

# THE SPOKESWOMAN



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## JULY 2021 CALENDAR

- **Thursday, July 8th, 7 pm** - Board Meeting (Zoom)
- **Saturday, July 10th** - book group (Zoom) discussion of *Of Salt and Women* by Gabriela Garcia
- **Saturday, July 10th, 4:30-6 p.m.** - UNA discussion on Clean Water and Sanitation, Sustainable Development Goal #6
- **Monday, July 19th, 5:30 pm** - Celebrate the 19th (Zoom); Topic: Equity for Women in Sports
- **Saturday, August 7th, 9 a.m.** - Annual Planning Retreat (in person), details to follow by email

## Board Installation Report

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, members gathered at Estelle's home for an in-person outdoor gathering to install the 2021-22 Davis branch board:

**Executive Officer:** Shahla Farahnak

**Secretary:** Leslie Rubin

**Finance Officer:** Gail Johnson

**Board Members-at-Large:**

Estelle Shiroma

Rhonda Reed

Verena Borton

Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt

Laleh Rastegarzadeh

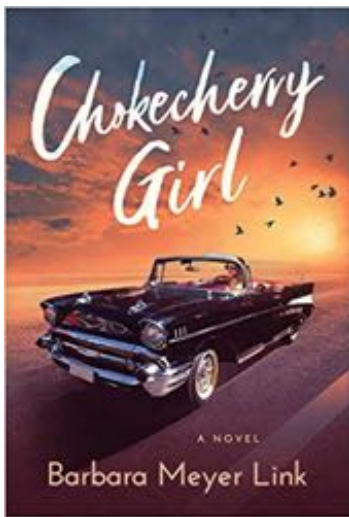
Rhonda, past President of many years and the “institutional memory” of the branch, installed the Board using the creative theme of indigenous birds of Australia. Rhonda travels to Australia often to visit her daughter and granddaughters. She recognized each board member by describing their contributions and the traits of a particular bird. Each board member was then gifted with a beautiful reusable shopping bag, much to everyone's delight.

One of the highlights of the gathering was meeting Zoe, one of our two student interns, in person. As the installation was held during finals week at UCD, Alexandra was not able to join us. Both interns were recognized by Leslie, on behalf of the branch, for their hard work and dedication.

The Board looks forward to a productive year in serving our branch and carrying out AAUW's mission.



## Report from Book Group Meeting - June 12th



Once again we had the good fortune of being joined by the author of the book we gathered to discuss, "*Chokecherry Girl*" by Barbara Link. The connection was made by our member Dorothea Bonneau, author of "*Once in a Blood Moon*," our book choice last September.

Dorothea introduced Barbara to Estelle, Juliana, Verena, and Barbara Durst. (Rhonda, Stephanie and Heidi from the Woodland branch joined later), mentioning that Barbara grew up in a small town in Montana that gave her many of the ideas for scenes described in "*Chokecherry Girl*," although the book is fiction. Dorothea and Barbara, who now lives in Sacramento, met in various writers' groups in our region, including the Blue Moon Literary and Art Review published in Davis. Barbara received her MA in creative writing from Mills College in Oakland. Her powerful memoir, "*Blue Shy*," was awarded first prize in the Sacramento Friends of the Library contest, and excerpts have been published in *Kaleidoscope* and *American River Review*. She is also a co-author of *Coffee and Ink*, a manual for writing groups. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in numerous literary magazines, and in 2008 she received the Bazzanella Prize at Sacramento State University for graduate fiction. KVPR, a National Public Radio affiliate, has aired four of her short stories on *Valley Writers Read*. Barbara thanked us for the invitation and felt it was a great compliment to have her book read and discussed by the AAUW Book Group.

The discussion about "*Chokecherry Girl*" centered on small towns and the '50s as well as the stories focused on three main characters: Bobbi Vernon, a teenager who is given the name "Chokecherry Girl" by basketball star Pretty Weasel, Patsy Olson who operates the beauty salon, and Mary Agnes Lone Hill, an alcoholic Crow Indian who longs to end her long estrangement from her son, Pretty Weasel. Barbara got the seed of inspiration for this story through recollecting an experience she had in second grade when a Native American boy came into her classroom without shoes despite the cold weather. He was subsequently sent away to an Indian boarding school and she never saw him again. Mary Agnes, one of the main characters in "*Chokecherry Girl*," likewise

had been sent far away at a young age to an Indian boarding school, cut off from her family and her culture.

Juliana asked Barbara why she had included the molestation sequence between a teacher and student in such detail, and what its purpose was. The author explained that this book was based on real events that she knew of. "Molestation happens, and needs to be brought to light." In the '50s, small town childhood had many hidden events. It was a repressive time, and children interacted with great interest in cars and friendships. They lived a life of imagination (no TV) and were somewhat fearless, off on their own. Their independence was quite different from today.

The author's own life experiences were inspirational for the book. Learning how to handle oneself is often missing in today's society, with a loss of the freedom of earlier generations when children had to learn much about life on their own.

Like Dorothea, Barbara also did much research about the cultural environment of the setting of the novel. The Indian Schools attempted to indoctrinate indigenous children to discard their heritage and become assimilated into white culture. Hundreds of thousands of Native American children in Canada and the U.S. were forced into the boarding schools. They were open from the late 1800s until the '70s, then closed. Barbara interviewed one woman who was taught at an Indian School, and she had nothing but painful, unspeakable memories. We briefly discussed the recent discovery of human remains at some of those historic school locations.

The group pointed out that, just as in "*The Night Watchman*," the strict Palmer method of handwriting was mentioned as a distinguishing feature of the schooling in the boarding schools. Writing by hand connects something more than does typing. It was striking that the teenagers in Bobbi's circle had no interest in academics at all, while toward the end of the novel Mary Agnes, who had had limited access to education, reveals a book of stories she has painstakingly researched in the library and handwritten for Pretty Weasel over a long period of time.

Verena shared that she and her husband had attended graduate school at Montana State in the 60s and during those years had contact with both the Crow and the neighboring Northern Cheyenne tribes, which made the story resonate for her. She also described the stark contrast between the harsh and cruel conditions at the Indian boarding schools and the caring,

nurturing atmosphere at the boarding school in the Netherlands where her parents taught refugee children whose parents had deliberately sent them away to be safe from the Nazis during the years leading up to WWII.

Readers enjoyed the book's cover, and Barbara explained how she had to convince the publisher to show the correct car to match the story, a 1957 black Chevy convertible. Verena pointed out that she grew up in a Dutch town where only the two doctors had cars, so the fascination with cars definitely was not part of her memory of the '50s.

Dorothea asked Barbara what things she found in her research. She answered "mostly about Indian culture". She enjoyed discovering various myths such as Coyote, the Trickster. These were represented differently within other tribes. She also discovered that war bonnets have one eagle feather. Indian language is sophisticated and meaningful, with many different words for one concept; for instance there are thirty different words describing snow.

Barbara mentioned her website and being challenged to have several characters brought together in a story line. There is/was a taboo about mixed racial relationships. Her next book develops several of the same characters (Leo, Bobbi, Dolores Wears Red). She is turning insight into inspiration.

Verena asked about the frequently coarse adult language. Was that part of her upbringing? Barbara said no, but she could hear it and she exaggerated it. The prevalence of beer was real. There was little the teens could do, and beer was easy to get. Many of these stories are based on her small town experience. The Indians had their own bar and did much drinking. There were lots of car accidents because of cruising.

In answer to several questions:

The town created community in women's circles with cooking, sewing, gossip, and knowledge. The beauty salon operator, Patsy in this novel, tended always to be a central figure in small towns, more or less a clearing house for gossip as well as occasionally a helpful friend to solve conflicts. Barbara's small town friends gave feedback, having read the book to see if each was mentioned. There was still no diversity in Barbara's hometown. "I am not Native American, so I wrote carefully. But I should be able to write fiction. For example, 'Memoir of a Geisha' was written by a man.

Estelle, who has worked for two Alaska native corporations, noted that one of the struggles of native American tribes is that once tribal members get educated, they often don't return to their native lands where they could be influential in helping to improve the lives of their members.

Stephanie, Heidi, and Rhonda joined late, and commented about Louise Erdrich's writing; reservation schools being different today; more stories being written about Indian culture. Dorothea mentioned "Seven Arrows" and mused that culture will come back to Native values. The Wintun tribe built the theater at Esparto High School and they are buying land for agriculture.

Barbara was thanked for her sharing with us and we told her we were looking forward to part two of the characters.

The August reading selection is *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson. The book group will be meeting by Zoom on Saturday, August 14th at 9 am. The Zoom invitation will be sent by e-mail and all are welcome to join the discussion.

## June 2021 Celebrate the 19th Recap



On June 19th, Shahla, Estelle, Helen, Verena, Stephanie and Juliana were pleased to hear from Eva Wynn (President of the AAUW UCD student organization), Alexandra Vigil (UCD intern), and Zoe Boomershine (UCD intern) about their participation in the virtual National Conference for Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) from Washington, DC, May 25-26.

The event featured speakers, panels, and workshops. The students were impressed with the organization and usefulness of the workshops, as well as the caliber of the speakers and panels. They were each inspired by their separate workshop choices.

The keynote speaker was Brittney Cooper who spoke about her book *“Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower.”* Zoe was inspired by the financial independence and salary negotiations discussed at the conference and offered online on Tuesdays. The knowledge was very beneficial. Shahla and Helen gave examples of using different kinds of leverage to obtain jobs. Zoe learned to write accomplishment statements and how to negotiate benefits, not just salary.

Shahla advised the students to NOT use the following lead-in statement: “I know you have many qualified applicants...”. Just put yourself forward. Estelle told us that she learned to negotiate her salary and benefits late in her career because she did not have the confidence or skills to do so earlier. She is an advocate of AAUW programs such as Start Smart and Work Smart.

Alexandra shared with the group she was challenged to further consider the path she believed she should take. Helen agreed that just because you had a particular major, you didn’t have to limit yourself or work at that no matter what. She agreed it was okay to get inspired and rethink a career. Verena added that, in contrast to formerly rigid career choices, nowadays it is perfectly acceptable to change direction and choose another path, because life is not as predictable as we once considered it to be.

Alexandra told us the speakers agreed that students need not enter grad school immediately, but encouraged them to work and try things first. Eva joined from Petaluma, agreeing that they said to start a career and change to another field and see how you move through both. Estelle noted that she switched majors multiple times from speech pathology to nursing, nutrition, and finally to zoology that led to graduate school in environmental science and engineering. Along the way, she met mentors who provided opportunities that shaped her academic and professional path. It certainly was not linear. College gives you thinking and creative skills that are resources for becoming adept to change.

Eva also got inspired to map out a new set of possibilities. Professional development allows you to communicate your skills across several fields and consider what values you have. Developing interpersonal skills encourages your financial, social, and creative aspects. One of the workshops posed the question: What does empathy mean to you? Eva thought of careers for women in nonprofits, working in different areas and exploring variability in a particular field. What skills would she need to be a valuable collaborator, a member of a team? How could she facilitate creativity so all are heard?

Alexandra was excited to demonstrate skills from a wide range of experiences - to be empathetic to all, ensuring their importance at “having a seat at the table”. Zoe enjoyed the same panel and heard that it was important to recognize your skills, thinking about how GOOD they were versus LIKING those skills. If you are good at organizing, there’s a possible burnout, but the interpersonal relations and helping and reaching others are so important.

Shahla thanked the students for their feedback and commented about their inspiration to us. Eva also pointed out that they met with other students at this conference and used the chat room to communicate later with each other through “LinkedIn” and “Instagram”. They are still continuing to network. Several speakers also gave their online addresses. Zoe thought there were about 200 women on panels, and 300 or so in the meetings. California was the most represented state.

Helen said that for a business degree, the curriculum is set up to help students get jobs, by practicing interviewing, writing resumes, and meeting potential employers. The same should be set up for other majors, like science and the arts. She told us that she changed jobs and direction also, getting another degree later in life. It also helps to have a job coach or counselor.



And the students' plans? Alexandra will continue through summer with AAUW while finishing classes at UCD and searching for work. Lucky for our branch, Zoe will continue with us during her last year at UCD. Eva will be studying in South Korea beginning in September, focusing generally on environmental science, looking at policies, diplomacy, and global situations. Shahla advised that people can use their skills in other countries. Take your passion there and make yourself unique and setting yourself apart. Connect to real life with your skills. Verena added: Everything you learn will benefit you sooner or later. It's never wasted and you can draw upon it.

Shahla asked the students if they had ideas about how AAUW can keep in contact and offer help with the students and other potential members (besides being able to attend this conference). Alexandra has been talking with Leslie and working on the welcome packet. Mentorships would help students, as well as continuing the Student Chapter. Lobby Day was great, we hope students will become more involved. Stephanie suggested that legislative bills that students could be passionate about should be selected beforehand because more time than available this year is needed to prepare for Lobby Day. Getting together with other colleges would be rewarding. Zoe agreed with those ideas, and added that we might have joint events, like with International House, Think Pink, etc. as well as using social media more.

Estelle reminded us about the Title IX movie, shown at her home, with the great discussion afterward where students brought up actual instances of non-equity and harassment. We can keep that experience in mind until we can meet in person again.

\*A note on our Celebrate the NineTEAnth tea tasting event: Due to the lockdown in Taiwan, the teas were not available in time. Luckily, they are currently en route. Keep an eye posted for information on this event!

## UNA Updates

### Highlights from the national **UNA-USA Virtual Week of Action June 6-11:**

- Many hours of informative and inspiring panel discussions and lectures by leading experts from the UN, from the U.S. government (including **U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield**) and from worldwide NGOs – with a notable **emphasis on youth**.
- **Advocacy training and meeting with legislators** from 48 states (missing Wyoming and South Dakota), DC and Puerto Rico to illustrate the importance of a **strong and constructive U.S.- UN relationship**; 45 CA UNA members (two from Davis chapter) advocated with **Senator Dianne Feinstein's staff** for full funding for the UN as well as pleas for support for specific UN organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNESCO, and got positive feedback; we had already had a similar advocacy meeting with Senator Alex Padilla's staff in May; unfortunately **Congressman Garamendi's office did not give us a time slot** this year (possibly because so few of our members from CA-3 had made themselves available for an advocacy meeting).
- Vast opportunities for **networking** among attendees.
- **Competitive demonstrations** of short presentations showing effective action projects in support of achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

### Other points of interest:

- Observance of **Charter Day**, commemorating the signing of the UN Charter on June 26, 1945 in San Francisco. The San Francisco UNA chapter and the region organized an impressive series of virtual events which some of us unfortunately were unable to access.
- Without much publicity, **UN Secretary General António Guterres was elected to a second five year term**, having been nominated by Portugal. Others, including several women, including a 34-year old UN staffer, considered themselves running, but since they did not get a country to endorse their candidacy, their efforts came to

nothing. It was generally lamented that since the founding of the UN, **there has never been a woman elected Secretary General.** On a positive note, Mr. Guterres announced that he would keep **Amina Mohammed on as Deputy Secretary General.**

- **The UN General Assembly voted to elect five new nonpermanent members to the 15-member UN Security Council** for two-year terms. Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates garnered the support of a two-thirds majority to join the Council.
- The Marin UNA chapter will be hosting the next free virtual webinar in their series on the Sustainable Development Goals on **Saturday, July 10 from 4:30 - 6 p.m. The topic is Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG #6.** To register, please contact:  
Bonnie Hunter, UNA Marin Chapter  
<[unamarinchapter@gmail.com](mailto:unamarinchapter@gmail.com)>
- The theme for the 2021 UN Day observance has been announced: ***Creating a Blueprint for a Better Tomorrow.*** UNA-USA will hold a national virtual event on October 25 open to all. The Davis UNA chapter hopes to be able to have an in-person event at International House on the actual 77th anniversary of the United Nations, October 24.

## UNA Webinar: Migrant Women's Journey Across Borders

On June 18 Verena, Shahla, Laleh, Estelle, and Juliana joined Sacramento UNA members for a virtual presentation by activist speakers discussing their work helping women and children migrants seeking safety in the U.S. Scarlett Bustas, Vice-President of Community for Peace, was the moderator and introduced each speaker.

Sally Weeks works with ProBAR, an organization providing legal services for unaccompanied children at the southern border on a Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project. She explained some of the legal details involved when children are put into shelters. It was instructive to hear from someone who has actually worked in this area (both geographically and logistically), giving a vivid impression far beyond what we generally hear on the news.

Sister Norma Pimentel is the Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. Women are forced to leave their country due to abuse, abandonment, gang extortions and very real danger for children who are usually left with other relatives, but who still can be threatened, raped, beaten, or forced to travel on their own. Sister Norma emphasized that the mothers do NOT want to leave their children, but are forced into decisions that break up the family. Whether the mothers leave or stay, they are in danger and so are their children. The Charities have organized humanitarian shelters, providing food and basic necessities. The Trump administration's policy kept migrants at the border for a minimum of 3 months; many end up languishing far longer. They live in thin tents by the river, where rats run rampant. How can we help? More shelters are needed. Our presence by their side shows we care and honor their humanity. Sister Norma spoke passionately and again it was significant to hear from someone who has been personally involved for quite some time in reaching out with physical and emotional care to fill the needs of migrants in desperate situations. Website: [www.catholiccharitiesrgv.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesrgv.org)

Jesse deHaven is an attorney and advocate focusing on asylum-seeking families and people in migration detention. It is important to remember that asylum is an international right. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." NorCal Resist.org is an organization with volunteers who will help with rental assistance,

transportation to ICE appointments, translation, grocery shopping, etc. This is a local opportunity to help. For details, visit [www.norcalresist.org](http://www.norcalresist.org)

Scarlett Bustas moderated a lively question and answer session where the speakers gave more information and clarification on issues connected to migrants and asylum seekers. The Sacramento UN Women group is to be commended for having gathered three very knowledgeable and passionate speakers to deal with such an important topic that sometimes is confused through misinformation.

***Migrant Womens' Journey Across Borders***  
Panelists will discuss why women leave their home countries, what happens to them once they get here, and what we can do.

When: Friday, June 18, 6pm-7pm  
To register for event [CLICK HERE](#) or go to <http://unasacramento.org/events/women>



**SPEAKERS**

 <b>Jessie Bellaren</b> Attorney and advocate focusing on asylum seeking families and people in migration detention.	 <b>Sister Norma</b> Executive Director, Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.	 <b>Sally Weeks</b> Provides legal services for unaccompanied children at the southern border.
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SCAN ME

## AAUW Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Webinar

On June 17, AAUW offered a webinar about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The purpose was to encourage branches to use the TOOLKIT from the website for discussions. There are plug-in programs that offer activities to enhance learning. Representatives who presented were Shannon Wolf, Melissa Ingram, Constance Hope, and Jesse Ohrenberger. They offered these definitions: Diversity means variety, anything different; Inclusion means belonging; Equality is the state of being equal (same as); Equity is justice according to natural law. There was also a discussion of micro aggression, which is unconscious or unintentional small insults. Two videos are available plus varied activities. Let the Board know if this subject interests you as a future program.

## AAUW CA and National Updates

### AAUW New Pilot Program: STEMEd for Girls

AAUW National has begun a new pilot program designed to encourage high school girls to pursue education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). With a particular focus on girls of color, *AAUW STEMEd for Girls* seeks to raise awareness, bolster confidence and expose students to the enormous and fulfilling career potential in these fields.

*AAUW STEMEd for Girls* will pilot this summer as a series of free virtual interactive workshops that aims to debunk myths about pursuing and working in STEM fields. Girls will participate in collaborative learning and STEM-based problem solving and will develop personalized pathways to potentially pursue STEM majors and STEM careers. STEM Ambassadors, accomplished AAUW fellowships and grants alumnae and STEM experts, will facilitate discussions, offer guidance and mentorship and encourage parents and caregivers to support their daughters' education and career journeys.

Click [HERE](#) for the schedule and more information on the program.

### AAUW CA New Marketing Initiatives

*From AAUW CA:*

We have embraced the goal of increasing AAUW's visibility and reach (Marketing!) which should help branches grow (Membership!). The Board of Directors backed it up by approving the hiring of a professional marketing firm to guide our efforts. Now, as a result of their research and recommendations, we have a roadmap to M&Ms!

Four workgroups have been designed to implement the marketing consultants' recommendations under the overall guidance of Sandi Gabe, President-Elect.

1. Working Age Recruitment Workgroup – Will investigate methods to attract the younger population with messages and content that resonate with their needs and interests. Chair: Crystal Stebbins

2. Retirement Age Recruitment Workgroup – Will develop strategies to engage individuals who are at or approaching retirement age. Chair: Sharyn Siebert
3. University and Organization Collaboration Workgroup – Will leverage the College/University program to expose more college students to AAUW and investigate other organizations for collaborative programs. Chair: Michelle Galaz-Miller
4. Social Media Workgroup – Will expand the strategic use of social media platforms to engage different populations with relevant messaging. Chair: Sandi Gabe

State leadership will also continue its focus on retooling Tech Trek to rocket it into the future. This effort began in February with the creation of five workgroups to assess changes suggested by Tech Trek stakeholders. Overall guidance is provided by Tracey Clark, Communications Committee Chair.

- Administration Workgroup - Tasked with evaluating the organization's overall structure including roles and responsibilities at the state and camp level. Chair: Sandi Gabe
- Camps and Campers Workgroup - Charged with studying the optimum camp structure and target group for Tech Trek. Chair: Marie Wolbach
- Finance Workgroup - Responsible for exploring ways to simplify financial processes for camps and branches. Chair: Alice Hill
- Marketing and Evaluation Workgroup - Responsible for developing strategies to promote Tech Trek to the public and design methods to measure and evaluate its effectiveness. Chair: Rebecca Jennings
- Curriculum Workgroup - Charged with reviewing Tech Trek's curriculum and learning experiences to assure alignment with current trends. Chair: Diane Coventry



**NCCWSL Suggested Reading List**

AAUW Davis intern Zoë Boomershine formatted a list of the suggested reading from the NCCWSL conference in May. Thank you, Zoë!



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