



PACIFIC CENTER FOR HUMAN GROWTH

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Upcoming Events

Mar 2018

Thursday, Mar 15 2018
Island Pride Peer Support Group in ALAMEDA
 Time: 10:30am - 11:30am

Thursday, Mar 15 2018
Queerly Aging Lesbians
 Time: 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Thursday, Mar 15 2018
Q-PAD - Queer, Male Identified, 20's & 30's
 Time: 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Friday, Mar 16 2018
OLDER & OUT free therapy group at N.Berkeley Senior Ctr
 Time: 3:00pm - 5:00pm

Friday, Mar 16 2018
L.O.U.D. Youth Group
 Time: 4:00pm - 6:00pm

Friday, Mar 16 2018
Transgender Peer Support Group
 Time: 8:00pm - 9:30pm

Monday, Mar 19 2018
OLDER & OUT free therapy group in Hayward
 Time: 1:15pm - 2:45pm

Monday, Mar 19 2018
AI-Anon Meeting
 Time: 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Tuesday, Mar 20 2018
Out Standing Seniors Peer Support Group in HAYWARD
 Time: 11:30am - 2:00pm

Tuesday, Mar 20 2018
OLDER & OUT free therapy group in Livermore
 Time: 1:15pm - 2:45pm

Tuesday, Mar 20 2018
L.O.U.D. Youth Group
 Time: 4:00pm - 6:00pm

Tuesday, Mar 20 2018
Transgender/Genderqueer AA Meeting
 Time: 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Vanguard: The Vietnamese LGBTQ Literary & Art Zine

June 15, 2016 in inQuery

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Vanguard is an underground zine based in Sài Gòn that features visual arts and written works by self-identified Vietnamese LGBTQ artists and writers. Its founders, Thanh "Nu" Mai and Aiden Nguyễn, created the zine as a safe platform for Vietnamese LGBTQ individuals to freely express themselves through visual arts and written works. Their mission is to foster a Vietnamese LGBTQ community and inspire "queer revolution" in Việt Nam and across the world.

In the foreword of the first issue, Aiden Nguyễn explains about the mission of *Vanguard*. He first describes his and Nu's cultural shock arriving in Sài Gòn, as both of them have been living in New York. When they attempted to reach out to LGBTQ artists, they encountered many difficulties. To their dismay, they found that the LGBTQ community is limited to the nightlife, and that the artists' community was not conducive to individual expression. Instead, artists and creators face much pressure to conform to specific conventions.

In many aspects, Vietnamese culture is more conservative than American culture is. Homosexuality, transgenderism, and gender-variance are not socially accepted in mainstream Vietnamese society, where some view homosexuality as a social evil and a disease. Due to discrimination in workplaces, schools, and households, many cannot maintain a source of stable income and risk poverty and homelessness if they come out (USAID). In addition to social stigma, Vietnamese LGBTQ individuals still do not receive many legal protections. Though same-sex marriage decriminalized in 2014, it is still not legally recognized or protected (iSEE). Civil code passed in 2015 will allow transgender individuals are able to legally change their sex, but only if they have had sex-reassignment surgery – and these changes will not take effect until January of 2017 (iSEE).

Vanguard seeks to dismantle the social barriers place on LGBTQ individuals and redefine acceptable artforms. Inspired by queer Vietnamese activist Mimi Thi Nguyễn, Aiden and Nu believe that art should be used to empower the oppressed and arouse social change. Their zine offers a medium to circumvent the conventions of the artists' community. As well, they put LGBTQ artists first, and welcome those from any social background and experience level.

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another piece from the first issue, Aiden wrote about the etymology word “bê đê” and the influence of Western colonization on modern Vietnamese culture. “Bê đê” is a commonly used derogatory term for homosexuals, particularly effeminate homosexuals. But, as Aiden explains, many do not actually know the origins of this word.



After doing a bit of research, he found that the word comes from the French word for pederasty, “pédéraste”. The word was introduced to Việt Nam during the period of French colonization in the 19th and 20th centuries. During this time, it was common for French colonizers to engage in pederasty with underage Vietnamese boys. However, the French also saw homosexuality as a sin due to Roman Catholic beliefs. French colonizers observed homosexual activity in Việt Nam, and saw it as a “Vietnamese disease” which threatened to infect the French with syphilis. ([Homosexuality and transgenderism in Việt Nam, Natalie Newton](#))

After learning about the origins of the word “bê đê”, Aiden expresses humiliation as a Vietnamese person and as someone who identifies with the LGBTQ community. Vietnamese people unknowingly use a word from French colonization to spread the same homophobia and ignorance their colonizers believed in. Aiden draws the conclusion that Vietnamese people did not form their own ideas about gender expectations and homosexuality. Instead, outside forces have had a deep effect in shaping the homophobic and heteronormative notions of modern Vietnamese society.

Vietnamese LGBTQ individuals comprise a group that is silenced on so many levels, be it by Western cultural dominance or Vietnamese social norms. It is even hard for many to find safety and acceptance within Vietnamese LGBTQ spaces. *Vanguard* offers voice and community to these people. It also connects them to a larger, global community of diasporic Vietnamese people, who may feel alienated by predominantly white LGBTQ spaces in English-speaking countries.

Each issue of *Vanguard* features drawings, digital art, photographs, essays, poems, and short stories in either Vietnamese or English. Issue #3 is currently in the works, while issues #1 and #2 are available on [their website](#), which is available in English and Vietnamese.

There are three ways that you can support *Vanguard*:

- If you are Vietnamese, you can submit material to zine before its deadline. The deadline for Issue #3 has already past, so you must wait until submissions for Issue #4 are open. The submission guidelines are provided in English [here](#), and in Vietnamese [here](#).
- If you would like to buy the zine, it is available worldwide. Please contact vanguardzine@gmail.com for more information. Issue #3 is scheduled for release in July.
- Finally, if you would like to make a donation, you can do so here: <https://www.gofundme.com/vanguard-3>.

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