



Atlanta Branch News

February 2021 Newsletter: Volume 71, Issue 6

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Co-President’s Message

By: Wendy Venet, Co-President

Recently, I read *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* by David Brooks, a columnist for the *New York Times*. Brooks calls on Americans, especially those who have retired from successful careers, to become “deeply rooted and deeply committed” to improving their communities. I am proud of the fact that members of the AAUW Atlanta Branch are deeply committed. Phyllis Miller and Marge Anderson have recruited new members. We now have seventy in our Branch! Betty Slater, Rose Cannon, and members of the scholarship committee are working to recruit applicants for this year’s awards.

Betty Arden and Velma Tilley have organized an interesting Zoom meeting on January 30 about women and heart health. This meeting features Dr. Gina Lundberg of Emory’s Heart Center.

Our work in the bookroom is ongoing. With Internet sales as our primary goal and consignment sales as a secondary goal, we are also finding creative ways to donate books that we are not currently able to use for one of these sales. Heartbound Ministries received a donation of our books late last year. We have now gathered books for donation to Dresden Elementary School, a DeKalb public school that serves a constituency of lower income students.

While we keep busy locally, AAUW National has asked us to consider a bylaw change that would drop the degree requirement for membership and establish “open membership.” Branch members around the nation are invited to visit the “election page” on National’s website and offer comments through February 5. Voting on this matter will take place between April 7 and May 17. Since this proposed change would alter the organization’s membership in dramatic fashion, it is vital that all of us express ourselves with comments and by exercising the franchise. The last time that National proposed this change, I had trouble accessing my ballot, but ultimately found it in my junk mail.

Let us be optimistic about the future with available COVID vaccines, the prospect of in-person Branch meetings later in the year, and a thriving AAUW Atlanta Branch membership.

****Zoom link for Jan. 30 Branch Meeting:
<https://zoom.us/j/93489004053>**

Leadership continued

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From the Bookfair Steering Committee

By: Mary Lynn Merkle

Books! AAUW Atlanta loves books. If we had a talisman, I'm sure it would be in the form of a book. We have collected and sold books for more than 61 years—which allowed us to give over a millions dollars in scholarships, fellowships and community action. We have shared our love of books through our Contemporary Literature group. And now we want to share books even more!

You'll remember that in the summer of 2020 we gave up our warehouse and moved what we could into our Bookroom at Habersham Estates Condominiums. We decided that there could be no Perimeter Mall Bookfair in 2020. We continued our very profitable on-line sales, and we partnered with Thrift Books, receiving 50% of any money they made from books that we had supplied them. Wonderful donations continued. And the hours and energy needed to pick up, sort, price, pack, mail, etc. also continued.

Now for the sharing part! Sometimes perfectly good books come in that are of insufficient-value to list online. Or perhaps Thrift Books can't use any more books in a particular category. These books are placed in two large bookcases in our Bookroom and are offered to anyone who would like them, free of charge. The books are in many different categories, such as children, photography, mysteries, biographies, history, romances, etc.

If you are a bookroom volunteer, you know all about these available books. If not, make a visit and check them out! Perhaps you have grandchildren or neighbor children who would love to have more books to read, perhaps you visit or volunteer at a senior center where donated books would be most welcome. Maybe there's one of those Little Free Libraries on a street near you. You may think of other avenues to share our book-overload.

Please do what you can to help us share our books. Really—can anyone ever have too many books?

Contemporary Literature Meeting

By: Kay Collins

Another Zoom meeting? Yep, we will meet Monday morning at 10:30 am on Feb. 1 to discuss *Olive, Again* by Elisabeth Strout. Please let Kay Collins know if you would like to join.

News from BlinkNow

By: Cele Covatta, Co-President

Our small but much appreciated 2020 donation to the BlinkNow Foundation elicited this heartfelt “Thank You” from Ashley Dittmar, Director of Development.

Although our membership has been clear that our primary philanthropic work should be local, BlinkNow represents and reflects our mission, and we are pleased to continue to honor their work. Anyone who would like to know more about this organization and our history with them, please contact branch member, Alta Birdsong, a long time benefactor.



December 28, 2020

Atlanta Branch AAUW
4320 Quail Ridge Way
Peachtree Corners, GA 30092

BlinkNow Foundation
P.O. Box 453
Mendham, NJ 07945

info@blinknow.org
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Dear friends at AAUW,

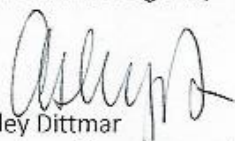
This year was tough — for everyone. It seems every conversation was dominated by talk of the pandemic, and words like “quarantine”, “hunger”, “corona”, “masks”, and “relief”. We had to teach children to wave instead of hug, spend long months away from family, and rethink how we, as a global family, could help those who were hurting. It seems there is nowhere and no one who hasn’t felt the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

BlinkNow’s mission has always been to empower Nepal’s children. Our primary focus is breaking the achievement gap so children have to access education and reach their full potential. We have been working to address this global problem in Surkhet since 2007. The pandemic of 2020 further highlighted the hardships our children face to become educated, and how much they rely on the Kopila Valley School and the full support BlinkNow provides.

Thank you from our entire BlinkNow and Kopila Valley team for your gift of \$100 received on December 28, 2020. We are not at the end of this fight, and it’s your support and partnership that will carry us into 2021, as we continue to provide top quality education and safe homes for hundreds of children in Nepal. We are incredibly grateful for your gift and investment in our vision to ensure every child is safe, educated and loved.

I hope you and your family are healthy, safe and able to spend the holidays with those you love. If you have any questions regarding your gift, or larger philanthropy and impact with BlinkNow, I welcome you to connect with me directly at ashley@blinknow.org.

With warmest regards,


Ashley Dittmar
Director of Development

Thank you! wishing everyone a safe + happy new year.

Please Mark Your Calendars

Our Co-president, Wendy Venet, will be presenting an author lecture at the Atlanta History Center on March 4, 2021 about her newest book, *Gone but not Forgotten: Atlantans Commemorate the Civil War*. The Zoom presentation should be available to non-members.

Here is some information about Wendy's book, taken from the University of Georgia Press website:

This book examines the differing ways that Atlantans have remembered the Civil War since its end in 1865. During the Civil War, Atlanta became the second-most important city in the Confederacy after Richmond, Virginia. Since 1865, Atlanta's civic and business leaders promoted the city's image as a "phoenix city" rising from the ashes of General William T. Sherman's wartime destruction. According to this carefully constructed view, Atlanta honored its Confederate past while moving forward with financial growth and civic progress in the New South. But African Americans challenged this narrative with an alternate one focused on the legacy of slavery, the meaning of freedom, and the pervasive racism of the postwar city. During the civil rights movement in the 1960s, Atlanta's white and black Civil War narratives collided.

Wendy Hamand Venet examines the memorialization of the Civil War in Atlanta and who benefits from the specific narratives that have been constructed around it. She explores veterans' reunions, memoirs and novels, and the complex and ever-changing interpretation of commemorative monuments. Despite its economic success since 1865, Atlanta is a city where the meaning of the Civil War and its iconography continue to be debated and contested.

RACIST? WHO ME?!

By: Mary Lynn Merkle

A recent debate participant said, "I don't have a racist bone in my body." I truly believe that the person believes that. However, a book that I've been reading (and discussing with friends) is *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin Diangelo. According to the author, racism is a part of all of us regardless of the color of our skin.

The majority of AAUW Atlanta Branch members are a group of middle-class, educated white women. We probably entered this world with a sense of belonging. We most likely took our first breath in a hospital surrounded by people who looked like us—except, of course, for the male doctor. We thrived in our "normal" world where our teachers, family friends, and playmates looked like us. Our baby dolls, our paper dolls, even our crayons (remember the Crayola color "flesh?") reflected positively.

I grew up in the North so we were "integrated." But were we really? Until I was in high school I never attended school with a person of color. I never had a teacher of color until I was in graduate school a large public university—and that was just one. I'm sure my experiences were not that different than many others of us. Oh, yes! Being "white" was (and still is) the norm, the comfort color. "White privilege" exists not because of who we are or what we've been able to accomplish as individuals, but merely because of the color of our skin; and our education usually adds another dimension.

It has been estimated that in less than 30 years we will no longer be a majority white country. Perhaps we will lose that automatic white privilege to which we have become so accustomed. Pundits suggest that one of the underlying reasons for the insurrection at our US Capitol in mid-January was people fearing their loss of power.

During my membership years Atlanta Branch has actively recruited and welcomed women of color to join us, with some success. In fact, I served as co-president with Blondie Chitunya-Wilson, a native of Zimbabwe. She has served our Branch loyally for several years. One of our first Signature Projects was Cool Girls, primarily composed of Black girls and young women. We supported them both financially and with hands-on activities. But is this enough?

What can we do? What should we do? Our first steps as individuals and as a group can be to name it (white privilege) and to identify those ways in which we have been unknowingly complicit. And then the next step would be to work on changing it. We need more women like Blondie to be a part of our quest to work toward equity for all women and all girls.

Quote of the month:

“If only you could sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet;
how important you can be to people you may never even dream of.
There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.”
– Fred Rogers

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