



Atlanta Branch News

October 2020 Newsletter: Volume 71, Issue 2

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President’s Message: Bookfair Archives

By: Wendy Venet, Branch co-president and Branch historian

This summer, I sorted and organized Bookfair archives dating to 1961 and deposited them with Women’s Collection archivist Morna Gerrard at Georgia State University. These archives tell the rich history of AAUW’s signature project.

The collection consists of Bookfair Steering Committee minutes, financial records, photographs, newspaper clippings, and other items related to publicity. Unfortunately, some of the photographs are undated and many of them do not identify the people who are depicted. Nonetheless, photographs provide a visual record of the thousands of volunteers who have assisted with Bookfair over the years and of the dignitaries who visited the fair. These include Mayors Ivan Allen Jr. and Andrew Young and Congressman John Lewis. Newspaper stories offer a glimpse into changing times. A 1961 newspaper clipping includes a photograph of several members wearing dresses, pearls and party hats while sorting books. Twenty years later, women were more likely to wear pants, and an item dated 1981 instructed members on how to stitch their own Bookfair tunics.

Beginning in 1961, where each member was asked to collect books from at least ten of her friends, the fair grew dramatically. In 1975, there were forty “barrel locations” for donors to contribute books. Bookfair profits also rose. The 1963 fair netted profits of \$1,150; twenty years later in 1983, gross receipts exceeded \$61,000. By the 1990s, with a growing number of members now employed fulltime, Steering Committee minutes reveal the challenge of recruiting enough volunteers, and in 1997 members debated whether to continue the sale. The costs involving rental of the bookroom, hiring movers to haul books to the sale, along with mall rental, made some members question whether the book sale was a viable endeavor. They decided in the affirmative when a majority identified Bookfair as a “source of pride” and renewed their commitment, motivated by the desire use the proceeds to fund scholarships. By the 2000s, Bookfair receipts were supplemented by Internet sales and the proceeds from sales at Georgia Antiquarian Booksellers Association (GABA) meetings.

This summer, the difficult decision was made to suspend the annual mall Bookfair due to COVID-19. As we hold conversations about a path forward in the book business, we need to remain creative, flexible, and optimistic. As Mary Lynn Merkle put it at the August Steering

Leadership continued

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Committee meeting, "We will continue to do good things with books."

By donating Bookfair archives to Georgia State, these records will be preserved for the future. Once the collection has been processed (and Georgia State's Library has reopened to the public), members may use them. They will also be made available to students writing research papers about women's issues and scholars from around the nation who visit Georgia State University's Women's Collections. To view a finding aid of the current collection at Georgia State, use this link: <https://archivesspace.library.gsu.edu/repositories/2/resources/1490>

October Program Announcement

By: Velma Tilley

AAUW Atlanta Branch is proud to announce its October 17, 2020 meeting via Zoom! At 10:30 a.m. join us to hear Bea Piddock discuss the 2020 US Census and its importance going forward. Please watch your email for details as to the Zoom link.

Contemporary Literature

By: Kay Collins

We will meet via Zoom on Wednesday afternoon, September 30 at 3:30 pm. We'll discuss Melinda Gates' book *The Moment of Lift*. Gillian will lead the discussion with Ansley and Cele will host and monitor. You'll need to provide your own refreshments...wine, anyone? For you newcomers, we used to meet Wednesday evenings where we did serve, and consume!, wine. We changed to daytime several years ago as more of us didn't want to drive at night and had retired so we had day times available. If you have questions, contact Kay, contemporaryliterature@aauwatlanta.org

Report of 2019-2020 Scholarship Committee

By: Terri Roland and Velma Tilley, Co-Chairs

AAUW Atlanta Branch is very pleased to announce 5 very deserving women as scholarship winners for the 2020-2021 school calendar year: Benetta Behnzukeh, Theresa Coleman, Shaniqua Mitchell, Van T. Nguyen, and Kim-Huong Ruiz.

Benetta Behnzukeh, 50 years old, is a native of Liberia, West Africa. She is a part-time student pursuing a graduate degree in Non-Profit Management at Georgia State University, where she is currently employed.

Theresa Coleman, 30 years old, will be a full time student at Georgia State pursuing a bachelor's degree in Public Health. Her goal is to work for a women's health organization.

Shaniqua Mitchell, 30 years old, will be a full-time student at Georgia Perimeter College. She is a licensed Practical Nurse working toward becoming a registered nurse with a goal of becoming a nurse educator.

Van T. Nguyen, 38 years old, came to the U.S. five years ago from Viet Nam where she was a medical doctor. She has been accepted as a full-time student at Emory University in the Accelerated Master of Nursing Program.

Kim-Huong Ruiz, 31 years old, is a full time, first year graduate student at Georgia State at Georgia State where she has been offered an assistantship in the fall. She is pursuing a M.A. in Communications: Moving Image Products.

We hope at some point to congratulate these women in person once the threat of Covid subsides. But we congratulate them now!

Bookfair News

By: Mary Lynn Merkle

We could all use some good news, and the Bookfair Steering Committee has lots of it! At our August 19th meeting, we voted to change the Bookfair fiscal year to July 1 through June 30, the same as our Branch fiscal year, to make record keeping and planning much easier.

As a result, monies will be dispersed to the three branches based upon volunteer hours and profits between November 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020. The exact amount to be distributed will be decided at the October 14th Steering Community meeting. Current records indicate that Atlanta Branch volunteered 3000+ hours during that period for 68% of the total. A special thank you to our Super Workers: Judy Lambert (884), Ellen Milholland (690), Sharon Bevis-Hoover (455), and Barbara Buchanan (242).

And some more good news! Contractually, we were responsible for paying over \$7,000 rent to Perimeter Mall for a 2020 Bookfair that had been cancelled. Debbie Karvey (Cobb), Bookfair co-chair, wrote a letter to Brookfield Properties describing AAUW's mission and the ways in which we used our Bookfair proceeds to further that mission. Voila! We received a letter specifying that we would not be held to that rental payment.

Lastly, at the August meeting, the Steering Committee brainstormed ideas for re-inventing ways to sell our books. Here are some of the ideas that emerged: 1) selling our collected books on the Bookfair website; 2) participating in local Festivals and Fairs (this would be much like our participation in GABA where we would target the audience and bring appropriate books); 3) having a table or two at Farmer's Markets; 4) having a 4 day sale, charge higher fees for book dealers; 5) reviewing opportunities to sell books quarterly and ways to increase our visibility.

What are YOUR ideas? Share them with Atlanta's Steering Committee members and committee chairs: Cele Covatta, Wendy Venet, Rose Carmon, Myra Carmon, and Sharon Bevis-Hoover. We're all in this together!

WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US

By: Mary Lynn Merkle

If you have been watching the explosion of campaign ads, I'm sure you will concur that they are polarizing and, all too often, negative. When have we ever been so divided and so mean-spirited?!

Our Atlanta Branch is a diverse group. Our members may vote "blue" or "red" or "purple." We may vote for bond issues or against them. We may vote for increase in millage rates for schools or not.

We are not of one mind, and that is as it should be. If we only hear our own viewpoints echoed back to us, we limit our opportunities for conversations that discuss alternate views and therefore limit our breadth and depth of our knowledge and understanding of issues. Active listening is essential to that growth.

It's important that we remember that AAUW is a non-partisan organization. It does not support particular candidates, nor should we as individuals speak for any candidate in the name of AAUW. We are mission oriented: equity and justice for women and girls. That is our common ground. That is our shared issue. Speak to it and for it whenever the opportunity arises.

AND—be sure to vote for your candidates and issues on November 3rd. It's our right—and our responsibility!

Zoe's Bat Mitzvah Project comes to the Bookroom

By: Cele Covatta

Good things are always happening at the Bookroom!

When Zoe Pearl Gordon, a student at Davis Academy was preparing for her Bat Mitzvah project, she and her grandmother, Ellie Gordon, a retired reading specialist and teacher began to research where they wanted to donate books from a book drive that Zoe and her brother had developed.

Zoe tells us that when she read the words of our mission, "AAUW advances equality for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research," her decision was made.

These are her own words from her Bat Mitzvah speech:

"Growing up in a house where books have been important, I have always had the opportunity to choose books of different interests. When I was little, I remember reading in my room for hours at a time. I would read to my stuffed animals. One of my favorite books was *The Giving Tree* (written and illustrated by Shel Silverstein). In this book, the tree gives back to the boy who loved the tree so much. I, too, have decided to give back by donating books to children not as fortunate as I am. To fulfill my goal, I requested my family and friends to collect books from around their houses to bring to the drive-by later today. My family and I are then going to take these to AAUW, a non-profit organization. Books have enriched my life and I hope to do the same for those less fortunate."

In early September, Shelley Gordon, Zoe's mother, delivered several boxes and bags of children and young adult books to the Bookroom.

With many thanks to the Gordon family, our good work with books continues to thrive.



Zoe Gordon

Special thanks to mom Shelley Gordon for providing Zoe's story and picture for this edition of the Atlanta Branch Newsletter.

Quote of the month:

“The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have.”

–Rep. John Lewis

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