



AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION OF
UNIVERSITY
WOMEN

2009–2010 Leadership

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ATLANTA BRANCH NEWS

Vol. 60, No. 1 ❖ September 2009

Fall Kickoff! RSVP Required

Please join us for our fall kickoff meeting on September 12, 2009.

Our keynote speaker at our kickoff program is **Joy Dike**. She will talk about the thesis she is completing on the history of science education for women and girls. Also, our Community Action Grant recipient will tell us about how Georgia Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic is collaborating with higher education organizations to read and record textbooks targeted to getting more girls interested in science, technology, and math.

The speakers will begin at 11:00 a.m., with lunch and our business meeting to follow.

We are meeting at:

Mary Mac's Tea Room

224 Ponce de Leon Ave, NE, Atlanta 30308

Select an entree from the menu. A steamed vegetable medley and a carrot-and-raisin salad will be served. Dessert will be bread pudding with wine sauce. Assorted breads and fresh-brewed coffee and tea will be offered. Price: \$18.00.

Please **RVSP** to Frances Smith: francesjsmith1921@yahoo.com or 404/231-0482 if you plan to attend. The deadline to reserve your place is Monday, September 7.

HANDBOOKS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED AT THIS MEETING.

Directions: Mary Mac's is on the corner of Myrtle St. and Ponce de Leon Ave., two blocks east of Peachtree St. From the expressway, take the North Ave. exit. There is parking on Myrtle behind Mary Mac's and also across Myrtle behind the laundry. ❖

President's Column: The Benefit Package for Atlanta Branch Members

by Mary Lynn Merkle

As I wrote my \$77.00 membership check this spring, I celebrated the fact that I get so much for so little. Why, I've paid that much for one ticket to a performance at The Fox! So—what is it that is such a bargain?!

My national dues, at \$49, support a national office and program that speaks for me and for equity for all women and girls. The added bonus is that 46 of those dollars are tax deductible. The \$3.00 that is not tax deductible is spent on lobbying and on issues that directly relate to equity for women and girls. That's money well spent, in my opinion!

Now the \$18.00 spent on branch dues is about the best bargain imaginable. It's less than \$2.00 per branch meeting, and for that we have some pretty outstanding programs, we visit interesting new restaurants, and revisit the tried and true. We get 9 or 10 informative newsletters. We participate in Small Groups. For me as a fairly

new Atlantan, I have been most appreciative of the Travel Group travels. I've been introduced to many new places—as different as the Oakland Cemetery, the new World of Coca-Cola, and the upcoming Grady Hospital Tour. And what about all those new friends!

We underwrite programs such as the Young Women's Leadership Program through Refugee Family Services and use our time and talent to increase its effectiveness. We provide scholarships for several non-traditional women students each year and contribute to graduate fellowships and legal assistance for women who have faced discrimination.

I know I've not covered everything. I'm only limited by space. But AAUW Atlanta Branch is such a bargain that we should share the good news with our friends and neighbors. We are most willing to share our Atlanta branch experiences. Why not invite a prospective member to Mary Mac's on September 12th? ❖

Shaping Public Policy in Georgia

by Marie Bonheur-Gulotta

During my recent participation in a legislative wrap-up and advocacy training seminar, I realized that we, as members of a Georgia community, have a lot of work to do before we can shape effective public policy.

First we must address what prevents our communities from receiving the beneficial results of current public policy.

Here is my brief review of legislation that should help our community thrive.

HB 37 is a bill that provides paid or unpaid leave for workers who take up to 24 hours a year off from work to attend mandatory school conferences or to take an elderly family member or child to a doctor's appointment. One of the reasons this bill has difficulty passing is because Georgia is an "at will employment" state which means that a person can lose their job for no reason

at all. HB37 should remedy this outmoded law.

With respect to the state budget, stimulus monies have restored some crucial programs for women such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs. However, the budget that was signed and passed by the governor still is not enough to prevent large cuts to education, health and social services, and to agencies that provide safety nets for disenfranchised women and girls. Although the stimulus package restored respite care and community living supports for seniors, deep budget cuts and a lack of progressive legislation are, I feel, unacceptable and just not good enough for the people of Georgia.

I am very hopeful for HB582 which decriminalizes minors for prostitution and is still pending. I was happy to see HB581 passed and signed which gives Georgia families an extension to unemployment compensation during these hard economic times.

I was especially pleased to have met Ms. Elizabeth J. Appley, a fellow Long Islander and attorney at large, who met with the lawyers of the governor and who helped champion necessary social services programs for FY09 and FY2010.

I believe that all the members of our community are potential policy makers. I believe that to shape public policy, people must take an active interest in the passage of legislation. Any member of the community can go on the Georgia Assembly website (website address) and reach out to local government leaders to advance the passage of bills like HB582 and by doing so make a difference in public policy. It is through this kind of community participation that we are able to protect the rights of every individual who lives in the community that is Georgia.

This website will allow you to get local info: <http://www.legis.state.ga.us/>. ❖

Catching Up With Our Members: Sarah Rondeau

by Mary Lynn Merkle

Sarah Rondeau, our Historian, has lived the history of Atlanta Branch for more than 27 years. During those years Sarah has filled many leadership positions, including a staff position with the Educational Information and Referral Service formerly provided by our Branch. She has always been a part of the Bookfair and the bookroom. She was Board secretary for two terms and is into her second term as Historian. And, when we were ready to celebrate our Branch centennial, she volunteered to update the Branch history. What a gift to our Branch!

During her "working for pay" years Sarah was a career counselor and an educational administrator, and she worked in a number of social service positions. She also spent time tending to the needs of several senior relatives who lived into their nineties.

Currently, she has more time for her hobbies. One, genealogy, has led to her active participation in the Georgia Genealogical Society where she serves as secretary on the Board of Directors, as well as the Friends of the Georgia Archives where she is on the Board of Trustees. She is active in her church, Chamblee First United Methodist, and she strongly supports Planned Parenthood of Georgia and the Nature Conservancy of Georgia.

Sarah and husband Ed have had many travel opportunities, having toured Canada, Mexico, and a number of European countries. Favorites among them are Scotland and Spain, especially Toledo.



Sarah Rondeau

Sarah and Ed have three very special nieces. And they currently share their home with two charcoal-grey cats that are "very smart and well-behaved (usually)."

Sarah was first drawn to AAUW (30-plus years ago) because she wanted to meet like-minded women and to participate in a strong organization with positive goals, and she obviously found what she was looking for. Now she is hoping that more people will hear about us and all the good things we do; and she thinks that collaborating our activities with other like-minded local organizations will make us even stronger. Our January legislative forum with One Hundred Black Women is a great beginning! ❖

Great News From LAF

Co-presidents Ruth Yurchuck and Mary Lynn Merkle recently received notice that Atlanta branch has placed 10th in the nation in the Top Ten Protectors of the legal rights of those facing discrimination through Total Branch Giving to the Legal Advocacy Fund. Notice and a certificate came in a congratulatory letter from Linda Hallman, AAUW's executive director.

Roses to Phyllis Miller, last year's Educational Foundation committee chair, and her team!

Bookfair Sign-up

			9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	12:30 p.m.– 3:30 p.m.	3:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.	6:30 p.m.– 9:30 p.m.
Sunday	9/20	Set-up				PEAK Set-up starts: 7:00 ends: approx. 10:30
Monday	9/21	Set-up				
Tuesday	9/22	Set-up				
Tuesday	9/22	Preview sale				PEAK Preview sale shift is from 5:45 till 9:45
Wed.	9/23	Sale	PEAK	PEAK		
Thursday	9/24	Sale				
Friday	9/25	Sale				CRITICAL
Saturday	9/26	Sale	CRITICAL	CRITICAL	CRITICAL	CRITICAL
Sunday	9/27	Sale		CRITICAL This shift starts: 11:00 a.m. ends: 3:00 p.m.	CRITICAL This shift starts: 3:00 p.m. ends: 7:00 p.m.	
Sunday	9/28	Tear-down				PEAK This shift starts: 7:00 p.m. ends: when finished

Please put a check in the chart above in the white space of the shifts that you prefer to work. (Select **3** or **MORE** shifts.)

PEAK: Shifts that are busy, requiring many staff. **CRITICAL:** Shifts not quite as busy as Peak shifts but usually under-staffed.

Name: _____

Branch: _____ Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Please indicate whether you have a strong preference to work as a cashier, a cashier's assistant, or on the floor as a merchandiser during the sale. Cashiering and cashier's assistant are sedentary jobs, but you must be able to operate our calculators accurately and quickly. All set-up shifts require unpacking books. Evening shifts should help clean and cover tables after closing. If you must sit but don't want to cashier you may be given a security/information job. If you do not state a preference, you will be assigned as needed.

Preferred duty: cashier/assistant _____ or merchandiser _____ **Please note: We will attempt to place you in your preferred duty, as much as personnel needs and policies permit. No one will be required to stand or lift books that cannot do so.**

If you can serve as a **Shift Chair** check here: _____ Shift Chair duties include assigning worker's stations at the beginning of a shift and giving information to AAUW personnel, as well as working as a relief cashier and merchandiser during the shift. Someone on each shift must be the Shift Chair.

Comments:

**Now is the time for all good AAUW members
to come to the aid of Bookfair.**

This is not just a catchy phrase. We are serious. We are still trying to recruit student volunteers to assist us but do not have a solid commitment at this time. **Staffing is extremely important.** Please sign up for as many shifts as possible and bring your friends and family. If every AAUW member brought one non AAUW volunteer our staffing needs could be met. We especially need strong backs to help unpack books on Sunday night and all day Monday. Anyone with retail experience can be very valuable during sale days/evenings as cashiers. Merchandisers are necessary to straighten displays, unpack books as space becomes available, and just to be visible as a security measure. And don't forget: Bookfair staff serve an extremely valuable function as AAUW's representative to the public. Use every opportunity to tell customers how the funds raised at Bookfair are donated and to recruit new members for AAUW.

THIS IS OUR 50th ANNIVERSARY!!! Let's make it GREAT.

Remember: double credit for Tuesday night Preview Sale and all shifts on Wednesday!!!

Mail your form to: **Barbara Buchanan • 1795 Riverside Rd • Roswell, GA 30076, or e-mail: barbara2@datekltd.com**

IMPORTANT: If you have been recruited to work on the BANKING COMMITTEE (OR "FINANCE COMMITTEE") **DO NOT** use the form above. The Banking Committee Chair will assign and keep track of your Banking shifts. They are different times than the shifts listed above. Please use the form above only to sign up for additional shifts which are different from your Banking Shifts.

Questions? Call Barbara: 770-998-2444

Georgia Needs To Cultivate More Female Political Leaders

by Marie Wilson

(Submitted by Marie Marie Bonheur-Gulotta and reprinted with permission from the opinion page of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, July 31, 2009)

When I was a young girl of 11, my best friend's father took us to the Georgia State House, and employed us as pages for several days. At the time, preoccupied by the usual musings of a pre-teenaged Southern girl, I had little understanding of the power wielded from within those great walls or the terrible exclusions it fostered.

It was decades before the women's and civil rights movements would challenge the status quo, but it was perhaps the absence of diverse faces and voices in that grand structure that made such an impression on me, and birthed a nascent seed of revolt in my young mind.

Over a half-century has passed since I first stood on the House steps, and much has changed in the capitol and across Georgia since then.

Schools have been desegregated, women and African-Americans have represented Georgians in Congress, and Atlanta has grown into the metropolitan star of the South. Yet in all the ways we have seen change, so much remains the same.

In an election year that mobilized our country to embrace diversity as never before, Georgia fell from 31st to 37th in the nation for women's political representation. Despite the leadership of several prominent women—including Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin and Atlanta City Council President Lisa Borders—women's representation is shamefully low in the Peach State. Georgia is a land of intelligent, dedicated, and remarkable women—and yet none have ever been elected to the U.S. Senate. Nor does a single woman currently represent the state in Congress, while only seven of Georgia's 56 state senators are women.

What does this mean for Georgia? Beyond the principle of equal representation—a core tenet of democracy—diversity in our leadership brings tangible benefits to society. Scholars at the University of Michigan and Loyola University have found that diverse groups tend to outperform their homogeneous counterparts despite equal abilities. And research coming out of Cranfield University is showing that mixed management teams make better business

At the White House Project, we use the “inspire, inform and equip” model to train a critical mass of women to lead a political life.



Marie Bonheur-Gulotta (left) with Marie Wilson, founder of the White House Project

decisions while bringing more innovation to the table.

These studies suggest that diversity in our leaders not only promotes fairness, but delivers a strong financial advantage, and with the economy looming large over Georgia's families, businesses, and institutions, adding women to our political leadership makes sense for the bottom line.

So how do we elevate Georgia's standing in the nation, and bring the voices and vision of our women to the halls of power?

At the White House Project, we use the “inspire, inform and equip” model to train a critical mass of women to lead a political life—more than 6,000 across the country and more than 2,000 in Georgia since 2004. These women form an impressive network of alumnae—including Tangela Barrie, Superior Court Judge of Dekalb County; State Rep. Dee Dawkins-Haigler; and current state House candidate Asha Jackson—who are making a positive impact across the state.

This summer, nearly 200 diverse women joined their ranks, when they attended the

White House Project's annual Georgia Go Run political leadership training. More than 40 of these women announced their intention to run for office in the next election cycle, many at the state level. Having witnessed their collective knowledge, passion and dedication this weekend, I know they are the future faces and voices of leadership in the South.

With so few women in positions of political power, women need a number of things to lead and succeed, including critical skills in fund-raising, campaigning and communications. While addressing the Go Run trainees last week, Mayor Franklin candidly echoed the unique challenges women face when running for office. Most importantly, they need a network of support in order to take the leap and run. An invitation to lead—from a colleague, friend, family member or community leader—can authorize a woman to move from citizen to candidate.

As Molly Ward, a 20-year-old student and activist who will attend this year's training stated, “More often than not, women do not pursue political leadership because they are never asked. I hope to utilize the skills from Georgia Go Run not only to advance my own leadership, but to inspire other women to do the same.”

We all know at least one woman whose intelligence, courage and commitment would bring a wealth of leadership to our political institutions. Like Molly, we should strive to tell them so—not only because we believe in them—but because Georgia needs them.

When I approached the State House steps in the 1950s, the bronzed face which met my youthful gaze was former Georgia Senator, and Klan supporter, Thomas Watson. Though he still greets all who climb the House steps, I take particular pleasure in knowing that his appointed replacement was a woman. Though her position lasted a mere day, Rebecca Felton was a passionate suffragist, and to this day, Georgia's only female senator. She exclaimed on that one day of service in 1922, “The trail has been blazed! The road is apparently rough—maybe rocky—but the trail has been located.”

Close to a century later, it's time we turn that trail into a well-beaten path for Georgia's women to lead. ♦

Marie Wilson, a Georgia native, is founder and president of the White House Project: www.thewhitehouseproject.org.



Bookroom Closed Prior to Bookfair

The bookroom will be closed to our general volunteers starting on **Saturday, September 5, 2009**. After that date, members who have keys are free to come and finish up pricing and boxing their categories. However, sorting will stop until after the Bookfair in order to give some breathing space, before the Bookfair, to our hardest working volunteers who have spent the year keeping up the pricing and boxing of their categories.

Those who empty bookdrops are encouraged to hold the books until after the sale if at all possible. But if necessary, you may deliver to the Bookroom after September 5 if you have keys to the building. You should be aware that there may not be anyone in the Bookroom to assist you in unloading your car.

And please remember: If you do not usually price a category, please do not try to help by pricing in someone else's category. A few books may remain on Bookroom shelves, but it is the pricer's responsibility to determine when to stop in their category or to ask for help.

Introducing Your New Publications Person

by Stephanie Babbitt

Hi everyone! My name is Stephanie Staples Babbitt, and the Atlanta Branch officers have graciously invited me to produce your branch newsletters in addition to the Handbook, which I've already been doing for several years.



Mary Lynn Merkle suggested I tell you all a little bit about myself. I grew up in DeKalb County (Lynne Fountain and I were schoolmates). I hold a B.B.A. from Oglethorpe University and an M.B.A. with a concentration in Marketing from Georgia State. I've worked for a number of publications and other businesses; my longest stint was 11 years at the Georgia Tech Research Institute. Unfortunately, health problems forced me to give up full-time employment in 1997, and I freelance now as my situation permits.

I'm largely confined to the house these days, so I'm afraid I won't be seeing you at meetings or the Bookfair. But I'm always available at sbabbitt@bellsouth.net if you have submissions or suggestions for the newsletter! ❖

An Added Benefit for Long-time Members

by Mary Lynn Merkle

Imagine 50 years of membership in AAUW! Anne Habersetzner can! She is one of our Fifty Year Honorary Life members. Besides enjoying all those years of membership she now no longer needs to pay Association, State, or branch dues.

We have some long-time members. Now is a good time to check your membership records and see how many years you've been with AAUW. They do not need to be consecutive years. Please contact one of the co-presidents if you feel that you qualify as a 50-year member.

And another benefit!! Anyone who has served as Atlanta branch president and has reached age 65 will have their branch dues paid by the branch. Could that be you?? ❖

Travel Group

The first meeting of the year for the Travel Group will be a tour of Grady Hospital which will highlight the newly renovated Goddard Memorial Chapel. Grady has been headline news recently, and this is our opportunity to see and hear first-hand about the difficulties Grady faces. We will meet at the Kroger Store at Ansley Mall on Monroe Drive at 9:45 a.m., Thursday, October 8, to carpool to Grady for our 10:30 appointment. We will lunch together following our tour. Anyone interested should call Betty Arden at 770/955-6381. ❖

Book Group

On Wednesday, September 2, our group will begin another year of discussion, reading, eating, and drinking! Our first book is Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*. We will meet at the home of Frances Smith, 1128 Club Trace, Atlanta, 404/231-0482 (Brookhaven area).

Our October meeting will be on Wednesday the 7th. Our discussion will be about *The Reader* by Bernhard Schlink. The location will be the same: Frances Smith's home.

Everyone is welcome even if you haven't read the book! Contact Kay Collins at 404/266-2183 if you have questions. ❖

You Are Invited!

Circle Tuesday, November 10, on your calendar! Cobb branch is hosting a reception for our new national president, Carolyn Garfein. Many of us who have been connected to AAUW through the years know Carolyn and supported her candidacy, so for us it's a special opportunity to honor her.

The reception will take place at 6:30 p.m. on November 10 at the Mansour Center, 995 Roswell St., Marietta. All branch members are encouraged to attend. ❖

FOR SALE

Red Book bags with the 50th Anniversary Logo in white

\$1.25 each or 4 for \$5.00

**Available at the September 12 meeting or from
Pat Bevis and May Ruth Bradberry**

General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2010

	Proposed 2008–09	Actual 2008–09	Proposed 2009–10
REVENUES			
Dues 2008–09	\$4,246.50	\$4,297.50	\$0.00
Dues 2009–10	\$0.00		\$3,967.00
To Association 2008–09	(\$2,535.00)	(\$2,556.00)	\$0.00
To Association 2009–10	\$0.00		(\$2,469.00)
To State 2008–09	(\$555.00)	(\$565.00)	\$0.00
To State 2009–10	\$0.00		(\$550.00)
Branch Dues 2008–09	\$1,156.50	\$1,176.50	\$0.00
Branch Dues 2009–10		\$0.00	\$948.00
Transfer from Community Fund	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Donations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Interest—General Fund	\$30.00	\$19.41	\$0.00
State Convention Awards	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Net Revenues	\$4,186.50	\$4,195.91	\$3,948.00
Expenses			
Conventions for AAUW	\$1,500.00	\$1,864.74	\$500.00
Ad for State Convention	\$60.00	\$60.00	\$60.00
Corporate Registration	\$0.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Diversity	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
Donations	\$200.00	\$350.00	\$0.00
Donations to AAUW Pres. Campaign	\$0.00	\$250.00	\$0.00
Hospitality	\$350.00	\$163.07	\$350.00
Membership Committee	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
Miscellaneous	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
Newsletter	\$600.00	\$279.98	\$300.00
Office Supplies	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
President's Expense	\$250.00	\$268.92	\$250.00
Gifts for Presidents	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00
Bank Fees	\$75.00	\$0.00	\$75.00
Board Expense	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
Program Development	\$750.00	\$366.52	\$500.00
Program—January	\$0.00	\$532.00	\$0.00
Public Policy	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
Storage for Archived Material	\$200.00	\$176.40	\$200.00
Telephone	\$150.00	\$151.21	\$0.00
Treasurer's Expense	\$50.00	\$68.31	\$75.00
Website Maintenance	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$720.00
Handbook	\$425.00	\$358.93	\$400.00
Total Expenses	\$5,460.00	\$5,010.08	\$3,900.00
Excess (Deficit) Revenues/Expenses	(\$1,273.50)	(\$814.17)	\$48.00
BEGINNING OF YEAR CARRY FORWARD			
Net Cash	\$7,439.13	\$7,439.13	\$6,524.96
Contingency	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Unallocated Transfer to Dues		(\$100.00)	
Total Carry Forward	\$8,439.13	\$8,339.13	\$7,524.96
Balance at End of Year	\$7,165.63	\$7,524.96	\$7,572.96

The Words of God Do Not Justify Cruelty to Women

by Jimmy Carter

(Submitted by Stephanie Babbitt and reprinted with permission of the Carter Center. This editorial was published in the July 12, 2009, edition of *The Observer*.)

I have been a practising Christian all my life and a deacon and Bible teacher for many years. My faith is a source of strength and comfort to me, as religious beliefs are to hundreds of millions of people around the world.

So my decision to sever my ties with the Southern Baptist Convention, after six decades, was painful and difficult. It was, however, an unavoidable decision when the convention's leaders, quoting a few carefully selected Bible verses and claiming that Eve was created second to Adam and was responsible for original sin, ordained that women must be "subservient" to their husbands and prohibited from serving as deacons, pastors or chaplains in the military service. This was in conflict with my belief—confirmed in the holy scriptures—that we are all equal in the eyes of God.

This view that women are somehow inferior to men is not restricted to one religion or belief. It is widespread. Women are prevented from playing a full and equal role in many faiths.

Nor, tragically, does its influence stop at the walls of the church, mosque, synagogue or temple. This discrimination, unjustifiably attributed to a Higher Authority, has provided a reason or excuse for the deprivation of women's equal rights across the world for centuries. The male interpretations of religious texts and the way they interact with, and reinforce, traditional practices justify some of the most pervasive, persistent, flagrant and damaging examples of human rights abuses.

At their most repugnant, the belief that women must be subjugated to the wishes of men excuses slavery, violence, forced prostitution, genital mutilation and national laws that omit rape as a crime. But it also costs many millions of girls and women control over their own bodies and lives, and continues to deny them fair access to education, health, employment and influence within their own communities.

The impact of these religious beliefs touches every aspect of our lives. They help explain why in many countries boys are educated before girls; why girls are told when and whom they must marry; and why many face enormous and

unacceptable risks in pregnancy and childbirth because their basic health needs are not met.

In some Islamic nations, women are restricted in their movements, punished for permitting the exposure of an arm or ankle, deprived of education, prohibited from driving a car or competing with men for a job. If a woman is raped, she is often most severely punished as the guilty party in the crime.

The same discriminatory thinking lies behind the continuing gender gap in pay and why there are still so few women in office in Britain and the United States. The root of this prejudice lies deep in our histories, but its impact is felt every day. It is not women and girls alone who suffer. It damages all of us. The evidence shows that investing in women and girls delivers major benefits for everyone in society. An educated woman has healthier children. She is more likely to send them to school. She earns more and invests what she earns in her family.

The root of this prejudice lies deep in our histories, but its impact is felt every day. It is not women and girls alone who suffer. It damages all of us.

It is simply self-defeating for any community to discriminate against half its population. We need to challenge these self-serving and out-dated attitudes and practices - as we are seeing in Iran where women are at the forefront of the battle for democracy and freedom.

I understand, however, why many political leaders can be reluctant about stepping into this minefield. Religion, and tradition, are powerful and sensitive area to challenge.

But my fellow Elders and I, who come from many faiths and backgrounds, no longer need to worry about winning votes or avoiding controversy—and we are deeply committed to challenging injustice wherever we see it.

The Elders have decided to draw particular attention to the responsibility of religious and



Former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Jimmy Carter (photo courtesy of the Carter Center)

traditional leaders in ensuring equality and human rights. We have recently published a statement that declares: "The justification of discrimination against women and girls on grounds of religion or tradition, as if it were prescribed by a Higher Authority, is unacceptable."

We are calling on all leaders to challenge and change the harmful teachings and practices, no matter how ingrained, which justify discrimination against women. We ask, in particular, that leaders of all religions have the courage to acknowledge and emphasise the positive messages of dignity and equality that all the world's major faiths share.

Although not having training in religion or theology, I understand that the carefully selected verses found in the holy scriptures to justify the superiority of men owe more to time and place—and the determination of male leaders to hold onto their influence—than eternal truths. Similar Biblical excerpts could be found to support the approval of slavery and the timid acquiescence to oppressive rulers.

At the same time, I am also familiar with vivid descriptions in the same scriptures in which women are revered as pre-eminent leaders. During the years of the early Christian church women served as deacons, priests, bishops, apostles, teachers and prophets. It wasn't until the fourth century that dominant Christian leaders, all men, twisted and distorted holy scriptures to perpetuate their ascendant positions within the religious hierarchy.

(continued on next page)

Calendar

September

- 2 Book Group meets
- 12 Fall Kickoff meeting
- 20 Bookfair setup begins
- 22 Bookfair preview sale
- 23 Bookfair!
- 28 Bookfair tear-down
- 30 Newsletter deadline

Jimmy Carter (cont. from page 7)

I know, too, that Billy Graham, one of the most widely respected and revered Christians during my lifetime, did not understand why women were prevented from being priests and preachers. He said: "Women preach all over the world. It doesn't bother me from my study of the scriptures."

The truth is that male religious leaders have had—and still have—an option to interpret holy teachings either to exalt or subjugate women. They have, for their own selfish ends, overwhelmingly chosen the latter.

Their continuing choice provides the foundation or justification for much of the pervasive persecution and abuse of women throughout the world. This is in clear violation not just

October

- 4 Board meeting
- 7 Book Group meets
- 8 Travel Group meets

November

- 1 Daylight Saving Time ends
- 3 Election Day
- 10 Reception for Carolyn Garfein
- 11 Veteran's Day

of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, Moses and the prophets, Muhammad, and founders of other great religions—all of whom have called for proper and equitable treatment of all the children of God. It is time we had the courage to challenge these views. ❖

Jimmy Carter was U.S. president from 1977–81. The Elders are an independent group of eminent global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela, who offer their influence and experience to support peace building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity.

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DON'T MISS THE BOOKFAIR SIGN-UP FORM ON PAGE 3!

Board Meeting

The Atlanta Branch 2009–2010 leadership team will meet on Sunday, October 4, at 3:00 p.m., at the home of Frances Smith.

ATLANTA NEWS

Atlanta Branch AAUW
1651 Executive Park Lane
Atlanta, GA 30329