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TACOMA (WA)
BRANCH

“By Joining AAUW, you belong to a community that breaks through economic and educational barriers so that all women have a fair chance.”

June 2020

Events and News

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Shared on Facebook by AAUW Washington

As advocates for equality, it behooves us as AAUW members to recognize and speak up against racism. It's time to shed light on this systemic issue in all the places it hides. Real change is possible and starts with positive action by each of us.

**Facebook Post by:
Nora McInerny
May 28 at 8:45 pm**

Hello my fellow white people, would you like to have a little history lesson together?

It's 1931 in Minneapolis, MN when this photo is taken. Look at all these people! What could they be doing posing and smiling on this lawn at 46th and Columbus?

If you guessed that they were a racist mob harassing Edith and Arthur Lee, who purchased a home just a few blocks south of the neighborhood where black people were *supposed* to live, you are correct!

The mob grew to over 4,000 violent people, who threw rocks and paint and yes, posed for this photo.

These riots lasted MONTHS — MONTHS! -- and they worked. The Lees moved out in 1933.



Crowd of people (mob) in front of 4600 Columbus Ave South (The Crisis, October 1931)

I keep looking at this photo and thinking about the people in it. Who are their kids, grandkids, great grandkids? Do they know about this photo? This mob? Do they know how they benefitted from the pain of the Lees and families like them?

Owning property is a way that families build generational wealth, and Minneapolis did its best to make that as hard as possible for black people. Generations later, we have the **lowest home ownership rate in the US** and some of the worst economic disparities between black and white citizens in the United States.

Our main freeways — 35W and 94E — were deliberately build to raze black neighborhoods and physically segregate black and white neighborhoods. Generations later, you can still **see** the effects of this as you drive through the city. Those segregations are still in place.

Still, in Minnesota, black business owners are less likely to receive loans than *less qualified* white applicants. (<https://ncrc.org/study-documents-discrimination-black-entrepreneurs/>)

Racism is structural, systemic, insidious. I'm a person whose family history in this city spans generations, and has received unearned generational benefits (many who used the GI bill to get a house without getting any shit, and several who started and ran businesses).

White people often want black people to justify or explain their anger. Don't do that. Your approval is not needed. Your education is on you.



Instead of asking "but why are they doing this? What does this accomplish?!" Ask yourself what systems created this situation, and why you think *you* know the right way for oppressed people to react.

Instead of thinking you know best, try to learn what you don't yet know.

We are steeped in biases and prejudices we aren't even aware of. It is our job to pull them out from ourselves and one another, over and over again.

Here are some useful links to help you put this week's riots and protests into *some* historical context. I say some because, uh, I'm not a historian I'm a curious person trying to learn, not a credentialed expert trying to teach.

Mapping Prejudice is where I learned the [story of the Lee family](#)

The Jim Crow of the North by TPT - Twin Cities PBS is a documentary available FOR FREE [here](#).

MPD150 has a very extensive [history of policing](#) in Minneapolis.

Anti-Racism: Women's Organizations Raise Their Voices

We are at an important crossroads. Cynthia Stewart, president of our local League of Women Voters, wrote an eloquent and important letter to their members in response to the murder of George Floyd. You can read it [here](#).

President's Corner



BLACK LIVES MATTER

Did you start feeling anxious reading these words? If you did, I can understand that. We've been indoctrinated since birth to believe that conflict of any kind is a threat to our personal safety. Stay with me here. AAUW sisters, let's talk about it.

There is a world of difference between "Yes, but what can I do?" and "Yes. What can I do?"

For centuries too long, white Americans have been satisfied with the "yes, but."

Question: do you feel personally attacked by that last sentence? You may not, but if you do, I can understand that feeling, I too have that desire to answer "but" when I feel indicted by the world's problems. To protest, "not me." I ask you to sit with that reaction a moment. Instead, let's ask ourselves, why? Why this automatic feeling of being attacked? Why is this about my own character (or anyone else's)?

Because that's how we've been trained to respond. When you say "yes, but" you are accepting the status quo as a given. The conversation veers away from examining the system and immediately shifts to "you" and "I" and "me" and "them." We talk about someone "being racist" the same way we often talk about being "unemployed" or "homeless" or "addicted" or "uneducated" or "obese" or "bankrupt." The same way most of society talked about being "homosexual" until very recently. As though it were some personal defect, a moral failing. As though it were your own



damn fault if you were in that “category.” As though the conversation is about individuals instead of *a system in which we all participate*.

As long as we inject “but” into the conversation, we lose sight of the issue, refusing to come to terms with a reality that’s been put in front of us. It is a deflection, an abdication of responsibility. “Yes, but ALL lives matter.” “Yes, but not all cops are bad.” We hear it in “Yes, but not ALL men.” So, when I hear the phrase “white Americans,” do I reflexively self-protect and protest: “Yes, but I am not a racist.” Ah, there’s the sticking point. I don’t want to be a *racist*. Nobody wants to be a *racist*. Even unapologetic white supremacists don’t want to be called racists!

The toxic legacy of the Puritans lives on. Indoctrinated (brainwashed, gaslit) to accept the premise that a society’s ills are actually personal failings, we are stuck in the “yes, but,” and not only reflexively do we accept our powerlessness as a given, we become complicit in upholding the injustice. We are not innocent. We perpetrate the injustice by our unquestioning acceptance of systemic premises.

The price of maintaining
membership in the
establishment is
unquestioning acceptance
of authority

Neil Postman

Are you thinking I’m getting too *radical* here? Good. Because I’m asking us all to get radical. To get to the **root** of it. Let’s not keep putting anesthetic on an infection.

If you’re a member of AAUW, you’re already radical. Radical in your belief that women are equally human, competent, intelligent, and deserving of power as are men. And cognizant that we have not yet achieved that standing in society.

Since time immemorial, women have been subject to and accepting of their second-class status. Thereby upholding the system that oppresses women. Many would have us believe that’s all in the past. Hardly. We still uphold the patriarchy in a myriad of ways and must constantly question our own responses and decisions. Am I appearance-shaming another woman in my thoughts or words? Am I judging another woman’s intimate relationship and automatically blaming her for her partner’s behavior? Am I judging other cultures by the prevailing standards of my own upbringing? Am I more liberated from oppression than my

Muslim sisters because I “can” wear a short skirt or plunging neckline? (But permission granted only if I “keep myself up.”) Do I discredit Black mothers for the imprisonment of their sons? At every age, from childhood to now, I have encountered new ways that the patriarchal system has put me *in my place* and enlisted me in its precepts. It is so easy to think I’ve figured it out, only to discover yet another way I’ve bought into and perpetuated the patriarchy.

That’s not a bug, it’s a feature.

It’s a circular, ongoing process to move from blindness to powerlessness and resentment to power. Perhaps all of the systemic problems we face as a society result from the nature of power itself – when one has it, when one is privileged by it, then it becomes the end in itself, no matter the reasons power was sought for in the first place. Yet, we have the Constitution instead of a king specifically to keep the reasons for governance above the rulers. Methods must always be held accountable to the values of the mission.



AAUW’s value promise is this: By joining AAUW, you belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance.

So. What can I do? You have entrusted me with the leadership of this branch. I have one more year in that position. I promise to engage us as a branch in this long-overdue conversation about systemic racism in our community and across America today. Because women’s rights are human rights. Because we cannot achieve equal rights for women when Black women and men are oppressed and endangered. Anti-racism solidarity and engagement is the **only** position of integrity for women’s rights organizations. I promise to provide a respectful forum for each of you to participate in as you feel willing to do so. This will be a series of conversations *among us*, predominantly white, educated women who are dedicated to equal rights... and any others who wish to participate with us. I’m not saying it will be easy. None of us have the answers yet. It will definitely not be

comfortable. Challenging a paradigm is a difficult and iterative process. I know we will treat ourselves and others with kindness as we speak plainly. There is no prerequisite or advance preparation. We come as we are. There will be no “buts” and we will not ask others to do our work for us.

I believe we can. We must. As the great Jedi warrior [Yoda said to Luke Skywalker](#), “You must unlearn what you have learned... Do. Or do not. There is no try.”

Yours,

Susan

Thank You to Our Continuing Board Members!

None of us could foresee that a pandemic would make continuity of branch leadership so critical at this moment in time, as we learn to work “together-apart” and plan for how and when we can gather in person. Carol Rikerd and Robin Larson agreed to stand for re-election, respectively, as Financial Officer and VP



Membership. Elected unanimously in our March members meeting (via email), we unfortunately did not have the opportunity to recognize them in our usual way in May.

Thank you, Carol and Robin, for agreeing to carry on!

And thank you to all our current and continuing board members, without whom we couldn't keep the wheels on this bus spinning!

Elected officers

- Susan Hesselgrave, President (final term, expires June 2021)
- Robin Larson, Vice President – Membership (July 2020-June 2022)
- Carol Rikerd, Financial Officer (July 2020-June 2022)
- Dolora Neumaier, Secretary (final term, expires June 2021)

Appointed Board members:

- LesLee Eicher, Communications
- Mary Letterman, Communications
- Marisa Peloquin, Tech Trek

Next year will be time for new leadership of the branch. And NOW is the time for all of us to prepare for that transition! In terms of elected officers, we will need a new president and secretary. Please consider joining a board meeting this fall as an observer or reaching out to one of your board members to explore what the various roles entail.

Membership

Renewal time!

It is that time again! This current membership year ends June 30. All members who have not renewed for 2020-2021 should have received an email and invoice from AAUW. Using that, it is really easy to go online to renew and pay with a credit or debit card. If you want to pay by check, you can print out and mail the renewal form and your check to AAUW – Tacoma Branch at

P.O. Box 65303
Tacoma, WA 98464-1303.

Now is also the time to invite your friends and family members join AAUW.

If you know of anyone who might want to join us at AAUW Tacoma Branch please pass on their contact information to Robin at laro32@gmail.com We would like to have them join.

If you have questions or concerns please contact Robin at laro32@gmail.com.

Thanks, as always,

~ Robin, Membership Chair



Tech Trek

On April 3, AAUW held a conference call with Tech Trek camp directors from every state. Leslie Perry, AAUW senior program officer and our contact for all things Tech Trek, presented a very convincing case that it was best to cancel all Tech Trek camps for this year. Technically, they left it up to the individual states to decide, but the case was pretty compelling. For example, consider these talking points:

- The safety of the girls and our volunteers is the most important consideration right now, and always. This situation is ever evolving, but even when the stay at home orders are lifted, the risk of contracting coronavirus will be with us for a while. Meaning, we should expect continued social distancing measures even as shelter-in-place may be lifted. It will not be a toggle switch where we just return to normal immediately. Based on experts, it is expected to be a slow return to normal operations for us all.
- With the close proximity of campers to each other and volunteers, including the overnight stay required for camps, social distancing will be impossible to effectively implement at camp. For our dorm moms and volunteers, it will be exceedingly difficult and a huge liability risk for branches, for affiliates and for AAUW.



We are so grateful for your continued commitment to Tech Trek and to helping girls realize their dreams and aspirations. You have made a difference in the lives of countless girls and we need to keep their health and wellbeing, as well as that of everyone involved in Tech Trek, as the top priority. We know you'll continue to provide wonderful experiences for girls after the nation and the

globe recover from this health pandemic.

Given this, Tech Trek WA directors agreed to cancel the 2020 camps and sent a notice to all branches. It was disappointing for many: nearly all branches had

finished fundraising and submitted funds to cover campers and many branches had already selected and notified girls that they were going and now had to send the bad news. As you know, by early April, Tacoma branch had already canceled the Tech Trek process for our area schools; We came to that decision when the notice came in March that closed the schools at least through April, and then for the rest of the year. Tech Trek WA plans to add to the capacity of the 2021 camps to accommodate girls who were selected this year. There will probably be a separate camp for those girls who by then will be rising 9th graders, rather than 8th graders, to maintain adequate curriculum and programs. All Tech Trek funds raised by Tacoma branch will carry over to next year and we look forward to 2021!

Mission Project Update

When COVID-19 shut down our Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) Tech Trek, we as a branch rapidly responded to the changing situation. Our FY20 mission funds (\$5,000) had already been deposited with AAUW-WA Tech Trek, and those are on tap for the 2021 Tech Trek camps.



Meanwhile, due to Stay Home, Stay Safe restrictions, there was an urgent emerging need impacting women and children facing domestic violence. There were no schools to go to, and abusers were not getting out of the house to go to work. Together this created a powder-keg.

Thus, your board recommended, and we approved as a branch, to allocate our FY21 mission funds of \$5,000 to the Tacoma-Pierce County YWCA's appeal to address these emergency needs. Those funds were delivered in May and have been put to immediate use. YWCA Director, Miriam Barnett, was profoundly grateful for our gift. We are thankful that, due to our members' generous support, women and children in our community have been helped out of harm's way.

Miriam was interviewed a few days ago on the Crossing Division podcast about the YWCA's response to the COVID-19 situation. It is inspiring and informative, and a great listen! You can listen to the interview [here](#).

Partnering With the League of Women Voters

In this election year, we will again be supporting our local League of Women Voters (LWV) in their good work of informing voters on issues and candidates. The most important way we can assist is in spreading the word to all the people we know, about the upcoming candidate forums. For this support, we will be acknowledged as a co-sponsor.



This summer, all candidate forums will all be held online via Zoom, so it's more accessible to more engaged voters than ever. No parking, no hard chairs, and no germs! (But you will have to provide your own coffee and cookies.) Please share this information with everyone you know.

Primary election forums will be held in races for which there are more than two candidates; and as many as possible will be held for the General Election.

Current schedule for the Primary election forums*:

- Tuesday, July 7, 5:30 pm: LD 28 – House of Rep.
- Tuesday, July 7, 7:30 pm: LD 29 – House of Rep.
- Congressional Dist. 10: TVW pre-recorded video to be shown at dates TBD
- Lieutenant Governor: TVW pre- recorded video to be shown at dates TBD
- Monday, July 13, 6:00 pm: County Council District 3
- Tuesday, July 14, 6:00 pm: Pierce County Sheriff
- Wednesday, July 15, 6:00 pm: County Council District 4
- Thursday, July 16, 5:30 pm: LD 26 – House Pos. 1
- Thursday, July 16, 7:30 pm: LD 26 – House Pos. 2
- Monday, July 20, 6:00 pm: LD 25 – Senate

*All forums except for the pre-recorded TVW ones will allow public participation.

Interest Groups (MeetUps)

Daytime Book Group

Greetings to all you Readers. Did you know we have a book group that meets to discuss books on the last Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m.? If you are interested in joining this interest group and have not been participating, please contact Robin at laro32@gmail.com. We are in the process of choosing books for 2020/21. When this is finalized, we will publish the list. We would love to have more members participate.

Evening Book Group

The Evening Book Group has selected its reading choices for the 2020/21 reading year, which begins in September. Please consider joining us if these books interest you, and if you enjoy a lively discussion. We meet on the first Monday of the month at 6:30 pm.

| Books | Reviewers | Your preferred date to review |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Sula</i> , by Toni Morrison | Susan | September 28 |
| <i>The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek</i> , by Kim Michelle Richardson and <i>The Giver of Stars</i> , by Jojo Moyes | Candace (Book Woman) and Bea Geller (Giver of Stars) | October 26 |
| <i>Sandcastle Girls</i> by Chris Bohjallan | Dolora Neumaier | November 23 or 30 |
| <i>Persuasion</i> by Jane Austen | Dorothy | January 25 |
| <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> by Ray Bradbury | Connie Ozmer | February 22 |
| <i>An American Marriage</i> , by Tayari Jones | Robin | March 22 |
| <i>American Dirt</i> , by Jeanine Cummins | [reviewer needed] | April 19 or 26 |

Papercrafters

Let's discuss if we want to continue this Interest Group in the new (2020/21) program year. **If you want to have this group continue in September, please call Connie D. at 253 565 7518.**

Stay Connected with AAUW

- AAUW Washington State Website <http://aauw-wa.aauw.net/>
- AAUW Washington State Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/aauw.washington>
- AAUW Washington State Tech Trek <http://techtrek-wa.aauw.net/>
- AAUW National Website <http://www.aauw.org/>
- AAUW National Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AAUW.National>
- AAUW Tech Trek Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AAUWTechTrek>

Communications Team Notes

- We welcome your ideas for interest groups, activities, priorities, recruitment, and anything else! Our goal is to attract new members by expanding our social media presence ([Facebook](#) and [Website](#)). We'd like to use our [MeetUp Tool](#) to reach out to other Tacoma-area groups.
- Please send notices of events and news to the newsletter team at aauwtacomaneewsletter@gmail.com. You can send photos as well. Please send by the **16th of the month** unless otherwise noted. We reserve the right to edit as we see fit.

~Mary Letterman and LesLee Eicher, AAUW WA Communications Co-Chairs

June 2020



| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 Current Membership Year Ends – PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP! | 31 | | | | |