

VOLUME: 54 NO: 9

UPCOMING AAUW EVENTS

- 11 / 29 : FOOD SHARE
THROUGH IBC
- 12 / 01 : HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE
- 12 / 05 : COFFEE & CHAT
- 12 / 06 : HOLIDAY ZOOM PARTY
- 01 / 13 : UNITY BOOK GROUP
- 02 / 07 : MEMBER MEETING

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OAK TWIG
WINTER 2020
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"I have walked that long road to freedom. . . . But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities." – Nelson Mandela

I came across the quotation above in my reading, and I thought it had a profound resonance with our recent experiences and the ways we might deal with them. The pandemic, the shadows of racism in our country, and our recent election have called a great many things into question. And Mandela's words remind me that we don't have the luxury of simply taking a long break and going on in the same old ways. As educated women and members of AAUW, we must act to make things better for others and ourselves through both our words and our actions.

On our national website it says: "Since our founding in 1881, AAUW members have examined and taken positions on the fundamental issues of the day — educational, social, economic, and political." So what can we do now?

I believe those words tell us that in terms of the COVID19 pandemic we must follow the information from scientists about the necessary precautions from wearing masks, washing our hands thoroughly, disinfecting surfaces, maintaining social distance, and not attending large group gatherings. That is what people who value the importance of education do. And it is likely we will need to do that for quite a while yet.

Further, when faced with the results of implicit and systemic racism, we must once again bring our education to bear. We need to find out all that we can through books and articles, webinars, social media, study groups, and discussions. And we must reach out with curiosity and respect to those whose life experience and ideas are different from ours to better understand their perspectives and our own. And our branch is planning a program in the new year to help us do just that.

We also need to embrace politics, not in a partisan way but as the reality of what it means to live in a democracy. Ideas are not inherently political. We make them that way through our interpretations and emotional attachments. As our national AAUW president, Kimberly Churches has reminded us, AAUW does not support candidates or parties. But we do join together to support positions that will benefit our communities, our country, and our world..

We certainly should take care of our own health and wellbeing in these challenging times. However, we also need to reach out and do what we can to make our world a better place. These are just some of the reasons I am proud to be a member of the American Association of University Women. Glad you are with us too.



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



THE DAYTIME BOOK GROUP meets at 10:00 AM via Zoom. Please contact Joan Udani for any questions joanudani@hotmail.com

NOVEMBER 23 *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelidas reviewer Berniece Reed

DECEMBER 28 *The Boston Girl* by Anita Diamanté reviewer Laura Ziff.

JANUARY 25 *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah reviewer Jeanette Hosek.

FEBRUARY 22 *Next Year in Havana* by Chanel Cleeton reviewer Wendy Hoffman.

MARCH 22 *Orange is the New Black* by Piper Kerman reviewer Jean Maxwell.

APRIL 26 *This Tender Land* by Kent Krueger reviewer Betty Stapleford.

MAY 24 *The Only Woman in the Room* by Marie Benedict reviewer Claudia Spelman.

JUNE 28 *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett reviewer Pat O'Donnell

THE EVENING BOOK GROUP meets at 7.00 pm on the third Thursday of the month.

For any questions please contact Sharon Dyer creationsbysharon@prodigy.net or 818-991-0689.

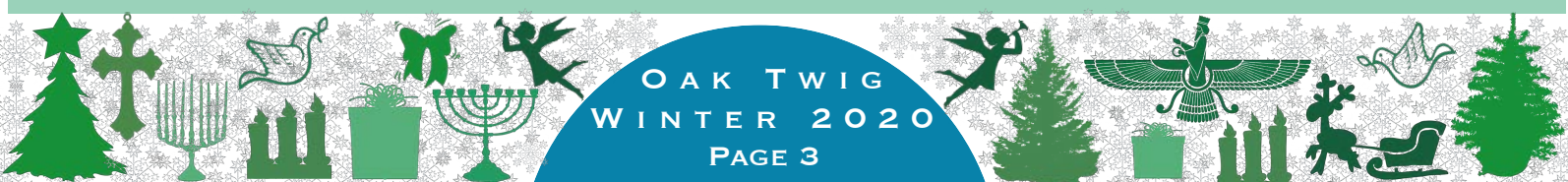
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17 *The Killers of the Flower Moon* by David Grann. The reviewer is to be determined. (Via Zoom)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21 *Look Me in the Eye* by John Elder Robison. Our reviewer will be Sharon Dyer. (Hostess to be determined)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 *An Officer and a Spy* by Robert Harris. Our reviewer will be Jean Maxwell. (Hostess to be determined)

THURSDAY, MARCH 18 *An Anonymous Girl* By Greer Hendricks Pat O'Donnell. (Hostess to be determined)

THURSDAY, APRIL 15 *Green Bottles* By Vivian Jeanette Katlan The reviewer is to be determined. (Hostess to be determined)





SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



COFFEE AND CHAT

Now that the election season is over, we will resume our Coffee and Chat sessions on-line on the following dates: December 5, January 2, February 6, March 6.

Please contact Betty Stapleford for the Zoom invitation each month.

THE HIKING GROUP

California State AAUW and our insurance company are not sanctioning any in person meetings of our branches for the remainder of this year. Therefore, we will not be posting Hiking group information.

Please contact Melanie Ashen for further information.



UNITY BOOK GROUP

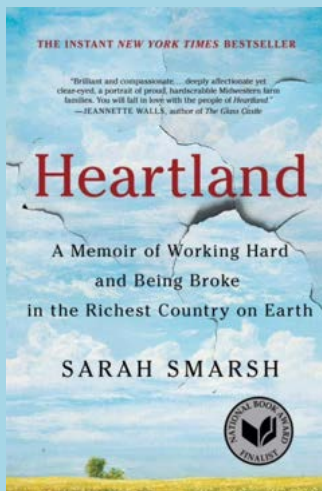
All are invited to join this terrific group for our discussions about interesting and unique books, mostly with a multi-cultural or diversity type theme or author. We will be reading for January 13 (Wed) *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth* by Sarah Smarsh.

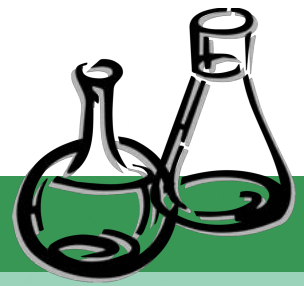
Here's a brief excerpt from the NYTimes review to tantalize you:

Sarah Smarsh escaped poverty, she believes, because, unlike her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, she didn't become a teenage mom. In part, she says, this was because she was among the first generation of her family to have at least one constant home, dating to when her maternal grandmother, Betty, married her seventh husband, Arnie. (By contrast, Smarsh's mom, Jeannie, moved 48 times before starting high school.) Such is the reality of poverty. The memoir flickers to life at that home, a humble farmhouse on 160 acres of wheat fields outside Wichita.

Our meeting will be on Wednesday January 13 at 2pm. NOTE day change from Thursdays.

Please contact Sally Hibbitts or Shoshana Brower for more information or to be added to the Zoom invite for the next meeting.





Our Branch still has not heard yet about the planned “virtual camp” for next summer 2021. When I hear more, I will be looking for volunteers to assist with it. Please let me know if you are interested in this opportunity to assist our Tech Trek campers.

In addition, we are continuing setting up a Tech Trek Alumnae Group (TTAG). We’ve got a committee ready to expand this project focusing on mentoring our former campers and guiding them through their high school to early college years. Several of us attended a webinar recently presented by Beach Cities AAUW, which has created an awesome TTAG! <https://beachcities-ca.aauw.net/2019/03/01/ttag/> All of our meetings are via Zoom. If you’d like to be involved with this other opportunity, please let me know.

Thank you.

Sally Hibbitts, Branch Tech Trek Coordinator



SPEECH TREK



Speech Trek – Our branch has long supported the incredible Tech Trek program for young women in middle school who are interested in STEM fields. And we will certainly continue that vital work.

But some of us have become aware of another program called Speech Trek that has been developed by AAUW California and is being sponsored by other branches in our state.

It is a curriculum that encourages young women to develop their presentational skills as accomplished speakers. If you would like to find out more about this program and perhaps introduce it to our branch,

please contact Betty Stapleford.





LATINO YOUTH LEADERSHIP GROUP



AAUW Latino Youth Leadership Group at TOHS meets twice a month. We usually have 20-25 members attend our meetings.

A recent presenter was Luis Tun, NPHS '18 & USC '22. Luis is one of our fabulous former Latino Leadership students and is now a junior at USC on a full scholarship. He's hoping to retain his DACA status as he completes his education. Luis is a PoliSci/Business Major and was a stellar speaker for our group. In addition our group members are working on developing their leadership skills and helping support their community. The students really enjoy and need your support.

If you'd like to Zoom into our meetings, please let Betty Stapleford know so she can include you on the invite.





COMMUNITY OUTREACH



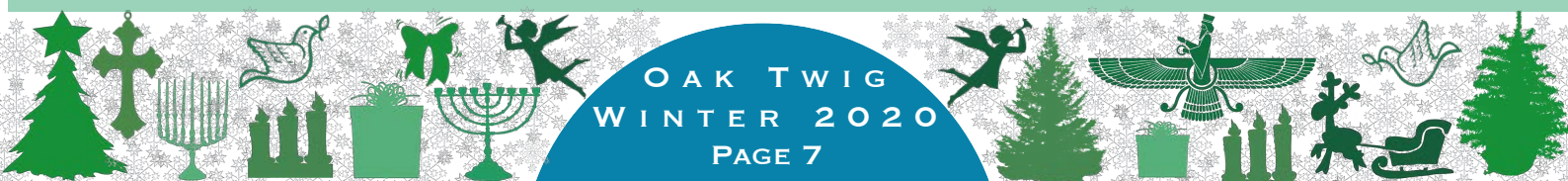
Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity to support Food Share with our IBC partners. You have until **November 29th** to support our efforts and get food to those who need it most.

An Invitation from your AAUW Interbranch Council
Please join us as we work together to raise funds to support FoodShare and provide food for hungry families in our communities. We are offering you lovely items for purchase with the proceeds going to support local food banks that partner with FoodShare. Most exciting among those items is the community basket! Take a look at the order form. Have fun making your purchases.

Reach out to your family and friends with this opportunity to purchase gifts such as maple candy, lavender lotion or our community basket!! We are working with a fundraising organization called FarmRaiser. View our online market here:

<https://www.farmraiser.com/campaigns/aauw-ibc-fundraiser-for-food-share/market>

This provides the AAUW Chapters in Camarillo, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks a unique opportunity to showcase what an integral and valuable organization we are to our communities. This provides us the opportunity to join together to make a real difference in the lives of so many that are in need especially at this time of COVID. Let's strive for 100% participation in each of our branches! Let's step up and make a difference for those that need us most! If you have any questions please contact Anne LaFianza at annelafianza@gmail.com. Thank you so much for your support!!





COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Due to Covid we have had to alter a bit the Community Outreach efforts both for safety and to address what is needed from us as a Branch. And, we are in a position to make an enormous difference in our community.

As many of you may already know, last year proved to be quite challenging for Westminster Free Clinic's Holiday toy giveaway. They were in an absolute crisis. There were no toys; until the community including our AAUW Branch stepped up.

The 2020 Holiday Season promises to be different. Our Branch will begin collecting toys now, in order to be sure that there is a toy for all the children that need them most. There will be a bin in front of my home at 1683 Camberwell Place from now until December 1st. You can also order toys and have them delivered to my home as well.

We can make an enormous difference in the lives of these children and their parents by making sure that every child has a toy at the Holidays.

If you have any questions please contact Anne at annelafianza@gmail.com / 805 390 7528.





Dear AAUW Thousand Oaks Inc. (CA) Branch members,

All of us here at AAUW National are holding you and all members of your sister branches throughout California and other western states in our thoughts as you cope with this most horrific fire season. Along with everything else going on over the past eight months (and counting), it just seems to be too much. 2020 – what a tumultuous and difficult year. That’s why, it really touches my heart that AAUW Thousand Oaks Inc. (CA) Branch chose this time to make generous gifts to support our greatest needs and the goals of our strategic plan. Please do share my personal thanks with all those whose passion for AAUW’s mission made these gifts possible.

Your gifts provide especially important support now. Throughout this fraught election year, AAUW has marked the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the 55th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act with an intense focus on supporting voting rights and getting out the vote. We are also working to ensure that other gains we’ve won won’t be lost – in educational opportunity, economic security, leadership and more.

The pandemic has exacerbated and highlighted inequities that run deep and with your support we’re meeting the moment. My recent article in Newsweek highlighted the pressures on working moms, too. I’m proud to report that your national staff is as hard at work and as motivated as we’ve ever been to secure equity for all women and girls.

Thank you, thank you, thank you – and I hope to “see” many of you on a Zoom AAUW webinar soon! Have a safe and healthy Thanksgiving season ahead.

With gratitude,

Kimberly Churches (she/her/hers)
Chief Executive Officer
AAUW





HOLIDAY ZOOM PARTY



AAUW Thousand Oaks HOLIDAY ZOOM PARTY



JOIN US!

**Sunday,
December 6th
4:00 to 6:00 p.m.**

**Learn to make a
holiday cocktail!**

**Snack and
dessert recipes!**

**Virtual BINGO
with prizes!**

Musical performances!

Show us your holiday spirit!



#ITOOBELONG

If you live in America and are a person of color, you are more likely to experience or have experienced racial inequality. Whether this may be covert racism or something more subtle, it is still wrong. White liberals/progressives are usually proud of their egalitarian values, but many do not realize their own subconscious prejudices.

At a time in America where African American individuals such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are senselessly murdered on our streets to the horrific living conditions in immigration detention centers, we cannot be silent any longer. We can no longer tiptoe around the issue of race. It is time to be open and honest about our experiences, as a proud American person of color, in order to benefit us all. This is why we need your help.

Storytelling has been a great way to inform and educate those around us and AAUW TO wants to know your story. Your story may be as simple as someone looking at you with disgust due to you speaking your native tongue, or someone asking you “to go back to where you came from” or being called a racial slur, we at the Oak Twig would be honored to hear it and publish it.

Below are the guidelines:

1. Your article may range from a paragraph to a page.
2. An incident you experienced or witnessed and/or how it made you feel. We'd prefer local experiences, but elsewhere is ok too.
3. You can choose to remain anonymous or include your name. (it is your choice).
4. Please submit to aauwoactwig@gmail.com

If you have any questions, please contact
Sally Hibbits at sjhibbits@aol.com or
Melanie Weerasinghe
aauwoactwig@gmail.com



#ITOOBELONG - MELANIE V WEERASINGHE

I want to begin by stating what this is not. It is not an attack on anyone or any group. It is not intended to offend nor is it aimed to hurt. It is not a smear campaign on a particular racial group nor is it a call for revenge. What this is, is a cry for humanity. It is a cry for unity. It is the people of color in this country asking for a moment of compassion and an ounce of kindness. The underrepresented communities asking to be seen and heard. To be understood and accepted. To be embraced and to be treated as equals.

The definition of "People of Color" can be described in a variety of ways. But in plain and simple English it equates to those who are not White. The acronym BIPOC which is more commonly used and accurate stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of color, tributing and acknowledging the great racial inequalities faced by the Native and Black communities. From the genocide of Native Indians to enslaving Black individuals, to locking up immigrants in cages, at varying levels, minorities have been subjected to years of racial discrimination, stigmatization, and pain, which has trickled down generations impacting BIPOC individuals today.

In my case, the racism I have faced hasn't been blunt. I haven't been asked to go back to the country I am from. I haven't had to fear for my life when being stopped by the police or going for a run in a predominantly Caucasian neighborhood. I haven't had to fear that my family or I would be taken away from our homes by ICE, nor have I had a racial slur yelled at me. I acknowledge that I am lucky, but I am wary about the possibility that I could be part of racism's next target group. The covert racism I have faced was being asked to cook more American by my roommate assuming my cooking would be filled with spices when it was dominated by mac and cheese, roast chicken, and fried rice. People constantly mispronouncing my name and believing it is okay due to it being an ethnic name. People avoiding me and preferring to speak to the Caucasian girl when working at the front desk, or people assuming I am of Indian descent simply because of the complexion of my skin, are just a few to name. (I am Sri Lankan, and no we are not part of India, we do not speak the same language, nor do we eat the same food. There are some similarities between the cultures, but similarity does not mean the same.)

As a South Asian woman, I will never know the struggles of what it is to be a Black woman in America, I will never know the pain of a Native American or the fight a Latinx individual faces on a daily basis. But as a person of color, I can relate to the feeling of not being welcomed, of not belonging, and being made to feel small. It is with this commonality that I encourage minorities to share your story. To not only educate those around us but to stand up for yourself and against the systemic racism we have been enduring for far too long. If you are not a minority, I encourage you to read. To read and really listen to the stories being told. Learning isn't like reaching the summit of the mountain, there is no final destination. It is a continuous process of understanding and acquiring new information and simultaneously unlearning the prejudices and biases so strongly embedded within us. It isn't by any means an easy task, but it is an absolutely necessary one. Too many lives have been lost, too many cries have gone unheard, and too many human rights have been violated for us to be silent any longer. We must all do our part to bridge the gap and end this cycle of discrimination and racial injustice once and for all.

“BUILDING EQUITY CENTERED CONVERSATIONS”

SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, February 7 From 2 - 4PM.

**AAUW TO is responding to the issues raised at our Fall October 10 Member meeting!
We invite you to join us:**

“Building Equity Centered Conversations”

led by Dr. Lisa Miller, Assist. Supt., Student Services, CVUSD.

RSVP required (for Zoom Invitation) to Betty

