

THE SPOKESWOMAN

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

President's Message

By Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt

Remembering Marti Abbott

First of all, I want to extend our condolences to the family and dear friends of Marti Abbott, who recently passed away. Marti was a key supporter of AAUW Davis and donated one of her beautiful handmade quilts for many years to raise funds for Tech Trek scholarships. We learned about and supported her long-time goals to help families and girls in overseas countries. Marti was especially passionate about the [CHISPA Project](#) in Honduras, traveling several times as a volunteer to create school libraries that brought books to children and sparked a love of learning.

Members shared their special remembrances of Marti.

During COVID, we held a Zoom Celebrate the 19th gathering, where Marti spoke to us about her involvement and commitment to the [CHISPA Project](#). Her belief in the positive importance of this program inspired our AAUW members to collect many children's books, which Marti boxed up and took to Honduras during her trips. I also remember her participating in a September picnic in the park to celebrate the Tech Trek Campers and their families where she enjoyed engaging with all of us. The last time I saw Marti was at the April 2024 AAUW Annual Meeting. She was passionate about the things she believed in until the end of her life. I feel very fortunate to have known her.

Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt

Aside from Marti's beautiful handmade quilts donated with generosity for TechTrek fundraising, I will remember Marti's

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April Calendar

Thursday, April 3, 3:00 to 4:00 pm:
Public Policy Peer Group Meeting
by Zoom

Tuesday, April 8 and Wednesday,
April 9: Lobby Days

Thursday, April 10, 7:00 pm:
Monthly Board Meeting

Sunday, April 13, 1:00 pm: Special
Book Group in-person meeting

Monday, April 14 to Tuesday, May
13th: AAUW National voting period

Tuesday, April 15: 4:00 pm:
Funding Futures: Understanding
Changes to Sex and Gender-Based
Scholarship Programs Webinar

Saturday, April 19: Celebrate the
19th (Earth Day) with UNA-Davis

Monday, April 21, 5:30 pm: Davis
Branch Annual Meeting, Black
Bear Diner

Saturday, April 26, 9 am to 2:30 pm:
AAUW-CA Annual Event on Zoom,
Pivoting 4 Our Future (sent by
email on 4/10)

Saturday, April 26 to Friday, May
16: AAUW-CA voting period

beautiful handmade quilts donated with generosity for TechTrek fundraising, I will remember Marti's enthusiastic sharing about the benefits of supporting Solar Cookers International and her passion for participating in establishing school libraries in Honduras with CHISPA.

Verena Borton

I agree with Verena's remembrances. Some of my personal memories are that Marti had us all at her home for a delightful Christmas party and that she willingly replaced a binding on my favorite quilt that was falling apart. Marti even made a special quilt for Char, which she enjoyed until the end. So generous and caring!

Juliana Wells

I remember sharing a meal with Marti as she talked about her many trips. I was enthralled. I also know she was a wonderful kindergarten teacher. She was also a caregiver for her ailing husband who had Parkinson's. Marti was one of the best, that's for sure.

Gail Johnson

I met Marti Abbott about 50 years ago when I moved to Vacaville in 1974. She was in AAUW here and I transferred to the local AAUW from Richmond. Marti was a career teacher and co-author of children's books and her writing partner was a member of the Community Presbyterian Church, in Davis. Marti taught both of my children in elementary school. The oldest, in Kindergarten and Second grade and my youngest in Second grade. Therefore, when either of them did anything out of line...I blamed Marti! Marti and her second husband bought a house very close to ours, which helped us stay in touch. Our husbands walked together quite often, even after Mark, her husband, was diagnosed with Parkinson's.

Several years ago, after my husband passed, I started traveling with a friend. Most of the travel was with a group started by a Professor from my University in Mississippi. One year my travel 'buddy' could not go and I invited Marti to take her place. Needless to say, that is when we really got to know each other well. We were in a hotel with small rooms...our twin beds were almost touching. She piped up, "Guess we are sleeping together now!" On that same trip, we were on a ferry overnight. In the morning, we wandered around looking for breakfast. Finally, we spied an area with breakfast laid out beautifully. We enjoyed our breakfast. When we left, we were asked for our room number. That's when we discovered we were in the wrong place! Our group was at the other end of the ship (with a lot less grandeur in the breakfast layout)! Oops. We

laughed about that rather often.

During the pandemic, my Granddaughter Charlie Rose spent the summers with me. She already knew Miss Marti and was invited to go over to swim whenever she wanted. She did and stayed many afternoons with Miss Marti. One afternoon she was packing up the bike with clothes...not just swimming gear. Why? "I'm having a sleepover!" Here? I asked. "NO! I'm sleeping over at Miss Marti's." What are you going to do? "SEW AND COOK!"

Sewing and Cooking were Marti's specialties even before she retired. She was the second Grandma to my Granddaughter. There is even a package of muffins in my freezer that Marti made for Charlie Rose, and they are labeled "from Miss Marti for Charlie."

Another little tidbit...Marti and I went to a Church Retreat at Tahoe...in her new Tesla. Upon leaving, three days later, we could not find a place to charge the car! We could not use the a/c because it would drain the battery. After two hours, we finally found a charger at the Hard Rock Casino! We tried to find every place we could charge in town. The directions provided by the car navigation system were useless. It told us to turn at an unnamed street! What an ordeal...hot and lost! We never forgot that. I always teased her – "so much for owning a Tesla!"

Rose Mary Forehand



Photo taken at the wedding of Rose Mary's youngest daughter. Marti is in the first row (third from the right); Rose Mary is second on the left.

AAUW Annual Meeting

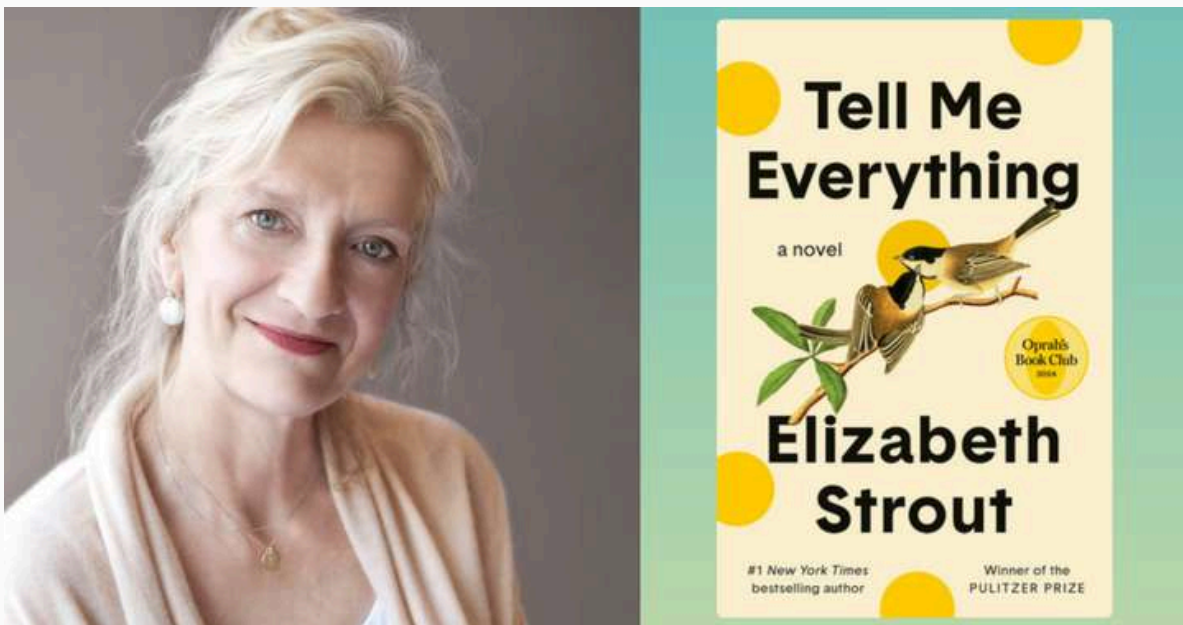
Members and students are invited to join us for the Davis Branch AAUW Annual Meeting on Monday, April 21st at 5:30 pm at the Black Bear Diner at 255 2nd Street in Davis. We plan to meet, as we did last year, in the large side room for dinner and meeting. There is plenty of free parking behind the diner.

We invite and encourage you to consider joining the board. This is a good time to shadow current officers so that we have a smooth transfer of succession of officers in June 2025. Areas of interest to you are also open with Publicity, Tech Trek, Public Policy, Lobby Days, Tabling Events, Fundraising, Outreach with UCD Affiliates and Interns, Writing and Editing the Spokeswoman, Archiving our History, and maybe more.

We want to thank Helen Thompson for serving as our Secretary this past year and welcome Cathy Tkach, who graciously offered to be on the ballot for Secretary.

March 8th Book Group Recap

By Carolyn Van Hoecke



The book we discussed on March 8th was *Tell Me Everything* by Elizabeth Strout. The gathering on Zoom was attended by Verena Borton, Barbara Durst, Estelle Shiroma, Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Karen Lemcke, Rhonda Reed, Valerie Olson, and Judy Flores, who led the discussion.

This is the most recent in a long series of novels by Elizabeth Strout introducing a rotating cast of characters, but it can stand alone as a separate story. The first, *Amy and Isabelle* (1998), introduced the imaginary New England town of Shirley Falls. *Olive Kitteridge* (2008) and *Olive, Again* (2019) features the cantankerous schoolteacher Olive and her longsuffering husband Henry in nearby Crosby. *The Burgess Boys* (2013) returned to Shirley Falls with the story of legal aid attorney Bob, his more successful corporate lawyer brother Jim, and their fraught relationship. *My Name is Lucy Barton* (2016), presents a memoir of the New-York based writer Lucy. The Barton family history was explored from different angles in a volume of interrelated stories, *Anything is Possible* (2017), and in the Booker-shortlisted novel *Oh William!* (2021), about Lucy's failed first marriage to the microbiologist William Gerhardt. Lucy's writing is brought up to date in *Lucy By the Sea* (2021).

In *Tell Me Everything* (2024) Lucy and William are now permanently settled and are considering remarrying. The central character in this book is Bob Burgess, who also happens to be William's solicitor and the person responsible for introducing him and Lucy to the community. Moving closer to Bob is the real reason Lucy has chosen to move from New York.

We are told at the outset that this is Bob's story – the story of an apparently unexceptional 65-year-old man, who “would never believe he had anything worthy in his life to document. But he does; we all do.” He plays an important role in solving a local crime mystery and in introducing a reclusive young man to modern society after he is absolved of being the suspected murderer.

In this book, Lucy and Olive meet for the first time and have a series of gossipy conversations that weave in and out of the local lives that are intertwined with each other in both direct and surprising ways. They both cherish discovering untold stories. We had a long discussion focusing on the many characters along the lines of “we are all broken” in some way. Some of the characters find heartbreak, but many work out their problems and continue. We talked about the concept of Bob Burgess being the “sin eater” of this story and what that meant to the characters he directly and indirectly, knowingly and unknowingly, helped. In some cases, details are provided, but in many cases, there is enough room for the reader to form conclusions about what really happened and the effects on the characters who find resilience after experiencing hard times. Some characters are likeable, others not so much. Some readers were motivated to pursue the previous books to find out more about these people while some of us felt this little town in Maine was very well covered by just this one story.

On April 13th, a Sunday rather than the customary Saturday, we will have a chance to interview Sash Bischoff, author of newly published literary thriller *Sweet Fury*, in person at a potluck luncheon starting at 1 pm hosted by Karen Lemcke, 334 University Ave., Davis, CA 95616.

Review of March 9 UNA Davis International Women's Day Event

By Juliana Wells

The celebration of United Nations International Women's Day is an annual March UNA Davis event. This year, it featured an intergenerational presentation by local Girl Scout Troop 2195 illustrating (literally and figuratively) challenges to stereotypes, and reflections on many years of Bangladeshi women "Paving the Way" by Forhat Chowdhury, who is attending UCD as a Humphrey Fellow this year. The focus of the whole program was Sustainable Development Goal #5, Gender Equity.

Audience members found on their seats an uplifting message from Lynn Dykstra, UNA Davis Advocacy chair, who could not be physically present on account of advocacy commitments in Washington, D.C. She quoted UN Secretary General António Guterres who warned that women's rights are under attack and added that "the world cannot stand by as our progress is reversed." As Lynn messaged us, thousands of women and men gathered to defend women's rights in Washington. Likewise, she encouraged us to undertake simple yet powerful actions to protect future generations and to sustain pathways for women to achieve their aspirations.

UNA Board member Verena Borton thanked all for attending and International House for its support. She acknowledged that we were guests on the land of the Patwin people who have for many centuries been stewards of this region. Verena explained that UNA Davis has existed for many decades and is one of 260 community and campus chapters across the nation, with over 20,000 members whose mission is to educate, inspire and advocate. As a reminder of the fact that the United Nations is a significant part of our daily and national life, she mentioned several familiar agencies such as UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, the Human Rights Council and Peacekeeping.

Verena then introduced Dahlia Garas and Melanie Gogol-Prokurat as the leaders of Girl Scout Troop 2195. The scouts had each researched and chosen a woman or girl who inspired them by, as they called it, “busting stereotypes.” They had then created artwork to illustrate the individual and added a short statement explaining the reason for their choice. Dahlia invited the girls to the front of the room to show their creations and read their brief statements. Board member Laleh Rastegarzadeh thanked them and told them that they are the next generation to exemplify innovation. The framed artwork remained on the wall at International House for two weeks.

These were their choices: Amia, Malala Yousafzai “who fought for girls to go to school”; Hana, Katya Echazaretta “Mexican who went into space”; Matilda, Kamala Harris who “ran for President as a black woman”; Sonia, Sonia Sotomayor “third woman and first Latina on Supreme Court”; Eliana, Ruth Bader Ginsburg “first Jew and second woman on Supreme Court”; Cora, Ruby Bridges, “first African American to enter all-white school”; Liliana, Coretta Scott King, “African American author who stood for equal rights”; Cyra, Frida Kahlo “who embraced her identity and art”; Sophia, Rosa Parks “who wanted all to thrive in harmony and who broke stereotypes”; Lea, Amelia Earhart “first to fly across the Atlantic”; Ulla, Harriet Tubman “who helped Black slaves to freedom”; and Elena, Cleopatra VII “the last Pharaoh who broke the stereotype that women couldn’t be strong and successful leaders.” An impressive list!

Laleh then introduced keynote speaker Forhat Chowdhury, who is a humanitarian architect specializing in emergency responses globally, with a focus on refugees, internally displaced people and climate migrants. Originally a commercial architect, she shifted her career during the 2017 Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh to address humanitarian emergencies. Her work deals with shelter design, site planning and climate-responsive initiatives. She has led humanitarian missions globally. As a Humphrey Fellow at UCD she is collaborating with experts in climate change and sustainability to integrate environmental consciousness into humanitarian efforts worldwide.



Forhat Chowdhury talks about Joan Baez, who performed the famous “Song of Bangladesh” in 1972.

After explaining the geography of her country and a bit of political history, including the fact that Joan Baez in 1972 performed a famous [“Song of Bangladesh”](#), Forhat introduced us to a truly amazing lineup of women who were “firsts” for their country or who made notable achievements as activists (many of the latter were jailed and tortured). With slides she told us anecdotes about women like Begun Rokeya (1880-1932), author of “Sultana’s Dream”; Leela Nag, first woman to attend Dhaka University; Pritilata Waddellar, revolutionary against British rule; politician Begun Razia Banu; Ila Mitra, athlete and peasant movement organizer; Noorjahan Begum (1925-2016), first official journalist and founder/owner of Begum Magazine (soliciting writing from other women); Sayeeda Khanani (1937-2020), photographer; Shahid Minar, activist for Bangladeshi language and uncredited designer of a memorial; Novera Ahmed (1939-2015) artist with posthumous award; Ferdousi Priyabhashini, artist and environmental activist; Babi Russell, fashion designer; Ruby Ghuznavi, material design; Marina Tabassum, architect who designed a mosque and was disparaged because the building was for men; Wasfia Nazreer, mountaineer; Nazia, first woman pilot in Bangladeshi Army; Siddika Kabul, nutritionist and author of widely used cookbook; Farzana Shumi, baker of fancy cakes at low prices for common folk; Rikta Akhter Lufta, one of BBC’s 100 inspiring women of 2024; Alpona Mistri and Karuna Mandali, rural seed guardians and farmers; Syeda Rubiya Hossein, humanitarian and UN worker; Dr. Tanjida Barauli, humanitarian who worked for Save the Children.

Chances are that none in the audience had previously been familiar with these outstanding citizens of Bangladesh or perhaps even with Cleopatra VII, so this was an education, as well as an inspiration for further study about the world’s outstanding women. Laleh moderated audience questions asked of all the presenters.

UNA Davis chapter president Edgar Trujillo thanked Forhat for her enlightening presentation. While he asked the audience to send a text asking members of Congress to support full funding for the United Nations and encouraged attendees to sign up for membership, Laleh and Verena distributed handwoven thank-you gifts to Forhat, Dahlia, Melanie and the Girl Scouts. Troop 2195 proudly wore their lanyards like medals.

Informal conversations, close-up viewing of the artwork and enjoying homemade refreshments on a beautiful, sunny, afternoon closed out another signature UNA Davis event.



Girl Scout Troop 2195 wearing lanyards handwoven by Verena and gifted to them by UNA-Davis.

Celebrate the 19th on March 22nd

By Karen Lemcke

On Saturday, March 22nd, our branch met to Celebrate the 19th (Amendment) at The Hive Tasting Room and Kitchen in Woodland, where the fresh outdoor air and ideas flowed, making our time together productive. The group of nine members (Gwendolyn Kaltoft, Heidi Gonzalez-Difuntorum, Carolyn van Hoecke, Juliana Wells, Nan Yates, Dottie Bonneau, Marlene Amador, Karen Lemcke, and Estelle Shiroma) and guest, Ross Lemcke, enjoyed a lively discussion and lunch with honey featured in our delicious meals and beverages.

Karen Lemcke recently participated in an AAUW-CA Zoom call focused on the impact of President Trump's Executive Orders on women. The discussion emphasized how these orders bypassed key protections outlined in the Civil Rights Act passed by Congress. In a troubling move, a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) "hotline" has been set up by DOGE—encouraging people to report government workers who continue to support DEI, even though we have been fighting for these values for the past 60 years. In March, AAUW national condemned the President's actions to dismantle the Department of Education, leading to major funding cuts, less oversight, and making it harder for students to get federal loans. These changes will impact first-generation college students especially hard, putting up more barriers to getting a degree. For example, Pell grants make college affordable for many students who otherwise would never have the opportunity to pursue higher education.

Meeting participants took notes about what actions we can take as individuals and with our branch to advocate for actions that protect our students and the future of education. These actions include:

Sign up to become a [two-minute activist](#). You can go to the [AAUW website](#) and sign up to receive emails that alert recipients of pending legislation. Tools are provided to contact our Congress members and State legislators by email. The text of the emails have been researched and written by AAUW, but you can personalize the emails. When you enter your zip code, the site identifies Congress members and State legislators who will receive emails. One of our youngest members who came Saturday, Marlene, a former Tech Trekker, mentioned that signing up to become a two-minute activist was quick and easy.

Branches can encourage members to be activists. In an AAUW-CA meeting Karen attended by Zoom, the speakers suggested we emphasize *belonging* as a central theme to encourage and inspire women to join us in moving forward, not backward. Speakers suggested that we advertise our meetings and programs using these methods to attract more members statewide.

1. Send e-blasts to our members (we already send a monthly newsletter and emails, as needed)
2. Let our sister branches know about our upcoming programs
3. Use social media to advertise that our meetings are open to the public
4. Explore new apps we can use to advertise our meetings
5. Host a monthly Call to Action event and invite nonmembers to learn more about AAUW's mission, values, and impact
6. Donate books on DEI to your local library
7. Reach out to speakers we are scheduling through social media and get to know them
8. Invite a female or male County Supervisor to our meetings

We talked about ways to team up with like-minded groups and coalitions to help keep the best government tools in place to advocate for social and racial justice, preserve our voting rights, access to education, fair pay, and other issues of importance to us. Organizations that provide advocacy support include:

- [Indivisible](#) - links to Mobilize Yolo County
- [Mobilize Yolo County - Take 10](#)
- [Activate America](#)
- [League of Women Voters Yolo County](#)

Let's go forward together!



March Celebrate the 19th at The Hive in Woodland.

UNA Update

By Verena Borton

1) **International Women’s Day** celebrated on March 9th at I-House was attended by a decidedly intergenerational audience of 55 who learned about an array of women who over the centuries have made an impact and challenged stereotypes – as presented by Davis Girl Scout troop 2195 and Bangladeshi Humphrey Fellow Forhat Chowdhury. A detailed account by Juliana Wells (on page 6) reflects highlights of the event.

2) UNA Davis looks forward to collaborating with AAUW Davis in a celebration of **Earth Day** on April 19th to be held as a zero waste outdoor picnic and social gathering on the grassy area surrounding the Peace rose beds south of 600 A St. We hope the roses, planted by UNA Davis thirty years ago, will be in bloom again by then. Details have been sent by email.



EARTH DAY PICNIC AT THE PARK

Join us for an informal gathering to honor Earth Day and the 30th anniversary of the UNA Davis Peace Roses. Bring a cultural dish to share, and in the spirit of conservation:

- 🍵 Please bring your own cup, plate, and utensils
- 💧 We'll provide some chairs, food tables, & iced lemon water

Let's celebrate our planet and community—together!

April 19, 2025 | At 12 PM - 2 PM
RSVP: unadavis.org/events →



Location: Grassy area adjacent to Civic Center Park, directly south of 600 A St Davis, CA 95616



3) The chapter's **Advocacy** chair, Lynn Dykstra, has had a busy March, with visits to four Congressional offices in Washington, D.C. and attendance at the 69th annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) where she presented at one event on SDG #5, Gender Equality. Congressman Mike Thompson's office invited us to an **in-district meeting** with Thompson in Davis on March 28th that had to be postponed at the last moment due to a flight cancellation. On April 9th Thompson's staff hosted office hours at Davis City Hall; Lynn and Verena attended.

4) Following (in italics) are some quotes from CSW via PassBlue that have particular significance for AAUW's mission. Please read.

*Activists and civil society groups considered the political declaration adopted recently at the Commission on the Status of Women gathering as a victory against strong opposition from the United States. However, women's rights groups remain deeply concerned that despite 30 years of advocacy, the declaration reveals **minimal progress in advancing gender equality** as politics disrupt gains and funding continues to lag.*

*The language of the nonbinding declaration was adopted on March 10. The document, focusing on women's global rights, was significantly watered down to accommodate opposition from some member states, **particularly the US**, during the months-long negotiations preceding the approval.*

*Many activists who spoke to PassBlue at various meetings during the annual women's rights conference did not say outright that the US was responsible for the weakened language on inclusion and rights. Diplomats who took part in the negotiations, however, told PassBlue that **the US opposed any gender language and wording deemed to advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies and the Sustainable Development Goals.***

"It is the policy of the United States to use clear and accurate language that recognizes women are biologically female and men are biologically male," a statement from the US mission to the UN read, explaining its stance. "We are disappointed the Political Declaration did not focus on the needs and perspectives of women and girls through precise terminology."

Jonathan Shrier, a diplomat with the US mission, elaborated at a CSW meeting, saying: "The United States government will no longer promote radical ideologies that replace women with men in spaces and opportunities designed for women. Nor will it devastate families by indoctrinating our sons and daughters to begin wars with their own bodies – or each other."

Additionally, **Washington opposed “equal pay for work of equal value”** wording to ensure pay equity between men and women. Instead, it wanted **“equal pay for equal work”** – which, although its meaning is unclear, could signal that gender considerations should not be part of pay-rate decisions.

“In the current climate of increasing hostility toward the Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality agenda, securing the selection of a woman as the next UN Secretary-General will be a significant challenge,” a proponent said in an email to PassBlue. **“While the United States has been vocal in its opposition, an increasing number of Member States are publicly *advocating for an all-female shortlist* for the position. Expanding this coalition and encouraging more Member States to take a public stance in favor of a female Secretary-General is essential.”**

5) March 27 news flash: White House withdraws Representative Elise Stefanik’s nomination for UN Ambassador (tight GOP margin in House).

6) Jane Roberts, author of *“34 Million Friends of the Women of the World”* was UNA Davis’ UN Day presenter in **2011** in a program co-sponsored by AAUW. She and Verena have stayed in touch and she sent a copy of her recent letter to the LA Times OpEd page, urging all of us to come to the rescue of UNFPA which is once again being defunded.

OpEd submitted to LA Times March 6, 2025 by Jane Roberts

Today the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) announced that the United States had withdrawn all U.S. funding from the world’s largest, most effective, reproductive health care agency which cares for the world’s most vulnerable women.

When George W. Bush withdrew \$34 million from the agency in 2002, Lois Abraham (deceased) and I separately asked 34 million Americans for \$1. We raised several million dollars in small contributions through a marvelous grassroots effort.

I was a retired French teacher and UNFPA invited me to visit their work in Mali and Senegal. I read their State of the World Population Report in French to have all the vocabulary. In a recent letter published by your paper I stated that the total fertility rate in Mali in 2002 was seven children per woman. Lots of misery.

The United Nations Foundation in the years that followed, funded my travel all over the country, enabling me to speak about this to universities, civic groups, and women’s organizations. While on an airplane flight I wrote this poem that appears in my *“34 Million Friends of the Women of the World”* book. I love it.

We are 34 Million Friends of the Women of the World

Every baby welcome now
Loved and fed and vaccinated
Mothers children learning now
Reading writing educated

Every child a heartfelt joy
Every child a book and toy
Every child with wings unfurled
Whether it be boy or GIRL

No more death while giving birth
Because a midwife's taking care
No more mothers in the earth
Because a midwife's helping there

To AIDS and violence we say NO
To family planning we say YES
Human rights are the way to go
Surely we can do no less

Woman lying on a donkey cart*
Dirt road heat wave and in labor
Doctor put her in his truck
Luck that day was in her favor

And all of us who have so much
One dollar we can share
To show the women of the world
That WE THE PEOPLE care

We are 34 Million Friends
We are going to have our say
We are reaching out to the world
Through the UNFPA.

* Jane Roberts' book shows a picture of the woman on the donkey cart.

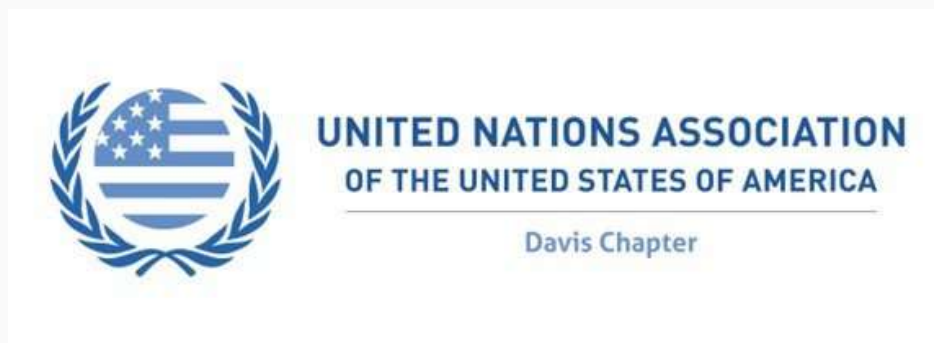
When I speak of violence against girls and women I'm talking about child marriage, female genital mutilation, lack of access to pre-natal care, lack of access to family planning, and sending boys but not girls to school.

UNFPA in its schools and clinics offers family life education and access to top medical care. Have you heard of obstetric fistula? Usually it happens to a young woman, child, pregnant, where the delivery lasts for hours, no C-section available. A tear develops between the birth canal and the bladder and/or rectum. The woman/girl is rendered permanently incontinent without surgery. Imagine!! \$500,000 of our first million dollars went to fistula repair. At Le Dantec hospital in Dakar I visited a roomful of young girls waiting for their surgeries and the UNFPA doctor who performs them.

Come on American people. We can do this. We are going to "grassroot" (new verb) this all around the country. www.usaforunfpa.org is where YOU do this, credit card or snail mail. Collect a buck from everyone you know. Let the world know that the American people are with the world's women and their families.

Note. Several years ago a chapter of UNESCO nominated 1000 women worldwide for the Nobel Peace Prize for doing good stuff. Lois and I were in the group. <https://1000peacewomen.org/en>

7) See Juliana's report on International Women's Day on page 6.



AAUW National News

AAUW National Voting

In April, AAUW National and AAUW-CA kick off voting on various issues, bylaws, and board positions. The AAUW National voting period is April 14th to May 13th, and the AAUW-CA voting period will begin on April 26, 2025, and will close on May 16, 2025 (see article in AAUW-CA news)

Members will receive an electronic ballot from AAUW National with their unique voting credentials from vote@simplyvoting.com, our third-party voting service. Add this email address to your safe sender list to ensure your ballot reaches you. Members without an email address on file will receive a paper ballot. Eligible voters are those who were members as of March 14, 2025.

Upcoming Webinars

AAUW always has webinars on deck for our members. Check out the [2025 Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative \(WEEI\) Webinar schedule](#) for live training courses. Also, amid growing attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion, AAUW is taking action. Join one or all sessions to stay informed!

- Funding Futures: Understanding Changes to Sex and Gender-Based Scholarship Programs | April 15, 7:00 p.m. ET [Register Here](#)

Did you miss our 3/26 webinar, Standing Strong Against Attacks on Equity in Education? [Check out the recording here](#) to learn about policy changes in education, how they impact women and marginalized communities, and how AAUW is taking action to defend equity.

AAUW-CA News

AAUW-CA Voting

The AAUW-CA voting period will begin on April 26, 2025, and will close on May 16, 2025. AAUW-CA will provide every member the opportunity to vote electronically. For the few members for whom AAUW-CA does not have an email address, a ballot will be sent via postal mail with information on how to vote.

On April 26th, each member will receive an email message containing a personal invitation to vote. There will be a link to click that will take you to the ballot. No password or code needs to be entered. You must submit your electronic ballot by **May 16, 2025**.

You are being asked to vote to:

- [Approve the Public Policy Priorities \(PPP\)](#)
- [Approve a dues increase](#)
- [Elect the Board of Directors](#)

Public Policy Priorities (PPP) for 2025-2027

The AAUW California Public Policy Program establishes policy directives to guide our members, inform our legislative priorities, and serve our mission. Every two years, we reassess these directives to determine if updates need to be made in light of an ever-changing cultural and legislative landscape. Members are invited and encouraged to make suggestions through a statewide survey, which was conducted in the Fall of 2024, and resulted in comments from over 680 of our members. Thanks to all who submitted comments. The AAUW California Public Policy Committee has reviewed all submitted comments and has incorporated several changes in the proposed PPP for the next two-year period of July 2025 through June 2027.

The proposed changes were presented to and adopted by the AAUW California Board of Directors and are being put to a vote by the membership April 26 to May 16, 2025, as required by our bylaws.

AAUW California's Public Policy Priorities, which are member-driven and approved, inform our legislative and other forms of activism. Consistent with our organizational value of achieving fair and equitable opportunities for all in our diverse society, and our mission to advance equity for women and girls specifically, we advocate for policies that promote, enhance, and ensure security, justice, access, and representation in four specific priority areas, as listed. As such, AAUW California advocates for policies that promote, enhance, and ensure:

Economic Security for All Women

- Equity in the workplace
- Enforcement of workplace anti-discrimination statutes
- Security in retirement
- Access to job training for career development
- Work-life balance, including access to quality affordable childcare and paid sick and caregiving leave

Equal Access to Quality Public Education for All Students

- Vigorous enforcement of Title IX provisions, which protect against discrimination based on gender in any educational programs or activities
- Adequate and equitable funding at all educational levels, including pre-school and post-secondary
- Increased support for and protection of STEM programs for girls and women
- Civics instruction in all California high schools
- Access to diverse staff and to curriculum that represents historically accurate information
- Funding adequate to support a strong infrastructure and equitable access to resources, including technology
- Opposition to diversion of public funds to nonpublic elementary and secondary schools and charter schools that do not meet public school civil rights and accountability standards

Social & Racial Justice for All Members of Society

- Self-determination in reproductive health
- Equal access to quality affordable housing, a healthy environment, and health care, including gender affirming care
- Freedom from violence in all its forms and wherever it occurs, including violence against historically marginalized groups, and support for policies that reduce or prevent gun violence
- Guarantee of civil and constitutional rights for all, including all forms of gender identity and expression, and all family structures; support for efforts to resist anti-immigrant policies which infringe on those rights, including protection of students from privacy violations and immigration raids on campus
- Protection and expansion of voting rights
- Support for United Nations sustainable development goals that address human rights and women's and girls' concerns

Increased Representation of Women in Leadership Roles

- Proportional appointment to publicly held corporate boards
- Access to leadership skills training
- Access to programs that promote participation in public service careers

Prepare for Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April

by Claire Noonan, AAUW CA Public Policy Committee

Sexual assault violence prevention calls for the creation of safer communities. Addressing the root causes of this kind of violence is difficult as it involves a multipronged approach, including improving street and housing conditions, providing education, and offering support services. We should work to advance policies at workplaces and schools, discuss sexual assault and its consequences with friends and family, and prioritize prevention in our communities.

Official channels for raising awareness about sexual assault violence and creating and implementing the policies needed for prevention has a long history in the United States; however, given the current administration's attack on "DEI," much of this work is now under threat of being dismantled.

Violence awareness began officially when the [Family Violence Prevention and Services Act \(FVPSA\)](#) became law in 1984, providing the primary federal funding for domestic violence victims and their children via emergency shelters and related assistance. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), [passed by Congress in 1994](#), is comprehensive federal legislation to end violence against women. In 2001, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center coordinated the first national [Sexual Assault Awareness Month \(SAAM\)](#), building on years of advocacy and awareness-building. In 2009, President Barack Obama [officially declared April](#) to be Sexual Assault Awareness Month, which presidents have proclaimed every year since then.

As part of this wider federal push, awareness-raising and prevention efforts around sexual assault violence have been more firmly embedded in core policies and practices. For instance, the Department of Defense has been trying to create a culture to eliminate sexual assault, requiring a personal commitment from all Service members. Educational institutions have benefitted as well: the final Title IX revisions by President Joe Biden

in April 2024 reflected the stronger shift to prevent assault actions on school campuses. These revisions also sought to protect more people, expanding the definition of “sex-based harassment” to include harassment based on sex characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex stereotypes, and pregnancy. At the state level, In September 2024 Governor Newsom signed eight bills on domestic violence. The legislation created a new victims’ services fund using penalties from white-collar crimes and expanded the ability of victims to access restraining orders.

While all of this movement has been positive, by the second week of President Donald Trump’s current administration, the Office of Management and Budget had ordered a freeze of all federal financial assistance in all agencies including those that oversee government programs and funding for organizations that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services, such as Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control, and the Department of Justice. [Multiple court orders have blocked the freezes from taking effect](#), but in some cases funds haven’t been received for programs aimed at preventing sexual violence.

In addition, the current Administration has attacked the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services and the Office on Violence Against Women, who must now disclose information that may further eliminate funding and resources, such as whether grants are being used to support “removable or illegal aliens or immigrants;” to “promote gender ideology;” or to advance “illegal DEI” programs—although at the time of writing, early challenges have signaled that enforcement of these provisions and [denial of funding may be unconstitutional](#).

As individuals and non-profit organizations, we can contact our Congressmembers and state officials to back efforts to get the money flowing to relevant organizations and programs that raise awareness of and prevent sexual assault violence.

We can also act in our local communities to reduce sexual assault violence. We can ask to improve lighting to make streets and other public spaces safer. We can make sure our city, county, and public health officials promote policies for families and children, address economic security, and provide access to safe, stable housing. We can collaborate with community-led organizations that coordinate resources and services that help with trauma, mental health and substance use, all of which lead to sexual abuse. (from [CDC-Violence Prevention](#))

Overall, we can all work to [support the organizations country-wide](#) that are on the front lines of dealing with sexual assault violence. [Click here](#) for downloadable free materials to share from the Domestic Violence Awareness Project.

What Can You Do?

- Contact Congress members and state officials to back efforts to get the money flowing to relevant organizations and programs that raise awareness of and prevent sexual assault violence;
- [Act in our local communities](#) to reduce sexual assault violence through improving lighting, promoting policies for families and children, address economic security, and help coordinate trauma resources
- [Support the organizations country-wide](#) that are on the front lines of dealing with sexual assault violence
- Share resources from the [Domestic Violence Awareness Project](#)

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

“If you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven’t spent the night with a mosquito.” African proverb

Formatted by Emmi Kuimelis