



# Atlanta Branch News

May 2020 Newsletter: Volume 70, Issue 12

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## 2019-2020 Leadership

### **President**

Diana Witt  
 president@aauwatlanta.org

### **Program Vice Presidents**

Betty Slater and Billie Collier  
 programs@aauwatlanta.org

### **Membership Vice Presidents**

Phyllis Miller and Marge Anderson  
 membership@aauwatlanta.org

### **Board Secretary**

Kay Collins  
 Secretary-board@aauwatlanta.org

### **Branch Meeting Secretary**

Marcy Nader  
 Secretary-meeting@aauwatlanta.org

### **Finance Officers**

Huiping Du  
 treasurer@aauwatlanta.org

### **College/University Relations**

Marge Anderson  
 universityrelations@aauwatlanta.org

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## **IT’S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN AAUW ATLANTA BRANCH!**

By: Marge Anderson and Phyllis Miller, Co-Membership Chairs

You should have received an email from AAUW letting you know that your dues payment can be made online by responding to the email, or by going directly to the AAUW national website.

Please do not put this off, as we need to **receive all renewals by July 1st**. If you prefer, please send your check for \$87 to Phyllis Miller. Past Branch presidents who are 65 or older are exempt from Branch dues (\$18); if they choose this option, their dues will be a \$69 check sent directly to Phyllis. THE NATIONAL PAYMENT PLAN DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THIS OPTION.

Thank you so much for renewing your membership and supporting our wonderful organization.

## **2020 BRANCH ELECTION RESULTS**

Our webmaster, Terry Eshenour, graciously agreed to serve as our election facilitator. Of the 69 ballots sent by email or regular mail, 39 members (59.1%) returned the ballot and accepted the slate presented. So, we have concluded an official election and the following members have been duly elected for the 2020 to 2022 term:

Co-Presidents: Cele Covatta and Wendy Venet  
 Co-Vice Presidents for Program: Betty Arden and Velma Tilley  
 Co-Vice Presidents for Membership: Marge Anderson and Phyllis Miller  
 Finance Officer: Sharon Bevis-Hoover

Nominating Committee for 2021: Myra Carmon, Blondie Chitunya-Wilson, Ingrid Reinhard, Betty Slater, and Ruth Yurchuck  
 (Note: committee term is for one year only)

Thanks to all members who voted and to Terry for conducting the electronic election and analyzing both electronic and mail-in responses. Lastly, congratulations to our newly elected officers!

*Leadership continued*

**Diversity**

Mary-Lynn Merkle  
diversity@aauwatlanta.org

**Historian**

Wendy Venet  
historian@aauwatlanta.org

**Hospitality**

Billie Collier and Betty Slater  
hospitality@aauwatlanta.org

**Public Policy**

Cecilia Cantrell  
publicpolicy@aauwatlanta.org

**Public Relations**

Sharon Bevis- Hoover  
publicrelations@aauwatlanta.org

**Scholarship**

Terri Roland, Velma Tilley  
scholarship@aauwatlanta.org

**Web Information**

Terry Eshenour  
webmaster@aauwatlanta.org

**Contemporary Literature**

Kay Collins  
contemporaryliterature@  
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**Travel Group**

Betty Arden  
travel@aauwatlanta.org

**Advisory Board Chair**

Kay Collins  
advisory@aauwatlanta.org

**Publications**

Keresa Richards  
publications@aauwatlanta.org

**AAUW Funds**

Dana Gordon  
aauwfunds@aauwatlanta.org

**Philanthropy Chair**

Mary Lynn Merkle  
philanthropy@aauwatlanta.org

**Communications Chair**

Ruth Yurchuck  
communications@aauwatlanta.org

**Bylaws Chair**

Pat Bevis  
bylaws@aauwatlanta.org

**PRESIDENT'S LETTER: AAUW UPDATE**

By: Diana Witt

Hello everyone: Since we are not holding our traditional end-of-year meeting, I want to start off by congratulating our new officers to lead the Atlanta Branch. I appreciate these wonderful women for their commitment to our branch, and I hope all of you will support them going forward. They will officially begin their duties on July 1<sup>st</sup>. I will be working with the current board and National to make this transition as smooth as possible. If the fates are kind, we will be able to honor our new leaders in the fall at our annual kick-off meeting. We will keep you posted about that.

This will be my last President's letter. I post it with very mixed feelings at best. My two-year term has been very difficult. It was my hope that by working with the many wonderful members of our branch, I would be able to resolve some of our outstanding issues to create a climate of stability and creativity as a legacy for future leadership. Together, we have come part way towards that goal. While we have achieved stability with our financial affairs, and we have benefitted from strong programming, success at Bookfair, and vibrant and stable branch activities like Book Club, Travel Club, Public Policy, Philanthropy, Scholarship, etc., no one can predict what lies ahead. Will we be able to do a Bookfair? Will the mall even be open? Will we be able to hold meetings in the fall? What happens to College and University relations when colleges are closed?

No one knows the answers to any of these questions. But we are strong intelligent and intellectually curious women. These qualities have never been more important or more needed than they are right now. Let's work together to come up with creative ways to do what we do best: advocate for women and girls to move onward and upward, using education as the ultimate weapon to gain access to the opportunity to realize their full potential.

Hopefully I will see you in the fall, but nothing is certain at this point. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Atlanta Branch as your president. You have my continued support, and feel free to contact me at any time.

Diana Witt,

President, AAUW Atlanta Branch

## **CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE MEETING**

By: Kay Collins

The May 4<sup>th</sup> meeting has been cancelled. The status of the June meeting is still to be determined! If you have questions and/or you want to be added to the email notification, please contact Kay Collins.

## **TRAVEL GROUP**

By: Betty Arden

The May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AAUW Atlanta Branch Travel Group has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The group does not meet during the summer months. The next meeting is scheduled for October 8<sup>th</sup>.



## **CELEBRATING DIVERSITY CAN CHANGE LIVES**

By: Mary Lynn Merkle

It is my contention that when we speak out against injustice or hate-speech, we can change things or people, even if it might be just one thing or person at a time. Recent events reminded me of this, and I'd like to share part of the story with you.

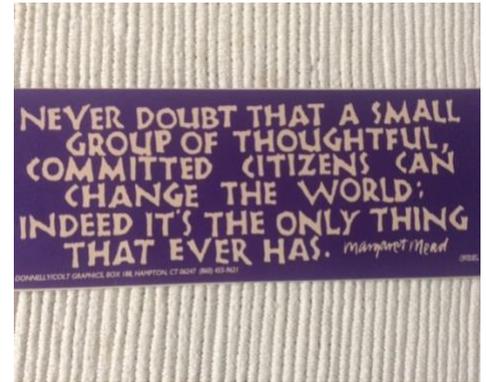
We've been going through boxes in our attic since being homebound. I happened to come across some research that Dale and I did in the late 90's through our connection to PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). The purpose essentially was to provide information to school districts in local Michigan counties (Bay City, Saginaw and Midland) that may help those districts better serve their GLBT students and the school community overall. We sent questionnaires out to adults we knew to be part of the GLBT population through PFLAG connections. Our "N" was small, but most informative for our goal.

Here are some of the findings:

- 85% had feelings of same-sex attraction before age 16.
- Although 70% self-identified before they were 21, only 48% felt they could trust someone enough to share that information before age 21.
- Only 37% shared with a family member before age 21, and about a fourth had never shared with a family member.
- Only 11% were out in their religious community.
- Almost 40% indicated that school friends knew or suspected they were gay before age 16.
- 55% said they experienced overt acts of discrimination in high school. Although most of the abuse was verbal, about 20% experienced physical abuse, and about 14% reported that some of the abuse came from teachers.
- When asked who in the school setting was most helpful in assisting him/her to come to terms with their sexual orientation, the most common response (from 44 % of responders) was NO ONE.

Now fast-forward to 2020. Although not all groups or individuals are on board, homosexuality is almost a non-issue. PFLAG has stated that its goal is to make its existence redundant; however, meetings are on-going all over the country. In 2015, the Supreme Court decided that marriage is a Constitutional right for all citizens--including gays and lesbians. Just two years ago our family attended a wedding on a boat on the East River in Manhattan. One of the grooms was a dear family friend. It was a beautiful ceremony attended by 75 friends and family who loved the two grooms.

Some of our most popular entertainers, authors, and political leaders publicly identify as part of the LGTB community, such as Mayor Pete Buttigieg (from South Bend, IN) in the democratic presidential debates. His candidacy and that of others was never about their respective sexuality. It was about the issues, and their abilities to confront and possibly solve them.



We've come a long way in the last 20 years. Schools are better at meeting the needs of all their students. And society in general has begun to understand how important acceptance is to our collective mental and emotional health. AAUW's goal is not to make everyone the same. Our goal is to celebrate our differences--our diversity. And we still have work to do! Women still make less than men in many work areas. No female has been elected as U.S. president or vice-president. Think of the recent signs posted in the Candler Park area denigrating people who are Asian. I'm sure we all have examples of discriminatory behaviors that we have observed.

So, speak up and speak out! It's not always easy, but it's always important!

## **ENDING ONE CHAPTER TO WRITE ANOTHER**

By: Keresa Richards, Communication Intern

I can't believe it, in a few days I'll be an Emory University Alum! This is a bitter sweet moment. I am thankful for all the blessings and growth, but sad to leave an experience I so cherished. The class of 2020 will not have the graduation we envisioned, but I hope we all still find ways to celebrate the moment in the comfort of our homes.

Graduating college is of significance not only to me, but my family as well. I was born in a small country town in Clarendon, Jamaica. Few have left my birth town or graduated from a university. I am a black, immigrant, female, first generation college graduate. These are all demographics that are historically disadvantaged, but my accomplishments in these four years lets the next girl like me know she can do it too!

Boy, were these past few years an unforgettable adventure! Below are some of the lessons I learned during this time (I have to admit most of my learning was outside the classroom).

Through my many mistakes, I learned a setback is NOT the end of the world (but it sure did feel like it sometimes). I developed more empathy for the world and learned to not only provide but accept support. Through my successes, I understood anything is possible. Often times we can get caught settling (especially women) but persistence, leveraging resources, stepping out of one's comfort zone, and a heart of gratitude can bring us so many blessings.

I learned how to manage my finances. As a child, I always had a sense of independence about me. This crossed over to adulthood and prompted my desire to not want financial help from my parents, although I knew they were willing to help. I worked several jobs during my time at Emory (often 2-3 at the same time), but I never minded. I liked knowing I could take care of me. Therefore, I learned how to budget, save, and grow money; important life skills for any young woman to know.

I came to the realization that traveling is accessible and not reserved for the financially wealthy (wealth also comes in forms outside of finance). The beauty of other lands and culture is something that will never leave me. I visited 11 countries and lived in 2 countries while getting my undergraduate degree. Needless to say, I've developed quite a passion for exploring not only our country, but the world beyond it.

During my undergrad, I've taken on several roles including coach, treasurer, member, intern, volunteer and president. Every position taught collaboration, leadership, time management, net-working, and service. The more I was involved in the Emory community, the more it shaped me. As I embark into the post college world, I plan to keep this same level of strong engagement in my local community.

Emory has been good to me and I hope I left a positive impact on those I encountered! Cheers to the class of 2020 and all the women who have graduated before me, are graduating with me, and will graduate after me. Education is a key that will open many doors. #GoEagles

## **UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN**

By: Keresia Richards, Communication Intern

I want to thank the AAUW Atlanta Branch. For the past two years I have been a part of your family and felt nothing but welcomed. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to grow throughout my position as Communication Intern. You celebrated my wins and have been patient through my mistakes. I hope this organization continues to prosper in its goals. The mission of AAUW has and will continue to guide my actions. Thank you, Ruth and Mary-Lynn, for your unwavering guidance. It has been a privilege getting to personally know such gracious, intelligent, and caring women. I wish all our members a happy and safe rest of the year!

### **Quote of the month:**

*“There are those who see the cup as half empty and those who see it as half full, I'd rather be a part of the later”*  
~ Keresia

[aauwatlanta.org](http://aauwatlanta.org)