



March 2021

Empowering women since 1881

The Shareline

March is Women's History Month

In honor of Women's History Month branch members Helene Carr, Judy Harrison, Pat Macsata and Connie Rusk will bring us Intimate Profiles of Women Making History Now: Katie Porter, Deb Haaland, and Stacy Abrams. The profiles will be presented on Zoom for three (3)

Thursday evenings in March at 6:30 PM.

Click [HERE](#) to Register. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

- March 11th will be the profile of Congresswoman **Katie Porter**, by Pat Macsata.
- March 18th will be the profile of **Deb Haaland**, US Representative for New Mexico, by Connie Rusk.
- March 25th will be the profile of **Stacy Abrams**, founder of Fair Fight Action and former member of Georgia House of Representatives by Helene Carr and Judy Harrison.

Register once on Zoom to watch all three profiles, or just one or two. The choice is yours. You will not want to miss these intimate views into the lives and times of these amazing women making history NOW!

For more information: lindajslater2@gmail.com

AAUW Elections

In April and May 2021, AAUW members will vote on a slate of National AAUW officers and on proposed bylaw changes, recommended by the current AAUW Board of Directors and the AAUW Governance Committee that would eliminate the degree requirement for membership. The comment period is now closed. Voting begins April 7th. Below are some questions and rationale from members about open membership in AAUW. Thank you to Cherie Sorkin of the CA Online Branch for her compilation. Each member must vote their conscience on the issue, but it's good to have multiple perspective when making an objective decision.

1. AAUW has been this way for a long time. Why do we need to change now?

- AAUW has adapted itself to changing times before in order to continue to be relevant.
- Our continued relevance will be enhanced by eliminating barriers that limit who can participate in our mission of advancing equity for women and girls.
- Many corporate and foundation funders have clearly told us they are not willing or able, based on their own criteria, to fund organizations they believe have directly or indirectly discriminatory requirements or create barriers to participation in the work of the organization. Corporate and foundation funding is essential for national nonprofits these days. AAUW's membership dues support only a small percentage of our work.
- As part of the country's overall reckoning with systemic racism and inequality, much of which disproportionately affects women, it is time to recognize that our self-imposed barriers to participation are actually harmful, even if these barriers once may have been understood to serve as a well-intentioned incentive to specific achievement.

2.. Won't dropping the degree requirement end what is unique about our organization?

- The uniqueness of AAUW is its breadth of programming, research, policy and advocacy, fellowships & grants, and grassroots membership. Unfortunately, AAUW is also unique in its exclusionary membership requirement, which is particularly unfortunate for an organization advocating for equity.
- Having a degree does not make someone "like-minded"—We are like-minded in our support for advancing equity for women and girls.
- Having a degree does not make someone a better advocate for women or a better symbol of womanpower. Think Eleanor Roosevelt, Lilly Ledbetter, Malala, Greta Thunburg.

3. Don't we need to honor the legacy of our founding mothers by retaining the degree requirement?

- It has been 140 years since our founding back in an era when only a very few women were able to go to college or find meaningful employment after graduation. Today, women outpace men in earning degrees at all levels. Women also make up (pre-COVID) close to 1/2 of the total workforce in the U.S. But economic disparities and discrimination against women persist widely, despite our levels of education and participation in the workforce.
- AAUW can and should take pride in its past and present success in helping women attain higher education. The fully endowed Fellowships and Grants Fund will allow AAUW to be a leader in this area in perpetuity. Education is important and does make a difference. But it alone does not guarantee equal treatment or opportunities for women, something our founders cared about deeply. The battle to be fought is not just about education, but about equal treatment.

4. If the degree requirement is dropped, will branch membership increase?

- Membership levels in associations and other organizations are affected by many things. But, certainly our degree requirement is a barrier to joining for many women, and increasingly it is seen as elitist and discriminatory.
- A rush of younger members to join branches is unlikely due to the age of most of our current branch members. However, more women in older age ranges may be interested in joining once the barrier is removed. Fifty plus years ago, many women, particularly non-White women, did not have access to higher education. We all undoubtedly have friends in this category--women who are "just as smart," just as interested in equality for women" not to mention "just as much fun" who can't be members because of the current degree requirement.
- Many of us have been embarrassed by encouraging friends to join, only to find out they are not eligible because they do not have a degree.
- Our degree requirement has shut out women with diverse backgrounds and perspectives – who may inject new energy into the mission. Younger women, in particular, view the fact that we have a barrier to entry that disproportionately affects women of color and women of lower economic status as contrary to our mission.

5. Since college education is more accessible now, why do we need to worry about dropping the requirement?

- Getting a degree was a badge of honor for many of us, building our confidence and honing our intellectual skills, and also helping to prepare us for work outside the home. For some it was also a badge of honor that meant we could join AAUW, an organization

that helped keep us intellectually stimulated while we were still at home raising children. But, degrees are not the “badge of honor” they once were, and skyrocketing educational costs, childcare, elder care, transportation, working multiple jobs and language barriers are significant issues for women today that make it hard for women to get a degree. Also remember that as it stands today, many women have gotten their degree only to be burdened by two-thirds of the national college debt. Cost is a barrier many of us did not have “back then.”

- Today, there are more careers open to women- firefighters, police, pilots, entrepreneurs, artists, politicians, manufacturers, retail managers, etc. that do not require a degree. Education can come in many forms, including career technical education, on-the-job training. Women without degrees can certainly be just as passionate about advancing equity for women and girls as women with degrees.

6. Won't we have to change our name if we drop the degree requirement?

- First of all, we have had a variety of names during our 180-year history. Today AAUW is well-respected and high profile, particularly in its advocacy and research. We would not want to lose this position of recognition. Many other organizations use only initials and did not formally change their names when one of the original words in the name became out of favor or inappropriate. Think NAACP or YWCA. Changing our name is not the issue to focus on. Opening our membership to a broader group that will work in support of the mission is the issue.
- Also, the full name has not been applicable for a while. “American” – we have worked internationally for over 100 years. “Association” – member dues now only comprise 15-20% of revenues. “University” – in 2005, membership was extended to people with associate degrees. “W” – in 1987, membership was open to men.

Voting Begins April 7. For more information on this and other issues, candidates for National office and information on voting, click [HERE](#)

President's Message

Hello Fellow Branch Members. Welcome March 2021 and Women's History Month. This month highlights the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society. AAUW's mission to advance equity for women and girls through education, research and advocacy requires us, as members, to get involved. I have just three things to bring to your attention this month, and they are all action oriented.

1. Become a Two-minute Activist!

Take action on issues impacting women and girls by joining AAUW's Action Network. As a Two-Minute Activist, you will receive urgent email notices when your advocacy is needed most. AAUW will provide all the tools you need to call or send messages to your members of Congress, write letters to the editor for your local newspapers, contact your state legislators about pressing issues, and more. Unlike the majority of developed countries, the United States does not guarantee paid leave for illness or family care, or paid parental leave—a problem that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. [Ask Congress to pass](#) the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act (H.R. 804/S. 248), which would create a national self-funding paid family and medical leave insurance program. To sign up to be a Two-minute activist, click on the following link to get started right away. <https://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/public-policy/two-minute-activist/>

2. Subscribe to Equity Express

[Equity Network Events – AAUW : Empowering Women Since 1881](#)



Equity Express is a monthly AAUW Newsletter that highlights: Equity in the News; the upcoming Equity Network webinars; the Two-Minute Activist issues of importance; and a wonderful “Where are they Now” article about fellowship recipients from AAUW's past.

On Thursday, March 4th at 2:00 PM PST don't miss **In Conversation with Dr. Shanna Benjamin, author of *Half in Shadow: The Life and Legacy of Nellie Y. McKay***. AAUW fellowships alumna Shanna Benjamin, Ph.D., educator, and scholar, will discuss her upcoming book. Nellie McKay is best known as the co-editor of the *Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*. [Register for the webinar here](#).

3. Serve as H-CV Branch leader

H-CV is as vibrant as its leadership. We have benefited from the capable leadership of many of you over the years, and now is your opportunity to come to the Board as an officer or support person. Your expertise, commitment to AAUW, and loyalty to the branch make you a natural. The expectations are clear, the time commitment is minimal, and the rewards are priceless. Please contact Linda Slater (slaterl@sbcglobal.net) or Liz Bathgate (lbbathgate@att.net) about serving as an H-CV leader. We will all be glad you did.



HELP WANTED! The Tech Trek Committee has a vacancy!

If you believe in STEM for girls and love talking to teachers, principals, and seventh grade girls this is a job for you. We deal with four school districts: Castro Valley, Hayward, San Leandro and San Lorenzo and a total of nine middle schools. Each person has 2 or 3 schools to cover.

Skills needed are:

- Elementary technology skills: word processing, using Excel, Zoom and FaceTime conferencing, email and texting for starters.
- You will also help with fundraising activities.
- This year Tech Trek will be totally virtual with no in-person contact with the girls.

Our branch has opted out of selecting girls for this year. We are looking forward to recruiting girls for a residence camp in 2022 if all goes well. Normally we are busy recruiting and selecting from January to March. Once the girls are selected the chair of the committee takes on the responsibility of getting the girls' materials in order and to the correct people. Dee Butner is retiring. The remaining committee members are Linda Hendley, Helene Victor and Judy Harrison.

If you want more information and are interested in participating in this very rewarding activity, please email Judy Harrison: jharrison663@comcast.net.

In other Tech Trek news, we are sending three 2020 campers to the virtual camp this year: Laila Calvillo, Canyon Middle School; Sofia Cruz, Washington Manor Middle School; and Isabela Zaragoza, Ochoa Middle School.

Upcoming events



Drama Reading

When: March 11, 2021

Time: 1 – 3 PM - Zoom Link: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86777900289?pwd=RHpQMTRwL3hOdzdaaGlvY1dObWx5QT09>

Meeting ID: 867 7790 0289 / Passcode: **513942**

We will read THE CEMETERY CLUB. It is a comedy-drama concerning three friends who all live in the same Jewish community in Pittsburg. All are in their mid-to-late 50s and have become widows within the past few years. Once a week they gather to visit their husbands' graves and meet at a deli afterward to talk about their lives.

The plays will be on the front porch on Monday, March 8th. Liz



Book Group

When: Monday, March 15, 2021

Time: 2 PM - Zoom Link: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87661376295?pwd=MVVERGtJb043RW8zVVNzQ3VqT3NFUT09>

Meeting ID: 876 6137 6295 / Passcode: **296800**

The meeting on Monday, February 15th, was a lively presentation, by many members, of *Eat Joy: Comfort Food from 31 Celebrated Writers*. Members divided up the chapters to report and lead the discussion.

The March meeting will be the science fiction, suspense thriller *The Need* by Helen Phillips. Linda Myers will facilitate. As all meetings this past year, this one will also be via Zoom. Linda Slater will send out information prior to March 15th.

Please watch future issues of *The Shareline* for details about the spring meetings.

Thanks to all the members who are giving time and creativity to the book group during this pandemic year we're experiencing. We welcome all members of the branch to join our meetings.

Evening Book Group



When: Thursday, April 1, 2021

Time: 6:30 PM - Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86026989222?pwd=ZHI2ZzdYdWgxNXFRTHdLTGVxUmtLUT09>

Meeting ID: 860 2698 9222 / Passcode: 418082

Dial by Telephone to +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose) Enter Meeting ID & Passcode

Do not be an April Fool. Join our new Evening Book Group starting up April 1st. Our first book will be Brit Bennett's second novel *The Vanishing Half*. Looking well beyond issues of race, *The Vanishing Half* considers the lasting influence of the past as it shapes a person's decisions, desires, and expectations, and explores some of the multiple reasons and realms in which people sometimes feel pulled to live as something other than their origins. Nominated as Best Book of 2020 by New York Times and many others, it is purported to be Barrack Obama's favorite as well. Join us for an evening of discussion and companionship. A little wine will likely be thrown in too. Question? Email Linda Slater at slaterl@sbcglobal.net. See you there.

Public Policy News from National

by Kathi Harper, Public Policy Co-Chair AAUW California

On February 2, 2021, my co-chair Sue Miller and I met via Zoom with AAUW Public Policy Director Kate Nielsen and her assistant Robin Lucas, along with state public policy chairs across the nation, to get updates on changes to the public policy landscape with the new administration and Congress. Here is a summary of what we thought members would like to know:

1. AAUW Public Policy team sends notice of our priorities for the new year
 - a. Letter to the President, focused on
 - i. Women's Economic Security
 - ii. Education Access
 - b. Letter to 117th Congress
 - i. Passing the Paycheck Fairness Act
 - ii. Passing the Equity in Education Act

- c. Both found at aauw.org/resources/policy/documents
- 2. Also outlined Admin and Congressional Priorities
 - a. Biden-Harris in the 1st 2 weeks – 41 Exec orders
 - i. Covid, including student-debt relief and opening of schools
 - ii. Anti-discrimination, including removing barriers, DACA relief and a Task Force to reunite families
 - iii. Protecting women’s health at home and abroad, including access to abortions
 - b. Coming Legislation from Congress
 - i. Covid relief – 1.9 Trillion package
 - 1. Paid sick & family leave extended thru Sept (14 weeks)
 - 2. Increase min wage to \$15
 - 3. Assistance to those at risk of losing jobs &/or their homes
 - 4. \$3B to help women with food relief for their families
 - 5. \$25B emergency fund for child care providers
 - ii. Raise the Wage Act (\$15 by 2025) – reintroduced Thursday
 - iii. FAMILY Act (emphasis on access to paid leave) – end of this week
 - iv. Paycheck Fairness Act – HR7
 - 1. AAUW working on since 1997
 - 2. Reintroduced 2/1
 - 3. Strong bi-partisan support
 - 4. Prohibits retaliation for discussing pay
 - 5. Closes loopholes in Equal Pay Act
 - 6. Can’t use prior salary HX in hiring decisions
 - 7. Members can help: Toolkit at aauw.org/resources/policy/pfa-toolkit/



Member News

If you have news about a member who needs to be congratulated on a special occasion or accomplishment, who needs to be encouraged during illness or difficult time, or to be reminded we are here for him/her, please contact your corresponding secretary Barbara Jones at 538.0516 or by email at bb_jones@pacbell.net.

This is especially important during these pandemic times when we are isolated from our branch friends and not enjoying our usual meetings. Let’s show our friends know we care.

