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WOMEN

ATLANTA BRANCH NEWS

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March Meeting: Women's History Month

Please join us for our next meeting on Saturday, March 20, at 11:00 a.m., at:

Copeland's of New Orleans

"Mardi Gras" room
3365 Piedmont Avenue

In observance of Women's History Month, we will have as our speaker Stacy Chavis of the White House Project. Her topic will be "Training Women to Run for Public Office." Following our business meeting, please plan to stay at Copeland's until 2 p.m. so we can have a block of time for members to provide input into re-examining our branch structure. We need **everyone's** opinion in making decisions about our branch.

Lunch will be a buffet with assorted desserts and beverages (tea, coffee, sodas, and water) included. Price per person: \$18.00.

To reserve your place, please e-mail Frances Smith at francesjsmith1921@yahoo.com or call her at 404/231-0482.

The reservation deadline is Monday, March 15.

Directions: Copeland's is northwest of Peachtree on Piedmont. From Peachtree, pass Highland Drive NE and Tower Place Drive on the right. Copeland's is in the next "block," also on the right. There is free parking behind Copeland's available from either side of the block or from a drive within the block. There is a passage from this garage to Copeland's. ❖

My Experience at the White House Project

by Marie Bonheur-Gulotta

The White House Project (WHP) is a statewide organization that teaches women to lead in the political arena. When I attended one of their sessions, I was delighted to see a large group of women who were passionate about making a real difference in their community. Every individual, like myself, had specific goals and reasons that she felt it necessary to make changes in her community.

Holding elective office allows women to be part of planning and organizing the process of making law. The WHP holds that women bring unique qualifications to elective positions. Women are likely to "think outside the box." Women are generally true to themselves and to their values and ideas. Most importantly, they possess managerial skills instinctively and know how to manage others. Women also understand that diversity is one of America's strengths; a diverse populace and government will help to build a successful nation. The WHP helped make me comfortable with the idea that I, as a woman and a citizen, could run for office at the state or even the federal level and make a greater impact to better my community.

Stacey Chavis, the executive director of WHP, spoke about the infighting among women and declared that *now* is the time to stop it. I found her talk encouraging particularly because she is a young woman holding an influential leadership position in this organization, and that gives me hope that many other young women will become involved with the WHP and take its message to heart.

The political leaders who spoke made it clear that women must be on fire for political life; it must be a burning desire. Each of the politicians brought wisdom, honesty, common sense, and, most importantly, a strong sense of spirituality to her political life. They went on to say that women who enter this male-dominated arena must be true to themselves.

WHP founder Marie Wilson spoke eloquently and made me feel comfortable and at ease. She said that the panel of political leaders inspired her, and she expressed delight that each of the guest speakers was eager to encourage other

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President's Column: Who Are We? And Why Are We Here?

by Mary Lynn Merkle

Recently I was part of a conversation in which it was suggested that AAUW (nationally) was viewed as Democratic (with a capital D); and, therefore, many women who identify as Republicans were not interested in becoming members. I've been mulling this over ever since. While I disagree with the premise of the comment, it made me mentally review some of the programs and actions our Branch has undertaken to see if we had some hidden political agenda of which I was unaware. For example, are scholarships for non-traditional women, support of the Refugee Family Services Young Women's Leaders project, awards of community action grants to organizations whose activities reflect the mission of AAUW inherently Democratic or Republican? I think not.

Who are the members of AAUW Atlanta? Presently we are all women. After this commonality, we diversify. We are—or have been—educators, business women, readers, gourmet cooks, tennis and bridge players, quilters, and so forth. To describe us as a Branch requires knowing each of us as individuals, which we are—and that is the point!

There are, however, some attributes we share. We all:

- place high value on learning and continue to educate ourselves as we read, listen, and participate in the process;
- are interested in and informed about one another, about our Atlanta community, and beyond;
- believe in and support equity for women and girls (and I would extrapolate that to include men and boys);

- enjoy our opportunities to socialize and to work together;
- respond to inequities we learn about from sources such as our community action grant awardees;
- use our national, state, and local public-policy communications to respond to our legislators and government officials in an informed manner.

We, as individuals, raise our voices to make a difference when we hear or see discriminatory practices taking place. On a personal level, I am very active in PFLAG (Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). That is not surprising, because I have two wonderful gay sons. My ears and my mind are attuned to discriminatory remarks about sexual identity or sexual orientation. Whenever possible, I respond. What is really gratifying to me are those people who do not have GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender) children, but still speak up and affirm everyone's right to be treated equitably. Other members are active in organizations that are equally committed to equity and justice. We are all, in our own way, activists for causes other than our own.

There are many other minorities (and, in the case of women, majorities) who experience unjust and unequal treatment. We, AAUW Atlanta Branch, are their voices. Whether we identify as Republicans, Democrats, Independents, or "others," that is our mission—to speak up, to speak out, and to provide opportunities for growth for ourselves and for others. ❖

There's Still Time to Vote!

You still have until March 11 to vote for Atlanta branch member Gillian Horsley's entries in the AAUW 2010 art contest. If either of Gillian's entries wins, it will be displayed in the 2010–2011 AAUW calendar, and both she and our branch will receive recognition.

You can vote once per week for up to three of your favorite entries at <http://listsrv.aauw.org/t/37971/534973/239/0/5>. (You must be an AAUW member to vote.) Artists' names will not be displayed, so you must locate the entries by title. Gillian's are: "Sunset over the Marsh, Edisto Island, South Carolina," and "Great Horned Owl in Snow, North Georgia Appalachian Mountains." Don't miss your chance to vote!

WHP (continued from p. 1)

women. She explored the meaning of the term "encourage," citing in particular one definition: "to speak your mind by telling all your heart."

She believes that we need women in elective positions precisely because women are different from men. For years, she noted, women have been the backbone of the family; they have educated their children and given them perspective and insight. Ms. Wilson used as an example our current President. He was raised by his mother (and his grandmother), and one may argue that these women's significant influence was instrumental in helping him to develop the traits that elevated him to the position he holds today.

Women are always "on message," she said; we are well familiar with issues that must be addressed politically: social policy, healthcare reform, and energy safety, just to name a few. She then examined the roles and rights of women in the present day.

I was most impressed with Ms. Wilson's vision for the state of Georgia. She observed that there is little bipartisan influence in state government at present, and that the state's legislative voice in Georgia often is one-sided. She believes that increasing diversity in state government by adding more women in elected positions would make a significant difference in correcting this imbalance. ❖

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• **Have you received the 2009 Annual Report from Planned Parenthood of Georgia? If so, turn to the centerfold. There are Atlanta Branch members (and spouses) Doreen and David Chemerow, Diana Witt, and Sarah and Ed Rondeau! Good picture and good PR!!**

• **If you're interested in attending this year's Gala on April 15, contact Sarah Rondeau.**

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Gender and Diversity

by Blondie Chitunya Wilson

Gender is a universal and yet very sensitive issue because of its impact on personal identity and, ultimately, on power—values which are culturally determined. The way we view men and women and the relations between them has changed markedly and continues to evolve. Any form of gender-based discrimination can no longer be tolerated on equity grounds, nor can it be justified in terms of social efficiency; women's productive capacities are an essential factor in improving the quality of life for all.

According to authors Thomas, Ely, and Fagenson, much attention is being paid to the topic of diversity in the workplace as academicians and managers confront the issues emerging from an increasingly diverse American workforce. The impact of increased workforce diversity touches virtually all management concerns. As a result, current diversity literature includes a wide range of areas of inquiry including, though not limited to, the impact of diversity on:

- communication-oriented outcomes;
- cognitive outcomes like creativity of solutions; and
- affective reactions like commitment or satisfaction.

However, a Huffington post blog entry agrees with me that maybe it's time for men to start adopting some "female" traits: multitasking, listening skills, and emotional empathy, just to name a few.

I am a strong believer that in order to advance or become better at our jobs, we need to move beyond the skills we either have naturally or have cultivated somewhat organically, and to challenge ourselves to develop in different ways. In addition, we should ask ourselves about the advantage in looking at these skills in terms of gender. Even though on the one hand it can be reassuring—How can we be expected to naturally be good at something our brain is not optimized to do?—on the other hand, we also run the risk of a gender-based backlash.

A crucial step toward developing a more balanced workforce is to improve gender diversity in education. Education is really the foundation of democracy. This is not a new idea. Benjamin Barber, in *A Passion*

Any form of gender-based discrimination can no longer be tolerated on equity grounds, nor can it be justified in terms of social efficiency

for Democracy, states that it was Thomas Jefferson who most frequently argued that broad civic participation required education. Barber states, "It remained clear to Jefferson to the end of his life that a theory of democracy that is rooted in active participation and continuing consent by each generation of citizens demands a civic pedagogy rooted in the obligation to educate all who would be citizens." This is also seen in our day-to-day lives: students educated in diverse institutions will be more motivated and better able to participate in an increasingly heterogeneous and complex society.

According to the National Academy of Science (NAS), eliminating gender bias requires support from government, professional organizations, and corporations, and for workplaces to be reformed with decisive actions. However, NAS statistics indicate that women in male-dominated fields of science and engineering typically receive fewer resources than their male counterparts.

Certainly women have the ability and drive to succeed in science and engineering. However, women who are interested in engineering careers are lost at every education transition. For example, at each step up the academic ladder from high school to college, more women than men who have expressed an interest in science and engineering decide to majoring in something else; and in the transition to graduate school, more women than men with science and engineering degrees opt into other fields of study. From doctorate to first academic position, there are proportionately fewer women than men in applicant pool to tenure-track positions. Active recruitment can help to overcome this deficit.

Researchers also agree that in several fields the pipeline has reached gender parity.

Women have earned over 30% of the doctorates in social sciences and behavioral sciences and over 20% in the life sciences; yet at top research institutions, only 15.4% of full professors in the social and behavioral sciences and 14.8% in the life sciences are female. These are the only fields in science where the proportion of women reaches into the double digits. However, women from minority and ethnic backgrounds are virtually absent from the nation's leading science and engineering departments.

Research findings indicate that women are likely to face discrimination in the field of science and engineering. Women in the United States have been told for decades they need to enter science at the bottom in order to make their way to the top. Nevertheless, this situation has been going on for too long. Those in the scientific elite must take it upon themselves to bring about genuine gender equality. ❖

Women's Capitol Briefing Announced

Georgia Women for a Change has invited any interested women to attend "Show Up/Act Up," a women's Capitol briefing, on March 16 from noon until 1:15 p.m., at the Central Presbyterian Church at 201 Washington Street (across the street from the Capitol). You can order a box lunch for \$10 or bring your own.

According to their publicity, "This lunch-learn-and-act is an opportunity to hear from our lobbyists and partners on the latest issues before the Georgia legislature, what impact they are having on women and girls, and what YOU can do to help."

In particular, they are looking into progress with the child prostitution legislature that AAUW has endorsed; family leave policies; budget cuts that could have severe impact on women and children; and the structure of the Commission on Family Violence.

Interested parties can gather at 11:00 a.m. at the church for a tour of the Capitol before the meeting.

For more information or to RSVP, email Stephanie at stephanie@gwomen.org.

Calendar

March

- 3 Book Group meets
- 4 *Half the Sky Live* movie event
- 8 International Women's Day
- 11 Travel Group meets
- 20 Branch meeting
- 29 Newsletter deadline

April

- 7 Book Group meets
- 16 AAUW State Convention begins
- 24 Branch meeting

May

- 5 Book Group meets
- 15 Branch meeting

Book Group

The Book Group will meet Wednesday, April 7, at the home of Carol Fetters: 1271 Verdon Drive, Dunwoody, 30338; 770/399-5656.

The discussion will be about *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett. We start gathering about 7:30 p.m. ❖

Travel Group

The AAUW Travel Group will meet on March 11, at 9:30 a.m., at the Ansley Mall Kroger store to form carpools for a visit to the Trees Atlanta Kendeda Center in Reynoldstown. Lunch will follow. RSVP to Betty Arden at 770/955-6381. ❖

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We're Invited!

AAUW Atlanta branch has received an invitation to the Georgia Women of Achievement 19th Annual Induction Ceremony to be held on Thursday, March 11, 11:00 a.m., at Wesleyan College, Macon. New inductees are Mary Ann Rutherford Lipscomb (1848–1918), Celestine Colley Sibley (1914–1999), and Madrid Loyd Williams (1911–1993). For more information go to <http://www.georgiawomen.org>.

Board Meeting

The Atlanta Branch 2009–2010 leadership team will meet on Sunday, March 14, 2010, at 3:00 p.m., at the home of Frances Smith.

ATLANTA NEWS

Atlanta Branch AAUW
1651 Executive Park Lane
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