

Dear Friends,

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SAVE THESE DATES: 1/6/22, 7:00p, Board Meeting 1/14/22, 8:00p LTA play, Bright Star 1/18-19/22, AAUW-VA lobby days 1/25/22, 7:00p, Mystery book group The Omicron version of Covid has created a large increase in cases. Hopefully we will follow the path of other countries and see a quick drop off. As of my writing this, our fundraiser at the Little Theater of Alexandria is still on. The play is Bright Star and it has had excellent reviews. All CDC restrictions are being observed. Our other meeting in January will be a Jan. 22nd DEI zoom call. It is a Saturday morning and I will send out a link and other information as soon as I have it.

Our holiday brunch was very successful. Thanks to Danielle Beach, the timing was perfect. We met as Delta Covid version sunk and before Omicron took off. We were very lucky. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker was a very impressive speaker. Our long-term members received a surprise acknowledging how important their contributions to AAUW have been. The room was beautiful, the food was delicious, and the view was lovely. It was a joy being there.

Our zoom meetings are continuing, and it has been an adjustment for all of us. However, as we learn to adjust to different online techniques, we realize that it is the best way for all of us to connect at this time. Possibly we will be able to meet in person by April.

We are going into a new legislative season. However, our objectives are the same. More than ever, it is essential that women receive fair pay.

Don't forget to register for the State Conference in Harrisonburg on March 26th. It should be a lot of fun.

Have a wonderful Holiday Season and please, stay healthy.

Diane and Sylvia Co-Presidents

BRANCH NOTES

Happy New Years and best wishes from the Board – Sylvia, Diane, Susan W, Susan C, Margaret B, Margaret Z, Jan, Virginia, Anne, Lynn, Danielle, Gail, Monique, Arlene, Bonnie, Lane



PUBLIC POLICY

Virginia Kress Public Policy Chair

State Lobby Day will be held in person in Richmond on January 19, 2022. The Richmond branch will host a Women Legislators reception on January 18, 2022. Please let me know if you can make it so we can discuss carpools and hotel room sharing. I can be reached at vmvkress@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP

Margaret Batko Membership VP

It's a calendar new year, though for AAUW the year began June 1, 2021 and we are half-way through the year. At this mid-point it is time to take a moment to reflect on where we are as a branch and as an organization.

It has been a tough year for the branch from a membership perspective. Currently we have 58 members, down from 61 in May 2021. One of the 58 is a life member who has not renewed for the state or branch. Twelve members did not renew, a very significant membership loss. Although we e have undertaken multiple initiatives to encourage membership renewal during this continuing pandemic crisis that has disrupted all our lives, these initiatives have not been as successful as we would like.

On a positive note, eight new members have joined. We are looking forward to their active participation. In talking to some of them, they seem to very excited about a number of our activities. Although some of the activities have been on a hiatus because of the pandemic, we expect that they will gradually be returning. Some have continued throughout the pandemic via Zoom. And work is continuing on the human trafficking app, an activity that may interest some of the new members.

National AAUW has dropped all non-renewed members (2021 expirations) from its Member Data Base. This means members will no longer be able to renew on their own using the personalized e-renewal link that Anne Simpson has sent out. To renew, you will have to send a check to Anne Simpson in order to renew.

We encourage everyone who has not yet renewed their membership to consider rejoining. Every member is important and we miss those who have not renewed. The next decade could be very challenging for women and together we are more powerful than individually.



AUTUMN LEAVES 2021

Susan Cash AAUW Funds Chair

The Alexandria Branch extends its heartfelt thanks to those who have donated to the Autumn Leaves 2021 fundraising drive.

In our Autumn Leaves 2021 drive, the funds raised will be divided equally between the Alexandria Branch and AAUW National's Greatest Needs Fund. Fifty percent of your donation will be tax-deductible. The portion retained by the Alexandria Branch will be used for the Branch's support of the Christ House meals program. A drawing for prizes was held at the holiday luncheon on December 5. We will continue to accept donations throughout the program year.

To contribute to Autumn Leaves 2021, please mail a check (in the amount of your choice), payable to AAUW-Alexandria, with Autumn Leaves on the memo line, to Susan Cash, 8402 West Boulevard Drive, Alexandria, VA 22308.

BRANCH ACTIVITIES



MYSTERY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Susan Werner

With continuing COVID outbreaks, the Mystery Book Discussion Group will be meeting via Zoom for the foreseeable future. Our mystery for the new year of 2022 is <u>Eight Perfect Murders</u> by Peter Swanson. Our Zoom meeting will take place on January 25, 2022. Time: 7 PM. As always, thank you to Lane Stone for providing the Zoom link. I need to start updating our schedule, and while I do have some recommendations new ideas/recommendations are always welcome. For questions and recommendations, please contact Susan Werner at <u>susan.werner1@verizon.net</u>. HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT – JANUARY 14, 2022, 8:00 PM "BRIGHT STAR"

at

LITTLE THEATER OF ALEXANDRIA

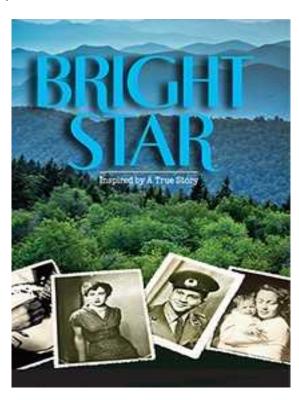
600 Wolfe St, Alexandria, VA

Together with the Mt Vernon Branch, the Alexandria Branch AAUW will hold its annual fundraising event at the Little Theater of Alexander (LTA). The music, book, and story for "Bright Star" were written by Steve Martin, acclaimed actor, comedian and musician, and Edie Bricknell.

Contact Susan Werner for tickets: <u>Susan.werner1@verizon.net</u>, or 703-270-5378 to let her know how many tickets you want. Tickets are \$35.00 each. (A check made out to Alexandria Branch AAUW or exact amount of cash required.) Mail check to Susan Werner, 7444 Spring Village Dr, #318, Springfield, VA 22150. All sales are final.

When she receives your order, Susan can either mail you your tickets, or hold them at the box office the night of the play. Let her know your preference.

Due to COVID restrictions, there will be no reception or raffle this year. Masks and proof of vaccination are required by LTA.



FRANCOPHILE GROUP DISCUSSION

Susan Cash

Our next meeting will be Saturday, January 22 at 3 p.m, via Zoom. Past co-President Lane Stone will give a presentation on her recent trip to France. The title of her talk is *Two Fascinating Women I Met on Vacation – Joan of Arc and Josephine Bonaparte*.

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83906284415?pwd=UVJ6Zmc1YUgvYm9xY0VLaW1tL3hMQT09

Meeting ID: 839 0628 4415

Passcode: 333629

Dial by your location +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)





Projected topics in future months include the books *A Man in France* by Philip Ogley and *The French Girl* by Lexie Elliott, as well as discussions of exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

POC: Susan Cash, 703/587-4790, scash5558@gmail.com



GREAT DECISIONS 2022

Lynn O'Connell

Some great news for next year! First, Great Decisions has added an additional topic so there will be nine discussions throughout the year. Secondly, we are partnering with another Great Decisions group (coordinated by Howard Soroos – you may have seen him at some of our meetings this year). This partnership means that we will have two meetings in early 2022 inperson; one of those meetings is scheduled for February, and the other is not yet scheduled.

To-Do's:

<u>Mark Your Calendars</u> (and keep in mind you are welcome to attend one, two, or all nine, as your schedule permits. And guests are welcome!)

Sunday, Feb 27, 7 pm – US Foreign Policy Challenges

Speaker: John Allen (https://www.brookings.edu/experts/john-r-allen/), President of the Brookings Institution. Previously, he was a Marine General with commands in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then served as President Obama's Special Envoy to the Coalition Against ISIS. Location: Aldersgate United Methodist Church, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA 22308

Thursday, March 10, 7 pm Thursday, April 14, 7 pm

Thursday, May 12, 7 pm

Thursday, June 9, 7 pm

Thursday, September 8, 7 pm

Thursday, October 13, 7 pm

Thursday, November 10, 7 pm

<u>Volunteer to Facilitate One of the Sessions</u> (see below – you can also choose your month to facilitate):

Changing Demographics

Outer Space

Climate Change

Myanmar and Asean (Diane Schrier)

Quad Alliance (Effort by US, Japan, Australia, & India to contain China)

Drug Policy in Latin America

Industrial Policy (Should US policy support specific companies or industries? What policies can the US implement to deal with trade & the international economy?)

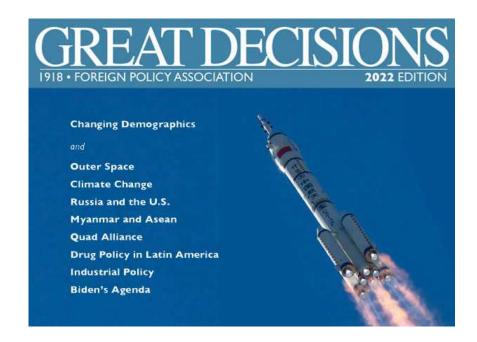
Email Lynn at lynnoconnellva@gmail.com with your topic choice. Thank you in advance!

Anyone Else Interested in a Book?

Below is a list of those who have pre-ordered a book. Please let Lynn (lynnoconnellva@gmail.com) know, and she can add you to an order that Aldersgate's Great Decision group is preparing to submit for additional books.

Lane Stone
Diane Schrier
Margaret Batko
Sylvia Linke
Lynn O'Connell
Susan Werner
Ruth Bennett
Patty Steelman

Peter Kent Gail Kalin Ross Paul (via Gail) Danielle Beach Priscilla Wiener





DIVERSITY BOOK GROUP

Bonnie Hershberg

Ten members of the Diversity Book Group met via Zoom in December, again thanks to the Ellen Coolidge Burke Library, to discuss Yaa Gyasi's debut novel, <u>Homegoing</u>. The story centers on some of the consequences of the North American enslavement of West Africans, specifically the descendants of two half sisters unknown to each other but born in different villages in what is now Ghana. The book focuses on the sister who remains on the "Gold Coast" and the one who is captured and enslaved in what becomes the United States and the generations that follow both of them.

Members of the Book Group were mostly positive in their reaction to this expansive piece of historical fiction. It provided some with greater insight into a key piece of the transatlantic slave trade. Moreover, while all found it disturbing in its description of the brutality associated with it, most felt it was a necessary read to advance our understanding of this tragic chapter in our history and its implications, which endure to this day. Ms. Gyasi's work touches on a seemingly endless number of themes, including race and racism, colorism, patriotism, enslavement, white privilege, discrimination, "othering," displacement, love, time, colonialism, complicity, and redemption. While some discussants found the wide array of topics enhanced the novel's value, several felt that trying to address so many threatened to overwhelm the reader and possibly dilute its impact.

Homegoing is not only ambitious in its geographic and thematic scope but also in exploring, if only at times superficially, three centuries through which the reader is introduced to seven generations. Many participants who praised the novel noted that the structure the author used made the book difficult to follow at times. Each chapter is about a different character, beginning with the half sisters, and alternates between the two continents. While the book is primarily a linear narrative, the author frequently uses flashbacks within chapters, further complicating the progression of the story. The group unanimously agreed that while the book might present significant challenges, it was worth the effort.

On January 10, 2022 from 7:00 - 8:30 pm via Zoom, the Diversity Book Group will be discussing An American Marriage by Tayari Jones. If you'd like to join us, please email Bonnie Hershberg at hersh3b@gmail.com before Tuesday, January 4.

FROM AAUW-NATIONAL

"The American dream belongs to all of us." Vice President Kamala Harris



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December 2, 2021 Webinar:

"Creating Inclusive Spaces" by Bonnie Hershberg

Because of the work that Alexandria Branch had done on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, National AAUW invited us to participate in a panel for a Webinar entitled, *Creating Inclusive Spaces*. The virtual program, presented on 2 December, is part of series National has built around these topics seeking to inform members and also to raise awareness of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion toolkit available on its website. The toolkit has a variety of 'plug and play' modules that can facilitate conversations on important issues and stimulate ideas to diversify membership and host programs.

My role in the Webinar—whose audience numbered over 150—was to speak for 10 minutes about Alexandria's initiative, begun in early 2019, "Strangers No More: Women Building Cross-Cultural Friendships." I spoke briefly about each of our three public programs and their success. I also highlighted

lessons we learned, including the importance of providing an accessible venue for people of varying abilities, advance advertising and outreach, and consulting early with members of the communities we were trying to attract. I highlighted our partnership with the Alexandria Public Library system, which has a long-standing reputation for welcoming a diverse community. Moreover, the Library has been key to the success of our now virtual Diversity Book Group, whose genesis and success I also described as it relates specifically to diversity and inclusion.

The panel featured an expert who spoke specifically "about the meaning and necessity of inclusion and offered techniques for leaders to help make organizations more inclusive. These included getting to know people in the organization, building trust, creating psychological safety, listening, ensuring that all views are welcome and sought out during meetings, sharing stories, and creating opportunities to interact with and celebrate differences. Another panel member represented a Branch in Iowa whose members enrolled in the United Way 21-Day Challenge related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. She encouraged participants to look at the United Way website for more information on how to initiate this activity. A third panel member, representing National AAUW, explained how the on-line tool kit works.

If you'd like more information either on this or upcoming webinars on this topic, please check out National's AAUW website: https://www.aauw.org/. Here's the link to this webinar.

December 15, 2021 Webinar:

Exploring Tough Policy Issues Through An AAUW Lens: Political And Non Partisan.

This webinar includes highlights of our proud nonpartisan, yet very political, history. Here's the <u>link</u> to the recording. And here are a few useful tools for your 2022 advocacy:

Congressional voting records:

https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-education/congressional-voting-record/

Two minute activist:

https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/

Advocacy toolkit:

https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/

Issue specific advocacy toolkit:

https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/crisis-recovery-toolkit/

What You Can Do as Members

Two-Minute Activist Advocacy Toolkits AAUW Lobby Corps & state lobbying efforts

Letters to the Editor

Call and meet with your officials

Educate friends, family and voters



Member Advocacy

DO

- Remain nonpartisan
- Work on issues guided by our values and mission
- Engage with candidates and elected officials from all major parties equally
- Encourage voter registration for everyone, regardless of their political persuasion

DON'T

- Expressly advocate for or endorse any partisan candidate
- Encourage voter registration for a particular party
- Share AAUW member lists with campaigns or political parties
- Raise funds for partisan candidates or coordinate any election activity with a campaign or political party
- Support anything in conflict with AAUW Public Policy Priorities



2022 CALENDAR – ALL EVENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

(CHECK BACK OFTEN)

1/6/22, 7:00p, Board Meeting

1/14/22, 8:00p LTA play, Bright Star,

1/18-19/22, AAUW-VA lobby days. Contact: Virginia Kress, vmvkress@gmail.com

1/25/22, 7:00p, Mystery book group, Contact: Susan Werner, <u>susan.werner1@verizon.net</u>.

2/3/22, 7:00p, Board Meeting

2/13/22, 2-4 Program meeting - Author's panel

2/22/22, 7:00, Mystery book group, Contact: Susan Werner, susan.werner1@verizon.net.

2/27/22, 7:00p, Great Decisions –In-person, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, 1301

Collingwood Rd., Alexandria, Contact Lynn O'Connell at lynnoconnellva@gmail.com

3/3/22, 7:00p, Board Meeting

3/10/22, 7:00p, Great Decisions –Contact Lynn O'Connell at lynnoconnellva@gmail.com

3/20/22 2-4 pm Program meeting - African-American Women's History

3/22/22, 7:00p, Mystery book group, Contact: Susan Werner, susan.werner1@verizon.net.

3/26/22, AAUW-VA Conference, part 1, Harrisonburg, In person

3/30/22, Christ House Dinner. Contact: Margaret Zebrowski, (<u>Mmzebrow@aol.com</u>) & Jan Jaynes (<u>janjjoek@verizon.net</u>)

2021-2022 Branch Officers

Co-presidents: Sylvia Linke (SFLaauw@gmail.com) & Diane Schrier

(diane.schrier@gmail.com)

VP Membership: Margaret Batko (<u>margaretwb@verizon.net</u>)

VP Program: Committee

Secretary: Susan Werner (<u>susan.werner1@verizon.net</u>)

AAUW Funds: Susan Cash (scash5002@email.vccs.edu)

Diversity and Inclusion Reps: Dr. Gail Kalin (gailkalin@yahoo.com) and Monique Miles

(moniquemiles08@gmail.com)

Public Policy Chair: Virginia Kress (wmvkress@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Anne Simpson (aseyedoc@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: Lane Stone (info@LaneStoneBooks.com)

Special Interest Group Leaders:

Campus Outreach: Danielle Beach (danielleaauw@gmail.com)

Christ House Dinners: Margaret Zebrowski (Mmzebrow@aol.com) & Jan Jaynes

(janjjoek@verizon.net)

Diversity Book Group: Bonnie Hershberg (<u>hersh3b@gmail.com</u>) Great Decisions: Lynn O'Connell (<u>lynnoconnellva@gmail.com</u>) Mystery Book Group: Susan Werner (susan.werner1@verizon.net)