

THE SPOKESWOMAN

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

IBC AAUW Fund Luncheon Kicks Off the New Year

By Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Davis Branch President

For many years, the Davis Branch has selected the AAUW fellowship and grant recipients who speak at the annual Capital Counties Interbranch Council (IBC) AAUW Fund luncheon. I had never attended these luncheons, but heard how great the speakers were, how each branch outdid each other in bringing amazing auction items, and how good the food was. Upon retirement, I was all in for helping to select the speakers, which is quite a lengthy process. It entailed viewing at least 30 recordings of scholarship and grant recipients. Each recipient was allowed five to seven minutes to talk about their background, area of study, and their goals. A small team of us – Rhonda, Juliana, and I – watched these recordings and developed a list of first drafts. We winnowed the list as each of us rewatched the recorded presentations. Ultimately, we had our list of four finalists. From there, Rhonda contacted the AAUW scheduler to request the selected fellowship and grant recipients as speakers. This year, while Rhonda was taking a long-delayed vacation in the Antarctic, I was put in charge of the final arrangements as I continued to learn about the detailed process that culminates in having speakers at our AAUW Fund luncheon.

AAUW is pretty amazing because in the 2022-2023 academic year alone AAUW provided \$6.3 million in funding for fellowships and grants to outstanding women. It makes me so proud that AAUW is one of the largest sources of funding for graduate education for women. AAUW has provided more than \$115 million to upwards of 13,500 scholarship fellows and grantees since 1888. Collectively, we have given a broader community of women access to educational and economic opportunities so that all women have a fair chance. This is powerful and my personal goal is for us to expand the opportunities for even more women. The path of their success leads to economic gains, which in turn leads to greater educational and economic growth for their families and communities and our world.

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Late Jan-Feb 2024 Calendar

Wednesday, January 31, 4 pm - AAUW National Inclusion and Equity Committee [webinar](#)

Sunday, February 4, 3 pm - “Mary Church Terrell and the Fight to Integrate AAUW” [webinar](#)

Wednesday, February 7, 4 pm - “School Boards: The Battleground for the Education Culture Wars” [webinar](#)

Thursday, February 8, 7 pm - Monthly Board meeting

Saturday, February 10, 9 am - Book Group meeting by Zoom

Thursday, February 15 - Deadline to register for Lobby Days

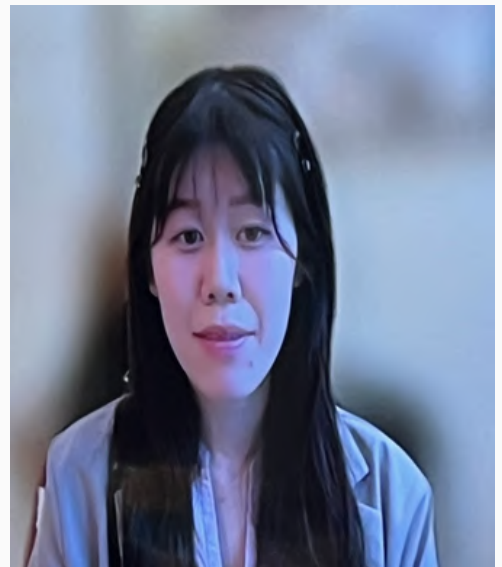
Friday, February 16, 7 am to 3 pm - UNA-USA Global Summit at UN Headquarters, partially available by Zoom

Monday, February 19 - Celebrate the 19th TBA

IBC AAUW Fund Luncheon Kicks Off the New Year Continued

This year, we were fortunate to host two outstanding fellows at the January 20, 2024 AAUW Fund luncheon held at Northridge Country Club in Fair Oaks. The first speaker was Krystal Lau, who presented via Zoom due to time constraints. Krystal was awarded the Selected Professional Scholarship, which supports her studies at Stanford University where she will complete her Master of Business Administration. Her goals are simply incredible and it was fascinating to learn about her trajectory to Stanford. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication from UCLA in 2019. In the years following her graduation, she worked with META as a product manager in emerging markets with a focus on digital literacy, as well as the development of educational products for people learning how to use the Internet. During this time she continued to advance into the world of publishing, which we learned from her presentation is arduous, requiring repeated attempts and tremendous determination. Once she had a literary agent, she was on her way. Many AAUW members expressed their amazement at what she has accomplished, especially given the fact that Krystal is only 26 years old and already has a remarkable list of [published books](#). Krystal authors books using the pen name, K. X. Song.

In getting to know Krystal before the luncheon, I discovered that she grew up in Davis and spent summers with her grandparents in Shanghai along with her older sister and younger brother. Her love of storytelling began during these summers when she entertained her siblings by making up and telling stories. She realized at a young age that she wanted to be a writer and these summers full of storytelling are what set her on the course to become a writer. She also studied Advanced Placement Chinese at Davis High School. When I told her that learning languages is important to me and shared with her that I taught in the Spanish Immersion Program here in Davis, she said, "Oh, my brother, Kevin, was in Spanish Immersion." What a surprise to discover that Kevin had been in my class back in 2010, which makes me wonder if I hadn't met Krystal 14 years ago when she came to the Elementary School to see her brother perform in our Music History programs.



*Krystal Lau, recipient of the
Selected Professions Fellowship*

IBC AAUW Fund Luncheon Kicks Off the New Year Continued

The second speaker, Joyce Weaver, is currently obtaining a Master of Arts degree in Game Development at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. She has an emphasis on character modeling and is aiming for an internship program this summer with a company that can utilize her skills in modeling in ZBrush and texturing in Substance Painter. She is passionate about combining a love of video games with thorough artistic training. Upon graduating in 2025, she wants to work for either an independent (“indie”) or AAA company where she can create both realistic and stylistic 3-D video game characters. An “indie” company tends to be smaller and self-funded whereas an AAA company has large budgets for game development and marketing. A key component behind the creation of the artistic characters is the stories that Joyce writes. Joyce is motivated to inspire other girls and women to enter this traditionally male-dominated industry.



Joyce Weaver, Recipient of a Career Development Grant



Examples of Joyce's artwork

IBC AAUW Fund Luncheon Kicks Off the New Year Continued

As an undergraduate, Joyce attended a small liberal arts university, [Notre Dame de Namur University](#), from 2012 to 2015 and received her Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Art & Interdisciplinary Dance/Theatre with a minor in Psychology, graduating Cum Laude. On her path to the San Francisco Academy of Art University, she attended the [Vertex School](#) where she completed a 9-month program that taught her how to create game-ready props and characters. She received her Certificate of Completion in the Game Artist Program in 2021.

Between 2015 and 2022 Joyce explored different career interests, often working as a volunteer. She thought she might follow her older sister into the nursing profession and volunteered at the new California Pacific Medical Center where her interests sparked the founding of the baby cuddler program. She managed the intake and distribution of breast milk for the neonates in Intensive Care, and if needed, held these tiny neonates anywhere between 30 minutes to 3 hours. She also helped to train staff in administrative work. Joyce began her volunteering at the California Pacific Medical Center in July 2018 and still volunteers one day a week.

Through all of her explorations, in September 2022, she found work at a new florist shop called BloominCouture in the Russian Hills area of San Francisco, where she continues to work full-time during the day while pursuing her Master's degree at the Academy of Art University. She works closely with the owner and is responsible for running the shop when the owner is away. Joyce creates arrangements and bouquets and delivers arrangements to other businesses and homes, as well as to events in the Bay Area. She has discovered that her favorite arrangements use tropical flowers and foliage.

All of this led to Joyce deciding that she wanted to pursue the arts. She researched scholarship possibilities and learned about AAUW. Shortly thereafter, she received a Career Development Grant so she could pursue her Master's degree.

Joyce's area of artistic pursuit is unknown to most of us in our generation. After Joyce's presentation, an AAUW member in the audience stood up and expressed her gratitude for Joyce giving such a clear, organized, and informative presentation about something that most of us know nothing about. Joyce's PowerPoint presentation included information about the programs that she was learning to use on the computer to create specific types of art required for her coursework. She also showed examples of the art that she had created. We also gained a clear picture of the journey and the challenges that she has experienced in following her passion. To learn more about Joyce, see her [LinkedIn profile](#). Joyce's artistic creations can be viewed on her [website](#).

It was truly a delight to have the opportunity to get to know these amazing young women and it makes me so proud that AAUW is behind them all the way.

Recap of Jan. 13 Book Group discussion of “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store”

By Juliana Wells and Verena Borton

Eight of us gathered on Zoom on a dreary Saturday morning in January to discuss James McBride’s novel, “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store.” With Helen Thompson taking the lead, Barbara Durst, Carolyn Van Hoecke, Karen Lemcke, Verena Borton, Estelle Shiroma, Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, and Juliana Wells discussed both the importance of community and what makes a community, one of the main themes of the book. We called up personal memories of the places where we grew up and the importance of a central local store, a bakery, bus terminal or barber shop or hairdresser’s – where stories and news were heard and passed on, where children were known by name and watched out for, and where new friendships could be formed.

The Heaven and Earth (Love & Community) Grocery Store of the title was such a community center in the 1930s on Chicken Hill, the part of Pottstown, Pennsylvania where immigrants from Eastern Europe and the South lived separate from the white Christian community at the bottom of the hill and without many of the municipal services they were entitled to. The store was run by Chona, a progressive and kind Jew, born and raised there, who rarely collected on the credit extended to her neighbors. Her husband, Moshe, an immigrant from Romania, ran the All-American Dance Hall and Theater that he had integrated due to changing musical tastes. Both Chona and Moshe had Blacks (“Negroes” in the parlance of the times) as their closest allies and helpers.

James McBride himself experienced such a community and writes with great insight about the complexities, as well as the benefits, of living among people from varied backgrounds and cultures who don’t necessarily agree on much but feel united through a common concern. Woven throughout this novel is a mystery that unfolds at the very beginning and is not resolved until the end. The story involves a host of characters, relationships, and events that initially may seem unrelated to the central theme, but that ultimately all play a significant part.

As to the central theme, it likely was the protection and saving of a deaf Black child, Dodo, from being permanently institutionalized by the State because of a false accusation and the cover-up of a crime by white town leaders. Dodo’s time spent incarcerated in a mental institution is described in graphic and depressing detail, based on accurate information. The injustice of the dominant culture rallies the divergent residents of Chicken Hill and a separate community, Hemlock Row, into cooperating in the rescue of the innocent victim. Retribution for evil and meanness is served in an unexpected way, and - spoiler alert - there is a happy ending for Dodo.

Besides recalling our own community centers of the past, we commented on varying assimilation patterns by different immigrant groups, the story’s gentle focus on disabilities, the joy of the significance of marbles both in the narrative and in our own childhood recollections, the prevalence of nicknames in the book and in our own experience, and the value of city events like parades to bring citizens together.

Recap of Jan. 13 Book Group discussion of “The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store” Continued

In the spirit of community, we discussed books we were currently reading and might recommend for future discussions – among the titles were “Solito” by Javier Zamora, “North Woods” by Daniel Mason, “Swallowing Mercury” by Wioletta Greg, “The Guardians of the Valley” by Dean King, “The Little Liar” by Mitch Albom, and “Harvest Son” by David Masumoto.

“Solito” by Javier Zamora, the true story about a 9-year-old’s exhausting and difficult journey from El Salvador to the U.S. to be reunited with his parents, will be discussed on Saturday, February 10 at 9 a.m. by Zoom. An email link to the Zoom meeting will be sent the week of the book group discussion.

Hands On Recovery for Lahaina, Maui

By Karen Lemcke

During the last week of October, my sisters and my husband traveled with me to West Maui where we wanted to volunteer during our week there and also support small stores and farmers who sold their fruits inside a large mall. Since September, their businesses have suffered a 70% decrease compared to their income during the same month in 2022. It had been 11 weeks since hurricane winds drove several fires westward and devastated the historic town of Lahaina.

Before we decided to go, I also checked to see where volunteers could be used. We signed up for a morning shift to distribute fresh food through [HandsOnMaui](#). Because many church groups were already in place before this disaster, a subgroup, Feed My Sheep, was in a shopping store parking lot. As registered residents gave their family size when they arrived, we provided each car with fresh fruits and vegetables donated by Hawaiian farmers and rice, lentils, and ground meat donated by Safeway. Many of our guests driving over were grandparents and the weekly portion we placed in each car trunk included a small package of donated diapers.

A high-end West Maui restaurant has been donating thousands and thousands of complete box meals to this displaced town; we also assembled meals in that restaurant kitchen and prep room. The last stop on the third day was the Humane Society in the center of Maui where my husband helped assemble large apartment containers for the many cats that were being held for Lahaina residents. At the large tourist area, Kaanapali, two large highrise buildings were open to Lahaina residents who lost their homes. Volunteers were able to provide dogs exercise by committing to a full day as a Beach Buddy. We observed Red Cross professionals working hard to help residents find housing, as there are not enough vacancies for the last 1,100 Lahaina unhoused residents who may be staying with anyone who can accommodate them. At the small condominium complex where we stayed, we learned that several owners had not rented their weekly rentals, but allowed survivors to move in the first month at no cost to them.

Hands On Recovery for Lahaina, Maui Continued

New affordable apartment housing, just completed last June, was also lost in this August fire. There are 200 firefighters on Maui, but of that number, some are assigned to work on two other islands at all times (Lanai and Molokai). But the largest obstacle in this fire was that the tornado winds weren't expected to come to the island from 285 miles away and the electric poles could not withstand the force of the 55-85 mile per hour winds. The firefighters weren't able to get ahead of the fire in time to stop it. The Maui news reported that 13,000 residents lost their homes, but FEMA would commit to only 500 units total. The units might be folding pods from Hungary which can be assembled instantly, but only measure 8' x 20'. Think about that. An older retiree, who has no home anymore, talked to me about the tiny house idea and was sad this was the only solution offered.

I want to write a letter to HUD and request they initiate a fast build of apartments with input from Lahaina residents for an exterior style that reflects Hawaiian architecture. The local culture has taken a huge hit with the loss of historical sites in the fire. This includes the graveyards where Hawaiian royalty are buried, the medical offices and instruments belonging to an M.D./missionary dating back to the 1830s, the historic courthouse and artwork, and all the business along historic Front Street. Gone. Maybe other branch members would agree to sign such a letter so more Hawaiians aren't forced to move away from Maui.

At Oakland airport on the night we returned to California, we saw quiet families traveling with several suitcases as some Hawaiians don't have a choice to stay on the island and have left. Building new apartments and quicker permit processes for accessory dwelling units could keep this small community together if we can change U.S. emergency housing policies for those who lose their homes during disasters.



*Hands On Maui volunteers
(Karen's sister in the background)*



Karen's husband, Ross, helping with food distribution

UNA Update

By Verena Borton

On January 8 an informative **Annual Membership meeting** about the mission, accomplishments, challenges, and future plans for the Davis UNA chapter was presented virtually. As a special benefit, UNA-USA's Senior Director for Programs and Policies, Farah Eck, sent an inspiring opening statement and welcome from national UNA headquarters specifically addressed to the Davis chapter, highlighting that in 2024 we are celebrating the 80th year of UNA-USA.

Our **mission** is two-fold: UNA-USA acts to **inform, inspire and mobilize** the public to support the principles and vital work of the United Nations and to encourage a constructive relationship between the U.S. and the UN. We strive to do that through informational programs (like the UN Day event last October on the Sustainable Development Goals), through collaborating with other like-minded groups (including AAUW), through forming partnerships and supporting youth leaders. The second aspect of UNA's mission is **advocating** with our elected leaders to inform them about the great value the UN brings to the world and most importantly, to secure their **support for full funding of our UN commitments**.

Among the **chapter's accomplishments**, we proudly highlighted the recent three in-person events (the City Council proclamation for UN Day and the UN Day program in October, and the highly successful Human Rights Day program in December, described in the previous Spokeswoman with attendance by one hundred persons,. Additionally, we mentioned the newly launched website (**unadavis.org**) and outreach through continuing regular tabling sessions at the Farmers Market and on the UCD campus.

Because our chapter has been a significant element of the Davis community for many decades, we also provided selected historical UNA highlights:

- The **International Film Series** from 1997-2019, showing 448 international films at International House with free admission and generous refreshments
- For several years hosting a one-day **International documentary Film Festival** at the Varsity through Stanford University's UNAFF, with generous support from the City of Davis Manager's office
- Coordinating the decades-long **UNICEF campaign** through the local schools, raising thousands for child survival until the pandemic shifted fundraising online
- The gift of **50 Peace Roses** to the city in 1995 to commemorate 50 years since the UN Charter was signed in San Francisco; rose beds at 600 A St. are maintained by UNA, with the annual pruning a Martin Luther King service project every January
- For a number of years conducting a national **UNA Essay Contest** for high school students that successfully engaged DSHS students and involved community leaders to evaluate the essays
- Participation in regional California Intergenerational Model UN competitions, close cooperation with Model UN at DSHS in past years and periodically with UCD MUN
- Attending Northern California UNA Division meetings and hosting three of these all-day meetings for all NorCal chapters (last one in February 2020 at International House)

UNA Update Continued

- Along with other fundraising efforts, Davis UNA actively contributed from 2016-2019 to a UNA-USA campaign called **Adopt-a-Future** providing schools, educational materials and teachers for students in the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya

Among the **challenges** discussed were membership, outreach, increased costs and the need to undertake strategic fundraising to enable the chapter to present strong programs.

Membership has declined in recent years (as is the case with many organizations) and our community chapter faces the added challenge that half our membership is labeled “Youth” with free membership until age 26. **Increased outreach** (digitally and through tabling) will ideally increase membership; standard membership is only \$50, very reasonable compared to many other organizations. Half of the membership dues paid to UNA-USA are returned to the chapter. While we previously offered events at International House without charging admission because the venue was free, we now pay rent and need to develop **fundraising strategies** to cover our costs.

The program ended with the election of the 2024 Board of Directors, including “UNA veterans” Laleh Rastegarzadeh, Edgar Trujillo and Verena Borton, and a welcome young new member, Molly Thompson, who is an International Relations major at UCD.

Other events:

- **UNA NorCal Division** (all northern California UNA chapters) **meeting** on zoom, Jan. 16, 7:30-9:30 p.m., productive exchange of ideas, challenges and successes.
- **UNA-USA Advocacy Leads** (national) meeting on zoom, Jan. 17, 4-5 p.m.* (see note)
- The annual UNA-USA **Global Engagement Summit**, with the theme “Pushing Forward for People and Planet,” will be held February 16 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. in person at UN Headquarters, partially available virtually.
- **International Women’s Day** 3-5 p.m. on March 10 at International House, focused on literacy, still in the planning stage.

*The unresolved budget crisis for FY2024, now pushed into March, has dire prospects for UN funding, with extensive threats for slashing funds. Advocating with our elected officials for Full Funding for the UN and UN Peacekeeping (less than 0.1 percent of the federal budget) is imperative and has been proven to make a difference.

UNA's annual Martin Luther King Day service project

Following up on an idea that originated with Ray Borton, a significant gift of fifty Peace Rose plants was presented to the City of Davis by the UNA chapter (with Mary Ellen Dolcini as President, as noted on a plaque) in February of 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco. With the assistance of a city employee, board members planted two beds of Peace Rose plants south of 600 A Street.

The roses need to be thoroughly pruned every January and this project has become a regular **Martin Luther King Day service project** for chapter members. Volunteers Laleh Rastegarzadeh, Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Shahla Faranak, and Molly Thompson (just elected UNA chapter secretary) were invited for a hearty meal of “Everything” soup and bread at Ray and Verena Borton’s home on January 14th. Reflecting on this gathering afterwards, Laleh wrote:” I was thinking your soup was a perfect metaphor for a harmonious community! The secret of the nurturing quality of the soup was the abundance of ingredients used (17); similarly, the path to a peaceful society is to embrace and cherish the diversity of its members.”



Pruning crew enjoying “Everything” soup lunch at Verena and Ray Borton’s home before heading out to prune the Peace Roses.

The six of us then headed down the street armed with clippers and gloves to tackle the roses and deal with muddy soil after the previous day’s rain. Whether working by ourselves or in groups, we enjoyed the feeling of collaboratively completing a task, no matter how uncomfortable the constant bending over was. We left a sizable pile of clippings to be picked up by County employees who take care of the grounds around the rose beds and who appreciate our volunteer work. Shahla wrote later: “As the work we did today gives the Peace Roses a healthier start in the spring, I wish peace and kindness will also spread in the world.”



The pruning crew with evidence of their hard work after pruning the Peace Roses.

Peace is a fragile commodity, but over the years these rose beds have demonstrated that with patience, attention, goodwill and loving care it can and will blossom forth to be an inspiration to all who witness it. We invite you to witness the plants in full bloom by April and May and continuing through to next fall. Next year we shall celebrate thirty years of the beauty and inspiration these plants have given to the citizens of Davis.

Sharing a sad statistic:

More than 1 billion women and adolescent girls are malnourished, according to data from the United Nations. This staggering figure sheds light on a global crisis that has long been relegated to the shadows and overlooked. When food is scarce, women — and especially mothers — eat last and least. UN agencies are increasing calls for action, so every mother can feed her child without going hungry herself.

Quotes:

Secretary-General António Guterres warned of an “epidemic of impunity” at the World Economic Forum: “The world is standing by as civilians, mostly women and children, are killed, maimed, bombarded, forced from their homes and denied access to humanitarian aid.” “We can’t build a world for our grandchildren with a system built for our grandparents.”

President of the 78th General Assembly Dennis Francis added: “It is people who are paying the price for triggers they did not pull.”

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed: “Men like to win wars; women like to end wars.”

AAUW National News

2024 Update and Commitment

Meghan Kissell, Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy

The new year is an opportunity for both new and continuing resolutions, including our 2024 commitment to you. This year AAUW will:

- Continue fighting for all women to achieve economic self-sufficiency through pay equity and paid family leave policies.
- Advocate for a strengthened Title IX and a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity.
- Pursue policies that advance full access to civil rights for a diverse society.

As a founding partner of the [ERA Coalition's National Strategy Task Force](#), AAUW will continue to call on Congress and the Administration to affirm the Equal Rights Amendment. Together, with your membership, support, and continued advocacy, we can advance policies that continue to break down educational and economic barriers for women.

Act – *A New Year's resolution: Be an informed voter.*

This year promises to be eventful, with many of our key policy issues impacting gender equity being decided in Congress, in statehouses, and at the ballot box. Start this year off right by committing to be a well-informed and engaged activist and voter. Here are three ways to do it:

1. Invite three friends to [become a Two-Minute Activist!](#) Share this message to help AAUW build momentum for positive change in 2024.
2. Engage on the state level! Throughout the year, states and branches engage on key AAUW issues at play in their state legislatures. Elected officials work for you, the voters—so urge them to stand up for gender equity, reach out to [an AAUW branch near you](#), and see how you can get involved.
3. Make sure you are ready for elections this year, including upcoming state primaries and caucuses. Confirm your voter registration to ensure its accuracy. [Click here](#) to find out your state's primary and presidential election dates for 2024.

Learn – *Occupational Segregation Continues*

[New data released in December](#) from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Study (ACS) illustrates two distressing trends: 1) Higher education is not enough to solve the gender pay gap and 2) occupations dominated by men usually pay better than female-dominated fields, even when those jobs require the same level of education and skill. This new data is consistent with previous AAUW [research](#) documenting occupational segregation and its impact on women of color.

AAUW National News

Despite women's educational gains over the past several decades, men with a bachelor's degree or higher continue to earn more than women with the same education in all fields. For example, in electrical engineering, women earn 85 percent of what men were paid (\$123,800 vs. \$105,200).

Additionally, the data demonstrates that degrees with a higher share (at least 60%) of women had relatively lower earnings than those with a higher share of men. In 2022, women held 90 percent of elementary education degrees and were still paid 84 percent of what men were paid, working in the same field with the same education (\$54,070 vs. \$64,380).

AAUW is addressing many of the causes of these inequities, including fighting to expand paid leave, access to affordable childcare, and elder care. In addition, AAUW works directly to end occupational segregation through programs like [STEMed for Girls](#), [career development grants](#), and [selected professions fellowships](#) are also used, in part, to reduce the impact of caregiving responsibilities for women seeking degrees and make higher education and career opportunities more accessible to women.

Engage – *Share the important work we're doing*

December 13 marked the 100th anniversary of the Equal Rights Amendment's (ERA) first introduction in the U.S. House of Representatives. As a founding partner of the ERA Coalition's National Strategy Task Force, AAUW marched alongside the ERA Coalition and partners in Washington, DC, to call on Congress to affirm the ERA and for President Biden to [instruct the Archivist](#) to publish the ERA as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Watch the [Task Force's video](#) featuring AAUW CEO Gloria L. Blackwell.

- Congress continued funding of federal programs through early 2024—Jan. 19 and Feb. 2—but the fiscal year 2024 appropriations process is still underway. AAUW [continues](#) to urge Congress to reject a year-long continuing resolution, which would result in catastrophic cuts to federal programs that serve the public and strengthen our economy, and to finish the appropriations process through a bipartisan approach.
- January 28 marked the 15th anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. [Learn more](#) about Lilly's fight and our continued work on the Paycheck Fairness Act. Look for the 2024 Equal Pay Days (which highlight the impact of ongoing pay inequities) dates to be released in early January.
- Federal pay data collection is a critical tool for identifying pay discrimination and working to close pervasive gender and racial pay gaps in the United States. AAUW [joined](#) coalition partners in urging the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to swiftly reinstate EEO-1 pay data collection, which requires employers to report employees' pay information disaggregated by sex and race.

AAUW National News

- When Congress temporarily expanded the Child Tax Credit (CTC) through December 2021 to include millions of families previously ineligible because the parents made *too little*, child poverty in the U.S. was reduced by almost half. Today, 19 million children are again excluded from the full benefit. AAUW [joined](#) over 350 organizations in urging Congress to prioritize expanding the CTC to strengthen families' economic security and assist with basic needs like housing, groceries, and care.
- Public Funds Public Schools—a national campaign founded by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Education Law Center, and Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP—has released an [interactive bill tracking tool](#) to monitor voucher and related legislation across 50 states and in Congress. Users are able to conduct searches by state, year, voucher type, eligibility criteria, and more. [Learn more](#) about AAUW's position on school vouchers.
- For decades, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has published crucial studies that provide comprehensive insights into how students pay for college, progress through college to degree completion, and how they experience employment and loan repayment after graduation. AAUW has previously used this data to illustrate the [disproportionate impact](#) of debt-financed higher education on women. In December, AAUW joined the Institute for Higher Education Policy and nearly 50 other organizations in a [letter to ED](#) urging the continuation of these vitally important postsecondary sample studies, including the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B). At a time when policymakers want more information about the return on investment for postsecondary education, we need to strengthen, not eliminate, tools that answer critical questions about graduates' experiences.
- In December 2023, ED released the new streamlined [2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\) form](#), which will help 1.5 million more students be eligible to receive the maximum Pell Grant amount. However, experts have raised concerns about how the delayed timing for FAFSA could impact low-income students' college enrollment, since students may not have financial aid decisions prior to school's acceptance deadlines.

AAUW National Webinar

[School Boards: The Battleground for the Education Culture Wars](#)

Date: February 7, 4:00 pm

Across the country, we have seen school boards, and candidates for school boards, taking up controversial policies that have led to banning books from school libraries; the censorship of curriculum in school classrooms due to individuals finding content “objectionable”; and policies leading to a lack of a safe space for students with “objectionable” sexual identities.

Please join us **Wednesday, February 7 at 4:00 pm** for an AAUW National Public Policy Committee webinar to learn how one AAUW state board is fighting back and what you can do locally.

Register [HERE](#)

AAUW California News

Save the Date: February 4 Webinar

In celebration of Black History Month, join us via Zoom on Sunday, February 4th, at 3 pm to hear about Black activist Mary Church Terrell, her work for women’s suffrage and racial equality, and her role in the integration of AAUW. A co-founder of the NAACP, Terrell became the first Black member of AAUW after winning an anti-discrimination lawsuit. We will hear from Dr. Alison Parker, author of *Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell*, as she recounts stories and major successes in the life of this extraordinary woman.

Don’t miss this unique opportunity to hear firsthand about this little-known activist and her unusual history with AAUW.

Register [HERE](#)

Communications

Dawn Johnson, Director, Communication Committee chair, communications@aauw-ca.org

Emails, Oh emails! Where are you?

Yes, we know. Some of you have not been receiving emails from AAUW California. When we launched our new Branch Officer Reporting System in June, we also changed the way our monthly Board to Board (B2B) and group messages are delivered. For the past several months we've fine-tuned and tweaked the system. In December we invested in upgrading to a dedicated IP address and that seems to have solved the problem. Since we made that change, very few messages have been undeliverable.

If you still can't find an email that you're expecting, please check your spam or junk folder. Way back in 2013, Gmail introduced new tabs such as "promotions" and "social" in your inbox to help organize your email. Sometimes our emails go there if you haven't disabled those folders. You can remove them by following these simple YouTube [instructions](#).

Website Evolution

Nothing stays the same for long, including our website. We're continually updating both the content and layout to give you a better experience and to help you find things. The [Branch Tools](#) and [AAUW California Business](#) pages have been given facelifts. Information has been reorganized and categorized. It's still a work in progress, but you'll be amazed at how much easier it is to find things. You'll find peer groups on the branch tools page.

Public Policy News

By Amy Hom and Melissa Maceyko, AAUW Public Policy Committee, publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org

Lobby Days, April 2-3, 2024

Advocate for our key bills by participating in Lobby Days on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 and Wednesday, April 3, 2024. Meetings will be held via Zoom as well as in person in Sacramento. A training webinar will be held on March 25, 2024 to equip you with everything you need for a successful meeting. A registration form was sent by email dated January 12. Please consider volunteering for the important role of team leader. The registration form describes the key responsibilities. Also note that if you indicate a willingness to meet with legislators outside of your own district, you may have the opportunity to team up with college student participants.

The deadline for participation in Lobby Days is **Thursday, February 15th**. Mandatory training will be held via Zoom on **March 25, 2024 (7-9 pm)**. Sign up for Lobby Days [HERE](#).

The AAUW-CA legislative agenda for 2024 will be coming soon. Send us your ideas! Our committee will be evaluating new bills starting in January for our 2024 Legislative Agenda. If you hear of any interesting legislation that will be introduced and that you would like us to review, please let us know at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org

Key links to your public policy resources:

- Google Workspace
- AAUW Policy Leaders Manual from National Branch liaisons
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org
- **Tell us about your branch public policy events** so that we can highlight them on the AAUW California website. Please share information by filling out this form.
- **Sign up for CA Legislative Action Alerts [HERE!](#)** Share the sign-up link with anyone you think may be interested. AAUW members and non-members are welcome. You can share this copy-and-paste shareable link: <https://forms.gle/zkbxQM8gBygjGymTA>

Is There a Hidden Agenda Behind the “Parents’ Rights” Movement?

By Kathi Harper, Chair AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project Committee

We members of the AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project sub-committee frequently come across materials from groups advocating for book-banning, curriculum censorship, and policies that negatively impact the lives of LGBTQ+ students, in the name of “Parental Rights.” For example, the House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 5, the “Parents Bill of Rights Act.” Eight governors have signed legislation with similar titles.

H.R. 5 establishes the rights of parents to, among other things: review curriculum; inspect the books and other reading materials in the school library; be advised of policies that permit transgender girls to compete on female athletic teams or use bathrooms or lockers designated for females; and provide consent before a school may use their child’s chosen name or pronouns on forms, or change the child’s sex-based accommodations. Many of the state laws noted above require the removal of “inappropriate” materials upon the objection of a single person.

AAUW California recognizes that not all our members will find these policies objectionable. And to be sure, most of our members would agree with this statement from PEN America, a human rights and free expression organization: “There is no question that parents deserve a say in shaping their children’s educations; that they have a moral and legal responsibility for their children, and the freedom to make fundamental decisions for their families.” (Suzanne Nossel, PEN America CEO, [Time Sept. 20, 2022.](#))

However, legitimate questions are raised when one parent’s “right” to control what their child reads and learns collides with another parent’s right to ensure their child has access to a broad and diverse range of educational materials. Or when a parent’s “right” to know if their child confides to a teacher regarding a sexual identity unknown to the parent collides with the

student's right to privacy. Or when one parent's "right" to ensure her daughter doesn't play on the same team as a transgender girl collides with that girl's right to partake in all the same activities as other girls, or to feel safe in the campus environment.

AAUW California advocates for a diverse curriculum in our schools, as well as the protection of all forms of gender identity and expression. It is a cause of concern when the rallying cry of "parents' rights" is, as stated by PEN America, "wielded to do far more than give parents their rightful voice; it is turning public schools into political battlegrounds, fracturing communities, and diverting time and energy away from teaching and learning." Additionally, according to the National Education Association (NEA), H.R. 5 "ignores the breadth of parental engagement" that already exists, "disregards educator experience and expertise" and "inserts the government into local decisions."

PEN America worries that the current emphasis on working with schools for the betterment of the child has been replaced with a parental focus on wanting to impose their personal beliefs – moral, religious, and/or political – on the entire education system. As an organization founded on the principle of expanding educational opportunities, we might all heed Suzanne Nossel's final words in her Time article: "The phrase 'parents' rights' may have a nice ring to it, but the agenda now afoot in its name should sound alarms for all those who care about the future of public education."

Read more at: Pen.org, Nea.org

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

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