

# THE SPOKESWOMAN

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

## Message from Stephanie

*By Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Davis Branch President*

Dear AAUW Davis Branch Members and Friends,

There are many positive messages to share with you about AAUW.

My focus is the June 3rd luncheon, which was a sweet highlight for us coming out of the hiatus of COVID. Locally our Tech Trek group is all set for the Tech Trek Camp at UCD, which runs from July 9 - July 15. At our June 3rd luncheon held at the Ding How Banquet Room, we welcomed three out of our four campers and their very proud moms. The three campers present included Alondra Ambriz (Harper Junior High), Kathya Garcia (Holmes Junior High), and Kami Ho-Lu (Emerson Junior High). Our fourth camper, Laura Forchu (Holmes Junior High), was on a special lifetime experience to attend her two older brothers' university graduation ceremonies in the midwest.

The big reveal of the 2023 Tech Trek Campers was a treat for all of us, especially for the campers and their moms who happened to sit at one of the big round tables along with Cristele, our UCD intern; Sally, our AAUW@UCD president; and Leslie, our awesome Board Secretary. It didn't take too long before shyness disappeared and the sound of new conviviality grew. One of the goals of our luncheon is for the Tech Trekkers from the four Junior High Schools to get to know each other and that is exactly what happened with Cristele and Leslie participating and guiding the initial introductions. The new Tech Trekkers are at the beginning of forming a bond that can potentially extend over their lifetimes as the Tech Trek opportunity provides a jump start to further opportunities for growth and educational growth.

Once everyone arrived, we introduced ourselves, shared special information about ourselves and provided advice for how to succeed and experience a wonderful life.

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## June Calendar

June 3, 12:30 pm: Installation Luncheon at Ding How restaurant

June 8, 7:00 pm: Board Meeting

June 10, 9:00 am: Book Group Meeting by Zoom

June 19, 5:30 pm: Celebrate the 19th on Juneteenth at Tres Hermanas patio

June 25: Deadline for 2023-24 AAUW membership renewal

July 8, 9 am: Book Group Meeting at Karen Lemcke's home

July 9-15: Tech Trek Camp at UCD

July 13, 9 am: Visitation Day at Tech Trek

July 13, 7 pm: Board Meeting canceled due to Tech Trek activities

July 19: Celebrate the 19th

## Message from Stephanie Continued

The shared words of wisdom and advice are worthy to remember and follow. I wish that we had a recording of each speaker as their words of wisdom and advice was a touchstone to the future.



*AAUW Members speaking at June Luncheon pictured above.*

*Pictured below is AAUW Davis Branch President Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt gifting Tech Trekkers.*



## Message from Stephanie Continued

I have attached a recent opinion piece from the Washington Post that resonated with me. It provides a view into the past and into the future and into what we strive to do for our young women.

### *Mattie Kahn “For girls’ sake, let’s end the myth of the ‘fearless’ girl”*

A girl sat down to write to her president. She was 12. She should have been doing her homework or out for a bike ride, but she couldn’t relax. She was scared the world was on the brink of destruction.

Children were starving. Families were desperate. Her government seemed more interested in producing weapons of mass annihilation than protecting the future of the planet. “As a child I do not think it is my business to have to think about such things,” the girl wrote. But if she didn’t speak up on behalf of her generation, who would?

It was not 2023 or 2020 or 2016, but 1981. And Nessa Rabin, a Vermont native, was beseeching President Ronald Reagan to act — not to curb the effects of a warmer climate or to ban AR-15s, but to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war.

Rabin received a formulaic response, the pat-on-the-head of formal correspondence. Then she escalated the issue. That spring, she called a meeting with friends — all girls — who formed the Children’s Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. For their first action, they invited children nationwide to write their own letters to the White House.

Four decades later, we recognize Rabin’s kind — girls such as Samantha Fuentes of Parkland, Fla., and Greta Thunberg of Stockholm and the thousands of Iranian schoolgirls who have taken to the streets, braving chemical attacks and arrests, refusing to cover their hair, for the prize of their freedom. The world seems to brim with girls in Rabin’s mold: girls who protest, who demand more from their leaders and their parents, who reprimand us when we disappoint them.

And oh, how the world makes a show of loving them for it. We have splashed their names on magazine covers and congratulated them for their courage. We have given ourselves permission to sit back and praise them for their pluck — for being “fearless.”

But the girls whose daring has furthered U.S. and global progress have not been fearless. In fact, the opposite. Their fear has motivated them.

In the 1830s, hundreds of workers in New England textile factories organized and formed some of the United States’ first unions. Most were unmarried women and girls. Before the strikes — which in some cases cost them their jobs — mill workers reported feeling dread at the prospect of leaving their posts.

In the 1950s, teenage civil rights activists, including Barbara Johns — who led a school walkout that helped form the basis of *Brown v. Board of Education* — and Claudette Colvin — who at 15 preempted none other than Rosa Parks in her refusal to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Alabama — made no secret of their genuine and warranted terror. Decades later, Colvin recalled the clang of her jail cell being locked shut as the “worst sound I ever heard.”

In 1965, volunteers affiliated with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee published a collection of poems and artwork. Langston Hughes wrote the foreword.

## Message from Stephanie Continued

The rest of the work belonged to the students themselves. In one contribution, a 16-year-old poet named Joyce Brown declared that she would not let her fear prevent her from joining the civil rights movement:

Here I have come and here I shall stay,

And no amount of fear my determination can sway.

In the modern era, Thunberg has been explicit, insisting before an audience of rapt adults: “I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day.”

For her as for others, the “fearless” label becomes not a compliment but a condescension — a term that across centuries has minimized the seriousness of girls’ activism and the real dangers they face as they put their bodies, their identities and their futures on the line.

It’s tempting in recounting the stories of activists such as Johns, Colvin, Rabin and Thunberg to emphasize their impetuosity, to characterize their clapbacks as instinctual and their protests as impulsive.

This, too, is patronizing — and disempowering. When adults tell themselves that the girls who helped spur the civil rights movement and the anti-gun-violence movement and the crusade to address climate change have supposedly acted without considering potential repercussions, they are seizing on an explanation of convenience: Whatchutzpah these girls show! How wonderful to be so naive, with so much single-minded faith in the potential for change!

It’s a rationale that absolves us. We don’t deserve the reprieve.

Girls aren’t fearless. Girls are terrified. And their activism isn’t naive. It’s not “innocent.” It’s the reasoned result of the stomach-churning awareness that girls can’t count on someone else to save them. This was true when students risked their lives for civil rights. It was true when Rabin begged the leader of the free world to renounce nuclear weapons. It is true now, as middle- and high-schoolers call for stricter gun laws and ask for legislative change — not awed tweets.

Of course, it’s not just girls whose fear spurs them to action. Young male activists have no less reason to feel distress over intertwined global crises. And nonbinary organizers have been on the forefront of critical social movements. But the undaunted girl — chin up, hands on hips — remains a quite literal and ill-advised avatar for progress.

In 2017, a Boston-based investment firm immortalized this version of our fantasies by sponsoring the “Fearless Girl” statue. It was first installed opposite the “Charging Bull” on Wall Street (and is now located across from the New York Stock Exchange), a faceoff not dissimilar from those we read about in the news: entrenched, hulking power vs. girl with an ideal.

The sculpture stands about 4 feet tall. Her skirt seems to swish, but she’s cast in bronze. Perhaps that’s how we like to think of our girl activists — as bulletproof. In fact, girls are vulnerable, under persistent threat from structural sexism and gender-based violence.

“Fearless” is a well-intentioned descriptor. But we haven’t really created a generation of unflinching girls. With our broken world, we’ve scared them into action.

## Congratulations to Our UCD Graduating Seniors!

We celebrate our graduating UCD Interns, Aislinn Kenny and Beth Miller, and AAUW@UCD President, Sally Ho. Aislinn and Beth have been Davis Branch interns for the past two years, joining us as they started their junior year. Aislinn is graduating with a degree in Political Science and plans to travel after school ends. She is also exploring a possible move to New York. Beth will be graduating with a B.A. in Political Science-Public Service.

Sally, a former Tech Trekker who attended camp at Whittier College, is graduating with a major in Evolution, Ecology, and Biodiversity. She successfully revived the AAUW@UCD organization after in-person classes and campus activities were suspended during the height of the pandemic. Sally will serve as Senior Counselor at the UCD Tech Trek camp this summer and next year, will study for the MCAT in preparation for applying to medical schools.

The graduates were recognized at the June 3rd Installation Luncheon and all received a 2023-24 AAUW membership. Congratulations to Aislinn, Beth, and Sally! We thank you for your contributions to our branch and wish you much success in your future endeavors.

## AAUW Membership Renewals Reminder

AAUW membership renewals for 2023-24 are now due. An email was sent to members on June 1, 2023 with the membership renewal application. Membership dues are a total of \$113 per year and include AAUW-Davis (\$21), AAUW-California (\$20) and the National Association (\$72). Member dues currently account for 13 percent of AAUW's annual budget, which sustains and grows [AAUW's programs and work that advances equity for women and girls](#). A combination of dues, donations, and corporate and foundation funding is critical to supporting AAUW's salary negotiation workshops, groundbreaking research, advocacy efforts, campus leadership programs, and so much more.

Association Life Members pay only State and Branch annual dues. For the dues to be filed with the National Association on time, please mail in your renewal membership dues before June 25, 2023 to Gail Johnson at 955 Wyatt Lane, Winters, CA 95694. Checks should be made payable to AAUW. Download the membership renewal form [HERE](#). You may also pay online by logging into [aauw.org/membership](http://aauw.org/membership) You must log into your account in order to renew your membership. Branch donations are appreciated to fund branch projects and Tech Trek scholarships. Donations may be made by following instructions at the bottom of the [membership renewal form](#).

The Branch has established an "angel" fund to help with partial dues payments if your financial situation makes it difficult for you to rejoin. For Angel Fund assistance, please call Gail Johnson at (530) 383-0881.

## Celebrate the 19th in May

Juliana and Verena went early to Sudwerk Brewing Company to save seats for our gathering on the new patio area that had just been inaugurated the previous day. Because it was already crowded and noisy, we asked the manager for indoor seating. When Leslie, Eugene, Margo and Jack arrived they suggested the indoors was too echoing and we should move to sit at a fire pit in one of the corners outdoors.

The group arrived slowly, eventually increasing from 4 to 9 adults when Estelle, Susan, Helen, Helen's friend Scott and Rhonda joined us. We had small group conversations around the pit, enjoyed snacks and had fun watching the children watching the train passing on the other side of the fence. Sudwerk's clientele appeared to be quite intergenerational, with surprising numbers of small children.

Intern Cristele had reformatted an article from PassBlue (an independent non-profit, women-led media company that covers foreign affairs and UN news with focus on women's issues) on the worrisome state of women's rights that we had planned to hand out to all who came, along with a questionnaire for responses from AAUW members. The article appears elsewhere in the newsletter under UNA Update and the questionnaire will be used at a future event that lends itself better for the purpose.



### Recap of May 13 Book Group Discussion

*Juliana Wells and Verena Borton*

Helen Thompson, Karen Lemcke, Barbara Durst, Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Carolyn Van Hoecke, Estelle Shiroma, and Juliana Wells met for a lively discussion, led by Verena Borton, of "Cokie, A Life Well Lived" by Steven Roberts, Cokie's husband.

We agreed that Steven did a wonderful job documenting his wife's life, accomplishments and efforts in support of women's equality, both in current times and in writing historical novels about the unsung support of wives of the nation's early leaders. With an enormous wealth of information to draw from, the author organized the book into chapters that deal with Cokie's roles as wife, mother, journalist, friend, storyteller and believer. Verena found herself wondering how she would think or write about herself in similar categories and encouraged the others to consider that question. Those who listened to the audiobook were unaware of the chapter division – read by Steven Roberts, the audiobook sounded like the love story it was.

The question "What resonated most with you in reading this book?" brought forth numerous responses, among them:

- It reinforced that it was OK to be female, to wear skirts, sew, yet be in the business world and able to multitask more effectively than most men
- It was fun to read about so many familiar names, as opposed to fiction, and to be able to picture many of the lead characters after seeing them on TV and having heard them on NPR
- There were many anecdotes of major obstacles for women in the workplace, Cokie's tireless efforts to mitigate them and her success at sticking up for herself, encouraging especially younger colleagues to do the same



## Recap of May 13 Book Group Discussion Continued

- It was impressive how Cokie had real, true relationships with other well-known women and was respected by male colleagues as well
- Cokie was known not only for her journalism, but also for her love and kindness for family and an incredibly extensive circle of friends, as well as her work for Save the Children and publicizing breast cancer
- The Roberts' interfaith marriage (a challenge in the sixties) became a good example for others and made this also a story of rituals and symbols, based both in Catholicism and Judaism
- She was so inspirational – I want to read other books about women's history
- Cokie's support for women and girls is such a direct parallel to AAUW's mission
- Competent women are good to have around, even if they put you a bit on edge
- Many of us enjoyed her “bounce” and being unapologetic, gracious with a wonderful sense of humor, able to balance career and family and living in the moment
- Being familiar all her life with Congress through family connections, she made a great effort to keep communication on the Hill civil and in today's political atmosphere it seems appropriate to quote the well-known question “What would Cokie do?”

On June 10th, the Book Group discussed “Listen World! How The Intrepid Elsie Robinson Became America's Most-Read Woman.”

We are reading “Hello, Beautiful” by Ann Napolitano for discussion on July 8th at Karen Lemcke's home. On August 12, the Book Group will discuss “The Midnight Library” by Matt Haig.

## CALL FOR TECH TREK VOLUNTEERS

The Davis Branch is sending four rising 8th graders to Tech Trek, the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) camp to be held at UC Davis from Sunday, July 9 to Saturday, July 15. We are actively seeking volunteers to help with registration, preparation of materials, special programs, and packing supplies on the last day of camp. Please email Estelle at [estelle.shiroma@gmail.com](mailto:estelle.shiroma@gmail.com) or call/text 530-848-9361 if you are able to volunteer.

**VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED**

# UNA Update

*Verena Borton*

A few highlights from UNA-USA's virtual Leadership Summit June 4-5, 2023

More than 700 UNA members from around the country were able to virtually join the 250 members who attended the annual Leadership Summit in person in Washington, DC, "United for Impact." (Current membership: 20,455, in over 225 community and campus chapters.)

Some highlights that stood out were the phenomenal youth presence, but also the intergenerational nature of most presentations and the evidence of collaboration. There was a great deal of emphasis on specific examples of projects by individuals and chapters, many of which could potentially be duplicated elsewhere – ranging from providing connectivity to indigenous communities in the Rocky Mountain region, Cities for CEDAW adoption success in Washington, DC, efforts to make outer space accessible to all working with the UN Office of Outer Space Affairs, helping Afghan refugees connect to telehealth, initiatives to fight plastic pollution and creation of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights based on youth input.

As always there was a great deal of emphasis on advocacy for funding for the UN funding in full and on time, this year with explicit involvement of youth and people with disabilities. There likely will be cuts resulting from the debt ceiling deal – as much as \$40B cut from the proposed budget, cuts not distributed evenly. "We know the ceiling, but not the bottom."

On a positive note: the U.S. is close to rejoining UNESCO (owing \$600M in arrears for the years since the Trump administration pulled us out). The bill to remove Congress' arbitrary cap for Peacekeeping dues will be reintroduced by California Rep. Sara Jacobs (US still \$1B in arrears for Peacekeeping on account of the 25% cap when our commitment is to pay 27%, based on our GDP).

Some members recounted accusations by critics who claim the UN "isn't doing anything." Multiple examples were provided to demonstrate the benefit of UN involvement to counter these arguments, among them:

- The IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) is the ONLY neutral agency able to act to prevent nuclear disaster at Ukrainian nuclear power plant, Zaporizhia
- UNICEF's critical role in protecting 45% of the world's children with vaccinations and being among the first to respond to disasters with medicines, food, WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene) and education
- World Food Program efforts to save millions in Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and elsewhere – food and effective logistics based on vast experience
- The Black Sea Grain Initiative
- World Health Organization preparing for next global disaster

The theme for United Nations Day (October 24) 2023 was announced:  
"DIGNITY, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE FOR ALL."

The 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be observed this year, officially on December 10th.



## UNA Update Continued

In 2017, the Davis and Sacramento chapters hosted a West Coast launch of the book “The UN Association-USA, A Little Known History of Advocacy and Action” co-authored by James Wurst and others, at International House Davis, with all the authors as speakers. Among them was Dulcie Leimbach, editor of PassBlue, a non-profit, independent women-led media company that covers foreign affairs and the UN, with a focus on women’s issues. Dulcie has remained a good friend who has given us permission to disseminate some of the articles that appear in PassBlue.

On May 15, an article by Natalie Samarasinghe titled “Decades of Hard-Won Gains for Women Are Unraveling Fast. How Can We Stop It?” stated that in the last six years, the backlash against the rights of women and girls has accelerated. She gives startling statistics, such as the fact that only eight countries offer full equal rights for women and results of a survey that incredibly found that 55% of male and 41% of female respondents believed that we have gone “so far in promoting women’s equality that we are discriminating against men.” Please read this article and share it widely. Consider signing up to receive regular news through PassBlue.com

### DECADES OF HARD-WON GAINS FOR WOMEN ARE UNRAVELING FAST. HOW CAN WE STOP IT?

*By Natalie Samarasinghe on May 15, 2023*

Nearly a quarter of women and girls cannot escape unwanted sex. Eleven percent are unable to make decisions on contraception. The recent report from the United Nations Population Fund is the latest source of grim statistics on women’s rights. It follows a barrage of papers released for International Women’s Day in March, from the World Bank’s study showing that only eight countries offer full equal rights for women to an Ipsos survey of 32 countries revealing that 55 percent of male and 41 percent of female respondents believe that we have gone “so far in promoting women’s equality that we are discriminating against men.”

*A female Rohingya refugee in Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh, 2019. In the last six years, the backlash against the rights of women and girls has sped up, the writer says, citing examples in Iran, the United States and Afghanistan, for starters. But giving up on gender equality is not an option.*



Perennially depressing, this year's reports so far hit home harder due to the arrival of my third daughter. Like her sisters, she is fortunate to have immense privilege. Her birth was testament to that. Surrounded by health professionals and all the equipment we might possibly need, our experience was a far cry from that of Sudanese mothers cut off from medical care, Ukrainian women laboring in bunkers and the Tamil lady from my homeland, Sri Lanka, who chose a roadside C-section to give her and her baby the best chance of surviving bombs and atrocities in 2009.

But even my children's privilege cannot shield them from the risks they face as girls — and brown ones at that.

My first daughter was born when President Trump's inauguration started the chain of events that led to some 22 million women and girls now living in American states where abortion is either banned or inaccessible. My second daughter emerged during the Covid-19 lockdown, when men seemed at last to realize that care is actually work (yes, I know, #NotAllMen but quite a few), only to go back to business as usual. Meanwhile, women and girls continue to suffer the consequences in employment, education and gender-based violence.

My third daughter arrived amid headlines of Iranian schoolgirls being poisoned and forced to wear headscarfs; the [Taliban banning female aid workers](#); and the impacts of the global cost-of-living crisis that has, you've guessed it, [disproportionately affected women](#).

In the last six years, the so-called “backlash” against women's rights has accelerated.

Maternal mortality — long emblematic of women's rights, given its largely preventable causes — offers a stark example. Since 2016, global progress [has stagnated](#), as women's health and rights have fallen down the priority list. Deaths have risen in [Europe and in the Americas](#), increasing by [40 percent in the United States](#). The country has long been the West's health laggard due to systemic inequalities, yet it is the richest nation in the world. Now the overturning of Roe v. Wade threatens even rich white women.

From my perch in Britain, it feels much harder to speak out than it did just a few years ago. The [Ipsos survey](#) showed that the share of people who are scared advocating for women's rights has doubled since 2017, to 29 percent. Sexists and racists, meanwhile, seem emboldened, from ridiculous stories [blaming women's empowerment](#) for all the world's ills to chilling [comments](#) about slavery.

So what can be done? First, we must never de-prioritize the fight for equality and continue to push for women's rights (including transwomen, of course) despite the pushback — in the courts, in our communities and online. While other challenges may dominate the headlines, they are unlikely to be solved if women and girls cannot achieve their full potential.

Second, we must fund the people and programs striving to advance women's rights. Only four percent of bilateral official development assistance goes to programs where gender equality is the main objective, and only one percent of that reaches grass-roots groups. This is why Open Society has committed \$100 million to support feminist movements and leaders.

Most challenging of all, we need to get serious about transforming our economies and societies. Since the 1990s, governments have embraced development agendas based on the reassuring formula of economic growth, while frameworks aimed at addressing structural inequalities, such as the Beijing platform for women's rights, have floundered seriously. This must all change. In April, the UN high-level advisory board on multilateralism presented numerous proposals that would help, although its report is light on gender-specific interventions.

Climate change should have prompted social and economic transformation decades ago. Instead, we are on the brink of irrevocable damage. From conflict to debt, pandemics to atrocities, we now face a downward spiral of crises because we opted for a “whac-a-mole” approach to solving them rather than addressing the systemic inequalities that lie at their heart.

Perhaps seeing the threats facing our daughters, sisters, mothers, friends and colleagues grow ever more dangerous will move us to act at last. If we don't, we have a heartbreaking example of what “gender apartheid” looks like — Afghanistan today — where women recently told UN experts: “We are alive, but not living.”

# AAUW-CA News

## AAUW FUND

### JOIN OUR CALIFORNIA FUND COMMITTEE TEAM!

Karen Vanderwerken, AAUW Fund Committee chair, [aaufund@aauw-ca.org](mailto:aaufund@aauw-ca.org)

We are seeking branch members to join us in making a difference in AAUW Fund at the state level. Click [HERE](#) to learn about the general responsibilities for the Fund Committee members and [HERE](#) for the application which is due by July 1st.

## PUBLIC POLICY

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

### OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW!

**Old:** This old-timer is coming to the end of my term on the board, and thus the end of my stewardship of the state Public Policy Committee. It has been my privilege and honor to serve in this capacity for the past five years, and I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of branch leadership in facilitating your branches' participation in our many public policy projects over the years. It is also my pleasure to introduce you to your new Public Policy leaders, Amy Hom (Los Altos-Mountain View Branch) and Melissa Maceyko (Long Beach Branch) who will serve as co-chairs for 2023-25. Trust me, you are in great hands!

**Now for the New:** I'm excited to announce that we have launched our new project, in which we'll be collaborating with *Equality California* to help ensure California schools remain free from book-banning and curriculum censorship. A survey to assess what's going on in our state was sent to all branch public policy chairs on May 1st and the results are in. We received 61 responses from 50 of our branches from across the state, representing over 200 school districts. Fourteen chairs reported that this is, or might be, an issue in their districts, with another 29 projecting that it will, or could be, an issue in the future. *Equality California* is seeking our help in recruiting qualified progressive candidates for **nonpartisan** school board positions. The purpose is to counter the effects of outside groups and money backing candidates who do not share AAUW California's values of providing all students access to diverse curriculum and materials that represent historically accurate information. Forty-seven of our survey respondents reported that they are, or might be, willing to assist in this effort, and 57 felt that their boards would, or might be, willing to endorse qualified candidates.

I am so proud of our members' willingness to engage in this important project. We are at a critical juncture in the battle for the hearts and minds of our children and young adults. So far California has chosen the path leading to greater diversity and inclusion; these results tell me that AAUW California is ready to help lead the way.

The School Board Project subcommittee is planning to present a webinar with representatives from *Equality California* to more fully explain the project and discuss next steps. Date TBD. Stay tuned.

Learn more about *Equality California* [HERE](#).

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

**Formatted By: Cristele Moztarzadeh**