The Poetics of Aging
Towards a New Understanding of the Many Verses in Life

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The Poetics of Aging: A New Conference Approach to Growing Older, and Better

(Poetics of Aging October 20, 2011). San Franicisco, CA. You would have to be hiding under a rock to have not heard the news: America is in the midst of a demographic transition that will impact every facet of our personal and professional lives. This year, the baby-boom generation began turning 65-years-old at a clip of 10,000 a day. Dubbed in catastrophic terms as the "silver tsunami," these 77 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964 are accelerating at warp speed the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population—older adults.

In our youth-obsessed culture, we demonize and deny getting older (you're not getting older, your getting better!). In our aversion to old age, we have created a multi-billion dollar a year industry in "anti-aging" potions, lotions and procedures - all designed to erase the visible signs of increasing years. The popular notion is that as we grow older, we decline - we grow more frail, more stale and diminished at every level. Given limited interpretations of old age, and the absence of positive role models of elderhood, it is little wonder people are resistant to being labeled over a certain age.

Thankfully, there is a growing voice of opposition to this negative stereotype of later life. We are at the beginning of a demographic and cultural shift that demands a deliberate, thoughtful and collaborative plan to meet the future needs, as well as reap the benefits, of an aging society. To begin, we need to understand our own cultural biases and perspectives on aging. Critical to this effort is questioning the status quo and exploring a more expansive, humanistic, and creative vision and approach to aging and the wisdom that age brings, along with a radical reinterpretation of longevity - Dr. Bill Thomas.

It is this spirit of public discourse and exploration of new meaning for growing older that the Age Song Institute is hosting, in collaboration with several California academic and non-profit organizations, as well as national organizations, such as the National Center for Creative Aging, the inaugural Poetics of Aging Conference, scheduled for November 16 - 19, 2011, at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in San Francisco. Led by notables, such as relationship expert John Gray, job search authority Dick Bolles, and

mind/body/spirit advocate Linda Hawes-Clever, MD, the conference explores, through panel discussions, interactive workshops, roundtables and performances, the gifts, opportunities and benefits of growing older, not in spite of added years, but because of them.

In addition to academic discourse, the conference utilizes creative expression as a pathway of exploration, featuring presentations by Stagebridge Theater, the first group of older actors in the country, and Stanford Classic Theater performances, a dance performance by legendary Anna Halprin, and jazz singing by Faith Winthrop, who has trained movie stars. Professionals, as well as the general public, will enjoy cutting edge theories, as well as practical applications presented by Stanford, UCSF, Berkeley, CIIS, and other university and organizational leaders. An outstanding group of well-known poets and storytellers will participate in a "Speakeasy." Pacific Institute will conduct an Inner Elder Training at the conference, and a Creativity Lab will be filled with crafts, films, and hands-on-arts.

For those who need to earn continuing education hours, for those who love to learn and share their wisdom with others, and for those who are just curious about how aging can be viewed as something to celebrate, rather than fear, this four-day gathering will create a climate where people can share their awareness and creative expressions, while providing room for self-study and discovery - a not-to-be missed inaugural event.

For more information, contact Sally@poeticsofaging.org and view the conference website, http://www.poeticsofaging.org.