color blind!" Unfortunately, racism is more nuanced than just belonging to the KKK. Racism is failing to acknowledge that Black and Brown people have suffered greatly and continue to suffer greatly at the hands of white people in this country. Racism is failing to admit that the system is stacked against People of Color.

Which system? The justice system. People of Color routinely get harsher penalties than white people. Just ask the Stanford rapist. People of Color are also disproportionately injured and killed by police compared to white people. Just ask Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Stephon Clark, and Philando Castille.

Which system? The financial system. A recent study concluded that it will take 228 years for the average Black household to accumulate the same level of wealth as held by the average white household today.

Which system? The educational system. Poor communities have fewer resources to fund their schools; students within those schools typically have poorer outcomes in terms of getting into college, in terms of succeeding in life. People of Color are more likely to attend public schools with fewer resources.

Some may say that racism happens elsewhere but not in Lafayette; however, the prior Police Chief, Eric Christensen, stated at a public meeting in 2017 that his department often gets two or three calls per week where white people call the police on People of Color in our community, because the white folks are sure that the People of Color don't belong there – that they're up to something. Nearly all of the

time, he said, the People of Color are not the problem.

Fighting racism in this country is not a zero sum game. By recognizing the inequalities in society and then acting to eliminate these inequalities, by elevating People of Color to the same level as white people, by leveling the playing field, we can make our community and our country better for all.

Gwenyth Searer, P.E., S.E. Lafayette

## Embracing the truth of racism

Members of our committee have received many notes of support since our last editor's letter. We also received some messages questioning the need for efforts to increase belonging and inclusion in our community. Some even came in the form of aggressive messages sent from alias emails. We have work to do as a community and country to acknowledge how privilege and racism touch our daily lives.

Our children watched the storming of the nation's Capitol on Jan. 6 with bewilderment. They are asking: why did people breach the sanctuary of our government? How were they allowed to terrorize national leaders, attack and kill police, plant pipe bombs, and wave Confederate flags in the cradle of our democracy? Others wonder why rioters were unmasked, showing little regard for protecting others, while students are homebound on Zoom classes.

Nationwide, BLM protesters were marching in desperate protest for their people literally dying in the streets and in their beds. They were met with throngs of officers, rubber bullets, and tear gas. In contrast, the angry mob that marched on the Capitol was enraged that its candidate lost a free and fair election. These

insurrectionists brought guns, bombs, and tactical gear. Yet they drew a mild, tolerant response. The contrast was devastating.

We won't come closer together with denial. Exposing the wounds of racism is not divisive; it is our only path toward equality. Lamorinda families and students of color have shared their unique stories, repeatedly, in multiple venues, challenging the fantasy that Lamorinda is a utopian bubble immune to privilege and racism. We must not continuously minimize their experiences and be brave enough to embrace their truths. Contact us at [lafayettek8equity@gmail.com](mailto:lafayettek8equity@gmail.com)

Yukie Fujimoto  
Founder, LafSD DEI Committee

## Thanks to volunteers helping with vaccine distribution

I want to thank Dr. Rebecca Parish and Dr. Denise Hillard for their initiative to have vaccines delivered to our community. One of the advantages of living in the Lamorinda area is that there are so many individuals who see problems and rather than just complaining about it they seek out solutions. When their patients along with other members of the community were having a difficult time getting vaccinated, they came up with a solution and delivered it. I also want to thank all the volunteers that were involved including the CERT Organization. (Community Emergency Response Team) making the event at the Stanley Middle School so successful. "Those who say it cannot be done need to get out of the way of those that are doing it." Thank you, Dr. Parish, Dr. Hillard and all the volunteers. You are all doers.

Barry Behr  
Moraga

# ACA Strong!



There was plenty of school spirit on full display in front of Acalanes High School in the evenings from Jan. 29-31, with bright lights and music to boost spirits and community pride. The drive-through lights display, organized and put on by cohorts of class officers and liaisons, and leadership students, will be re-

peated Thursday to Friday evenings, Feb. 4-7 and Feb. 11-14, from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Families are all welcome to drive through and are invited to bring peanut butter and/or boxes of cereal as donations to the Monument Crisis Center.  
- P. Fisher

# Stanley vaccine drive-through misunderstanding cleared; all participants guaranteed second doses

... continued from Page A3

Lamorinda Village received many calls and emails from grateful seniors complimenting the smoothly run operation. "If anything, the county should emulate your first dose drive through clinic," said one.

Mike Doyle and his wife, both 75 years old, attended the first clinic. "The volunteers were friendly, informed and Dr. Parish was everywhere ensuring that all went according to plan," said Doyle. "I can't imagine how a single thing could have been done better – simply outstanding."

Contra Costa Health Services spokesperson Scott Alonso says that CCHS has a special interest in providing

for the health of the most vulnerable communities and those who have been historically marginalized. "As we continue to develop infrastructure and evaluate the need for future community clinics and mass vaccine events, we will do so with a steadfast commitment to equity and service to the communities hardest hit by this pandemic."

In fact Horowitz says his client, Parish, would like to bring this community model to minority and marginalized communities in the near future.

Drive-through clinic participants can call a hotline for up-to-date information at (925) 284-0835.

The CCHS vaccine call center phone number is 833-VAX-COCO.

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence – we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters must be factually accurate and be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com) for submission guidelines. Email: [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com); Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

# The Creative Seamstress is making life 'sew' much easier in Moraga



Photo Vera Kochan

The Creative Seamstress owner Odontuya Tserenjav, left, and sister Odma Tserenjav

## By Vera Kochan

In need of any alterations or repairs to your wardrobe? The Creative Seamstress can help you out with that and more.

Located in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center at 370 Park Street, Suite B, owner Odontuya Tserenjav and her sister Odma include tailoring, custom sewing projects, personalization, and vinyl decal/stencil cutting on their list of skills.

The sisters became adept with a needle and thread as teenagers learning how to sew from their mother and grandmother. Odontuya eventually became a fashion designer in Mongo-

lia. Both women were seamstresses in Oakland when they decided to look for a place to open their own business. They fell in love with Moraga. "We wanted to move here, because the schools are good," explained Odma, "and the hills are so green."

The Creative Seamstress is Odontuya's first foray at being a business owner, and the first time she and Odma have worked together. Besides repairs and alterations for men and women they can work on children's clothes. "We also make original clothes," stated Odma. "If you bring in a design we can work from that. We also make cushion covers and curtains."

Shop hours are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. They are closed on Sundays. For additional information call (925) 871-8082 or email [TheCreativeSeamstress@yahoo.com](mailto:TheCreativeSeamstress@yahoo.com).

# In Memory

## John 'Jack' Forsyth Helms

December 25, 1933 - January 22, 2021



John "Jack" Forsyth Helms passed away peacefully in Walnut Creek on Jan. 22. He was born in Oakland on Christmas Day in 1933. After initially living in Piedmont, the family moved to Fresno where Jack graduated from Fresno High School. He received an Accounting degree from the University of Washington in Seattle, after which time he served three years as a United States Naval Officer. Upon returning to the Bay Area, he earned a Master of Business Administration degree from UC Berkeley's Haas Business School.

Jack married Julie Rapalje Caulkins on Sept. 21, 1963. They moved to Moraga in 1973, where they raised two children, David and Laurie.

He worked in various information technology and financial positions, retiring from the corporate world in 1987. After his retirement, he and Julie studied Spanish and traveled extensively in Mexico and Central America. In addition, they visited various European countries and spent time at their cabin in Lake Tahoe.

One of the greatest gifts Jack shared with his family was his love of the outdoors. Backpacking and skiing were regular family activities. Jack was a 32-year member of the National Ski Patrol and former head of the Homewood Volunteer Ski Patrol. Jack enjoyed fly-fishing since his teen years, and was at his happiest when wading in a sparkling stream in the Sierras.

Jack was a longtime member and former president of the Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen, as well as a member of the Lafayette United Methodist Church. His greatest joy was his family, and he was a devoted and loving husband, father, and grandfather.

Jack is survived by his son David (Cheryl) Helms of Walnut Creek, daughter Laurie (Peter) Maxwell of Santa Barbara, and five grandchildren: Kiersten, John, Holly, Michelle, and Sarah. He also leaves his sister Susan Vildosola of Fresno. He was recently predeceased by his beloved wife Julie.

The family will gather privately to celebrate his life. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be sent to Yosemite Conservancy.

## Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com), and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.