



HIGHLIGHTS

IN EQUITY

AAUW Heights-Hillcrest-Lyndhurst, Ohio Branch

A newsletter for members and friends who support gender fairness
February 2024, Volume 2023-2024, Issue 5

Inclusion On Purpose



Our next program will be on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, at 7:00 pm. We will review the book titled *Inclusion on Purpose: An Intersectional Approach to Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work* by Ruchika Tulshyan. Ruchika is an author,

keynote speaker, and inclusion strategist. She is the founder of Candour, an inclusion strategy practice. She is a former international business journalist, a regular contributor to The New York Times and Harvard Business Review, and a recognized media expert on inclusive leadership and workplace culture.



Richika declares inclusion is leadership. She argues that when creating inclusive cultures, the first step is to understand, identify, and give language to how bias shows up, how it sounds, and how we want to make change to be more inclusive, and what that actually looks like on an individual level.

In the author's opinion, the Constitution of the United States defines diversity as WE THE PEOPLE, and furthermore declares that it is the people that form a more perfect union - not politics, bureaucracy, Fortune 500 Companies, authoritarianism or male dominance. The Constitution even throws in the word justice. I venture to suggest that anything else might be thought of as un-American. It's time we stop paying lip service to our national ideal. I think Ruchika would agree.

See you later, *Donna*

Our February hybrid event will be on Zoom and in-person at the Bertram Woods Branch Community Room. The Bertram Woods Branch of the Shaker Heights Library was recently renovated. Find this branch near the intersection of Warrensville Center Road and Shaker Blvd. Eastbound. It is **not the main branch** of Shaker Heights. The address is 20600 Fayette Rd, a side street off Shaker East, a very short distance from Warrensville.

For those connecting by Zoom, Join Zoom Meeting
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89383260761?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89383260761?pwd=N0ZMcHBjN1lNzhEM21POE5iOWp3QT09)
[pwd=N0ZMcHBjN1lNzhEM21POE5iOWp3QT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89383260761?pwd=N0ZMcHBjN1lNzhEM21POE5iOWp3QT09)

Book Summary:

How organizations can foster diversity, equity, and inclusion: taking action to address and prevent workplace bias while centering women of color. Few would disagree that inclusion is both the right thing to do and good for business. Then why are we so terrible at it? If we believe in the morality and the profitability of including people of diverse and underestimated backgrounds in the workplace, why don't we do it? Because, explains Ruchika Tulshyan, we don't realize that inclusion takes awareness, intention, and regular practice. Inclusion doesn't just happen; we have to work at it. Tulshyan presents inclusion best practices, showing how leaders and organizations can meaningfully promote inclusion and diversity. Tulshyan centers the workplace experience of women of color, who are subject to both gender and racial bias. It is at the intersection of gender and race, she shows, that we discover the kind of inclusion policies that benefit all. Tulshyan debunks the idea of the "level playing field" and explains how leaders and organizations can use their privilege for good by identifying and exposing bias, knowing that they typically have less to lose in speaking up than a woman of color does. She explains why "leaning in" doesn't work—and dismantling structural bias does; warns against hiring for "culture fit," arguing for "culture add" instead; and emphasizes the importance of psychological safety in the workplace—you need to know that your organization has your back. With this important book, Tulshyan shows us how we can make progress toward inclusion and diversity—and we must start now.



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Passcode: 016009

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Branch News: President's Column

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President's Column—Kay Rasmusen



Knee Surgery, International Women's Month, Memories of my mother and help from friend and former International Student, Feroza LaBonne

Welcome to my world. I am still recuperating from robotic assisted total knee arthroplasty (knee replacement surgery) on January 10th that I willingly signed up for hoping I will have more mobility and can traverse mountain paths in West Virginia again or just go to our hybrid AAUW meetings at local libraries or our annual conference in Columbus or help our Secretary Komeisha collect donated items to help persons in our nearby or global community. Before the surgery I was running around as much as I could. I came home the day after surgery – (the nurse took pity on me because she found out I live in a house with stairs and let me stay one night. In the Cleveland Clinic pre surgery training session they said they pioneered where knee and hip replacements are now considered outpatient procedures. I wasn't really prepared for the pain after the surgery, so now I understand what my friend who had hip surgery last summer after her doctor said she waited too long, was going through. I have been homebound for a month. At night I couldn't sleep, the Physical Therapist said the swelling in my leg is pushing on my nerves. I have been reading books I never finished in the wee hours of the morning just to get myself distracted from the pain, plus walking around with my walker.

Last year in my President's Message I wrote about our former President, Julie Donaldson attending the Women's March in Cleveland carrying our AAUW banner, and the International Women's Day rally on the steps of Cleveland City Hall, followed by a march. This year I looked up and found this event celebrating International Women's Month 2024.

Overcoming Adversity:

How International Women Paved Their Path in Cleveland Celebrate the impact that international women have on our region and the world.

A Panel and Networking Event on Friday March 8, 2024, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Cleveland Public Library, Louis Stokes Wing Auditorium, Cost is free but need to register. Look up International Women's Month Global Cleveland or <https://globalcleveland.org/iwm24>

Of course, looking this up reminded me of my mother, she and my father were supporters of international students from Case Western Reserve University through the Cleveland Council of World Affairs. For many years my mother would invite a student to dinner on holidays and keep up with them in other ways, so they could feel more at home in Cleveland. One of those students was Feroza LaBonne who became a lifelong friend of ours. Feroza still has sweet memories of my mother, saying she was an amazing, smart, and caring woman, full of life and energy. My mother was a long-time member and officer of AAUW. She paid for my initial membership in AAUW until I could afford to pay for it, and I have been a member ever since. I wanted to become President in memory of my mother.

Feroza was an international student who came to the U.S. for her Masters Degree in Music Education at CWRU-Cleveland Institute of Music after she moved here after schooling in London. She grew up in Bombay India. She is a third-generation pianist, her mother being India's leading piano teacher. Currently she is a music teacher at the Willoughby Fine Arts Center with many award-winning students. She was formerly an adjunct piano faculty member in upstate New York's Union College and concurrently the music critic for the *Times Union* daily newspaper of Albany, New York.

Feroza had hip surgery a month before I had the knee surgery, so she signed me up for the Mayo Clinic newsletter which has articles about health issues, and the recent issue had an explanation in it of what happens in knee surgery. She also was extolling me to do the physical therapy exercises as aggressively as possible. She sent me YouTube videos about what to do after surgery. Feroza was worried for me as she had a co-worker who couldn't do her exercises because she came down with a cold after the surgery; she is still having problems and can't climb stairs yet.

As Global Cleveland stated, "We strengthen our city by welcoming our world."

AAUW—Heights-Hillcrest-Lyndhurst Branch

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More Branch News: January Meeting; fundraiser; birthdays



A geologist can look at a sliver of mud from millions of years ago and know what's in it."

At our January program we had as our guests two remarkable women. They both are following their life dreams. Amy Mayer, daughter of our own AAUW HHL member Kathe, is a producer, writer, award-winning journalist, science reporter, and editor. She is invited to speak on talk shows about agriculture and farming in the Midwest or wherever she is; she does podcasts, too. For us she talked about being on the *JOIDES Resolution* research ship expedition for two months off the coast of Portugal, where she interviewed scientists who were studying sediment cores from the bottom of the ocean. The cores contain dust, rocks and skeletons of tiny organisms. They are studying the history of the oceans, 'paleoceanography' and climate change. She would put videos and audiograms on social media, to be seen all over the world.

As the Onboard Outreach Officer, she would tour young children around the ship via Zoom, while the ship was sailing, and explain how and why scientists were studying the cores. She connected the science team virtually with more than 3.5 million people. She found out about the JOIDES expedition and that they needed a journalist, so she applied. Find out all about Amy at <https://www.amymayerwrites.com>

Beth Caissie is a Physical Scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey. Last summer, she was on the Research Vessel *Sikuliaq* owned by the National Science Foundation and operated by the University of Alaska Fairbanks College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences. She and her former undergrad professor wrote a grant to investigate what the ecosystem was like on the part of the Bering Land Bridge that is now under water. They think that instead of the land being dry tundra, it was more lichen and moss and shrubs with rivers and lakes. Beth was studying what the sea ice was like along the coast of the land bridge. They found stripy sediments, some freshwater peat, which means lakes, broken up shells, stones, gravel, woody plants and marine diatoms. To see a video tour of the ship and what they do, go to YouTube NSF "Join Researchers on the Bering Sea." (Unearthing the Bering Land Bridge.)

We asked Beth about her journey to becoming a researcher of the ocean. She had wanted to be outside, she wanted to do something intellectually stimulating. She wanted to learn about climate change and help with that. She took classes that were of interest to her and followed her interest. She fell in love with diatoms, or single celled organisms. She said don't be afraid to try something. Her PhD



advisor encouraged her to try going on a ship, and she found she loved it. Kathe Mayer sent us an email with a picture of Dr. Beth Caissie and Dr. Jenna Hill of United States Geological Survey with a core from the bottom of the ocean and a picture of a tip of a corer with rocks at the end, also marine and terrestrial materials.

An AAUW National article about STEM stated that "Research shows that there is no inherent difference in math and science capability between girls and boys. It's also a myth that girls aren't interested in science: in elementary, middle and high school girls and boys take math and science courses in roughly equal numbers except in engineering and AP computer science according to the National Science Foundation. One study found that the apparent gender gap in mathematics is smaller in countries with greater gender equality, suggesting that gender differences in math are largely due to cultural and environmental factors, not ability."

Kay



Every Child Needs a Family. Unfortunately, not every family has the means to house a child that needs one. There are over 2000 children in Department of Child and Family Services custody through no fault of their own.

Many continue to live unstable lives and



can be moved from pillar to post because of the actions of adults who are not always able or competent to care for them.



Imagine not being able to take any of your belongings with you if you were being relocated to the care of strangers. Imagine the psychological impact of having to move

everything you own in a large garbage bag at a moment's notice. I may not be able to care for one of these children, but I can provide them with a piece of lightweight luggage.

AAUW HHL is collecting old, mildly worn luggage to donate to the DCFS. We are looking for small carry-on sizes approximately 22 x 14 x 9 inches. Please help by contacting us on Facebook to arrange a pickup. *Donna*



March birthdays:

25 Kay Rasmusen

April birthdays:

3 Sarah Maasz

17 Mary Koeth



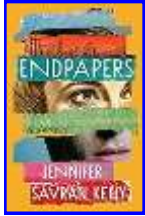
AAUW Ohio Update—Nancy; Public Policy—Kathe

Ohio Update—Nancy Stellhorn

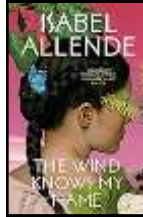


Book discussions motivate understanding and the practice of diversity, equity and inclusion. AAUW Ohio leads monthly discussions. Register to get the Zoom link that is posted about a week before each discussion. The February discussion was

Isabel Allende's *The Wind Knows My Name*. On March 16, 2024 we will discuss Jennifer Savran



Kelly's *Endpapers*. Yes, this story is driven by something discovered beneath the endpapers pasted to the cover of a book, but it's not the book about the German American



family of the book publisher Kurt Wolff. This is a fictional puzzle of a hidden illustration of a woman with a man's face. Dawn, the main character, works toward authenticity and a world where no one has to hide.

Spring for the State organization is a period of elections and business. The statewide Convention and Annual Meeting will be Saturday, April 13, 2024. This is usually a 10:00 to 3:00 event beginning with programs and ending with business and election of officers. The day is open to all HHL members, but only delegates may vote in the Annual Business Meeting portion. Plan to attend in-person at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio or by Zoom. Do let our delegates, Kay Rasmusen and Kathe Mayer, know how you want them to vote. There will be a vote to change the State Bylaws. If approved, the State will allow every AAUW Ohio member to vote at the State Annual Meeting. Read the main story of the [front page](#) of the AAUW Ohio website and a full copy of proposed bylaws using [this link](#) to the State website.

Nancy



Check out our branch website for the latest branch information
<https://hhl-oh.aauw.net>
and our blog: <https://aauwghl.wordpress.com>
and find us and like us on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/AAUW HHL>

Public Policy—Kathe Mayer



Again, the focus is on school funding and how much has been taken from public community schools. This is why many of our members' local schools joined to request more federal funds. The reason is that much funding has gone to charter schools. For example, Cincinnati Classic Academy received \$2 million. None went to the Cincinnati public schools. The CCA implied in their request for these funds that they taught poor Black students, however the school is 82% white and almost all students are English language speakers. CCA also teaches English as a second language.

Jeff Bryant who wrote on January 20, 2024, "Two education related grant programs operated by the U.S. Department of Education--both of which dole out millions in federal tax dollars for educating K-12 children every year--present two opposing truths about government spending on public education that it can be wasteful and misguided or innovative and informed."

The first program enjoys significant backing of industry lobbyists and wealthy foundations and allows private education operators--some that operated for profit--to skim public money off the top. It also adds to racial segregation in public schools, and squanders millions of dollars on education providers that come and quickly go, or simply fail to provide any education services at all. This program funds charter schools and was started during the Clinton administration and expanded during Obama's. There is no real overseeing of these schools. The early ones were often housed in unused public-school buildings and had trained teachers and provided good educational programs. Later ones asked for these funds, received them, and did not provide education for students but lined the pockets of the requesters.

The second program helps schools in high poverty and rural communities expand learning time and opportunities for students. This program helps public school districts provide the extra help some students need to learn the required material. It also aids students' health and well-being. Vouchers go to students who have or have not attended public school and districts need to request more taxes from the neighborhood. This is why most northeast Ohio school districts claim vouchers hurt our public schools and their communities by the need to raise local taxes. When districts have to pay for vouchers local schools are hurt by the loss of Federal money.

Kathe



It costs you nothing to do this. Your help is needed to provide mammograms for those who cannot afford one.

Diversity—Cindy Goldberg, Co-Chair



Black History Month more than “his” story, but “her” story as well

I have been told many times, and in many contexts, history is merely “his story.” The most usual context of the conversation was one where the history presented was idealized and important facts were left out. There was another feature to this conversation, where people questioned the “facts” and saw them again as a function of “his story” not necessarily the real story.

February is Black History Month and there are so many events and learning opportunities for us all to acquaint ourselves with the history of African Americans in our nation. Some have questioned the necessity saying that we need to remember Black history 12 months of the year not just during one month. Others have wondered whether enough is being presented; whether the truth is being told.

Though my own experiences are far from complete. I have seen the focus of many historic studies to be that of the history of men. I would like to include in this article, the unique history of a woman and her Black history. It is so important to remember that history is made up of the unique stories of individuals. Please continue reading. We can learn much from her story.

One Woman’s Perspective... Black History Month

Black History Month grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans in 1915. But history is not just about the “important people” who made a lasting impact on a national or global scale. History is also about the most average of people . . . how they lived their lives, the choices they made, the hurdles they had to face, the victories they won and the legacy they left for generations to come.

My mother was born in 1916, the sixth of 10 children living in a Negro settlement called Halls Hill, which was on land sold to Blacks by their brutal former slave holder. That area is now identified as part of Arlington, Virginia. Her birth certificate classified her as “Mulatto” but her racial designation changed to “Colored” in the 1920’s census, then “Negro” in the 1930’s census, “Black” in the 1970’s and “African American” in the 1980’s. Around 1920, her family moved across the Potomac River to SW Washington, D.C.

For much of the first 50 years or so of her life, *every aspect of her day-to-day life was determined by her race:*

- which neighborhood she could live in,
- which church she could worship in,
- which schools she could attend,
- which store she could enter to buy clothes,
- which items she could try on (not hats or shoes) even in stores she was allowed to enter,

- which water fountain or bathroom she could use,
- where she could dine while sitting and at which tables,
- where she could dine only while standing at a counter,
- which public beach or pool she could swim in and in which public park she could play or walk,
- on which seats on a bus or in which car on a train she could sit
- in which hotel she could stay while traveling (we stayed mostly in Black boarding houses during my childhood),
- whether she could vote,
- which job she could hold,
- which rate of pay she could receive (Black teachers received from 30% to 60% *less* than white teachers in the South until the mid-1950’s and my mother was a teacher),
- in which hospital she could be treated for illness and, if treated, in which ward could she stay,
- which blood she could receive if she needed a transfusion (yes, even blood was segregated by the Red Cross until about 1950),
- and for much of her life, where she could be buried when she died.

In some ways her life was extraordinary, but in other ways it was no different than that of her family members, neighbors, and friends. I remember experiencing some, but not all, of this myself. For many who read this your family history may, in many respects, resemble mine. And for others . . . it’s probably hard to imagine.

My mother was a woman of her time, and the stories she told me about all the above were coupled with stories of the joys and happiness she also experienced. Despite the roadblocks, she was well educated, well read, well-traveled and well loved. She lived a long and complex life, and she is one of the many of her generation whose life experiences are included in the history of Blacks living in America and, to all of whom those living and deceased, I tip my hat during Black History Month.

Yours in philanthropy,

Bev

Beverly White-Seals

In conclusion, let us remember that all histories are not just histories of great leaders, great political figures and reformers, but ultimately history is the story of individuals with their struggles and triumphs and those struggles and triumphs come together to become the history of people and a nation together.

Fondly submitted by *Cindy*, for the Diversity Committee

AAUW Diversity Policy: AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of sex, gender identity, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class.



It's About Justice—
Meryl Johnson



Jesus at the Gay Bar

by Jay Hulme, from his book "The Backwater Sermons"

He's here in the midst of it –
right at the centre of the dance floor,
robes hitched up to His knees
to make it easy to spin.

At some point in the evening
a boy will touch the hem of His robe
and beg to be healed, beg to be
anything other than this;

and He will reach His arms out,
sweat-damp, and weary from dance.
He'll cup this boy's face in His hand
and say,

*my beautiful child
there is nothing in this heart of yours
that ever needs to be healed.*

Meryl

Itsaboutjustice@gmail.com

Listen to Meryl every Saturday on
"Its About Justice?"

1:00 to 2:00 pm

WRUW. 91.1 FM



Reflect On This—Inclusion And Diversity

In his article, "Inclusion: a defining definition?", published in 2011, Alan Hodgkinson framed the concepts of inclusion and diversity as a "Labor policy problem in England." He argued that historically, inclusion, rather than being located in terms of equality should be observed as a complex ideological construct which legitimized the process of the subordination and domination of vulnerable groups in society. He argued that his article was not intended to provide a 'lesson from history', it sought to demonstrate how even the best intentions of government with regard to social justice and equality are mediated, dominated and subordinated by ideological diktat, competition, and simple cold-blooded economics. Legitimization of bizarre policy and moral contradictions is a 'guise of truth' which employed a cultural cloak of equality to create double binds where performativity was pitched against presence, standards against segregation and ablism against absence. Inclusion there became utopian rhetoric ... we are a fully inclusive society' and 'all can fully participate'

This clever sidestepping of race began in 1997 when a New Labour government swept to power in England on a tidal wave of equality rhetoric and a commitment to reform how children with Special Education Needs and disabilities were to be educated (Hodkinson, 2005). Inclusion from this time has become a political process (Allan, 2008), a key component of governmental planning (Corbett, 2001) pursued through a powerful top-down implementation approach (Coles & Hancock, 2002).

How clever to reframe an unsanitary bias as a worrisome concern for a marginalized (oops, disabled) segment of the population. You cannot get any more humane than that. You cannot sterilize hate more efficiently than this. He concluded with "absent things leave traces of their presence and a thing can be present while being partially absent" (Chia, 1995, p. 580). This is nothing less than power and subordination with 'blurred boundaries' and no sharp distinctions.

We have not been able to blur the boundaries in America. Failure to fully include people based on race and gender is a fully visible bias and preference here. We have pawned hate off as a problem for religion to fix, a problem for law to fix, a problem for education to fix and a problem for social media to fix. Where do we go next? Elevating Consciousness by nationally training the same moral belief states? Altering external forces and training internal drives? It couldn't hurt as long as Hitler does not get to have a say.—*Donna*

February is Go Red for Women Month—

Live your best life by learning your risk for heart disease and taking action to reduce it.
American Heart Association



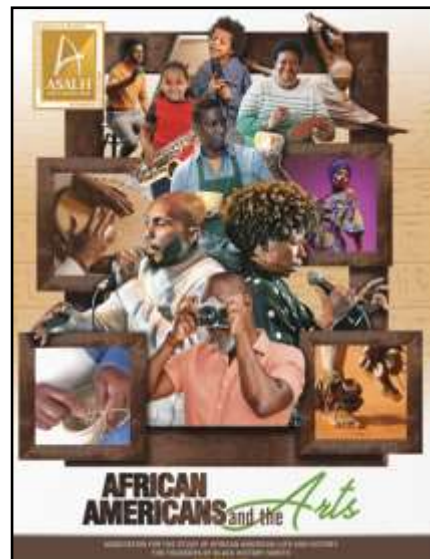
Nominating Committee:

We have two volunteers for the nominating committee, Donna Black and Komeisha Rose. Officer positions to be filled are Secretary, Membership Vice President and Program Vice President. If any member is interested in these positions please contact the nominating committee. This year we want to become a cooperative and work together to set up programs and the Program Vice President will be the coordinator.

Black History Month

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of "Negro History Week," the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month and endorsed a specific theme. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black history.

The Black History Month 2024 theme, "African Americans and the Arts," explores the key influence African Americans have had in the fields of "visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and other forms of cultural expression."



Forum page—Phyllis; Around Northeast District; Looking Ahead



I Carry a Torch for The Ugly Duckling Fiat 500

Bob's father bought us a Fiat 500. This car looks underfed. We cherish it because its many faults make it "so human." It shows that you don't have to be big to be tough.

We are newlyweds living in an apartment on Overlook Road in Cleveland Heights. I am teaching at Euclid Shore Junior High School, my first teaching position. Bob is a student at Cleveland State University. We have an ugly duckling Fiat 500 that he drives to school. On one trip downtown, the floor of the car separated to the pavement while moving down Overlook Hill. Bob drove the car back home up the hill with his feet on the right passenger side. To fix it, the floor was welded back on.

We purchased a four-door used car for me to drive to school. Despite its ugly green color, we are happy to have it. My fellow teachers, Ardith sits in front and Phyllis sits in the tiny back seat. During winter, I am able to drive up a steep hill that other cars can't do.

Early in the morning, students run the track in the gym. Although I am very awkward and slow, I often join them. I love my spacious classroom. My large wall of giant windows overlooks the parking lot and the shopping center to the left of the school. I purchased a yellow skirt and a red sweater there. I move the desks into a giant circle. My female students are studious. We are concerned, however, about our delightful tall, handsome males' learning problems. After asking the principal, Dr. Sparky DeBeosio, I have permission to separate the young men into their own classroom.

I am so very delighted to see these young, very tall, and talented men. They stand up when I enter. They warmly say good-bye as they leave the classroom. I see considerable progress as they become serious students. Their test scores increase. They have learned to effectively study. The textbooks are inviting with pictures and helpful quotes.

Pregnant teachers must leave after four months. Dr. DeBeosio gets school board permission for me to teach until my ninth month. My students move their desks over in jest when this pregnant teacher walks near.

My delightful ugly duckling Fiat 500 continued to serve me lovingly as I drive to my cherished school. I park near the back door in the large lot. I pass the beautiful gymnasium to the hall, and up steps to the second floor and enter at the second door for a delightful day of teaching.

Phyllis



Our next program will be on Saturday, March 23, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. at the Euclid Public Library.

Our guest speaker is Janice Lombardo, a certified End of Life Doula through IAP College. She specializes in Directive Planning, Legacy Projects, Caregiving Respite and Bereavement Support. Her services are non-medical, holistic guidance, support, and education. She helps individuals and their loved ones plan for the end of life. The presentation is titled, "**How to Write a Legacy Love Letter.**"

We all fear, or the least feel apprehensive, about death. We don't know what it feels like if it feels at all. But our feelings are very important to us. How do we express our feelings about death? It happens in so many ways. Is it really death that troubles us or our relationships with family and friends? We will talk about this, and our end of life wishes during this presentation. So, come with questions and leave with answers.

I was totally captivated by Janice as I listened to her share her life story. Not only is she a survivor of many life tragedies, she is truly remarkable in her fortitude, compassion, and spiritual insight. You can find her on Facebook as My Angel Janice CEOLD; on LinkedIn as Janice Lombardo; and you can follow her on Cleveland Law of Attraction Meetup on the last Sunday of each month.

Donna



Around Northeast District—

Northeast Ohio Branch met on Saturday, February 3 at Steele Mansion to discuss the book *The Women's March* by Jennifer Chiaverini.

On Tuesday, March 5 they will make their annual visit to Lakeland Community College to see *from Woman XVII*, the art show for, by and about women.

On February 15 at 7 pm at Fellowship Baptist Church in Medina, Medina County Branch held a program entitled, "Capturing our History through Photography and Song," a collaboration. This is their annual Black History Month program.

They will meet again on March 22.



Watch here for more information about the annual long-sleeve shirt collection for the migrant workers. *Komeisha*



A huge win for closing the gender and racial pay gaps was announced this week: the White House is banning the use of current or past pay when determining the salaries of new federal employees. This means:

- The country's largest employer will halt a practice known to foster discriminatory pay and allow it to follow an individual throughout their career.
- Federal contractors may soon follow a similar rule in the future and may be required to post salary ranges in job listings, as proposed by the White House.
- Women's paychecks, and the respect for our value in the workplace, should be positively impacted.

It was fitting that these announcements came on the 15th anniversary of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Lilly has been tenacious in her advocacy for the **fight to reduce pay inequity**. Her journey inspires our continued advocacy with the White House, Congress, and around the country to advance policies that address gender and racial inequity.

In solidarity, Meghan Kissell

Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy

Act — Support Paid Leave for All

For the more than three decades since the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was signed into law on February 5, 1993, it has remained a cornerstone piece of legislation in efforts to create healthier and more equitable workplaces. While FMLA provides job-protected, unpaid leave, many people can't afford to take leave without pay. Nearly 40 percent workforce is not eligible for FMLA, with Black, Latina, and Native workers disproportionately impacted by this.

We all need access to paid leave, and the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, would do just that. We know that women continue to disproportionately bear the economic opportunity cost of providing care for children or elderly family members. Congress must do better for women and families.

This legislation builds on successful state programs, creating a national paid leave insurance program, to provide wage replacement and job protection. It would expand the definition of "family" to cover more loved ones, cover care for military families, and support those experiencing domestic violence. Paid leave has broad bipartisan voter support. As we honor how FMLA has protected workers for the past 31

years, [urge your members of Congress to take the next step and support the FAMILY Act \(H.R. 3481\) to support paid leave for all!](#)

Learn — Exploring the Intersection of Race and Gender

Racial and gender-based inequities persist in the United States' education system. Their effects are clear. In K-12 schools, Black students are punished more harshly and more frequently than white students for similar offenses. Data from the U.S. Department of Education finds that Black girls are significantly more likely than white girls to be suspended or receive referrals to law enforcement.

To combat the damaging impact of this reality, AAUW supports policies like the Counseling Not Criminalization Act, which provide money and resources to schools, and that increase the presence of mental and behavioral health personnel in schools. These steps have been shown to improve educational outcomes, increase attendance and graduation rates, and lower the rates of suspension and expulsion.

As Black women enter college, they are more likely to have to take on more student loan debt to acquire a degree. The student loan debt crisis highlights **glaring disparities** in who accumulates student loan debt, with women of color encountering the greatest challenges due to the combination of wealth gaps, gender, and racial pay gaps. To uplift Black women in college, AAUW continues to advocate for policies that make college more affordable, including increasing Pell Grant awards, and providing meaningful debt relief.

Black women then graduate into a **pay gap** that is **wider** for them than other women — with full-time workers earning only 69 cents in comparison to white men. This adds up to a loss of more than \$1 million over the course of a 40-year career, according to the National Women's Law Center. Additionally, women still face discriminatory employment practices and inadequate legal protections at work. This is why AAUW continues to fight for stronger pay equity laws, improved paid leave and child support, and collection of wage data that helps identify ongoing areas of gender and racial discrimination.

AAUW supports closing the gender, ethnic, and racial gaps in education and employment. This month and every month, we work to ensure that Black women and their families are served in the actions and policies we support. The bottom line is this: We need to address when and where sexism and racism intersect to truly foster equity for all women.

Engage — Share the important work we're doing

- Mark your calendars: March 12 is Equal Pay Day 2024. Each year, this symbolic day is used to raise awareness around and combat the impact of pay



- 9 inequities. Learn how you can raise awareness with our [Pay Equity Now Toolkit](#).
- A slate of anti-abortion bills were recently introduced in the House of Representatives, including the Pregnant Students' Rights Act. AAUW [joined](#) coalition partners in voicing strong opposition to the bill, which fails to address key barriers to pregnant students' educational attainment. The White House also [expressed opposition](#) to the bill in its current form. The bill (H.R. 6914) passed the House in January and it faces an uncertain outcome in the Senate.
 - In a positive step for student borrowers, the U.S. Department of Education responded to a call from [AAUW and coalition partners](#), to hold a forth session of the negotiated rulemaking process to address student debt relief. The additional session will provide an opportunity to give more attention to the significant burden of student loan debt for Black and Hispanic women. The [fourth session](#) will be held on Feb. 22 and 23.
 - As a result of sustained advocacy, in January, Congress reached a bipartisan agreement on a tax package that will temporarily expand the Child Tax Credit (CTC). AAUW [joined](#) over 350 organizations in urging Congress to prioritize this expansion which would benefit about 80% of the 19 million children who are currently left out of the full CTC or don't receive it at all because their parents' earnings are too low.
 - The Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act ([H.R. 6585](#)) was advanced out of the House Education & Workforce Committee in December 2023. The bill would allow federal Pell Grants to be used for short-term education and job training programs. Higher education advocates have raised concerns over the inclusion of for-profit schools and how the bill is funded.
 - AAUW joined a letter in opposition to the College Cost Reduction Act ([H.R. 6951](#)) due to our concerns that the bill would repeal current Financial Value Transparency and Gainful Employment regulations which AAUW has supported as a way of protecting students from unaffordable student loan debt.
 - The U.S. Department of Education began [negotiated rulemaking sessions](#) in January to improve regulations that hold higher education institutions accountable for

the quality and integrity of their programs, including reforms to give students timely access to financial aid disbursements. AAUW [joined](#) partners in recommending reforms to the accreditation process for higher education institutions to better protect students from predatory practices and ensure they receive a high-quality education.

- The U.S. Department of Education has extended the deadline to consolidate student loans for [Income-Driven Repayment \(IDR\) Account Adjustment](#) to April 30, 2024. This extension will give borrowers more time to consolidate and keep the maximum amount of credit toward cancellation programs on their loans.
- Last year, a bipartisan Paid Family Leave Working Group in Congress was established to explore federal paid family leave policies. In December 2023, the Working Group released a [legislative framework](#) that will serve as the basis for roundtable discussions later this year and is gathering input from stakeholders to inform their efforts to expand paid leave access in the United States.
- Registration is [now open](#) for AAUW's National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL), May 30 – June 1, 2024! NCCWSL brings together hundreds of college students every year for leadership training, advocacy, and networking. Please share widely and reach out to nccwsl@aauw.org with any questions.
- Join AAUW Lobby Corps and make your voice heard! We're holding virtual trainings on February 8 at [9:30am](#) and [5:00pm](#) ET. All AAUW members and college students in the Washington, D.C. area are welcome to join Lobby Corps.

AAUW and our members have been steadfast supporters and leaders of equity for women and girls since our inception. The valued members of our community have a shared interest in creating productive and impactful environments to advance our mission. As part of their engagement with AAUW, **all members are responsible for:**

- Promoting inclusion and equity for all, in line with AAUW's mission
 - Staying informed and up-to-date
 - Being respectful
 - Voting on critical governance matters
 - Paying dues and donating
 - Committing to engage in AAUW's mission-based work
- Civility matters.** As we approach another vote on open membership, creating respectful, courteous and inclusive environments is essential for us to achieve our mission, and AAUW members have a responsibility to demonstrate



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civility towards our collective AAUW community. More information on member responsibilities and why civility matters, authored by the member-led national AAUW Governance Committee, can be found on our national [website](#). We strongly encourage you to engage with this information as you consider branch/state programming and discussions on open membership.

To learn more about AAUW's inclusive policies, including our commitment to civility, please [join us this Wednesday, January 31 at 7:00 pm ET](#) for our webinar on Inclusion in Practice.

Sincerely, Julia T. Brown, Esq.
Chair, AAUW Board of Directors

MISSION & ACTION

AAUW's newsletter

NO HIBERNATION & NO MORE INEQUITY

As autumn transitions into winter and snowflakes begin to fall, we're not going into hibernation at AAUW — quite the opposite. We remain energized and grateful for your ongoing support and advocacy which keeps the work of AAUW's mission to advance gender equity for women and girls impactful and relevant. Thank you.

As the rights of women remain under attack, AAUW members took to the streets of our nation's capital last week — as we did nearly 50 years ago — to demand equal rights for all. AAUW members came from Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia in a strong demonstration of women's power and our refusal to be dismissed or denied our rights.

We joined U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley (MA-7), the ERA Coalition, and fellow advocates calling for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) be recognized as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, 100 years after its first introduction in Congress.

As I share [in this video with fellow fighters](#), the U.S. is the only modern democracy that does not include sex equality in its Constitution. AAUW is happy to be a founding member of the ERA Coalition's National Strategy Task Force. This recognition will be a powerful step toward dismantling

systemic inequalities and ensuring that the rights of women and girls are safeguarded.

I am inspired by and hopeful for all we have accomplished together in 2023 and enter the new year expressing my deepest gratitude for your unwavering support and commitment to our collective power. Your passion and generosity drive the impact of our shared work to advance equity for women and girls. We couldn't do it without YOU.

In solidarity,
Gloria L. Blackwell, CEO

It has been more than a year since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which instigated new legislative and legal attacks on critical health care. One of the most recent cases, of a Texas woman facing a pregnancy whose fetus could not survive and also threatened her own life, has showcased how abortion bans — even with exceptions — do not work. After Kate Cox, mother of two, learned from her doctors that her fetus had a fatal condition, she sought an abortion to protect her life and future ability to have children. Last week, the Texas Supreme Court overruled the determination of her physicians and the lower court. Kate's life could not wait while this political theater played out and she was forced to leave her home state in order to receive medical care to save her life.

Everyone has the right to make decisions about their own reproductive lives without government interference. [Which is why we are calling on Congress to pass the Women's Health Protection Act \(WHPA\)](#). Abortion access is vital to women's ability to control their lives, bodies and futures. Congress must act to protect women and all people who might need this lifesaving care, because access to critical health care should not depend on where someone lives. The [Women's Health Protection Act \(WHPA\)](#) would protect abortion care as a statutory right and prohibit restrictions including arbitrary deadlines like 6- or 20-week bans, biased counseling, and mandatory ultrasounds. These restrictions are medically unnecessary and rely on "exceptions" that as Kate's case shows, can be nearly impossible to get.

[Take action now and every day until your members of Congress support and pass the Women's Health Protection Act!](#) Without reproductive freedom, there can be no equity.

