

THE SPOKESWOMAN

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

Stephanie's Message

By Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt

June 8th was a perfect day for our annual June AAUW Luncheon, held to celebrate the Tech Trek scholarship awardees and install the incoming AAUW board. Twenty-six of us met at the banquet room of Ding How for the occasion, including two of our UCD interns, Ellie Oatman and Natalie Posell who we met in person for the first time. As soon as menu items were selected, we moved into introductions and on to presenting our Tech Trekkers and their families.

This year's Tech Trek scholarship awardees are:

Olivia Lopez (Harper Junior High School)

Sophia Palomino (Holmes Junior High School)

Kinsey van der Hoek (Holmes Junior High School)

Isla Watt (Da Vinci Junior High School)

Each Trekker received a congratulatory certificate for being awarded a scholarship to attend the 2024 Tech Trek Camp at UCD and each spoke briefly about what they are looking forward to doing and learning during their camp experience. The girls were then presented with the softest little bears wearing a blue tee shirt with AAUW Tech Trek Camp stitched on the front. This is a sweet tradition started years ago by Gail on behalf of the branch. The purchase of the bears supports the AAUW Redlands STEM Initiatives fund.

Sally Ho welcomed the Trekkers and shared her words of wisdom with the girls about their upcoming camp experience and how her Tech Trek Camp experience ten years ago changed the trajectory of her life. The week of hands-on discovery with 90 other girls passionate about science opened up an entirely new world for Sally. As proof of her passion for Tech Trek Camp, Sally has been a Junior Camp Counselor, Senior Camp Counselor, a Camp Dorm Mom, and is returning as the Senior Camp Counselor at UCD for the second year in a row. Sally also proudly announced that she still has her little AAUW Tech Trek Bear given to her as a 7th-grader when she attended camp.

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June 2024 Calendar

Saturday, June 8 at 9 am: Book Group Discussion by Zoom

Saturday, June 8 at noon: Board Installation and Meet Our Tech Trekkers, Ding How Restaurant

Thursday, June 13: Deadline for Tech Trek Visit Day reservation (see article)

Thursday, June 13, 7 pm: Monthly Board Meeting by Zoom

Wednesday, June 19 (Juneteenth): Celebrate the 19th: No meeting due to summer vacations.

Stephanie's Message Continued

Leslie Rubin, the Camp Nurse at UCD for many years, also shared important information with the girls and their families about what can be expected with core classes, field trips, evening programs, and the development of long-lasting relationships. She emphasized the importance of campers telling Tech Trek leaders of their interest in future opportunities to help at camp. As high school juniors, they too might follow Sally's pathway to long-term involvement with Tech Trek. "Once a Trekker, always a Trekker" rings true for many campers.

Branch members who volunteer during the Tech Trek Camp are looking forward to seeing our Trekkers in July. In September, we will hold another special gathering where the Trekkers will have the opportunity to share impressions and anecdotes about their Camp experience. Information about volunteering to help at Tech Trek will soon be sent by email; I sincerely encourage you to volunteer. On Thursday, July 18th from 9 am to noon, AAUW branch members and nominating teachers may participate in Visit Day. It is an opportunity to visit core classes and camper demonstrations. If you are interested in attending, details are provided in the Tech Trek Announcements article.

Finally, the incoming 2024-2025 board members were introduced:

- President: Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt
- Financial Officer: Gail Johnson
- Secretary: Helen Thompson
- Board Members at Large: Verena Borton, Laleh Rastegarzadeh, Rhonda Reed, Estelle Shiroma, Juliana Wells

The board looks forward to another productive year focusing on engaging the membership and supporting the AAUW mission through branch projects and a variety of activities.



Recap of Book Group's Discussion of "Absolution" by Alice McDermott

By Verena Borton

Nine of us met on Saturday morning, May 11, to discuss our reactions to and interpretations of Alice McDermott's novel "Absolution" that covers a time in the early sixties that is well remembered by some of us and strange, even foreign to our younger members whose mindset today is so different.

Barbara Durst, Carolyn Van Hoecke, Rhonda Reed, Judith Flores, Karen Lemcke, Estelle Shiroma, Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Helen Thompson and Verena Borton tackled various aspects of the story that is focused primarily on the lives of expats in Saigon during the increasing tensions of the Vietnam war (or as the Vietnamese refer to it, the American war) and specifically on the subservient role of women. Central figures are two women: new arrival and newly-wed Tricia and Charlene, who is well established as a leader among the wives of Americans – all seeing themselves as "helpmeets" to husbands assigned as military or corporate advisors. Charlene immediately involves Tricia in her various projects to "do good" for Vietnamese children in orphanages and hospitals and eventually also for the patients at a leprosarium. We gradually discover that the provenance of Charlene's baskets filled with charity gifts is vague and even borderline illegal. Tricia refers to Charlene as a "white savior," while describing "the cocoon in which American dependents dwelled" as "still polished to a high shine by our sense of ourselves and our great, good nation."

For most of us, it only gradually became clear that the novel was framed as correspondence exchanged in the present between Tricia, by now a widow well along in years, and middle-aged Rainey, Charlene's daughter. After Charlene's mother's early death, Rainey reconnected with her mother's friend, Tricia, as well as with a veteran from their Saigon times, Dominic, a kind young medic and Conscientious Objector who had helped Charlene and Tricia. In essence, we get the story as recollected and enhanced by hindsight sixty years later. Their correspondence uncovers many previously unknown details of that year in Saigon, including Tricia's longing for a baby, her miscarriage, and Rainey's longing for her busy, domineering mother's love and attention.

Coincidentally (?), soon after the 2023 Barbie movie and all the publicity for it, Barbie dolls (new since 1959) also played an important role in the novel, especially for lonely Rainey. Talented Vietnamese seamstress Lily (Ly) creates miniature ao dai outfits for "Saigon Barbies" that become a major fundraiser for Charlene's charity work. The (not so subtle) power differential between the expats and the Vietnamese is graphically illustrated by the relationship between Charlene and Lily. There is reluctant appreciation of Vietnamese women's elegance and their sensible dress that is well suited to the climate, but no Vietnamese personality is explored beyond its servant role.

Recap of Book Group's Discussion of "Absolution" by Alice McDermott Continued

The author's detailed descriptions of the dress code six decades ago rang a bell. For those of us who remembered and in addition lived abroad and perhaps even in tropical climates at the time, it brought back memories of fighting humidity with hair curlers (either to create curls or to straighten our hair), obligatory invitations, superficial conversations, the luxury and awkwardness of having servants and the inequality of society, but above all the lack of agency for women.

We spent considerable time discussing the title of the book. None of us felt comfortable with it. The literal meaning of absolution is: formal release from guilt, obligation or punishment. Those in the know commented on the Catholic meaning, connecting it to the fact that some of the book's protagonists (including Tricia's husband Peter) held strong convictions of the Catholic mission of advisors from a country with a Catholic president (Kennedy) and the Catholicism of the then-president of Vietnam (Diem). Was Charlene seeking forgiveness for all the horrors the war unleashed? Due to all the uncertainty we arrived at consensus that a better title for the novel might have been "Absolution?"

The next reading selections are Kristin Hannah's "The Women" (June 8) and "The Bohemians" by Yasmin Darznik (July 13). The book group meets on the second Saturday of each month at 9 am. Contact Karen Lemcke at lemckekaren@yahoo.com if you are interested in learning more about the book group.

Tech Trek Announcements

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 14 to Saturday, July 20. We are actively seeking volunteers to help with registration and special programs, prepare materials, and packing/moving supplies on the last day of camp. Please email Estelle at estelle.shiroma@gmail.com or call/text 530-848-9361 if you are able to volunteer.

Visit Day at Tech Trek is on Thursday, July 18. Tech Trek Committee members, branch members, nominating teachers, and guests (excludes parents and relatives of current campers) are invited to and encouraged to attend Visit Day. Core class visits and camper demonstrations are the highlights of Visit Day from 9 am to 12 noon. If you wish to stay for lunch, a selection of salads and sandwiches will be available for a \$15 donation or you may bring your lunch. Please RSVP to Meri McEneny at mmceneney@gmail.com by June 13, 2024 if you would like to attend. Let her know you are a Davis branch member and whether you are staying for lunch.

AAUW 2024-25 Membership Dues

AAUW membership renewals for 2024-25 are now based on the month you joined or renewed your membership. Gail Johnson will contact members individually when it is time for members to renew. 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 much more. 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.

When you renew your membership, you will also have an opportunity to make donations to fund branch projects and Tech Trek scholarships. No amount is too small and all donations are greatly appreciated.

Studying Abroad in London with UCEAP

By Cristele Moztarzadeh

In January of 2024, I began participating in the UC system's Education Abroad Program (UCEAP). I spent the following six months working towards my political science degree at King's College, London, where I took a variety of classes that broadened my knowledge of political events worldwide. After taking classes at King's, I realized that my classes at UC Davis were centered around American politics, very rarely straying too much into other countries' politics. My classes abroad opened my eyes to the complexity of politics – it taught me about happenings around the world that I did not hear about in my classes at Davis or online through social media or newspapers due to the very American-focused nature of the U.S. media.

I took one course on the European Union and learned how it originated, the foundation it is built on, and current issues and events involving it such as Brexit, immigration issues, and warfare around Europe. Learning in a different country, especially such a powerful one in Europe, exposed me to new ideas and political opinions, as I was taught by professors from many different countries and collaborated with peers from around the world to learn just like me. In America, we are mostly taught only our political system and sometimes how other countries affect us. Learning about the European Union, an institution comprising 27 countries that work together to spread their moralistic values, was something I had seldom heard of before, coming from a country so intent on being number one.

Studying Abroad in London with UCEAP Continued

Alongside my class on the EU, I took a course on the political and economic impacts of immigration which can be a very controversial topic to debate in America. The class was very eye-opening in that immigration was viewed in a surprisingly positive light. My professor, who works with the British government to study immigration trends, disproved the very common American view that immigration is damaging to a country's culture and economy. I feel like immigration can be a taboo subject in America, so being able to study facts on it and talk about it in an open environment gave me a new perspective on how immigration impacts a country and how in most cases, despite some short-term problems it may experience, immigration tends to result in more positive than negative results.

My third class was on gender in war, where we studied how gender plays a role in war-making and how it impacts men and women differently in their cultural roles and personal lives. Lastly, I took a class on the Modern German state post-reconstruction. I found this class very different from any I have taken in America as I was able to learn the perspective of the losing side of World War II – an important historical event often discussed in America but only through an American lens and about how the losing country fully reconstructed their government's foundation to make amends and acknowledge their mistakes. A German professor taught the class. There is something very impactful in learning about a sensitive subject of a country taught by someone born there. I feel like this idea would not be as easily accepted in America. Overall, each course provided me with a new learning tool for my degree and greatly broadened my political knowledge beyond just the American lens.



Not only did I develop my own political opinions and understanding inside the classroom, but my UCEAP experience allowed me to travel to various new countries and learn about their culture and history. I studied art I had only heard of in high school at the Louvre in Paris and London's National Gallery. I walked streets dating back to the 7th century in Croatia and 6,000 BC in Malta (a country I did not even know existed before visiting Europe!).

Studying Abroad in London with UCEAP Continued

During my travels, I made friends from around the world that I plan to keep in touch with. I feel lucky to have visited different cities in Spain, where my family is from, and heard so many things about, but finally got to see for myself. Visiting Spain felt like getting to know a part of my family's heritage, seeing where my family used to live, trying authentic Spanish food rather than America's attempts at re-creation, and even just speaking Spanish with actual Spaniards was very cool to me.

In the end, the most impactful country for me was, unsurprisingly, the United Kingdom. I do not think there is anywhere quite like London, and I do not have enough word space to say everything I'll miss about the historically rich and seemingly never-ending city. My father encouraged me to study abroad in London, as he fled from Iran to London in the late 70s and fell in love with it during his studies here. One thing I love and will miss dearly about London is how, no matter how much you try, it feels like you will never see everything and every day I discover someplace new on my ventures into town. I will miss my walks around the massive parks like Hyde and St. James, and befriending Londoners in pubs after everyone clocked out of work or university - a British tradition that America unfortunately did not adopt. I'll also miss the impressive public transportation that allowed my housemate and me to visit whichever random corner of the city we pleased on any random day. In summary, I'll miss being in a big European city in my twenties, learning and living abroad. I do hope and plan to return one day though, with my degrees finished next time!

UNA Update

By Verena Borton



The annual UNA-USA Leadership Summit took place in Washington, DC June 2-4. Edgar Trujillo, board member of UNA Davis, represented our chapter in person and has promised to write a detailed report of the Summit with pictures for the July 1 UNA Davis Newsletter. (If you aren't signed up to receive our monthly newsletters, and wish to, please contact Verena at verena.borton@unadavis.org and we'll gladly add you to the list.)

UNA-USA gives out the following five national awards during the Summit: Community chapter excellence, Campus chapter excellence, Young Leader of the Year, Advocate of the Year, and Lifetime Achievement. The chapter awards went to East Coast chapters. The other three awards

UNA Update Continued

all went to Californians: Young Leader went to Dom Jones who is running for the CA Assembly in district 72 (Orange County); Advocate of the Year went to Kate Chang, President of Sacramento UNA and Advocacy chair of the NorCal Division; the Arnold Goodman Lifetime Achievement Award went to a surprised Verena Borton, longtime Davis chapter president and UNA board member since 1992 who had to send in her acceptance speech by video.



Information regarding frequently asked questions about Palestine, the UN and the U.S.

Current status of Palestine at the UN:

The State of Palestine is a non-member observer state at the UN, a designation that was conferred by the UN General Assembly in 2012 by a vote of 138 in favor, 9 opposed and 41 abstentions. As an observer state, Palestine can participate in General Assembly sessions, observe the UN's operations, and maintain a mission at UN Headquarters. Observer states cannot vote on General Assembly resolutions; voting rights are only granted to member states.

How to become a full UN Member State:

The recognition of a new State or Government can only be granted or withheld by other States or Governments. The United Nations is neither a State nor a Government and therefore does not have the authority to recognize a State or Government. As an organization of 193 independent States, the UN may consider admitting a new State to its membership if the application confirms that the obligations of the UN Charter are accepted. The Security Council then considers the

UNA Update Continued

application. Any recommendation for admission must receive affirmative votes of 9 of the 15 members of the Council, provided that none of the 5 permanent members (China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the U.S.) vote against the application. If and when the Security Council acts in the positive, a two-thirds majority vote for admission is required in the General Assembly.

The U.S. vetoed considering Palestinian membership in the Security Council on April 18, 2024. Palestinians earlier had submitted an application to the Security Council in 2011. Unable to reach a unanimous decision on eligibility, the Security Council shelved the request until a request for reconsideration was filed on April 2, 2024.

Full funding for the UN in grave peril for FY25

The House State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee released its 2025 International Affairs funding bill on June 3, radically proposing that the U.S. cut all funding for the UN Regular Budget. This decision would forfeit nearly 80 years of U.S. leadership. The UN Charter stipulates that a country that fails to pay its regular budget dues – the most basic responsibility of any UN Member State – two years in a row can lose its vote in the UN General Assembly, threatening irrelevancy of the U.S. at the General Assembly (a first for a P5 member).

In more concrete terms, the bill also prohibits all U.S. funding for the World Health Organization and eliminates the account that provides core funding for UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNRWA, the UN Human Rights Office, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and many other agencies. The U.S. is the world's single largest humanitarian funder and these drastic cuts will eventually cost far more than they can save.

Better World Campaign President Peter Yeo remarked: "This comes at a time when Republicans and Democrats agree that geopolitical competition with China and Russia is one of the defining issues of our day. Why would we choose to decimate our international influence? Proponents of this bill are reducing the U.S. footprint across the international system during a period of increasing instability, when U.S. values need to be represented more fully. These actions make us weaker, not stronger."

Coming literally 5 days after UN Peacekeeping Day on which we honored the many thousands of UN peacekeepers (currently more than 85,000 serving in 12 missions), this bill once more calls for significant cuts to UN peacekeeping missions, in spite of the fact that data show that these missions save lives, reduce violence and are far cheaper than sending in U.S. troops. The already astounding arrears the U.S. has amassed would reach over \$1.4 billion dollars.

The hundreds of UNA members attending the Summit who fanned out to legislative offices on the Hill on June 4 undoubtedly expressed singly and collectively the critical need for full funding for the UN in a unified call for action.

UNA Update Continued

Martin Griffith, head of the **UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** (OCHA) is completing 3 years in this post at the end of June. Noting that around 300 million people globally will need humanitarian aid in 2024, he commented that OCHA deals with a set of crises, which occupy all our attention and reduce the bandwidth available for discussion of those crises that are not topping the agenda and news cycles, highlighting that the wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan ‘superseded’ the conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Haiti and elsewhere. He concluded with the sad statement, “I leave this job with a sense of work unfulfilled because the world is a worse place now than when I joined.”

15-member Security Council membership

On June 6, the following non-permanent members won an uncontested election to the Security Council for 2-year terms beginning January 1, 2025: **Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama and Somalia**. They will replace the five non-permanent memberships ending December 31, 2024 of **Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Switzerland and Mozambique**.

Remaining additional non-permanent members for another year are **Algeria, Guyana, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Slovenia**.

Permanent members referred to as the “P5” who wield the infamous veto power are China, France, Russia, the UK and the U.S.

The presidency of the Security Council rotates each month.

AAUW National News

CEO Webinar: In Conversation with Dr. Pempho Chinkondenji

Watch CEO Gloria L. Blackwell's conversation with AAUW International Fellow alumna, Pempho Chinkondenji, Ph.D. from the [May 21 webinar](#).

Dr. Chinkondenji discussed her work on addressing structural inequalities within educational policies and practices, with a specific emphasis on the intersection of education, gender, race, and motherhood. Dr. Chinkondenji is a scholar, educator, and practitioner-activist in the field of comparative and international education. She gave many lively examples from Malawi, her home country where most of her research was focused, and paid eloquent tribute to the example provided by her mother who went back to school after raising a large family. While gender inequity persists in Malawi, some progress has been made in enabling teen mothers to continue their education and to receive counseling on childcare.

AAUW CA News

2024 Updates to Title IX: An Overview of Changes and Challenges

By Missy Maceyko, Co-chair, AAUW California Public Policy Committee

On Friday, April 19, 2024, the Biden Administration released long-awaited [guidance on the application and administration of Title IX](#). The rule changes rework Trump Administration guidance on the handling of campus sexual assault, providing expanded protections for survivors and expanding Title IX protections against sex/gender-based harassment and discrimination to protect members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as pregnant and parenting students.

In sum, the 2024 regulations clarify what sex-based discrimination is and who should be protected from sex-based discrimination under Title IX: the regulations prohibit discrimination not only on the basis of sex, but also on the basis of sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

[Many of the major changes in guidance under Title IX](#) come from a centering of the term “sex-based,” including a redefinition of “sexual harassment” as “sex-based harassment.” Under this redefinition, sex-based harassment still includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking, but, importantly, allows harassment to be defined as conduct that contributes to the creation of a sex-based hostile environment, more broadly. This means that unwelcome sex-based conduct can be more holistically understood as problematic, including a consideration of conduct that is not only offensive but also so severe or pervasive that it limits one’s ability to participate in or benefit from an education program or activity.

AAUW News Continued

The 2024 guidance also reforms the process for reporting, hearing, and resolving Title IX complaints, which is an important shift, as guidance issued under the Trump Administration created a reporting environment that many experts agreed was [friendlier to those accused of misconduct than to those who were victimized by misconduct](#).

Because the focus of Title IX guidance has shifted to protecting against “sex-based” forms of discrimination and harassment, it also clarifies the boundaries of pregnancy-related discrimination and expands protections to the LGBTQ+ community. Both of these expansions under Title IX [align with current interpretations of federal law under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act](#), which prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of sex/gender.

While the changes to Title IX have been [widely supported as an overall good](#) by a wide coalition of gender equity advocates, including [AAUW National](#), a coalition of states and conservative advocacy organizations have started to file lawsuits [to block the new rules](#) from going into effect, as scheduled, on August 1, 2024. Furthermore, at the time of this writing, [at least eight states](#)’ governors have issued executive orders that openly refuse to comply with the new guidance, putting their state universities at risk of losing all federal funding.

Officials who have filed suit and/or who refuse to comply with the new Title IX guidance claim that the rules conflict with their state laws, especially those aimed at the due process rights of those accused of misconduct, [LGBTQ+ material in curricula](#), and the regulation of transgender students’ access to bathrooms and sports teams. Therefore, these state officials claim that they should not have to follow the new guidance.

For a concise overview of major rule changes under the 2024 guidance, check out the coverage in *Ms. Magazine*, [here](#). For continued updates, you can also peruse upcoming issues of [Public Policy News](#) via AAUW California throughout the summer.

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

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