

# 2024 Creative Aging Symposium Speakers (in order of appearance)

## Oshea Luja



Oshea Luja is the Artistic Director of Still Waters Network, the Producer of the Still Waters Experience, and co-founder of the literacy-rooted Still Waters Writers Workshop. A renowned poet and producer, he is a 2015 and 2017 Village Award Recipient from the Villagers Hall of Fame Awards Foundation. Oshea co-founded Vibrations Holistic Center in Inglewood CA and later, The Balance Portal in Southern CA, where he has co-created a line of teas and natural skin and hair care, and helps others explore life-purpose alignment and soul work.

## Damon McLeese



Damon is a visionary leader who has dedicated his career to promoting accessibility, inclusion, and innovation in the arts. As the Executive Director of Access Gallery for more than 25 years, Damon has been a driving force behind the organization's success in unlocking the creative power of people regardless of their background, ability, or experience.

Damon's collaborative approach bridges the gap between creativity and community, whether in a corporate setting, senior center or in the classroom. He creates projects that forces us to look at creativity, ability, and disability in very different ways.

Projects as diverse as a photography project for people who are blind, a street art project for people with Alzheimer's and dementia.

## Grant Avenue Follies



Grant Avenue Follies bring to life the legacy of San Francisco Chinatown's golden nightclub era (1940's to 1970's). Originally comprised of four retired dancers of the nightclubs, they were following doctor's orders to exercise for improved physical health. The Follies rediscovered the sheer joy and freedom of dance and reconnected with their roots.

In 2021, the Follies performed the "Gai Mou Sou Rap" to stand against Anti-Asian hate crimes. Their music video went viral, receiving international attention and was featured in many film festivals. The Follies have since appeared in Steve Harvey's show, "Steve on Watch." A collaboration with AARP led to another viral video, "That Lunar Cheer," and a national TV appearance on Mario Lopez's Access Daily Show. The new PBS arts + culture primetime documentary series, The Express Way with Dulé Hill will feature the Grant Avenue Follies. The series is scheduled to launch in the spring of 2024.

## Anna Hall



Anna Hall is the Founder and Chief Purpose Officer for The Purpose Equation. She has over 25 years of experience in employee and team engagement, program development, leadership and organizational strategy, change-management and technology innovation in the senior living space. The Purpose Equation is an evidence-informed framework that boosts confidence + wellness to reveal clear direction in life and work based on unique personality, strengths, thinking patterns, values and motivation. Hall is a Certified Life Purpose Coach.

## Makers Meetup



"Carlsbad Maker Meetup," is a monthly gathering for all creative minds, makers, and passionate hobbyists. From delectable recipes and intricate scrapbooks to cozy quilts and breathtaking fine art – our diverse community shares a passion for creation in all its forms. Hosted by Front Porch Gallery, these gatherings are rooted in the joy of sharing. This isn't a group for critique and feedback; our conversations focus more on process and technique. Come with curiosity and an appetite to learn. Whether you're a seasoned designer, a curious tinkerer, or someone exploring a newfound hobby, the Carlsbad Maker MeetUp welcomes you with open arms. The Carlsbad Maker Meetup Group is open to adults aged 18 and above, with a special emphasis on welcoming individuals aged 60 and older. It's never too late to embrace your creative spirit and share the wonders you're crafting.

## Zoe and Susie Ghahremani



Zohreh (Zoe) Ghahremani is an author, speaker, and painter whose work is heavily influenced by her experiences as a Middle Eastern immigrant and her background as a poet. Zoe actually began writing as a child, completing two novels before her teens! However, she was encouraged by family to pursue a more traditional profession and so became a dentist while her passion for literature stayed in her heart. Following her graduation from London University, for two decades she ran a busy pediatric dentistry practice in the Chicago area and taught at Northwestern University's Dental School, but kept reading and writing at any opportunity. One day, she heard the advice that "if there's something you've always wanted to do, you should do it" – so she walked into her office, put her practice for sale, and never looked back. Today, she lives the life she always dreamed of: write, paint, garden, repeat.



Susie Ghahremani is an award-winning illustrator and author, an internationally exhibiting fine artist, an educator, an entrepreneur, and designer. In addition to illustrating for commercial and editorial clients, Susie develops a whimsical, illustrated stationery and gift brand titled Boygirlyparty®. Her original artwork regularly exhibits internationally at museums and galleries, including solo shows in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. She is Middle Eastern, a first-generation American, and advocates for diversity and representation in illustration.

## Suzanne Reich



Suzanne Reich is a museum educator and arts educator. She has worked with students and adults at [Ruth's Table](#), at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, and at SFMOMA, and taught for many years as a literacy specialist in elementary schools. At Ruth's Table, she developed and leads our monthly virtual Slow Looking Program and facilitates our Memory Cafe, offering exhibit tours and art-making, for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

## cin salach



Poet of page and stage, Illinois Arts Council recipient, four-time Ragdale fellow, and Emmy nominee for voice-over and on-screen narration of the PBS documentary "From Schoolboy to Showgirl." cin salach has collaborated with musicians, video artists, dancers, photographers, and most recently, healers, chefs and scientists, for over 30 years. She was honored to be the inaugural Poet Laureate of Covenant Farm in Sawyer, Michigan. Her two books of poetry, "Looking for a Soft Place to Land" and "When I am Yes" are housed there in the Porch Swing Poetry Box.

cin leads circles of women writers in a monthly workshop called Splitting the World Open, inspired by the quote, "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open. (Muriel Rukeyser)"

She also creates workshops/poetry experiences for seniors, caregivers, and those with dementia and Alzheimer's. Helping people voice their deepest truths, even when they are the most afraid, is the work she has always felt called to do.

She lives in Chicago with her son, where her love of poetry and the belief that it can change lives has led her to create her business, [poemgrown](#), helping people mark the most important occasions in their lives with poetry.

# Creative Aging Symposium

Unveiling the power of tiny creative habits  
to fuel our longevity.

**May 9th, 2024, 9 - 11:30am PT**

Register at [creativeagingysymposium.org](https://creativeagingysymposium.org) or 877-797-7229



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