



THE SPOKESWOMAN

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HONORING THE LEGACY OF RBG

On September 19th, a candlelight vigil was held at Central Park to honor the life of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Branch member Marty West, Professor Emerita of the UC Davis School of Law, spoke at the vigil and kindly shared her thoughts with us. The text below was also published as a special commentary in the Davis Enterprise on September 30th.

We are here tonight in Davis Central Park to celebrate the life of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She has always been a part of my professional life and our lives have intersected many times. I will miss her.

In fall 1971, when I was beginning my second year of law school at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ruth argued and won her first case in the US Supreme Court. The case was *Reed v. Reed*, and she convinced the Court to rule, for the first time, that a sex-based classification in a law violated the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. The Supreme Court ruled that Idaho's law automatically preferring a father over a mother as the executor of a child's estate was unconstitutional.

In the fall of 1972, when I was a third year law student, I went to a conference at Yale on how to create a law school course on Women and the Law. Ruth was there with her co-author Herma Hill Kay, law professor at UC Berkeley. They were the first ones to publish a law school textbook on Sex-Based Discrimination.

As the founder of the ACLU Women's Rights Project in New York in 1972, Ruth had been pleased with the result in *Reed v. Reed*, but really wanted the Court to find that a sex-based classification created a "suspect class," mandating the highest level of judicial review, the same level of review given to a classification based on race. So Ruth tried again.

In 1973, Ruth argued *Frontiero v. Richardson*, involving a woman in the Air Force and her right to claim dependent's benefits for her husband. The Court ruled in Ruth's favor, and she got four members of the Court to agree with her that a sex-based classification created a "suspect class" subject to the most stringent judicial review. However, she did not get that fifth vote needed to adopt the higher standard.

That same year, 1973, I published my student law review article on the sex-based classifications in the Social Security System. I cited a lower court case, then pending, brought by Ruth and the Women's Rights Project: *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*. That case challenged the denial of any father's benefits when a mother, covered by Social Security, died leaving young children. Ruth won the case before the Supreme Court in 1975, and the Court actually cited my law review article in the footnotes!

Ruth's genius was demonstrated by her decision in these two cases to pursue fact patterns where striking down the sex classifications would benefit men, not women. Arguing before nine men on the Supreme Court, she wanted to find examples they could possibly identify with. She continued to follow this policy throughout the 1970's.

In 1976 I was the treasurer of the Equal Rights Amendment campaign in Indiana. We were the last state to ratify the ERA before the time expired, leaving the amendment three states short. Our ERA campaign got financial and other support from the ACLU Women's Rights Project in New York, still headed by Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

In 1980 Ruth was appointed by President Carter to the federal Court of Appeals, joining the District of Columbia Circuit.

In 1982, I joined the faculty of the UC Davis Law School.

Justice Ginsburg took her seat on the U.S. Supreme Court in 1993.

In 1994 I received an invitation from Professor Herma Hill Kay, then Dean of the UC Berkeley Law School, to join her as co-author of the law school textbook, *Sex-Based Discrimination*. Herma had been producing new editions by herself ever since Ruth had gone on the federal bench in 1980, but Ruth had been urging her for some time to get help. At some point, Ruth sent me a note, thanking me for agreeing to be Herma's co-author. Herma and I published three more editions of the textbook over the next twelve years.

In 1996 Justice Ginsburg authored the Supreme Court opinion in *US v. Virginia*, finding that the exclusion of women from the Virginia Military Institute, a public university, violated the Equal Protection Clause. She relied on all those cases she had litigated in the 1970's overturning sex-based classifications and got as close as she could to "strict scrutiny" of a "suspect class." She labeled the level of judicial review as "skeptical scrutiny" for sex-based classifications. Five other Justices joined her majority opinion.

In 2006 I was in Washington, D.C. on sabbatical. I called up Justice Ginsburg's office and asked if I could sit in on a couple of oral arguments. I got to sit in the "family" section of the chambers, in Marty Ginsburg's seat, and after the first set of oral arguments, the guard escorted me up to Justice Ginsburg's office. We had a very pleasant fifteen-minute conversation. That was the last time I saw Justice Ginsburg.

I retired from the law school in 2000 and retired from teaching Gender and Law in Women's Studies in 2012.

But, of course, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg never retired.

In the 1970's, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was responsible for developing the law of constitutional Equal Protection which has benefited all of us ever since. We owe her our deepest gratitude.

REPORTS

A SPECIAL EVENT FOR TECH TREK

A successful drive-by celebration to honor Amber, Emma, Katie, and Maya – the four recipients of the Davis Branch 2020 Tech Trek scholarships – was held on September 3rd. Estelle secured the cooperation of her neighbors in the Plum Lane cul de sac and set up a table with food and the Trekkers' gift baskets. The girls and their parents and several siblings arrived masked and stood in their small family groups as Shahla and Gail welcomed them.

Gail introduced each one in turn and we (Shahla, Estelle, Rhonda, Gail, Verena and Ray, Leslie and Margo, Ramona, Laleh, Karen, and Juliana) vigorously applauded and listened to each talk a bit about how they have enjoyed summer and school.

Rhonda took pictures and offered suggestions for using their journals: ‘As potential scientists and mathematicians, they could practice observing and recording what they notice.’ Then the girls and family were invited to the table for food and drink goodies (with social distancing). After they dispersed, so did we, thanking Estelle, Gail, and Rhonda for all their work.



BOOK CLUB September 12TH



We were pleased to have several Woodland AAUW members join us to hear a special speaker, Dorothea Bonneau, author of “Once in a Blood Moon”. Verena introduced her as a former writer for the Enterprise and Davis teacher. The book received a 2020 American Fiction Award in the category of African American fiction.

The idea for the book came 40 years ago, and Ms. Bonneau did research for it for fifteen years. She had to travel to several states and countries. The historical facts which drove the writing were further explained at the end of her presentation. This story was very personal for her. She showed us slides of

old pictures and documents and explained that one question after another led to the research.

The main character is Alexandra, a strong young woman who matured quickly as her circumstances changed from daughter of a rich plantation mistress to slave. As her life changed, she met many challenges and people, including a young white orphan indentured boy. They helped each other, but the readers were left to wonder if those two would ever succeed in getting through all their life experiences.

The discussion of her research results enriched the background of her story: the history of growing rice, the term “maroon” (those who escaped slavery and lived in communities outside of plantations), the treatment of slaves by southern owners versus by freed slaves, indentured servants, African and island Blacks, the Lumbi, the Diola, and the importance of lace-making and music. That history could be a separate fascinating presentation.

After we thanked her, she asked us to write a review of her book on Amazon. All participating enjoyed the book. Some suggested that the story be adapted for a screenplay or movie.

A recording of the book group discussion is available at:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/mQ42N-
qdLnl_2FxsO65FIeh97Ful1MB73oL3rQ550nKR5tp3JlxvC6m7mprcsvI6.FzsoRdQ
Bxs_oYxbJ](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/mQ42N-
qdLnl_2FxsO65FIeh97Ful1MB73oL3rQ550nKR5tp3JlxvC6m7mprcsvI6.FzsoRdQ
Bxs_oYxbJ)

Access Passcode: V#YbwQ5E

The next book for the club is by Stacey Abrams, “Our Time Is Now”, to be discussed on October 10 at 9am on Zoom. A Zoom invitation was sent to members on October 6th. Please check your e-mail.

SEPTEMBER CELEBRATE THE 19TH

On September 19, Solmaz spoke to us about Contact Tracing for COVID-19. She started her presentation after we had a brief discussion to reflect on the contributions of RBG, who died the previous day. Our branch president, Shahla, also introduced a guest from State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board), Brianna St. Pierre

who was one of the professional women at the 2019 TechTrek professional women's night as a professional woman geologist working in agriculture and landfills.

Solmaz works as a Water Resource Control Engineer at Water Board. She received her PhD in Civil and Environmental Engineering. She has a background in ecotoxicology through her PhD research and is experienced and interested in public health. Following graduation, Solmaz worked in Boston for a Science and Engineering Consulting company. She then moved to California and started to work for State Water Board.

While holding her position as a Water Resource Control Engineer, Solmaz volunteered for Contact Tracing to help stop the spread of the novel coronavirus and break the COVID-19 chain of infection. Before this virus, the public knew little about Contact Tracing, although Department of Public Health had been using the Contact Tracing technique to limit transmission of other infectious diseases. Since COVID-19 is highly contagious, this extent of effort for Contact Tracing was unprecedented and its form has changed from traditional to digital.

As a Contact Tracer, Solmaz interviews COVID-19 positive cases, asking for their recent contacts. She asks the patients to isolate themselves, provides education regarding isolation and the health orders. She also checks in with their health and living conditions and asks if they need any social support to cope with their situation. She then initiates calls with the identified contacts to notify them about their possible exposure to COVID-19, asking them to self-quarantine, providing them education, and encouraging them to get tested. She makes follow-up calls to all to see how they are feeling and how the quarantine days at home have been for them.

As a Contact Tracer, it is important to establish a rapport with the cases and contacts, be a strong communicator, and show empathy and compassion, Solmaz said. Solmaz told us that she enjoyed the experience and satisfaction coming from serving the public and society, although Contact Tracing could be emotionally draining at times. Contact Tracers need to stay fresh, friendly, and patient.

We thanked Solmaz after she answered questions. New member, Helen Thompson, will also be trained to do Contact Tracing. It was very informative.

UNA OCTOBER UPDATES

UNICEF campaign during October and beyond

A decades-long tradition of Davis schoolchildren Trick-or-Treating for UNICEF and community members donating funds to help children around the world under the UNA chapter's auspices continues this year in a modified form. UNICEF has created a way to donate into a virtual orange box online, but community members may prefer to donate by check. Checks may be mailed to Verena Borton, 101 E. 7th St., Davis, CA 95616 or directly for deposit to the designated bank account: UNICEF (UNA-USA Account), First Northern Bank, 434 Second St., Davis, CA 95616. For details about virtual donations contact Verena at verenaborton@gmail.com

United Nations Day Proclamation by Davis City Council October 6

At its October 6 meeting the Davis City Council presented a Proclamation celebrating United Nations Day (UN 75) and Support UNICEF Week, as has been done for many years – but this time without a delegation of Trick-or-Treaters in costume and UNA members in attendance. Read the text of the impressive Proclamation on the AAUW website at: aauwdavis.org

Virtual United Nations Day Celebration on October 22 at 6 p.m.

You are invited to join the Sacramento and Davis UNA chapters for a commemoration of the United Nations' 75th anniversary on October 22. The occasion will feature a short documentary about David Lubin, a Sacramentan whose historic contributions to world peace are largely unknown although the concept for the League of Nations originated with him. Lubin's focus on international cooperation to solve global issues was a radical idea at the time but eventually helped create the United Nations. The video will be followed by a live Q&A session with Morton Satin, a retired executive of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the world's foremost expert on David Lubin. Please contact Verena at verenaborton@gmail.com for a flyer and details on how to register for the free event.

Virtual United Nations Day via GEOS on October 23 at 9 a.m.

UNA-USA will present this program through the free Global Engagement Online Series (GEOS) to reflect on the past 75 years since the UN's creation in 1945, to celebrate the accomplishments of the present and to look forward to progress toward a better and brighter future for everyone, everywhere. Featured speakers include Rachel Pittman, Executive Director of UNA-USA, Paula Boland, UNA-USA National Council Chairperson and Executive Director of UNA-NCA, Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, World Health Organization's Head of Emerging Diseases Unit and Covid-19 Technical Lead, and Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth. Please register here: <https://unausa.org/event/un-day-geos/> (you do not have to be a UNA member).

TAKE ACTION!

AAUW is helping to ensure that every American has the opportunity to cast their ballot in an informed way. We can do our part by being involved in voter access, getting out the vote, and voter education. For suggestions on how to take action, go to: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/get-involved-in-elections/>

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

The Davis Branch Board will be contacting members over the next few months to gather information for member biographical sketches. Our members have interesting backgrounds, skills, and talents – let's share!

CALENDAR

October 10 - 9 am, Zoom Book Group Meeting, "Our Time Is Now" by Stacey Abrams

October 10 and 24 – AAUW CA Fund Zoom Webinars from 1 pm to 3 pm featuring California Fellows and Grant Recipients; register [ONLINE](#).

October 11 – 4 pm, [Virtual Sahaya Walks](#).

October 13 - 10 am, STEM Film: *Picture a Scientist: Bringing Gender Equity in Science to the Big Screen* (recommended for 14 years and older)

October 18 - 4 pm, Zoom Celebrate the 19th – Member Forum

Link for [AAUW California October events](#)

Link for [upcoming AAUW webinars and recordings of past webinars](#)

BE AS ACTIVE AS YOU CAN, BUT STAY A MEMBER.