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## **Co-President's Message**

*By: Wendy Venet*

On March 5, the AAUW Action Network urged our members to focus on Women's History month as "an exercise in living history" by promoting congressional passage of the \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill. Happily, this AAUW-endorsed legislation has been enacted into law, and I will focus instead on a message honoring our past by remembering the founding leaders of our Branch.

According to our Handbook, Lillian Jones served as first Branch president, followed by Emma Garrett Morris and then by Sarah Converse. Because the Atlanta Constitution is available digitally as a subject-searchable database, I researched their names and learned some interesting information.

The AAUW Atlanta Branch began in 1905 as part of the Southern Association of College Women (founded Knoxville, Tennessee, 1903) and merged with the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (founded 1881). Although the formal unification of the two organizations did not occur until 1921, they met together for a number of years before that time. In 1905, they met jointly in Atlanta, where Lillian Jones served as Atlanta's leader. Governor James M. Terrell addressed this large and distinguished gathering, and speakers included Dr. M. Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr College.

The Constitution discussed the fashion choices of some of the women who attended the meeting in order to dispel the notion that college-educated women were dowdy. More importantly, the newspaper reported on why college education was important to these women. Most of those in attendance came from elite backgrounds, but they nonetheless denied that college education for women served as "finishing school." Instead, they argued that higher education helped women to learn and grow; above all, it gave them confidence.

College education also inspired many women to address important social issues in their communities. Although I found no evidence of African American members in its early years, President Sarah Converse investigated the issue of illiteracy among African Americans in 1907 and its relationship to crime. She also wrote an article for the Constitution about ways in which New York City was tackling the issue of juvenile crime among White children.

## *Leadership continued*

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When Emma Garrett Morris died in 1952, her obituary listed the names of her children but also her achievement in championing child labor and compulsory education laws in Georgia and physical examinations for public school children in 1908. You can learn more information about the history of our Branch in the Handbook on pp. 23-25.

We can be proud of our foremothers in AAUW. My research into these remarkable women has helped to inform my decision about how to vote regarding whether AAUW should end its requirement of a college (or associate's) degree for membership. Remember that voting begins on April 7 and ends on May 17.

### **Membership Update**

*By: Marge Anderson and Phyllis Miller*

Our Branch is our members, and we are so grateful for each of our 70 current members!

Please note that the fiscal year 2022 dues collection starts March 16th at a new rate national rate of \$62, of which \$59 will be tax deductible. This is an increase of \$3.00. Atlanta Branch dues remain the same for members at \$18.00 and State dues remain \$10.00 for the FY22. This brings total dues for the coming year to \$90.00, reflecting the national dues increase.

AAUW Atlanta Branch membership new and rejoining will be activated after March 16 with a personal letter of invitation sent to everyone. Please look for this in your inbox.

There is an opportunity to become a life member of our Branch. Current AAUW members can upgrade to paid life membership for \$1,240. This one-time tax-deductible gift exempts you from any future national dues. A member may want to make this choice now instead of joining today with a \$62.00 national dues payment, get a tax deduction and consider it a donation.

Paid life membership allows you to put your values as a leader for gender equity into action for a lifetime.

### **Local Scholarship Committee at Work!**

*By: Betty Slater*

There are so many specific needs for college students! The Local Scholarship Committee is working to contact colleges in the area to inform them that application forms for our Atlanta branch scholarships funds from are available on our website.

We are contacting metro colleges that have been AAUW college/university partners in the past and inviting some other institutions to consider joining as a college/university partner.  
Let's hope we get some wonderful candidates!

Our local scholarship committee members are contacting these schools:

Agnes Scott College - Betty Slater  
Atlanta Metropolitan State College – Betty Slater  
Atlanta Technical College – Betty Slater

Clark Atlanta University – Judith Behrens

Emory University – Marge Anderson

Georgia Gwinnett College – Susan Diffenderfer  
Georgia Institute of Technology- Susan Diffenderfer

Georgia Perimeter College – Wendy Venet  
Georgia State University- Wendy Venet

Kennesaw State University – Judith Vanderver

Mercer University – Judith Behrens

Oglethorpe University – Judith Vanderver

Savannah College of Art and Design- Judith Vanderver

Spelman College and University - Judith Behrens

Rose Cannon and Cecilia Cantrell are making sure the letters are emailed to these specific institutions. And Terry Eshenour has posted the AAUW Atlanta Branch Scholarship Award form on the website.

### **Branch Meeting Notice**

*By: Velma Tilley*

SAVE THE DATE for the last official meeting of the year on Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. Our speaker is Jeff Graham, Executive Director of Georgia Equality. Could be on Zoom; could be in person. Stay alert for exciting messages. Plan to come!

### **Contemporary Literature Update**

*By: Kay Collins*

This group will meet via Zoom on Monday morning, 10:30 am, April 5. We'll discuss *Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line* by Deepa Anappara. Even if you haven't read this timely book set in India, please join us to learn that you do want to read it! If you have questions, call Kay Collins.

## **Diversity Article**

*By: Mary Lynn Merkle*

I am sharing excerpts (and my musings) from a blog written by a longtime friend and a Shippensburg University alum, Bill Summerhill. Dr. Summerhill is a recently retired educational leader and minister. I hope you enjoy and reflect as much as we did:

### **Herd Immunity?**

By William Summerhill on Mar 08, 2021 11:56 pm

When Horton heard that in the herd  
He could secure immunity,  
He thought it wise and not absurd  
To seize that opportunity.

But Horton wondered to himself  
Which herd did he belong?  
Was he a lemming at the ledge?  
An elephant wasting tree and hedge?  
Or gnu dodging crocs at river's edge?

Who am I, Horton asked, and where do I belong?  
My name, my game my fame supply  
Identities I can't deny—  
Yet I'm a "who" and not a "what"  
A "who" who counts within my herd.  
With voice deserving to be heard

(Apologies to Dr. Theodor Geisel—the now maligned Dr. Seuss—whose limerick style invited this parody from his 1954 Random House book *Horton Hears a Who!*).

Herd immunity may be a new term for many of us. Nevertheless, due to Covid-19, it is now part of our vocabulary. And we look forward to that day when we have reached that plateau and go back to the social interactions we have formerly enjoyed. Who is my "herd?" And who is your "herd?" As creatures whose lives depend, from cradle to grave, on the care and support of others, we know full well what herds—both large and small—mean to us.

Haven't we been in herds since we were first named by our parents, thrown into the customs and traditions of nuclear and extended families? Didn't we find some measure of identity in schools, town, states, regions, and homeland? Herds we know, and we find a certain comfort in the company of those whose sounds, smells and faces resemble our own. And in this latter day of global cross-fertilization, we find some affinity with and for those whose Heinz 57 blend of accents, customs, and appearances confirm that we belong with them, even if our tribes claim different pastures in which to roam.

Herds are an important part of our lives. We are protected by our herd membership. The herd gives us security and often provides for us. Our AAUW herd protects women from workplace discrimination through our Legal Advocacy Fund. We provide books (and more) to children who have few books. When one of our members expresses a need, we do our best to fill that need.

As individuals we fund organizations who feed the hungry, who shelter the homeless, who suffer injustices. We gain our identity from our herd(s). We form bonds with our fellow herd members. We celebrate our ethnicities, our religions, our cultures, our colleges, our organizations-and even our grandson's baseball team. Our connections and relationships are essential to our well-being.

Let us not forget that herds can also affect us negatively. We have learned that often herds are not of one mind. We've had to decide whether to stand firm or compromise on some important issues. And we have all seen bullies in action. Governor Brian Kemp and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger stood firm on the reliability of the results for the recent Georgia elections and have suffered much negativity for that. Whatever our "politics," sure we admire their steadfastness. We clearly owe our survival, our successes, and our well-being to the Herd(s) to which we belong. As we consider our large herds (such as being American members of the human race) or our smaller herds (such as our AAUW Atlanta Branch membership), our lives are interwoven in such a way that what affects one of us, sooner or later, affects all of us. Our independence and uniqueness is always tempered by our interdependence and commonality. May none of us belonging in any of the human herds that graze on this planet ever forget it.

\*If you are interested in reading Bill's entire blog on "Herd Immunity," please let me know.

### **Membership Spotlight**

Dr. Daisy Bourassa, active Branch member, has married and moved to Newberry, South Carolina. She is now Dr. Daisy Bourassa-Dowd, an assistant professor of chemistry at Newberry College. We will certainly miss Daisy but offer congratulations on her marriage and new academic appointment!

From her new institution:



**Daisy Bourassa-Dowd**

Assistant Professor of Chemistry

***Degrees:*** Ph.D., Chemistry, Georgia Institute of Technology; B.S., Biochemistry, Simmons College

***Bio:*** Dr. Daisy Bourassa-Dowd joined the Newberry College faculty in February 2021.



## **“Protect the Vote” Rally on March 1, 2021**

*By: Jennifer Parker*

Atlantans rallied around the Capitol building on March 1st to protest HB531, a voter suppression measure being pursued by Republicans because GA Democrats won 2 senate seats & the presidency in the Nov. 2020 election. This bill restricts absentee ballots & multiple-day voting while making ID requirements more stringent.

Hundreds of people participated in the rally, which alternated between Liberty Plaza & the area surrounding the Capitol building, & included activists from 30 local groups. Representatives from the NAACP, Atlanta Jewish Army, Fulton & DeKalb County Democrats, etc. held vigil from 5:31 AM until 5:31 PM., protesting the suppression of our vote. Several Democratic Representatives came out of the Capitol building to address the crowd & local news crews covered the event.



## Surplus Books Distribution

The distribution of the surplus books to various facilities is greatly appreciated. One example is the Mansions at Decatur, where Wendy has graciously supplied our resident library with a variety of titles, which are eagerly picked up. Our resident library supervisor made the sign to inform residents how we obtained these treasures!



### Quote of the month:

"Spring will come and so will happiness. Hold on. Life will get warmer."  
—Anita Krizzan

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