



Empowering Women
Since 1881

AAUW Gaithersburg Branch

NEWSLETTER

September 2020

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VIRTUAL BRANCH MEETING!

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

Log in to Zoom meeting: 7:15pm

Presentation begins: 7:30pm

SPEAKER & TOPIC:

Alvah T. Beander, ISA, MRICS, ASA

President, Melanin Art Appraisals, Inc.

“Decimal Point Please! The New Narrative in the African and African American Art Market”

Ms. Beander is an internationally recognized expert in the appraisal and valuation of arts and antiques, with a specialization in African and African American art. Ms. Beander operated her own arts and antiques shop in Alexandria for many years. She has appraised art objects given to President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condeleeza Rice. She also served as a consultant to the National Museum of African American History and Culture Plan for Action Presidential Commission. We will hear about significant points in her career as well as see many fascinating and unusual items she has appraised.

Virtual Board Meeting

Tuesday, September 8 at 7:00pm

Log in to Zoom meeting: 6:45pm

Board meetings are open to all members. If you want to attend, please email Heather Reichardt: hjr1234@gmail.com to receive a Zoom meeting invitation.

ZOOM MEETING TRAINING SESSION

We want to ensure everyone can participate in these virtual meetings as seamlessly as possible. A Zoom meeting training/practice session will be held on Thursday, Sept. 10 at 7pm.

All members will be invited and anyone who wants to try Zoom or practice logging into the Zoom meeting can attend. We will send out some basic instructions ahead of this meeting. Also note that you do not have to be on video camera to participate in Zoom meetings. Phone numbers are provided so that you can call and listen while watching your screen for the presentation and speakers/attendees.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- **Edie Allison**

We have been socially distant since our last in-person meeting in February, but I hope that you and your family are well and that the AAUW branch can provide you an ongoing connection to friends and acquaintances, and new ideas.

The AAUW branch officers aim to protect our members' health while supporting members' emotional and intellectual health. In-person activities will not start until state and local health guidance, and members' concerns allow it. Instead, we plan to offer informative and interesting virtual monthly starting in September, as well as informal virtual gatherings and other occasional communications.

We expect to gather virtually using Zoom (some interest groups may also use Facebook Meeting Room). Both are easy to use if you have a computer, tablet/iPad or smart phone and we will provide some technical guidance.

I think we are approaching what may be the most significant autumn for women since the ratification of the 19th amendment 100 years ago. Diversity and inclusion issues persist, even as Kamala Harris becomes the first woman of color to be on a national ticket; safe voting by mail faces unexpected hurdles; and the coronavirus is disproportionately impacting women's education and health. This branch and the national AAUW are working to mitigate these threats to women's education and equity.

The November election may be the first thing on our minds as the national news highlights voting by mail issues. The county board of elections and the state continue to revise procedures to meet the demand for mail-in voting. The latest information on Montgomery County absentee ballots, in-person and ballot drop-off locations, and deadlines are at the Board of Elections website at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections/>.

Even though our 2020 book sale was cancelled, the branch continues to support local college and university students. Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove reported that students and their families face exceptional financial constraints as a result of reduced work opportunities during the coronavirus shut downs. Even prior to 2020, Montgomery College

reported that 45% of students received Federal Pell Grants for low-income students. Through the generous contributions given by branch members, we were able to fund multiple scholarships for students this fall. We hope to invite the scholarship recipients to join us for our October Zoom meeting.



AAUW continues to lobby for legislation to guarantee paid family and medical leave. The lack of paid leave places a disproportionate burden on women, who are often the caregiver for children, parents or family members with special needs. The burden is even more pronounced during the coronavirus pandemic when women are often in "essential" positions or may need to continue working in low-paying or part-time jobs. AAUW expects to accelerate its campaign for paid family and medical leave as Congress returns to work. You can learn more about this issue at <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/position-paid-leave/>.

AAUW is also lobbying Congress to protect and enhance, rather than cut, access to Affordable Care Act programs. The ACA reduced the uninsured rate from almost 17% of the nation in 2009 to 9.1 percent in 2015. However, as Republicans work to reduce or eliminate the ACA, the need is growing. Traditionally, about half of Americans receive employer-sponsored health insurance. Coronavirus-driven business closures and layoffs have reduced access to this health insurance. Not unexpectedly, unemployment rates are higher for women than men (11.3% in July compared to 9.8% for men; and men and women of color faced much higher rates). For more information on women's access to health care see <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/position-health-care/>.

For information on how you can take action to help change policies to increase gender equity, subscribe to the AAUW Two-Minute Activist at <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>.

NEWS AND OPINION

- Edith Allison, President, AAUW Gaithersburg Branch

On August 17, the chair of the AAUW Board of Directors notified some, but not all, members that the board intends to vote on October 16 on two possible dues increases, A: an increase of between \$3 and \$10, to take effect July 1, 2021 or B: an increase of between \$3 and \$10 to take effect in each of the next three fiscal years. The Board justification for this increase is, "... in recent years dues have not increased with enough regularity to keep pace with expenses." You have until September 25 to send your comments on this dues increase to connect@aauw.org.

The Board notes that member dues currently cover between 15 and 20 percent of AAUW's annual budget. Looking in the AAUW archives I have found that in 2017 dues covered about 13 percent of the AAUW budget, and in 2018 National dues were increased about 20 percent,

from \$49 to \$59. Members also pay \$10 state dues and \$18 branch dues.



As an AAUW member I intend to tell the Board of my strong objection to this increase. General inflation has not been high over the past few years, and increasing dues is unconscionable when unemployment, especially for younger women and persons of color, threatens the very people AAUW would like to have as members, and the things AAUW values, including education and pay equity.

All the other scientific and professional organizations to which I belong are facing severe declines in income but are working overtime to deliver great, virtual services, and are not raising dues.

SCHOLARSHIPS UPDATE

Funds for this year's scholarship were sharply limited due to the cancellation of the annual book sale. Members generously contributed \$1,568 to augment the fund. The AAUW Gaithersburg Board of Directors at its June meeting approved the following distribution of

scholarship funds: To Montgomery College \$4,233 and to the Universities at Shady Grove \$3,817.



Don't forget to use the Gaithersburg Branch website: gaithersburg-md.aauw.net.

Barbara Garrard is now the website manager and she is putting in the most important alerts. Plus, you'll find the latest newsletter there almost immediately after publication, as well as copies of older newsletters.

You'll always find the web address at the top of the sidebar in the newsletter that lists our officers.



GREAT DECISIONS

- **Mary Wykes, Coordinator**



The Great Decisions Interest Group will not meet in September. The study guide topic for the month is "China's Road

into Latin America" for those members who have the guide or wish to watch the presentation on the Internet.

LITERATURE GROUP

- **Mary Wykes for Coordinator Jean Young**



The Literature Group members have decided to suspend monthly meetings for the foreseeable

future because of the pandemic.

AAUW GAITHERSBURG BRANCH

Website: gaithersburg-md.aauw.net

Advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research.

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Dorothy Camara

The American Association of University Women
Gaithersburg Branch
437 Fellowship Circle
Gaithersburg, MD 20877