

Members enjoy a delicious lunch and good conversation at the AAUW Funds Luncheon

The Hayward-Castro Valley and Fremont Branch met at the Acqua e Farina Restaurant in Hayward for the annual AAUW Fellowship Luncheon on Saturday, February 4, 2017. Members were welcomed and seated in a private dining room with long tables and lovely floral decorations. Guests were offered a menu selection of ravioli di spinaci, fettuccine pesto with chicken or eggplant parmigiana. This member can vouch that the fettuccine pesto with chicken was marvelous. Liz Bathgate of the Hayward-Castro Valley branch was our MC for the afternoon.

Liz introduced one of her fellows and our keynote speaker, Connie Won. Connie spoke passionately about her research that includes racial and gender violence, school discipline, and critical prison studies. Connie Won has worked as a community-driven researcher, high school teacher, sexual assault counselor and activist on issues of violence against women of color. On November 4th she finished a paper titled: "Angered: Black and non-Black girls of color at intersections of violence and school discipline in the U.S."

Ms. Won spoke of the anger and helplessness that women of color frequently experience. They "keep this stuff in." When Connie was a teacher in a continuation school, she found one of her students lying on top of a desk! Her first reaction was to discipline the student. However, after talking to the young woman, she found that the student was suffering from anger and depression resulting from the violence and abuse the student had experienced. "She became one of my favorite students," Connie Won recalls. Our speaker researched and wrote about the ways girls respond to violence and the ways adults respond to violence. Most importantly, she wrote about how we can help. She also studied the issue of poverty and the lack of resources to deal with it. Connie found that teachers don't always understand the experience of poverty.

Connie Won used Maya Angelou's quote from a 2006 episode of Iconoclast, on the Sundance Channel, to remind us all that we must do something with our anger and not just hold it in.

You should be angry. You must not be bitter. Bitterness is like cancer. It eats upon the host. It doesn't do anything to the object of its displeasure. So use that anger. You write it. You paint it. You dance it. You march it. You vote it. You do everything about it. You talk it. Never stop talking it."

Connie Won's goal is to teach girls how to deal with these issues of violence themselves. She works to help young women help themselves through organizations such as Girls For Gender Equity and United Asian Women.

During the discussion after the program, Mary Lynn Pelican talked about the importance of mentoring troubled young women and her experiences as a mentor. Thank you, Mary Lynn, for reminding us how important it is to give these girls hope.