

AAUW Heights-Hillcrest-Lyndhurst, Ohio Branch

A newsletter for members and friends who support gender fairness
 January 2026, Volume 2025-2026, Issue 4

Equality Unfulfilled



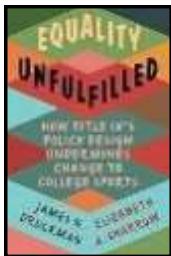
January 28, 2026, 6:45 pm
 In person at:
 Bertram Woods Library
 20600 Fayette Road
 Shaker Heights, OH 44122
 and on Zoom

AAUW HHL will host a book discussion on *Equality Unfulfilled* by James N. Druckman and Elizabeth A. Sharrow, on January 28, 2026 led by Komeisha Rose. In the book, the authors emphasize that although legal and social gains have been made, equality remains "unfulfilled" because rights that exist on paper are often unevenly enforced or accessible in practice. This message is especially relevant today, as ongoing challenges to voting rights, reproductive freedom, and economic equity continue to expose gaps between promise and reality. Through this discussion, participants will examine how the book connects historical struggles for equality to present day policy debates and why sustained civic engagement is still essential to achieving true gender equity.

The book revisits the promise of Title IX, passed in 1972, and asks a simple but important question: if this law opened the door for women's athletics, why do so many inequalities still remain? Through surveys with student-athletes, coaches, administrators, and fans, the authors show how institutional culture, sex-based segregation, and money-driven decisions continue to hold back real change.

This book is meaningful and timely, and the message transcends far beyond sports. It offers insight into the barriers any marginalized group faces when pushing for fairness, and what it really takes to make equality everlasting. Join us.

Best, Komeisha



Looking Ahead: The National Long Sleeve Shirt Drive is Almost Here!

As we move into another season of service and solidarity, we are proud to recognize National Farmworkers Awareness Week and support the Long Sleeve Drive. The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs is dedicated to protecting and honoring the migrant and farm working community that sustains so much of our food system.



This year's observance is especially meaningful as we approach our fifth year of donating long-sleeve shirts to migrant farm workers, a small but powerful way to support safety, dignity, and comfort in the fields. Long-sleeve shirts are more than just clothing, they are a critical layer of protection from sun exposure, chemicals, and harsh working conditions.

We are honored to have Diana Guzman of Pathstone present this year. Diana is a trusted leader and advocate within the farm working community, and her perspective will help bring to life the importance of this month and the impact of collective care. Hearing directly from someone who works alongside farm workers every day reminds us why this effort matters.

As we look ahead, National Long Sleeve Month invites all of us to recommit to standing with the people who feed our nation. I am proud we offer our support not just in words, but through action, awareness, and ongoing support. We hope you will join us in celebrating this milestone year and in listening, learning, and giving alongside Diana from Pathstone.

Best, Komeisha

Zoom link to pre-register for January 28 meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/nwAIQy_YQ5S8ZQ80eXj4wQ

Branch News: President's Column; AAUW News from Ohio

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President's Column—Komeisha Rose



As we step into 2026 together, I want to wish each of you a joyful, hopeful, and empowering New Year on behalf of AAUW HHL. I am deeply grateful for our community and for the many ways you showed up for one another and for our mission throughout.

Last year was one of growth, resilience, and connection for our branch. Although 2025 brought its fair share of challenges, we also celebrated meaningful wins. We did not just accomplish goals; we grew closer along the way. I often find myself smiling as I reflect on the thoughtful conversations we shared about our mission and our collective passion. As we continue to unite around causes such as publishing the Equal Rights Amendment, I am reminded why this work matters and why it must continue.

Thank you to everyone who supported our Voter Symposium and helped ensure strong collaboration with grassroots organizations like the League of Women Voters and Ohio Equal Rights. These partnerships strengthened our ability to prepare, educate, and stand firm in our commitment to equity and civic engagement.

Another highlight I am incredibly proud of was our trivia night fundraiser. It brought laughter, friendly competition, and most importantly your time, energy, and presence. Together, we raised critical funds for scholarships that directly support women and girls in our community.

We also made important strides in expanding our reach. By continuing to maintain our website and Facebook presence and by launching LinkedIn and Instagram accounts, we took meaningful steps toward connecting with new members, allies, and the next generation of advocates.

There is no denying that 2025 was a challenging year for women's rights. Yet this past year has shown me that our branch does not retreat in the face of difficulty. We convene. We support one another. And we persist.

As we move forward, I hope you share my excitement for expanding our outreach, deepening our partnerships, and

continuing to invest in women and girls. Thank you for inspiring me every day with your passion, generosity, and belief in what we can accomplish together.

Thank you for being part of AAUW HHL. Here's to a new year of purpose, progress, and possibility.

Best, *Komeisha*

AAUW News from Ohio —Nancy Stellhorn



Movie—

Be inspired to advocate for women with this free movie screening and hear from the film's subject, Dr. Charity Woodrum. The award-winning documentary film *Space, Hope and Charity* follows Dr Woodrum's journey through poverty and tragedy as she pursues her dream of becoming an astrophysicist.



Access Period—

Monday, January 12th–Saturday, January 31st [One-Time Streaming Link](#) Password: woody14 You will be asked to set up or use an EventLive account. To watch with the Oregon Online Branch, register in advance for their meeting January 27, 7:00 pm Pacific Time by clicking [HERE](#).

Discussion Provokes Thought—

AAUW Ohio's Change, Women in History, and Diversity monthly initiative continues with a discussion triggered by one selected book. You do not have to read the book to come listen to the Zoom discussion. We begin the year with *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig, a book about change, on Saturday, January 17 at 9:00 am. On February 21 the theme is Diversity; the book is *James: A Novel* by Percival Everett.

Bylaws Vote This Spring—

Your vote will be needed to approve bylaws changes for AAUW Ohio. We purposely delayed these changes so each AAUW member in Ohio could vote on them. Watch for the announcement and the ballot.

Nancy

AAUW—Heights-Hillcrest-Lyndhurst Branch

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December theater outing recap—Kay



Cleveland Public Theatre Holiday Outing in December, Play, *I Wear My Dead Sister's Clothes*—

Amy Schwabauer is an award-winning Cleveland actor, playwright and toy theater creator. Her solo play examines loss during a time when holiday grief can feel especially poignant. In the early months of the pandemic when theaters went dark and the world pressed pause, Amy picked up her life and moved in with her older sister and was her caregiver. Her sister died from pancreatic cancer that year.

The experience inspired this play that mixes grief and humor in an autobiographical story about love, loss and the complicated bonds between sisters. She said she was always the “funny one” as she tumbled around the stage sorting through her sister’s possessions. Her sister Candy was the “cool and dreamy older sister.” She had nine giant plastic bins full of “bougi” purses and she did not even go out.

Amy would do anything for her sister. She made us laugh then cry as she pulls out items from under the stairs, things that made her sister happy, toys that brought back her childhood, her lip glosses. Taking care of her was hellacious, but her sister trusted her and she felt like she mattered.

As she finally goes through her sister’s clothes and tries them on, they become an act of remembrance and then a way of moving forward as she was saying she would go out dancing with one of her dresses on in the end.

Several of our members and guests had comments: “I think she gave us a realistic view of what grief looks like for someone in our close family in a humorous way. How pissed she was, at her sister, was very realistic.” A guest said, “she could have written that play if she had been able to take the time.” One member said, “I found the play thought-provoking, especially the part about having to go through her sister’s things. So many items were multiple and never used. During the play I worried about the actress’s mental health. So it was good to meet her after the play and see that she was smiling (although very tired). Good acting!”

After the play, the group had a chance to chat and take a picture with Amy and then we went across the street to La Playa Mexican Food & Mariscos (Seafood) restaurant which has a vibrant tropical atmosphere—nice on a cold snowy day—where we enjoyed each other’s company.

See article from The Plain Dealer Sunday, December 7, 2025, by Joe Morona for more about the play.

Kay



Pictures taken by Kay at the December theater event.

In January Northeast Ohio Branch does not hold a general meeting; they have a board meeting in January.

On Saturday, February 7 at noon, they will meet at Steele Mansion, 348 Mentor Ave., Painesville, to discuss the book: *The Cure for Women: Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi and the Challenge to Victorian Medicine That Changed Women’s Lives Forever* by Lydia Reeder. Mary Frances Burns will lead the discussion. Lunch will be served before the discussion. Email Carrie Svigil for a reservation form if you did not get one. Payment is due by January 29.



Check out our branch website for the latest branch information
<https://hhl-oh.aauw.net>
and our blog: <https://aauwhhl.wordpress.com>
and find us and like us on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1364957294373532>

Diversity—Cindy Goldberg, Co-Chair



Wishing for the good old days?; watch what you wish for—

For many of us, the holidays bring back memories of the past whether good or bad. For some there is a heartwarming reverie, a wish for days gone by. For women, the days gone by, however, are not shaped out of an image of an idyllic Currier and Ives painting. The article below shows us that women, who indeed are the largest minority (though a statistical majority) in America, often, in reality, are treated as a disadvantaged minority, have a history which is concerning indeed. Please read the article included in this column and consider those who are calling to a return to the past specifically with regard to the roles of women.

From Facebook—"In 1870 America, married women legally did not exist. That is not a metaphor, and it is not exaggeration. Under U.S. law at that time, a married woman had no independent legal identity. She was invisible in the eyes of the courts, the government, and the economy. Her existence was absorbed into her husband's, as if she were never a separate person at all.

This system had a name, and it shaped everyday life for generations. It was called *coverture*, a legal doctrine inherited from English common law. Under *coverture*, a woman's legal identity was "covered" by a man. First her father, then her husband. Once married, she became what the law called a "feme covert," meaning a covered woman. The husband and wife were considered one legal person, and that person was the husband.

Because married women did not legally exist, they could not own property in their own names. They could not sign contracts, operate businesses, or sue or be sued. Any wages they earned belonged automatically to their husbands. Even clothes, jewelry, and personal items were legally his. If a woman inherited money or land, it became her husband's property the moment she married.

Children were not legally hers either. Under *coverture*, children belonged to the father. If a woman left her husband, even in cases of cruelty or abuse, she would almost certainly lose her children forever. The law did not recognize her as a parent with rights, only as an extension of a man.

Her body was not legally her own. Marriage was considered permanent consent to sex. Because a wife had no legal right to refuse her husband, marital rape was viewed as impossible, by definition. You could not violate consent that the law did not recognize. This belief remained embedded in American law well into the late twentieth century.

Violence was also permitted. A husband was allowed to physically discipline his wife under the idea of "moderate correction." Courts debated limits, not the right itself. One commonly cited guideline suggested the object used should be no thicker than a man's thumb, a phrase often linked to the saying "rule of thumb." While historians debate the exact origin of that phrase, the underlying reality remains clear. A married woman could be beaten with legal approval.

Taken together, the consequences were devastating. A married woman could be robbed of her wages, denied her children, beaten, and sexually assaulted, all without legal remedy. The reason was simple and horrifying. In the eyes of the law, she was not a person.

This was not ancient or unusual law. It was mainstream American history. *Coverture* shaped marriage, property, and family life across the United States for centuries. It was taught, enforced, and defended as natural and proper.

So, when did it end? The uncomfortable answer is that it never ended all at once. *Coverture* did not disappear with a single law or court decision. Instead, it slowly eroded over time. In the mid nineteenth century, states began passing *Married Women's Property Acts*. These laws allowed married women to own property under certain conditions. Even then, the changes were limited and uneven.

By the early twentieth century, some of the harshest rules had been softened, but full legal personhood for married women was still far away. Women were often excluded from juries, either entirely or by default. Many states assumed a woman's primary role was domestic, not civic. In some places, women did not regularly serve on juries until the 1960s and 1970s.

Financial independence came even later. Until 1974, banks in the United States could legally require a male cosigner for a woman to obtain credit. Married women could be denied credit cards simply because of their gender. This was not discrimination in practice. It was discrimination written into policy.

Reproductive autonomy was also restricted. Laws allowing husbands to control access to contraception were not fully struck down by the Supreme Court until 1972. Even decisions about a woman's own body were shaped by the lingering belief that marriage transferred authority to a man.

Perhaps the most shocking example of *coverture*'s persistence is marital rape law. It was not illegal in all fifty states until 1993. That means within living memory, a husband could legally rape his wife in parts of the United States. The idea that marriage erased a woman's right to consent lasted far longer than most people realize. Even today, *coverture*'s influence has not completely disappeared. In some states, real estate transactions still

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AAUW Diversity Policy: In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

Forum Page—It's About Justice



**It's About Justice—
Meryl Johnson**



This is an excerpt from an article posted by Timothy Snyder on January 6, 2026, entitled *Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*.

Meryl's Note: I recently attended a birthday party at which a small book (6"x4"), *On Tyranny*, written by Timothy Snyder, was distributed to everyone as a party favor. The following lessons are the openings to the twenty chapters in the book. It is sad to say, but these lessons are essential in today's world.

1. Do not obey in advance. Most of the power of authoritarianism is freely given.

In times like these, individuals think ahead about what a more repressive government will want and then offer themselves without being asked. A citizen who adapts in this way is teaching power what it can do.

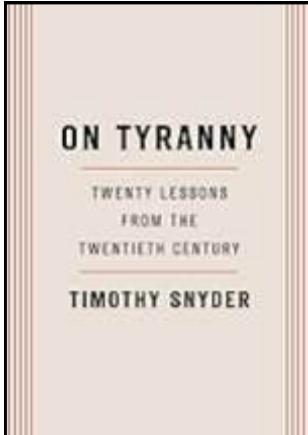
2. Defend institutions. It is institutions that help us to preserve decency. They need our help as well. Do not speak of "our institutions" unless you make them yours by acting on their behalf. Institutions do not protect themselves. They fall one after the other unless each is defended from the beginning. So, choose an institution you care about -- a court, a newspaper, a law, a labor union -- and take its side.

3. Beware the one-party state. The parties that remade states and suppressed rivals were not omnipotent from the start. They exploited a historic moment to make political life impossible for their opponents. So, support the multiple-party system and defend the rules of democratic elections. Vote in local and state elections while you can. Consider running for office.

4. Take responsibility for the face of the world. The symbols of today enable the reality of tomorrow. Notice the swastikas and the other signs of hate. Do not look away, and do not get used to them. Remove them yourself and set an example for others to do so.

5. Remember professional ethics. When political leaders set a negative example, professional commitments to just practice become more important. It is hard to subvert a rule-of-law state without lawyers, or to hold show trials without judges. Authoritarians need obedient civil servants, and concentration camp directors seek businessmen interested in cheap labor.

6. Be wary of paramilitaries. When the men with guns who have always claimed to be against the system start



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Listen to Meryl every Saturday
on
"Its About Justice?"
1:00 to 2:00 pm
WRUW. 91.1 FM

wearing uniforms and marching with torches and pictures of a leader, the end is nigh. When the pro-leader paramilitary and the official police and military intermingle, the end has come.

7. Be reflective if you must be armed. If you carry a weapon in public service, may God bless you and keep you. But know that evils of the past involved policemen and soldiers finding themselves, one day, doing irregular things. Be ready to say no.

8. Stand out. Someone has to. It is easy to follow along. It can feel strange to do or say something different. But without that unease, there is no freedom. Remember Rosa Parks. The moment you set an example, the spell of the status quo is broken, and others will follow.

9. Be kind to our language. Avoid pronouncing the phrases everyone else does. Think up your own way of speaking, even if only to convey that thing you think everyone is saying. Make an effort to separate yourself from the internet. Read books.

10. Believe in truth. To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is spectacle. The biggest wallet pays for the most blinding lights.

11. Investigate. Figure things out for yourself. Spend more time with long articles. Subsidize investigative journalism by subscribing to print media. Realize that some of what is on the internet is there to harm you. Learn about sites that investigate propaganda campaigns (some of which come from abroad). Take responsibility for what you communicate with others.

12. Make eye contact and small talk. This is not just polite. It is part of being a citizen and a responsible member of society. It is also a way to stay in touch with your surroundings, break down social barriers, and understand whom you should and should not trust. If we enter a culture of denunciation, you will want to know the psychological landscape of your daily life.

13. Practice corporeal politics. Power wants your body softening in your chair and your emotions dissipating on the screen. Get outside. Put your body in unfamiliar places with unfamiliar people. Make new friends and march with them.

Forum Page—more Diversity; more Its About Justice

Diversity continued from page 4

reflect unequal spousal consent rules. Tax law assumes joint filing as the default, echoing the idea that a married couple is a single legal unit. Employment benefits, healthcare decisions, and inheritance laws all developed within a framework shaped by centuries of coverture.

Social traditions also carry their imprints. The expectation that a woman takes her husband's surname is not a harmless custom. It comes from a time when marriage erased her legal identity. It was never required by law, but it symbolized legal nonexistence so effectively that it became normalized as tradition.

Even phrases like "head of household" carry historical weight. They reflect the assumption that one person, usually the husband, represents the family legally and socially. These words may feel neutral today, but they come from a culture built on legal inequality.

Understanding coverture changes how we see the history of women's rights. When suffragettes fought for the vote, they were challenging a system that claimed married women could not hold independent political opinions. When women demanded the right to work, own property, and keep their wages, they were fighting a doctrine that said they were not legal persons.

Every right women have today was won deliberately and often painfully. The right to own property. The right to control wages. The right to custody of children. The right to refuse sex within marriage. The right to open a bank account. None of these were gifts. All were victories.

This history is not distant. If you were born before 1974, you were born into a country where married women could be denied credit without male approval. If you were born before 1993, you were born into a country where marital rape was still legal in some states. This is not your great grandmother's life. For many, it is their mother's or even their own.

Coverture explains why gender inequality persists in subtle ways. When women were excluded from legal personhood for centuries, cultural change could not happen overnight. When women were barred from economic independence for most of American history, disparities did not vanish with one law.

The ghost of coverture still shapes how society views marriage, power, and gender roles. It lingers in expectations, paperwork, and assumptions we rarely question. Recognizing it does not diminish progress. It deepens our understanding of how hard that progress was won.

History is not just about the past. It is about the systems we inherit and the traditions we accept without knowing their origins. Coverture may be weaker now, but its shadow remains."

In conclusion, let us be aware of the threats women see to the achievements they have made in autonomy and full recognition of our personhood. Beware of the call in society to push back women into historic roles which minimize the woman, her freedoms and her worth. Let us be ever vigilant in protecting the gains that were so hard fought for. In the new year and beyond, let us take nothing for granted.

Fondly,
Cindy
for the Diversity Committee.

Its About Justice, continued from page 5

14. Establish a private life. Nastier rulers will use what they know about you to push you around. Scrub your computer of malware on a regular basis. Remember that email is skywriting. Consider using alternative forms of the internet or simply using it less. Have personal exchanges in person. For the same reason, resolve any legal trouble. Tyrants seek the hook on which to hang you. Try not to have hooks.

15. Contribute to good causes. Be active in organizations, political or not, that express your own view of life. Pick a charity or two and set up autopay. Then you will have made a free choice that supports civil society and helps others to do good.

16. Learn from peers in other countries. Keep up your friendships abroad or make new friends in other countries. The present difficulties in the United States are an element of a larger trend. And no country is going to find a solution by itself. Make sure you and your family have passports.

17. Listen for dangerous words. Be alert to use of the words "extremism" and "terrorism." Be alive to the fatal notions of "emergency" and "exception." Be angry about the treacherous use of patriotic vocabulary.

18. Be calm when the unthinkable arrives. Modern tyranny is terror management. When the terrorist attack comes, remember that authoritarians exploit such events in order to consolidate power. The sudden disaster that requires the end of checks and balances, the dissolution of opposition parties, the suspension of freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, and so on, is the oldest trick in the Hitlerian book. *Do not fall for it.*

19. Be a patriot. Set a good example of what America means for the generations to come. They will need it.

20. Be as courageous as you can. If none of us is prepared to die for freedom, then all of us will die under tyranny.

Meryl



Equity Now!! Together we can achieve a vision of equity for women and girls.

More Branch News—social network contacts

HHL Branch joins two more social media platforms—

Thanks to President Komeisha Rose for setting up an Instagram account for us at [aauwhhl](#) and also signing us up for LinkedIn under [AAUW-HHL](#). These were goals suggested by AAUW Ohio and were accomplished in December 2025.



Instagram is a visual-first social media platform owned by Meta (formerly Facebook) launched in 2010. It has grown to become one of the most widely used (3 billion.) The platform serves as a personal diary and a marketing tool for businesses. It has a logo of a futuristic camera with bright colors.



LinkedIn is a professional networking platform that connects individuals and businesses, allowing users to create profiles, network, search for jobs and share professional content. They have a logo with a blue square with white letters "in."

We would like to attract more members to our branch with appealing posts. Please check out the latest Instagram post created by Komeisha about our special evening at the play in December. And then while you are there look up the actress playwright Amy Schwabauer @instaschwabs.



Joining with the above new platforms is our Facebook page. Feel free to "like" us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1364957294373532>. Facebook is an American made social media and social networking service owned by the American technology conglomerate Meta.

Kay



Heights-Hillcrest-Lyndhurst AAUW, January, 2026

AAUW HHL Branch is involved in the community



Continue to collect your "no longer wanted or needed" long-sleeved shirts for donation to the National Farmworkers Association drive for distribution to those farmworkers that need them.



If you have any other ideas about how AAUW HHL can be involved in the community, share those ideas with either Kay or Komeisha.

Luggage for Foster Kids:

Every Child Needs a Family. Unfortunately, not every family has the means to house a child that needs them. There are over 2000 children in DCFS 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.



Last year, I asked you to imagine not being able to take any of your belongings with you if you were being relocated to the care of strangers. I asked you to imagine the psychological impact of having to move everything you own in a large garbage bag at a moment's notice. You listened and we were able to donate lightweight luggage to the Department of Child and Family Services. We won't stop at a few items. This year, we are looking to donate more small, carry-on sizes approximately 22 x 14 x 9 inches. Please help by contacting us on Facebook to arrange a pickup

Donna

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR
2026**



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