

UPCOMING AAUW EVENTS

**05 / 24 : DAYTIME BOOK
GROUP**

**05 / 28 : EVENING BOOK
GROUP**

**06 / 05 : END OF YEAR
MEETING**

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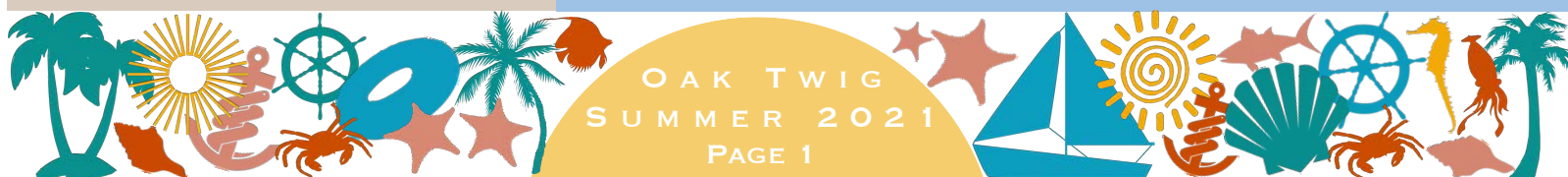
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CO-PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE - BETTY STAPLEFORD



As hard as it may be for me to believe, at the end of June, I will have completed two years as president and then co-president of our Thousand Oaks AAUW branch. And I have learned a lot about myself and our organization during those years.

First, I want to share a special message of gratitude with Peggy Buckles for working together with me during the last year to tackle the challenges of technology and the multitude of tasks that were necessary during the COVID 19 pandemic. We shared the responsibilities of the presidency by keeping in touch with each other and doing what we could to accomplish what was important.

Thanks, Peggy!

In addition, I want to let the officers, members, and associates of the Board know how much I treasured all the things we accomplished together during the last two years. Along with the interest group chairs and community outreach and branch program leaders, I think we can be proud of what we were able to do. And we had lots of help from members who filled roles both large and small. Blessings to you all.

I also kept discovering that events in the larger world were always impinging on our lives and efforts. The big one was, of course, the pandemic, forcing us to find new ways to perform tasks such as the scheduling of online meetings and climbing the steep Zoom learning curve. Then there were the various political conflicts, the recognition of the racism in ourselves and others, the results of overwhelming gun violence, the local and national immigration crises, the personal and statewide economic upheaval, the lack of in-person social contact, and so many other things. Each day seemed to bring new tests of our ability to cope.

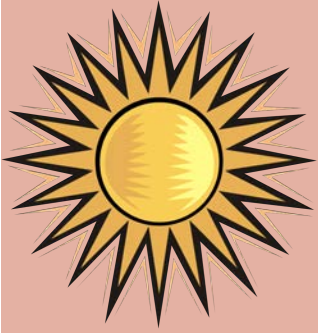
But this is what I think about most at the end these last two years. I believe we can do more great things together than any of us can do alone. I think we have all the skills we need to face the unexpected if we keep our vision clear and focused. And I am convinced we can find new answers to perplexing questions when we open our minds and hearts to what is and can be.

It has been my honor to serve with all of you.

Betty



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



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

MAY 24 *Next Year in Havana* by Chanel Cleeton (Reviewer Wendy Hoffman)

JUNE 28 *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett (Reviewer Pat O'Donnell)

JULY 26 *Woman of Troublesome Creek* by Kim Michele Richardson

AUGUST 23 *City of Girls* by Elizabeth Gilbert

COFFEE AND CHAT

Contact Betty Stapleford at bstaple4d@gmail.com for an invitation.

When: June 5 and August 7 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.



THE EVENING BOOK GROUP meets at 7:00 PM via Zoom. Please contact Sharon Dyer for any questions jcreationsbysharon@prodigy.net / 818-991-0689

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SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



MAY 28 *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett (Reviewer Pat O'Donell)

Bestselling author Ann Patchett offers another compelling read in *The Dutch House*, which takes readers into a man's fascinating journey from abandonment to maturity and eventual forgiveness. Danny Conroy looks back on his childhood with memories marred by the bitterness of his past. The only saving grace in the darkness of his recollections is the constant and comforting presence of his older sister, Maeve, who takes on the role of mother to Danny after their own mother walked out on them. The siblings' grandiose childhood home is a 1922 mansion in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia previously owned by a wealthy Dutch family. The Dutch house is both the witness and the object of Danny Conroy's childhood miseries. Described by *The Washington Post* as a "subtle mystery, psychological page-turner," Ann Patchett's latest offering promises to be as enthralling as her other best selling works.

JUNE 20 *An Officer and a Spy* by Robert Harris (Reviewer Jean Maxwell)

A whistle-blower. A witch hunt. A cover-up. Secret tribunals, out-of-control intelligence agencies, and government corruption. Welcome to 1890s Paris.

Alfred Dreyfus has been convicted of treason, sentenced to life imprisonment on a far-off island, and publicly stripped of his rank. Among the witnesses to his humiliation is Georges Picquart, an ambitious military officer who believes in Dreyfus's guilt as staunchly as any member of the public. But when he is promoted to head of the French counter-espionage agency, Picquart finds evidence that a spy still remains at large in the military—indicating that Dreyfus is innocent. As evidence of the most malignant deceit mounts and spirals inexorably toward the uppermost levels of government, Picquart is compelled to question not only the case against Dreyfus but also his most deeply held beliefs about his country, and about himself.

A note from Sharon Dyer to the AAUW members:

I would like to thank the wonderful members of our branch for all the cards, messages of support and flowers after the death of my husband and my recent knee replacement surgery. It has meant so much to me.

Thanks again, Sharon Dyer.





SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

UNITY BOOK GROUP

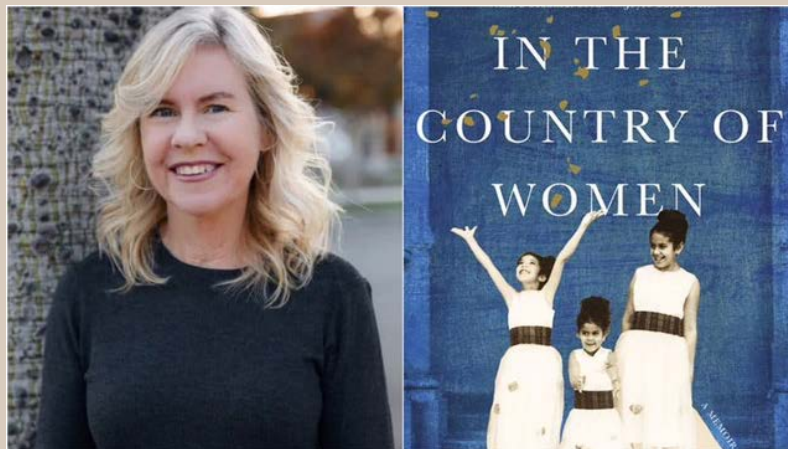
All are invited to join this thought provoking group for the discussions about interesting and unique books, mostly with a multi-cultural or diversity type theme or author. The next book is a memoir titled *In The Country of Women* by Susan Straight and it will be discussed at our next meeting on Wednesday, May 19 at 1:30 pm (note change of time).

Here's a brief excerpt from the Good Reads review to hopefully intrigue you:

" In inland Southern California, near the desert and the Mexican border, Susan Straight, a white self-proclaimed book nerd, and Dwayne Sims, an African American basketball player, started dating in high school. After college, they married and drove to Amherst, Massachusetts, where Straight met her teacher and mentor, James Baldwin, who encouraged her to write. Once back in Riverside, at weekly driveway barbecues and fish fries with the large, close-knit Sims family, Straight—and eventually her three daughters—learned the stories of Dwayne's ancestors. Some women escaped violence in post-slavery Tennessee, some escaped murder in Jim Crow Mississippi, and some fled abusive men. Straight's mother-in-law, Alberta Sims, is the descendant at the heart of this memoir. Susan's family, too, reflects the hardship and gumption of women pushing onward—from Switzerland, Wisconsin, Canada, and the Colorado Rockies to California."

As a special treat, the author Dr. Susan Straight, will be joining our conversation about her memoir. It will be nice to hear her comments about this interesting read. Dr. Straight is a Professor of Creative Writing at UC Riverside.

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





TECH TREK



Tech Trek Update: Our Campers Are Ready!

Exciting news was recently received by our four selected 2020 campers, as they've been accepted for the new Virtual Tech Trek Camp 2021. These girls will be joining about a hundred or more other California girls participating, from their homes, in a Virtual Robotics/STEM Camp this summer. These local girls are: Greceldy Hau, Lene Nagorsen, Alyssa Hunnicutt, and Ana Chow. They are all currently in grade 8 in the CVUSD, normally Tech Trek is only for grade 7 girls but due to COVID, there have been many changes.

This all new Virtual Camp was created last summer and there were 50 girls enrolled in it as a trial run. Our AAUW CA Tech Trek Leaders have spent countless hours creating the curriculum for this camp along with transferring the entire Tech Trek process to an all digital platform.

The 2021 camp will be in three one week sessions and the campers will be on Zoom throughout this time period creating their robot project in teams with other campers from across the state. The robotics kits are provided by QualCom Corporation in San Diego and the campers will be creating in the morning on an interesting project of their own design. At lunchtime, there will be speakers from various AAUW Branches talking to the girls about career paths in STEM fields. Then in the afternoon, the campers will be working on other daily STEM projects.

We are very lucky too, as three of our previous campers were selected to be Junior Counselors for this coming summer. They were all Tech Trekkers in 2019 and are looking forward to assisting with the Virtual Camp. These girls are: Sydney Bandejas, Sammy Gallegos, and Swasinya Jayarmar.

It's anticipated that the 2022 Tech Trek Camp will be back on the UCSB Campus, however the fees will probably be raised. Therefore, we always appreciate your support of Tech Trek. Please make checks payable to "AAUW CA SPF" and mail directly to c/o Sally Hibbits, 3119 W. Adirondack Ct., Westlake Village, CA 91362.

Alyssa Hunnicutt.



Greceldy Hau

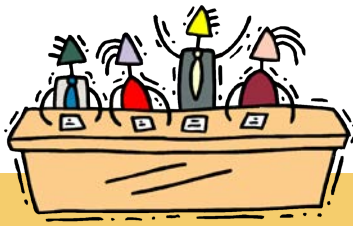


Ana Chow



Lene Nagorsen





END-OF-YEAR MEETING

June 5th is Coming Soon!

Hope you will join us for our end-of-year meeting
on ZooooooooooooM!

We will elect our Board Members for 2021-22
and recognize the outgoing Board Members.

Announce our Named Gift Honorees.

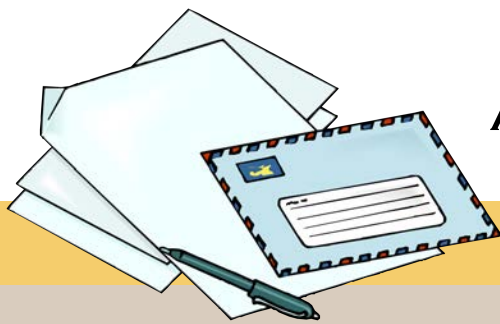
Honor our 40 year plus members.

And

Be inspired by an interactive presentation
from our own Claudia Spelman and her life experiences
to find new ways to understand our chaotic world
and make a difference where and when we can.

Contact Betty Stapleford - bstaple4d@gmail.com
to RSVP and receive a Zoom invitation





AAUW MEMBERSHIP



It is time to renew your AAUW membership.

Please respond to an email you will receive from national which will enable you to pay your dues online or send a check for \$103 to the following address:

AAUW - T.O. PO Box 4223; Thousand Oaks, CA 91359.
Please write the check to AAUW - T.O.

This will renew your dues until 6/30/22.

If you have any questions,
please contact Eloda at (310) 809-0926 or elodatom@verizon.net.





#ITOOBELONG - MEHEK MALIK

There is a look, a moment when your eyes meet another's and, you understand. Words are not essential when this occurs. You know that the person in front of you does not want to have anything to do with you. It could be because they once experienced their own traumatic event at the hands of someone who looks like you or practices the same religion that you do. It could even be something that was taught to them by the media or perhaps an ignorant relative. Whatever the case may be, I cannot express the sadness that plagues you once you become aware that there is no amount of smiling and courteous behavior that can hide who you are and forever will be to this person.

My identity goes beyond superficial indicators and yet in one instant, I can be reduced to a mere reflection of another person's opinion. Almost as if my experiences and my life are irrelevant. At the end of the day, I am intimidating, greedy, dangerous, and ultimately someone who does not deserve the benefit of the doubt.

We look to our history when this happens and point to our ancestors as a source of conflict or mistrust between cultures or peoples. Outline the hierarchy of color and culture and blame the dominance of one individual over another for superficial immaterial reasons. But we cannot alter the past and to be fair in most areas, we have evolved from our previous mistakes. What is it about these superficial differences that remain a pressing and often life-threatening issue today?

Discussions of empathy are thrown from one side to the other and yet we still cannot seem to comprehend that our experiences do not define culture, they define individuals and individual experiences. For even if you were to paint with the same brush, I guarantee that every stroke the brush makes will be different as it is entirely dependent on you and what you feel at that moment.

Are our emotions the key to this challenge? When we or someone we love is wounded or cheated by another, do the superficial parts of their identity matter? Or is it something we have become accustomed to blaming in order to cope?

Even if the emotion we are conditioned to feel at the sight of another human being is fear, for example, why is that allowed to rule our interactions? Because our emotions do not belong to that other individual, who prays to another god, who has different colored skin or speaks a different language, it belongs to us. We are responsible for our emotions and the actions or micro-aggressions that may follow.

I have experienced active and passive forms of aggression and my experiences cause me to feel pain, anger, injustice...I could go on. In that feeling, I remind myself that this experience does not encapsulate an entire group or culture but is the responsibility of that one individual. And while our emotions are natural, they may even be out of our control or perpetuated by another, they should not rule our interactions and beliefs as they have in the past.





AAUW BYLAWS AMENDMENT

Proposed AAUW Bylaws Amendment

Between April 7th and May 17th, all AAUW members will have the opportunity to vote on an important bylaws amendment that will eliminate the degree requirement for membership. The AAUW Board of Directors and the AAUW Governance Committee give the following rationale for the proposed the amendment:

“AAUW’s mission is to advance gender equity, yet the requirement for membership explicitly denies access to membership to those without college degrees. AAUW does not promote equity for all women and girls if the organization maintains exclusionary membership requirements. The membership requirement is not fair, is not right, and is not equity. This is simply the right thing to do.”

Our branch board strongly endorses the amendment and is planning a “Town Hall” on March 2nd. This will provide an opportunity for you to bring your questions and comments to what we hope will be an open and productive discussion. Over the next few weeks we also plan to present responses to frequently asked questions. Here is one to start us off.

QUESTION: AAUW has been this way for a long time. Why do we need to change now?

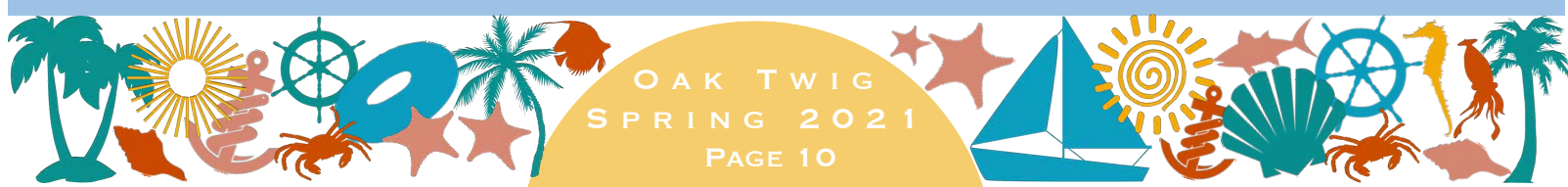
Our continued relevance will be enhanced by eliminating barriers that limit who can participate in our mission of advancing equity for women and girls.

Staying relevant is crucial to AAUW’s survival. We will have access to more funding from corporate and foundation funders, which is critical. Many will not fund organizations that have barriers to participation in the work of the organization.

Membership dues only fund a small portion of our work. Our self-imposed degree requirement actually discriminates against women and girls, even if it once was a well-intentioned incentive to specific achievement.

Bottom line, If the degree requirement is eliminated, membership in AAUW will be based on support for our mission to advance equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy, not on whether someone individually has had the opportunity, time, or money to attend college.

I hope you will take the time to carefully consider this significant amendment. You can learn more about the proposed bylaws change.



HOW WILL ELIMINATING THE DEGREE REQUIREMENT AFFECT YOUR BRANCH?

It will help protect the future of AAUW, national and branch, by opening up opportunities for funding. Due to our discriminatory requirement, foundations and corporations will not donate to our organization because they consider our degree requirement as counter to their criteria of equality. This disadvantage, along with the now 400-plus organizations competing with AAUW on women's equality issues, greatly affects National's ability to get much needed funding. Declining membership, now at 40,000 plus, only provides 15-20%. This is not enough to support branch services.

It will make it easier for the branch to recruit senior women, particularly senior women of color, who did not have the opportunity to attend college 40 or 50 years ago. In addition to possibly increasing membership, these new members may bring new energy and viewpoints. It will also remove the embarrassing situations when you must tell someone he or she does not qualify, such as a government official, a non-profit leader or even a Tech Trek parent.

It will update the relevance and image of the branch as the world reckons with inequality and systemic racism, much of which disproportionately affects women. It might open up more opportunities for collaboration. Having a limiting membership requirement can be considered discriminatory and off putting to other local like-minded groups. When speaking at community functions, it reflects poorly on the branch to say that not everyone who believes in women's rights can be a member.

It will mean that the branch may have the potential for a wide variety of new members since we will no longer have a degree requirement that penalizes women unable to attain a degree due to today's skyrocketing educational costs, childcare, elder care, transportation, working multiple jobs and language barriers. Today, there are more alternatives to college degrees which have burdened women with two-thirds of the national college debt. These careers include firefighters, pilots, entrepreneurs, artists, politicians, manufacturers, retail managers, etc.

It will not affect our status or as one of the leaders in graduate grants and fellowships. Our Fellowships and Grants Fund, due to the generosity of our members, is fully endowed and will continue in perpetuity.

It will not affect the name – AAUW. Like the YWCA and NAACP, we will longer spell out the names since much of the original meanings no longer exist. For example, we are international, not just American. We have been open to individuals with associate degrees, not just degrees from universities, since 2005 and open to men since 1987.

It will not affect the honor of having earned a degree in times when so few women attained this achievement. Today, with women outpacing men in earning all degrees, we can proud that we were instrumental in breaking down the barriers for women who followed us.

It will not affect the uniqueness of AAUW. Its uniqueness is its breadth of programming, research, policy , advocacy, fellowships and grants, and grassroots membership.

It will not affect AAUW's mission to advance equity for women and girls through education, advocacy and research.

It will not change the branch's local scholarships or interest groups.

It will not change the like-mindedness of the branch. Like-mindedness is not determined by a degree, but in belief in and dedication to the mission.

It will not attract a large number of younger branch members which studies show prefer projects and not membership programs. However, they may now decide to join as a national member or supporter.





OPEN MEMBERSHIP FAQ'S

Sampling of questions from branch members across the US

1. AAUW has been this way for a long time. Why do we need to change now?

AAUW has adapted itself to changing times before in order to continue to be relevant.

Our continued relevance will be enhanced by eliminating barriers that limit who can participate in our mission of advancing equity for women and girls.

Many corporate and foundation funders have clearly told us they aren't willing or able based on their own criteria to fund organizations they believe have directly or indirectly discriminatory requirements or create barriers to participation in the work of the organization. Corporate and foundation funding is essential for national nonprofits these days. AAUW's membership dues support only a small percentage of our work.

As part of the country's overall reckoning with systemic racism and inequality, much of which disproportionately affects women, it is time to recognize that our self-imposed barriers to participation are actually harmful, even if these barriers once may have been understood to serve as a well-intentioned incentive to specific achievement.

2. Won't dropping the degree requirement end what is unique about our organization?

The uniqueness of AAUW is its breadth of programming, research, policy and advocacy, fellowships & grants, and grassroots membership. Unfortunately, AAUW is also unique in its exclusionary membership requirement, which is particularly unfortunate for an organization advocating for equity.

Having a degree does not make someone "like-minded"—We are like-minded in our support for advancing equity for women and girls.

Having a degree does not make someone a better advocate for women or a better symbol of womanpower. Think Eleanor Roosevelt, Lilly Ledbetter, Malala, Greta Thunberg.

3. Don't we need to honor the legacy of our founding mothers by retaining the degree requirement?

It's been 140 years since our founding back in an era when only a very few women were able to go to college or find meaningful employment after graduation. Today, women outpace men in earning degrees at all levels. Women also make up (pre-COVID) close to ½ of the total workforce in the U.S. But economic disparities and discrimination against women persist widely, despite our levels of education and participation in the workforce.

AAUW can and should take pride in its past and present success in helping women attain higher education. The fully endowed Fellowships and Grants Fund will allow AAUW to be a leader in this area in perpetuity. Education is important and does make a difference. But it alone doesn't guarantee equal treatment or opportunities for women, something our founders cared about deeply. The battle to be fought is not just about education, but about equal treatment.





OPEN MEMBERSHIP FAQ'S

4. If the degree requirement is dropped, will branch membership increase?

Membership levels in associations and other organizations are affected by many things. But, certainly our degree requirement is a barrier to joining for many women, and increasingly it is seen as elitist and discriminatory. A rush of younger members to join branches is unlikely due to the age of most of our current branch members. However, more women in older age ranges may be interested in joining once the barrier is removed. Fifty plus years ago, many women, particularly non White women, did not have access to higher education. We all undoubtedly have friends in this category--women who are "just as smart," just as interested in equality for women" not to mention "just as much fun" who can't be members because of the current degree requirement. Many of us have been embarrassed by encouraging friends to join, only to find out they aren't eligible because they don't have a degree.

Our degree requirement has shut out women with diverse backgrounds and perspectives – who may inject new energy into the mission. Younger women, in particular, view the fact that we have a barrier to entry that disproportionately affects women of color and women of lower economic status as contrary to our mission.

5. Since college education is more accessible now, why do we need to worry about dropping the requirement?

Getting a degree was a badge of honor for many of us, building our confidence and honing our intellectual skills, and also helping to prepare us for work outside the home. For some it was also a badge of honor that meant we could join AAUW, an organization that helped keep us intellectually stimulated while we were still at home raising children. But, degrees are not the "badge of honor" they once were, and skyrocketing educational costs, childcare, elder care, transportation, working multiple jobs and language barriers are significant issues for women today that make it hard for women to get a degree. Also remember that as it stands today, many women have gotten their degree only to be burdened by two-thirds of the national college debt. Cost is a barrier many of us didn't have "back then." Today, there are more careers open to women- firefighters, police, pilots, entrepreneurs, artists, politicians, manufacturers, retail managers, etc. that don't require a degree. Education can come in many forms, including career technical education, on-the-job training. Women without degrees can certainly be just as passionate about advancing equity for women and girls as women with degrees.

6. Won't we have to change our name if we drop the degree requirement?

First of all, we've had a variety of names during our 180-year history.

Today, AAUW is well-respected and high profile, particularly in its advocacy and research. We would not want to lose this position of recognition. Many other organizations use only initials and didn't formally change their names when one of the original words in the name became out of favor or inappropriate. Think NAACP or YWCA. Changing our name is not the issue to focus on. Opening our membership to a broader group that will work in support of the mission is the issue.

Also, the full name has not been applicable for a while. "American" – we have worked internationally for over 100 years. "Association" – members dues now only comprise 15-20% of revenues. "University" – in 2005, membership was extended to people with associate degrees. "W" – in 1987, membership was open to men.

