

FEBRUARY 2023

# THE SPOKESWOMAN

<https://davis-ca.aauw.net>

## The New Year Begins with a Bang!

*Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, President*

Through all the New Year's storms, strong winds, and heavy downpours, AAUW kept on track starting with a statewide Tech Trek Planning Committee meeting, a statewide Public Policy Committee meeting, and our local board meeting.

Locally, we moved right into the Book Group gathering on the second Saturday of the month with a lively discussion of Geraldine Brooks' book, "Horse." Verena Borton led the discussion with thoughtful questions and added a delightful comparison incorporating her personal passion for weaving with the way events in the book were woven together.

At our Celebrate the 19th gathering, Marti Abbott shared her history and experiences with the Chispa program in Honduras. She spoke passionately about the positive impacts that the Chispa program has had in the lives of school children, their teachers, and their communities. Marti shared her presentation notes with us in this month's Spokeswoman because we were so impressed and felt that everyone should have the opportunity to learn about this incredible program. Even if you don't travel to Honduras to participate with the

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## February Calendar

Thursday, February 9 at 7 pm: Board meeting

Saturday, February 11 at 9 am: Book Group

Saturday, February 11, 10 am to noon: Gov Trek Session 2, Women's Leadership & Political Participation (check link in article for recording)

Friday, February 17, 7 am - 3 pm UNA Global Engagement Summit

Sunday, February 19, 4 pm: Celebrate the 19th

Saturday, February 25: 10 am to noon: Gov Trek Session 3, Ready, Set, \*Live\*! Campaigning 101

Monday, February 28: Lobby Day Registration Deadline

## The New Year Begins with a Bang! Continued

program, there are many ways that you can gather appropriate books for the program. The [CHISPA](#) and [WBUR](#) websites are inspiring and worth exploring.

The following evening on January 20, the AAUW@UCD students kicked off the Winter Quarter with a special event featuring branch member Marty West, Professor of Law Emerita. The discussion included the Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v Wade, the importance of Title IX for women, and workplace discrimination against women. It was a pleasant and informative evening with a combined group of AAUW Davis branch members and AAUW UCD student organization members and friends.

At the end of January, the Capital Counties Interbranch Council (IBC) hosted the annual gathering, which prior to Covid, was known as the Annual Fund Luncheon. A great deal of work and organization goes into making this event possible. To begin with, the 39 Grant and Fellow recipients each create a 10 to 15 minute video in which they give a brief overview of their research project. These introductory videos are organized into three different zoom programs presented on three different days for a total of six or more hours of research presentations. A number of us listen to the presentations and individually select our top choices that we think the Interbranch members would be most interested in learning about. Rhonda helped determine the final selections and sent invitations to the selected researchers asking them to present at the IBC meeting on the 28th of January. Because these are very active young women, it can be a challenge to coordinate their schedules with the planned IBC meeting, and additional invitations are necessary to secure selected presenters.

And, of course, I have to put a plug in for the Lobby Day events. The Public Policy Committee extended the registration to February 28 so there is time for you to try it out, make the leap, learn about legislation that AAUW supports and speak up and advocate for those bills with your state legislators or staff members. Click [HERE](#) to complete the survey and register.

Attend the March 20th mandatory webinar from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Honestly, you would not be prepared without this webinar. Expect to meet with your assigned team members via Zoom and prepare your advocacy notes for upcoming meetings with state legislators or members of their staff. Last year I was assigned to AAUW members from Napa. We had a ball getting to know each other and planning out how we wanted to advocate for the bills. I became team leader and did the initial introduction and the three other team members selected the bill that they were most passionate about and set out key points to support their advocacy. It was wonderful, seeing and hearing women step up as a team to speak with their legislators.

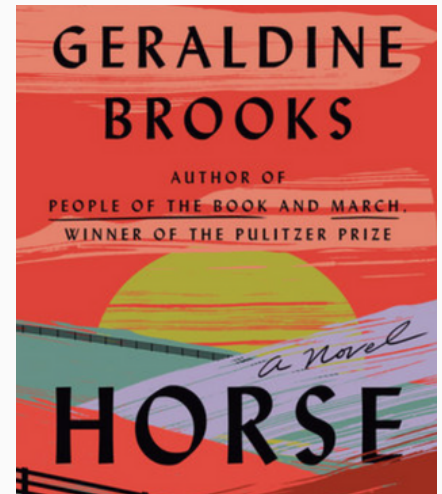
We are off to a good year.

# Recap of January 14 Book Group Meeting

*Verena Borton*

Estelle Shiroma, Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Helen Thompson, Karen Lemcke, Barbara Durst, Carolyn Van Hoecke, Rhonda Reed and Juliana Wells met on January 14 for a discussion, led by Verena Borton, of Geraldine Brooks' novel "Horse."

Although a fictional account, the book is largely based on fact, covering history dating to the mid 19th and mid 20th centuries right up to the present with mention of the beginning of the pandemic. Brooks clearly had done extensive research. When asked whether she did the research before writing the book, she replied that she started writing the novel as soon as she had the general outline in mind, stopping whenever she came to a scene where she realized she needed to know more and at that point did the required research. Consequently her detailed research evolved as she was writing the novel.



Verena, as a professional weaver, shared how she saw the structure of the novel in weaving terms of warp and weft. She saw the warp (lengthwise threads) formed by

- the story of the famous horse Lexington's birth and various owners
- the story of racial conditions before the Civil War and after, including the present situation in the U.S. with racial tensions demonstrated by the relationship between Australian scientist Jess and Theo, the Nigerian-American art historian (both of whom are fascinated, in their own discipline, with the facts surrounding the history of Lexington)
- the story of careful descriptions of geographic features in different regions
- the story of multiple detailed transactions in the horse racing world
- the story of a painter who also was a journalist
- the story of a art gallery owner with a special interest in horses, and
- the story of very specific scientific research

## Recap of January 14 Book Group Meeting Continued

All of these stories are woven into an intricate web with as weft (the crosswise threads) the stories of Lexington and Jarret, his Black groom, that affect all the different strands throughout the novel strongly enough to create a solid fabric.

The character of Jess, an Australian scientist at the Smithsonian, is based largely on Geraldine Brooks' own life story, having grown up in Sydney, writing newspaper reports about horse races, coming to the U.S. on a scholarship and remaining here without having planned to do so. She owns a horse and loves all animals. The idea for the book germinated when the author heard someone from the Smithsonian over lunch tell the story about the re-articulation of the skeleton of Lexington, examining the horse's bones for clues to his legendary speed and endurance.

Among other details, Brooks' attention to the change in language used in the different time periods and by different sectors of society is remarkable and must have required careful investigation.

Some of the questions the group explored were:

- *Could you picture Jarrett in your mind and share his feelings for the horse?* Many answered with an emphatic yes, feeling that the relationship between horse and groom was tangible, to the extent that Lexington was in many ways the closest recipient and provider of affection in Jarrett's life.
- *How likely was the role of Mary Barr Clay, a young woman of the owners' class who risked much by her friendship with Jarrett and actually saved his life?* It was pointed out that Mary Barr was ready to call out injustice and in real life joined the women's rights movement, elected president of the American Suffrage Association in 1883.
- *Who of the men did you find least likable and why?* While there were quite a number of possible choices, the one resounding answer targeted the 1865 rebels who ransacked the stables and stole the horses of Alexander's Kentucky farm.
- *Had you thought about the importance of art in recording life and statistics before the introduction of photography?* This question elicited discussion of the various paintings of Lexington and the artists who were highly regarded for their skill. It was a logical segue to mention of the chance finding by Theo of a painting in a neighbor's trash heap, and the ensuing challenge to document the painting and its origins. That touched in passing on the mid 20th century segment of the book dealing with a New York gallery owner who becomes fascinated with the same puzzle.
- *Would some people feel concerns about "cultural appropriation" with Brooks expressing the feelings of Blacks?* Nobody voiced much concern about that – saying instead that few know much about the critical role played by Black groomsmen and jockeys, and that it is good to have that part of horse racing history brought out in the open as such a central part of the novel.

## Recap of January 14 Book Group Meeting Continued

All in all, the group was enthusiastic about “Horse” with one exception: the final events (not disclosed here with respect for those who have not yet read the book) – we tend to wish for a happy ending.

On February 11th we discussed “The Book Woman’s Daughter” by Kim Michele Richardson. The Woodland book group has invited us to join them on March 1 for their discussion of “Secrets of the Sprakkar: Iceland’s Extraordinary Women and How They Are Changing the World” by Iceland’s First Lady, Eliza Reid. On March 11, the Davis book group will discuss “Demon Copperhead” by Barbara Kingsolver. The book group meets on the second Saturday of each month at 9 am by Zoom. All are welcome to join us!

## Celebrate the 19th: Marti Abbott Shares Success of Chispa Project

*Marti Abbott*

Chispa Project was started by Sara Burkes Brakhane six years ago with a motorcycle, a backpack of books and a goal to help kids reach their goal of reaching their full potential with the “chispa”, spark, they already had. It has grown to a staff of six reaching more schools each year. With our support the staff can work one on one with each school and that is what makes the libraries so well organized and sustainable.

Each school has a Chispa Project Coordinator. Once they begin the process, the coordinator helps guide the committee, but does not make the decisions for them. Next the teachers are trained in the use of picture books and techniques to enhance reading skills. Then 50 community members come in to paint, decorate, and implement reading programs with the kids. The staff in Honduras continues to stay in contact with the schools so that they continue to feel supported.

The library programs are flexible to adapt to the needs of unique communities. About half of the 76 libraries are what you might typically imagine: a room full of books where kids visit once a week. The other half reach small, one to three-room school houses up dirt roads accessible only by motorcycle or horseback, on average 40 kids per teacher, grades 1 to 6, in one classroom. In these schools we give every teacher a traveling backpack of multi-grade level books. The teachers exchange the backpacks throughout the year to give their kids access to more than 500 books in a year.

While Honduras overall had a 40% dropout rate during the pandemic, one school district had 70% perfect attendance with Chispa’s program. This year these teachers proactively maintained their book lending program and they raised funds, matched by Chispa to buy more books!

## Celebrate the 19th: Marti Abbott Shares Success of Chispa Project Continued

There are community volunteers at each school as well as local university students who help with preparation of materials. Each year a few libraries get the extra help of international volunteers during a week-long visit. The sense of camaraderie for local and international folks is inspiring, helping students feel especially important that someone from far away would come to help them read! Trip payments help sponsor the library itself, funding more libraries than we would be able to do on our own. This and the donations from our friends who support the project keep increasing the number of kids reached in Honduras.

As many of you know, I am going on the trip March 12-19 to establish a library in a school of 1,000 students as a memorial to my son Matthew. Any donations that our AAUW group makes will go to that library. We have a rather small group going, so if anyone is interested in joining us, please go to the [Chispa](#) website.

Sara said, "Each year I am blown away by how much more we can do thanks to your support and an incredible and dedicated team here in Honduras. It's hard to believe that we've now reached almost 15,000 kids and donated 47,000 books. Thank you for letting us do what we do."

### January 20 AAUW@UCD Evening with Marty West

On January 20, two days before the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* that protected abortion as a constitutional right, the AAUW@UCD students met with Marty West, Professor of Law Emerita. The event was attended by students, friends, and branch members. Sally Ho and Sara Su, the leaders of the UCD student organization, greatly appreciated Marty sharing her insights with all of us.

Marty spoke about the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, leading to an in-depth discussion about the rights of women to make decisions about their health. Marty also spoke about the importance of Title IX, the landmark gender equity law that banned sex discrimination in federally funded education programs. The impacts of workplace discrimination on women was also discussed. Marty highlighted the many changes and improvements that have occurred over the past 50 years and is optimistic that there will be continual improvement for women.



# January 28 IBC Meeting Recap

*Juliana Wells*

The annual Capital Counties Interbranch Council (IBC) AAUW Fund Event was held online on January 28. The meeting featured two AAUW Fund grant recipients who gave in-depth presentations about their research and shared with the audience their life experiences that sparked their motivation to engage in advanced studies. Sandi Gabe, our AAUW State President, spoke first, bringing us up to date on current AAUW programs. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Director, Dr. Stormy Miller Sabia, then spoke about the progress being made and the challenges we face. IBC President Katherine Greenwood introduced by our own Rhonda Reed, who introduced and welcomed each grant recipient with encouraging remarks and congratulations.

Shirley Ruiz is studying for a master's degree in Organizational Leadership and Learning at Pepperdine University. For 15 years, Shirley has been a dedicated alternate media specialist, working with teachers and students to ensure that students have appropriate access to the curriculum despite hearing or visual disabilities. Her goal is to train teachers to adapt curriculum materials by creating texts that are more accessible so students can understand through specific assistive technology and receive the best possible educational experience. This could include large text, Braille translations, auditory aids, and other adaptations. As a first generation college attendee and a single mother, Shirley shared her struggles to support herself and her son. She expressed deep gratitude for the AAUW Career Development Grant that enables her to pursue a master's degree and to fulfill a hard won dream.

Isha Poudel received an International Fellowship and is studying for a master's degree in International Agricultural Development at UC Davis. She focused on gender inequities in her home country of Nepal, working side by side with the women farmers in rural areas. In Nepal, three-fourths of the economy is agricultural, while 80% of the farmers are women. Men have emigrated to other areas to work, leaving women to deal with family, farming, the challenges of gender bias, of food insecurity, of Covid-19, and of global warming. Isha experienced their lives, not sitting and watching, but working with them and gaining their trust. She walked for miles and hours to reach them. Her research may build Nepali support to ease the challenges of working mothers in farming and family survival.

Both young women were inspiring speakers and demonstrated the importance of women empowering women through education. Your donations to the AAUW Fund continue to encourage women to give service to others while educating and advocating for cultural change and acceptance and honoring women who work.

A recording of the meeting can be found [HERE](#).

# AAUW-CA NEWS

## *Celebrating in Solidarity*

*Stormy Miller Sabia, Director, DEI Committee Chair, [diversity@aauw-ca.org](mailto:diversity@aauw-ca.org)*

A time of year that is often met with hope, resolution, and intentions, has been met with sorrow and grief for many, particularly among Asian, Black and African American communities. The mass killings in Monterey Park, Half Moon Bay, and the shooting in Oakland, occurred in rapid succession in our state, and our trauma was intensified by the killing of Tyre Nichols. It's hard to know what to do or how to respond to these horrific experiences impacting communities of color.

What does this mean for our work in AAUW? What does this mean for an individual committed to equity and justice? And how might we mobilize and unite when things feel heavy and hard? There's an opportunity to explore these questions within our branches and in community conversations that center on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Most importantly, let us explore how we can stand in solidarity and support our fellow AAUW members who are members of these communities. Below are a few resources you may wish to review or share, in an effort toward lifting up communities of color and providing mental health resources and support during this difficult time.

Wishing you all comfort and peace, and wishing you a warm and joyous start to the celebration of Black History Month.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." -Martin Luther King, Jr.

Black Emotional and Mental Health Collaborative BEAM: <https://beam.community/>

Asian Mental Health Collective: <https://www.asianmhc.org/>  
aspiring to make mental health easily available, approachable, and accessible to Asian communities worldwide.

Stop AAPI Hate: <https://stopaapihate.org/>

## Branch Members Participate in Shaping AAUW CA Public Policy

*Kathleen Harper, Director, Public Policy Committee Chair, [publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org](mailto:publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org)*

Over the last two months, the state Public Policy team has reached out to members with two opportunities to participate in our advocacy efforts. In December, we asked members to provide input on our Public Policy priorities for 2023-25 and 465 members responded! While the majority felt that the current priorities satisfactorily represent their views, there were many suggestions for modifications and/or additions. The committee appreciates the time and thought that went into these comments, and is in the process of reviewing and discussing each one.

In January, we asked members to sign up for Lobby Days to help us advocate for our top three bills with the California legislature on March 21st and 22nd. 111 members answered our call, and the committee is now working on organizing those members into teams. Members should expect to receive further information this month once we know which offices will be participating. A note: some members completed the interest survey but did not register for the mandatory training webinar on March 20th. If you, or any of your members, received a notice of need to register for the webinar, please do so ASAP! Please remember, if you do not attend the training, you cannot participate in the Lobby Days event. Finally, “late-comers” who wish to participate but missed the deadline can still submit an interest survey and register for the training.

Click [HERE](#) to complete the survey and register. **The deadline has been extended to February 28th.**

## Virtual Gov Trek Has Begun!

*Shauna Ruyle, Gov Trek Program Director, [govtrek@aauw-ca.org](mailto:govtrek@aauw-ca.org)*

Exciting News! AAUW California 2023 Gov Trek’s inaugural session started with a video address from fellow Californian Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi. We were privileged to have the first woman Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives greet us as we begin our journey together to explore careers in public office and elected positions. Click [HERE](#) to hear Nancy Pelosi’s greeting to AAUW California.

Five distinguished women leaders addressed Gov Trek participants in the Women in Leadership Panel. They covered topics on elective office and public service at different levels of government, including the skills and challenges involved with them, and other related career paths in leadership and political participation. The speakers were:

Kathleen Van Osten, AAUW California Advocate and Lobbyist

Ellen Montanari, Deputy Campaign Manager, Rep Mike Levin

Regina Luzincourt, Lobbyist and Former Press Secretary, State Senator Parker

Shana Hazan, VP San Diego Unified School Board

Griselda Ramirez, Senior Director of Community Engagement, Partnerships, and Strategic Initiatives, Office of San Diego County Board of Supervisor Chair, Nora Vargas

Click [HERE](#) to watch Gov Trek Session 1.

There are four more inspiring Gov Trek sessions including the Gov Trek Finale & Campaign Competition! The speaker sessions will be recorded and available to AAUW California members on the website [HERE](#) in the Student Program Materials section.

We can’t wait to see how our future leaders will change the world!

## Resourceful Women: Let's Grow!

*Marsha Swails, Membership Committee Chair, [membership@aauw-ca.org](mailto:membership@aauw-ca.org)*

Over the last several months, it has been a privilege to work with several talented women thinking and dreaming about how to grow AAUW California membership. On January 25th, the Membership Committee presented the webinar Growing AAUW California. Click [HERE](#) to view the webinar and the slides for the presentation. Besides presenting statistics about current membership, the group challenged branches to grow 6% by February 2024. Just imagine the energy, experience, and perspective these new members will bring!

## Annual Event on April 22 – Save the Date!

*Charmen Goehring, Meetings Planner, [meetings@aauw-ca.org](mailto:meetings@aauw-ca.org)*

AAUW California will be hosting our Annual Event on April 22, 2023, from 9-4 on Zoom. This year's theme is the Academy AAUWards! Come join us for red carpet interviews, listen to inspiring keynote speakers, and watch the Speech Trek and Gov Trek finalists. Cheer on your fellow members and branches for all sorts of AAUW awards, get a public policy update, and meet the board candidates. And, every awards event worth its swag bag has after-parties! Join our Zoom-style parties to hang out with your friends! Look in next month's B2B and on the website for more information soon!

Celebrating AAUW California, its branches, and its members will be the most fun event of the spring! Don't miss out on the Academy AAUWards on April 22nd! Get ready to mingle!

## UNA Update



Due to the erratic weather in recent weeks, the annual pruning of the UNA Peace roses, traditionally performed as a service project during the Martin Luther King Day holiday, had to be postponed until January 22 when sunshine had dried the soil sufficiently after the storms. Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Laleh Rastegarzadeh, and Ray and Verena Borton worked hard to prune the plants down to where beautiful blooms can be guaranteed by April. The UNA chapter appreciates this partnership with AAUW, both for the time and effort invested and the underlying symbolism of this hands-on way to support peace.

## UNA Update Continued

For a detailed background about the Peace Rose Project that dates back to 1995 when the Davis UNA chapter donated these fifty rose plants to the city in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the UN charter, see the article “A tradition continues” in the February 2022 Spokeswoman.

***Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, AAUW Davis Branch President, pictured feeling cheerful after a successful pruning day. Pictured to her right are what the roses will look like in a few short months.***



***AAUW Davis members working hard on the service project.***

## UNA Update Continued

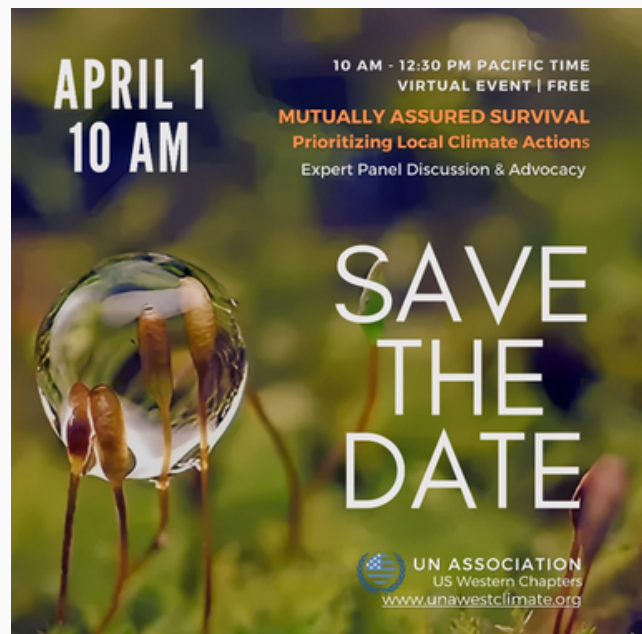
UNA members of 12 regional chapters are invited to a Northern California Division virtual Consultation on Saturday, February 11 from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. to review successes, opportunities and best approaches to challenges.

See the previous Spokeswoman about details for the UNA-USA Global Engagement Summit, “Empowered and Emboldened for Impact,” at UN Headquarters on Friday, February 17, 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (PT) Register for personal or virtual participation (\$25 charge) at:

<https://events.unfoundation.org/2023globalengagementsummit1>

Within days of the devastating February 6 earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, UNA Davis' contact at UNICEF USA headquarters sent the chapter a review of the increasingly dire conditions. Thanks to loyal donors to the chapter's permanent UNICEF bank account at First Northern Bank, a sizable amount of funds had been accumulated after last year's Ukraine fundraiser ended. On Thursday, February 9, the chapter was able to send a check for \$2,500 to UNICEF to assist in emergency support in the affected region through WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), child protection services, health and nutrition, and education. Notified by email of the donation in the mail, they sent this reply: “WOW. I am speechless, truly your community”'s generosity inspires me always.... On behalf of the children of Syria and Türkiye, THANK YOU.”

Mark your calendar for UNA Western Regions' Climate Forum on Saturday, April 1, 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. This event follows four previous climate programs in 2021 and 2022 by the UNA Western Regions (including Hawaii) and will focus on high impact local actions and advocacy. See “Save the Date” flyer.



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