



Leading the Way to Lifelong Learning

# Conductor

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of MPC

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May 16 - July 15, 2026

## President's Corner

*Nancy Johnson,  
President*



As we reach the close of another academic year, I've been thinking about the remarkable history of the Gentrain Program and the Gentrain Society. It all began when the late Phil Nash had a vision of creating an accessible, interdisciplinary education program in the humanities and social sciences. In 1973, he successfully applied to the

National Endowment for the Humanities for a \$50,000 grant to fund a project called Interdisciplinary Instruction System for the Teaching Educational Courses.

The grant supported interdisciplinary curriculum development and faculty workshops, and in 1974 Phil's dream took life as the Gentrain course. It has remained vital through every lecture and every classroom conversation, and, since 1983, in the Gentrain Society itself.

This past year has shown how strong and engaged our community truly is. Your enthusiasm for our lectures, trips, and Special Events has kept the Society vibrant. As we prepare to say goodbye to coordinator and literature instructor, Alan Haffa, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the dedication he has brought to Gentrain for over twenty years.

While the Gentrain course will be on hiatus over the summer, I hope you will continue to join us for the lectures and activities we have planned in the coming months. **And as we look ahead to the fall, I encourage you to register for the Gentrain Program and continue supporting the tradition of lifelong learning that has sustained us for more than fifty years.** Your participation is what keeps this community strong and flourishing.

Thank you for being part of the Gentrain Society. I look forward to seeing you this summer and again in the fall.

## Gentrain Society Board Meetings

The next Gentrain Society Board meetings will be held on campus on **May 20 and June 17** at 2:45 pm in MPC Social Sciences 104. **These Meetings are open to all Gentrain Society Members.**

## Membership Report

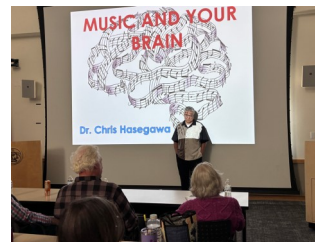
*Merry Nolte, Membership Chair*

**We gladly introduce these new members:** Florence Whitmire Allen, Christine Bailey & Bill Becker, Rebecca Bishop, Charla Britt & Bob Bluth, David & Cheryl Calleri, Mary Capehart, Marlo Faulkner, Paula Robinson & Thomas Jamison, Cynthia Kilian, Jean Killacky, and Mary Jane Lloyd. Welcome to all!

## Special Events

*Michael Sovereign, Rene Kimzey, Co-chairs*

The "Ladies of Larkin House" Special Event was an enjoyable afternoon with a good turnout, good weather and good food! **April 28th, our Special Event was "Music and the Brain" by Dr. Chris Hasagawa--hope you didn't miss it.**



**May 19th at 11:00 am in LF 103 will be our EXTRA SPECIAL end of semester fête. Come and visit with your fellow Gentrainers before the summer break..**

## Farewell, Alan

*Merry Nolte, Membership Chair*

**As this term ends, we are all sadly aware that Dr. Alan Haffa will retire at the end of this semester from MPC and the Gentrain Program, where he has been the Director since 2003. The Gentrain Society thanks Alan for his years of service and wishes him well in retirement.**



Here is a little summary of Alan's career: After graduating from high school in his hometown of Minneapolis, he made the fateful decision to attend St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. St. John's is a small liberal arts college where all students read the Great Books of western civilization, and Alan says it "changed my life." He went on to earn a Ph.D. in Classical Studies and a Masters in Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

After studying classical Greek and French at St. John's, he added Latin and Italian to his linguistic skills at U. of Wisconsin.

Alan married his wife Arlene while in college. After he obtained his Ph.D., it was Arlene's turn. She earned a Ph.D. in Bio-Chemistry at Arizona State University. During this period, Alan directed a classical studies and honors program at Phoenix Community College.

This accomplished couple spent six years in Phoenix before moving to Monterey with their two children. Alan immediately became Gentrain director, replacing retiring Grant Voth. During his tenure, the program has gone through several phases, as financial support has waxed and waned. Enrollment has varied from about 60 to almost 200, and back down to its current level of about 60. The class schedule changed from eight hours per week to four, extending it to a two-year cycle. While mostly staying true to its Western Civilization roots, Alan has worked with the other professors to broaden the focus of Gentrain to include more women and non-Western material. He developed a World Train program but only had support to offer it one semester.

Alan has led Gentrain trips to the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon every year. He particularly enjoyed getting to know Gentrain students better, with a highlight being the discussion sessions the mornings after seeing the plays. He hopes to continue the Ashland trips in retirement. As director, Alan has worked closely with the Gentrain Society Board coordinating their support of the Program. He also taught Shakespeare and composition classes for MPC's English department.

Away from MPC, Alan has been active politically. He served on the Monterey Peninsula School Board for three years while his children were students. He is proudest of a Spanish immersion program which he helped start which continues to the present. He also served as a Monterey City Councilor for twelve years. His wife Arlene is a professor at CSU-Monterey Bay.

## Ashland Report

*Allison Porter, Committee Chair*

### FINAL CALL FOR SHAKESPEARE

**Our trip is almost full, but there are still a few spaces left! See below if you would like to join us.**

**Join the Gentrain Society and Dr. Alan Haffa, Director of Gentrain, as we visit Ashland, Oregon, for the annual Shakespeare Festival, July 6 - July 11, 2026.**

**We are scheduled to see six plays:** *Taming of the Shrew* (one can only wonder what the OSF will do with this troublesome play, but the brochure promises a "bold production"), *Come From Away* (a Tony Award play based on the true story of Canadians taking in a



**A street banner in downtown Ashland celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.**

stranded plane load after 9/11), *Emma* (a "bold, gender-bending romp that turns Jane Austin on her head"), *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's timeless romantic comedy, where "the course of true love never did run smooth"), *Henry IV, Part One* (will Prince Hal ever grow up to take over the crown?), and *Raisin in the Sun* (Lorraine Hansberry's seminal mid-Century work that "changed the American theater forever").

A four-session overview and analysis of the plays will be led by Dr. Haffa in the week or so before the trip. We will also have daily discussions of the plays after viewing them in Ashland. These sessions are required in order that we may qualify for student housing and ticket prices.

We are housed at the local university dormitories. Rooms are comparable to motel rooms; most have two double beds, private bathrooms, mini fridge, and microwave. Suites can be reserved for one or two people.

**Costs include:** Transportation from and back to MPC and shuttle service in Ashland, five nights lodging, tickets to six plays, and all gratuities. Meals are not included.

**Costs for this year's trip are as follows:**

Suite/single	\$1,821
Suite/double EACH	\$1,695

The trip is limited to 30 participants and spaces are filled on a first-come basis. **Your check for the full amount, made out to MPC/Gentrain Society, will secure your reservation. Please send to Allison Porter, 1920 Noche Buena Street, Seaside CA 93955.** Make sure your name, address, phone number and email address are included (typed or printed). **If you are not a member of the Gentrain Society, please enclose an additional check for \$35, made out to Gentrain.**

**Any questions about registration can be answered by Allison at 831-224-8052.**

## **Gentrain Financial Report**

*Mary Alice Rennick, Treasurer*

Gentrain Treasurer's Report

May/June 2026

This time of year always challenges our budgeting skills and our operational income stream (mostly membership dues) slows to a trickle while expenses increase because of year-end activities. Now, at the end of April, most remaining expenses have been identified and our budget projections look accurate. We now expect to end the fiscal year with a trivial surplus of operating income over expenses. Our self-supporting activities (Special Events, Shakespeare Festival, Scholarships, etc.) are breaking even as well.

The Gentrain Board will consider a new budget for FY27 at their June meeting.

If you have any concerns about Gentrain Society finances or would like to know more details, please contact any Board Member or send mail to [treasurer@gentrain.org](mailto:treasurer@gentrain.org).

## **Scholarship Report**

*Vikki Logan, Scholarship Chair*

**The Gentrain Society announces its Scholarship Winners:**

**\$1000. Each:**

Howe, Christine

Buckley, April

Cabrera, Stilver

Laval, Keegan.

Miranda, Damaris

### **Memorial Scholarships:**

Tania Alvarez in memory of Mary Ann Kane

Karina French in memory of Lynn Swerrie

Heather Vosburg and Justice Imlay in memory of Jack and Isaline Sedan

Nicholas Arnold in memory of Chuck Kimzey

Arlene Loomis in memory of Anne Flynn

Laval Keegan in memory of Anne Flynn

Justice Imlay in memory of Jack and Isaline Sedan

### **Winner of the Marcellini art scholarship in memory of Linda Marcellini:**

"I wanted to share a photo and update with you. When I reached out to Nicholas Garcia, he quickly responded and graciously stated that we could have a print of his work. Within that email, he invited us to attend the upcoming MPC Gallery that showcases artists and that he would be in attendance. The opening night was

Friday April 10th. It just happened that my dad, brother, and sister were able to attend. They got to meet Nicholas! See photo below. My family stated it was a beautiful moment and are so thrilled he was the 1st recipient of the scholarship!" Kristen (daughter)



The winner is Nicolas Garcia, the big man next to Robert (far right) and two of Robert's children.

## **Webmaster Report**

*Mary Alice Rennick*

**Have you explored the Gentrain website lately? If so, you know that it includes several different types of information, most of which can be accessed using multiple paths.** There is general information about the Society, oriented towards viewers who are not familiar with our program. The President's Note gives our President an opportunity to reflect on Gentrain's place in our community, its past, and evolution towards its future. Special announcements and other information about future lectures and events are also available. All this can be navigated from the main menu or by links from related content.

**How do you use the site? Which features are most important to you? Are they easy to find? Do you**

- Consult the lecture notes? Before, during, or after class?
- Explore planned lectures and events? Calendar or event details?
- Do you use the "comment" or "send email" links to communicate with the Board or other viewers?
- Want information that you cannot find?
- What do you find useless or annoying?
- Which platform do you use? PC? Mac? iPhone? Android phone? Other?

**Please share your thoughts with any Board Member or [webmaster@gentrain.org](mailto:webmaster@gentrain.org).**

## The Gentrain Book Club

### Gerard Kapolka



The Great Books discussion group is currently discussing *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy. It is a very long novel and we will be discussing it for some time. We welcome any new members, and you don't have to join the group at the beginning of the reading to participate. We meet on Zoom on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. The discussions last about an hour.

If you wish to join our group, email me, Gerry Kapolka, at [gtkapolka@gmail.com](mailto:gtkapolka@gmail.com) to receive a reading list and Zoom invitations. We welcome all newcomers.

### The Zorg, by Siddarth Kara

Thanks to Allison Porter for providing this wonderful book review by Gentrain Program student Charlie Stone.

If you have heard Gamble Madsen's lecture on J. M. W. Turner's painting *The Slave Ship*, you may have an interest into the details of this voyage and its aftermath. If so, you will be delighted to know that the full story is told in this just published book by Siddarth Kara, *The Zorg*.

The end of legal slavery began with an English lawsuit by the ship's owners against their insurance company, Lloyds. The owner/human trafficker demanded recovery for the "loss of cargo" which had occurred when the incompetent crew jettisoned half the slaves overboard. The ship had been severely overloaded with bodies and faced lack of food and water. If the slaves died on board or after landing, the loss would not be covered by insurance; the only way to recoup the value of the slaves was to throw them into the ocean and claim they had been sacrificed to save the remainder of the slaves and sailors. The company expected an award of half the retail value of the lost slaves, or about \$1,000 (today's value) per adult male. (Spoiler alert: the ship owners prevailed in the trial court, but the case was overturned on appeal)

Kara sets out the details of the slave trade including how the African tribal leaders would sell captives to the powerful English governors on the Guinea coast; they would then be re-sold to masters of the slave ships moored nearby.

This horrific voyage was disastrous for the officers (both greedy and incompetent), for the crew (much too small to handle the "cargo" loaded at almost three times capacity), and for the slaves, who spent months in an allotted space 16 inches wide by 6 feet long and 24

inches high and stacked in three layers. They had to crawl over each other to go to the toilet. Shackled in smaller groups, they were taken to the deck for 30 minutes a day to eat and exercise, and forced to entertain the crew by dancing and for the women, by submitting to the systematic rape.



Accountability for slavery necessarily goes to all except the victims, but in the first instance to those in power who profited from the trade and labor of enslaved persons. Of course, in the larger picture, all systems, religious, business, society, and politics, benefitted to a greater or lesser degree, and for several centuries, at least, few were not touched by the Peculiar Institution.

## Wednesday Lectures

*Gentrain Wednesday Lectures are held in LF 103 from 1:30 to 2:30 pm. Visitors are welcome; no charge or registration is required.*

### Wed., May 20, 2026 - 1:30 pm in LF 102! *Good Morning, Julia Child*



*Good Morning, Julia Child* is a staged reading performed by an actor who magically transforms herself into the world famous French Chef, Julia Child. She is being interviewed on June, 1994 by Alex Morgan on KPLX radio program in Boston. In this interview, Julia will reveal her passion for cooking, her deep love for her husband, Paul, and how it all began in Paris.

Carol Marquart, playwright, has written and produced staged readings of famous and infamous

persons of the twentieth century. These readings have taken place all over the Monterey Peninsula. The subject of her plays have included Carol Steinbeck, Mark Twain, Frank Lloyd Wright, Bette Davis, William Randolph Hearst and even Rasputin!

**Wednesday, June 3, 2026 - 1:30 pm**  
**Taste the Rainbow,  
But Please Don't Lick the Art**

Let's savor Skittles (provided by Gentrain Society Vice President Becky Taylor) and learn about ART! Join us on June 3rd to meet Melissa Shields Bispo, a Studio Arts MPC faculty member. She is a Monterey native and an active member of the Monterey Peninsula Art Forum on Cannery Row. Melissa studied art at the California College of Arts and Crafts (B.F.A.) and earned her M.F.A at San Jose State. Her focus was glass and installation art.

**Wednesday, June 17, 2026 - 1:30 pm**

**To be determined.** Direct any questions to the Gentrain Board Vice President Becky Taylor at (831) 869-1562 or check *gentrain.org* for updates.

**NO WEDNESDAY LECTURE ON JULY 1**

**Wednesday, July 15, 2026 - 1:30 pm**  
**Citizen Tom Paine - Trials of the Soul**

Meet Tom Paine, the one "Founding Father" denied access to the National Pantheon.



The irascible and controversial English radical who championed the American Revolution reviews his eventful life as he awaits his supposed death during the French Revolution. The author of *Common Sense* and *The American Crisis* shows why he was the "stormy petrel of two revolutions" in Howard Burnham's entertaining and informative dramatic characterization. **F.**

**Howard Burnham** is Monterey County's default English actor. Do you need an Englishman on stage? Better call Burnham. You can't go wrong with the man who has embodied and performed as over 60 historical figures from the U.K., starting with the English-born Founding Father Thomas Payne, through Winston Churchill and Lewis Carroll, to...Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

Burnham studied modern history at the University of Durham in England, where his adventure with acting started. In 1973, he became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in London. After many years of work in education, he took off for America in 1998, eventually landing in Monterey County where he is well-known for performing theatrical one-man monologues of historical figures.

**MPC Spring Gentrain Program**

**April 28, 30 - May 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21**

**Gentrain 15/415 WORLD WAR II TO THE PRESENT (1945-PRESENT)**

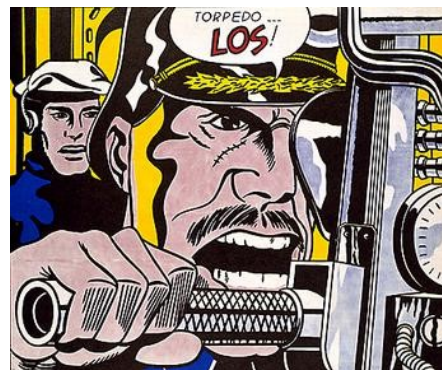
The course examines selected aspects of the Western World in the past half century, including such topics as the Cold War and the succession of wars that followed World War II, and the rapid development of movements in art, literature, and philosophy in response to a changing world.



**Guernica - Pablo Picasso**



**President Truman signs the North Atlantic Treaty with guests in the Oval Office**



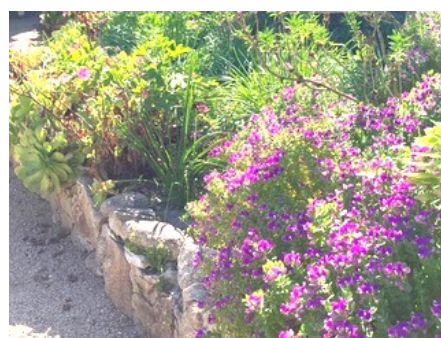
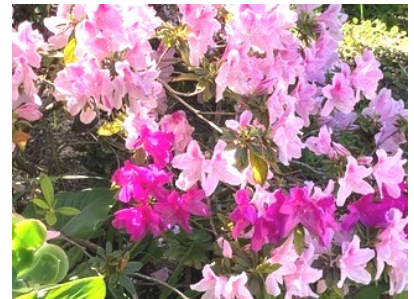
**Torpedo... Los!**

**Roy Lichtenstein**

**The Gentrain Society of MPC celebrated Women's History Month at the historic Casa Serrano adobe ...  
photos by Richard Forster and Terry Blum**



... some of us then followed the “Path of History” to the Larkin House where the gates to the garden were open ...  
photos by Richard Forster



**The Gentrain Society of MPC**

**2025 - 2026**

**Board of Directors**

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Imm. Past President: Peter Purdue (831) 646-9216  
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Scholarship: Vikki Logan (831) 625-8653  
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Michael Sovereign (831) 646-1912  
Oregon Shakespeare Festival:  
Allison Porter (831) 394-8051  
Webmaster: Mary Alice Rennick (831) 375-0702

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**Yes, I would like to contribute to the  
Gentrain Society Scholarship Fund**

**980 Fremont Street, Monterey CA 93940**

*(Please make your checks payable to MPC/Gentrain Society)*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount enclosed: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Invitation to Join**

Dues: \$35 per year, \$50 Couples

Send your check payable to the *MPC/Gentrain Society*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **I would like to learn about volunteer  
opportunities.**

Please clip out and send to:  
Membership, *Gentrain Society* - MPC  
980 Fremont St., Monterey CA 93940

