THE TWIG - FEBRUARY 2024

Opening the AAUW Membership to Everyone

For the second time in three years, AAUW National is requesting a vote to open our membership to those without a college degree. The measure was narrowly defeated in 2021. AAUW National is recommending we vote "yes" to eliminate college degrees as a criteria for membership.

The proposed change:

Any individual who supports AAUW's purpose of advancing equity for women and girls shall be eligible to receive admission to AAUW membership subject to completion of such informational procedures as the Board shall establish; such membership shall be granted upon payment of AAUW dues. The provisions set forth in this section are the sole requirement for eligibility and admissibility to AAUW membership.

For arguments for and against, click on **Pros and Cons of the Open Membership Measure**

More than 62% of those voting approved the change in 2021. Fewer than 10% of the voters opposed it, but that 10% prevented it from reaching the two-thirds affirmative vote required for a change to the bylaws. However, turnout in 2021 was less than 25%, indicating that members didn't have strong feelings, didn't know about the vote, or didn't know how to vote online.

If the measure passes, AAUW will no longer be called American Association of University Women, but will be referred to as AAUW, the way the Young Men's Christian Association is now known as the YMCA.

The comment period for the open membership measure has passed, but voting begins

on April 3. It's important for all Fremont branch members to vote on this cultural change. A small number of voters either way can make a difference in whether the measure wins or loses.

Curator: Alice Alfaro Manfredi **Editor**: Jennifer Foster **Deadlines**: 25th of the month before publication Send items for The TWIG to Jennifer Foster at **jejenfo@yahoo.com**

Vol. 3 Issue No. 2





Ar President's Message



As we celebrate Black History Month, I am honored to share the incredible journey Karen Weinstein, Co-President of our Berkeley sister branch, took to resurrect the forgotten history of Mary Church Terrell, a prominent African American suffragist who integrated AAUW.

Karen, a political activist and former Co-Chair of the Affirmative Action Committee of the CA Democratic Party, was reading about the suffrage movement when she discovered there were a number of African-American women who were actively involved, but not given credit. One of those women was Mary

Church Terrell, the daughter of former slaves, a graduate of Oberlin College, a founder and charter member of NAACP, and the first African-American AAUW member.

With her interest piqued, Karen contacted the AAUW National archivist and worked together to unearth numerous historical documents and articles about Ms. Terrell. Karen learned this formidable civil rights activist waged a three-year campaign and won an anti-discrimination lawsuit to integrate AAUW when she was an octogenarian!

From visiting museum websites and watching numerous videos, Ms. Terrell's extraordinary achievements came to life when Karen found an exceptionally well-done interview with Dr. Alison Parker, author of *Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell*. She emailed Dr. Parker and invited her to be the keynote speaker for a Meet the Author event jointly held with the Oakland-Piedmont branch last month.

Our state leadership was so impressed by the program that Karen organized, it's hosting its own webinar titled "Mary Church Terrell and the Fight to Integrate AAUW" this Sunday, February 4, at 3 pm. Click here to register for this exciting event.

Karen also wrote three letters to National to request adding Ms. Terrell to the Faces of AAUW Trailblazers web page. Connecting with a specific administrator was challenging, so she contacted our CEO, Gloria Blackwell, directly. Ms. Blackwell took immediate action. Mary Church Terrell is now prominently displayed on the Faces of AAUW Trailblazers web page and will be added to the AAUW organizational timeline in the future. Click here to meet Mary Church Terrell!

Thanks to Karen Weinstein of AAUW Berkeley, an influential political advocate and activist in her own right, a prominent AAUW Trailblazer forgotten by history got the recognition that she deserved.

With respect,

Phie K. Dai



Public Policy 🐨 Is There a Hidden Agenda Behind the "Parents' Rights" Movement?

By Jeanne Delp

The following is from AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project and has been edited for length.

The House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 5, the "Parents Bill of Rights Act." Eight governors have signed legislation with similar titles. H.R. 5 establishes the rights of parents to, among other things: review curriculum; inspect the books and other reading materials in the school library; be advised of policies that permit transgender girls to compete on female athletic teams or use bathrooms or lockers designated for females; and provide consent before a school may use their child's chosen name or pronouns on forms, or change the child's sex-based accommodations. Many of the state laws noted above require the removal of "inappropriate" materials upon the objection of a single person.

AAUW California recognizes that not all our members will find these policies objectionable. And to be sure, most of our members would agree with this statement from PEN America, a human rights and free expression organization: "There is no question that parents deserve a say in shaping their children's educations; that they have a moral and legal responsibility for their children, and the freedom to make fundamental decisions for their families." (Suzanne Nossel, PEN America CEO, *Time* Sept. 20, 2022.)

However, legitimate questions are raised when one parent's "right" to control what their child reads and learns collides with another parent's right to ensure their child has access to a broad and diverse range of educational materials. Or when a parent's "right" to know if their child confides to a teacher regarding a sexual identity unknown to the parent collides with the student's right to privacy. Or when one parent's "right" to ensure her daughter doesn't play on the same team as a transgender girl collides with that girl's right to partake in all the same activities as other girls, or to feel safe in the campus environment.

AAUW California advocates for a diverse curriculum in our schools, as well as the protection of all forms of gender identity and expression. It is a cause of concern when the rallying cry of "parents' rights" is, as stated by PEN America, "wielded to do far more than give parents their rightful voice; it is turning public schools into political battle grounds, fracturing communities, and diverting time and energy away from teaching and learning." Additionally, according to the National Education Association (NEA), H.R. 5 "ignores the breadth of parental engagement" that already exists, "disregards educator experience and expertise" and "inserts the government into local decisions."

PEN America worries that the current emphasis on working with schools for the betterment of the child has been replaced with a parental focus on wanting to impose

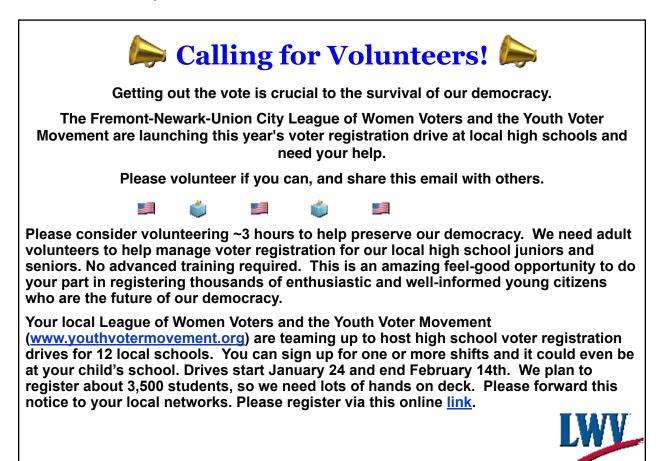


their personal beliefs – moral, religious, and/or political – on the entire education system. As an organization founded on the principal of expanding educational opportunities we might all heed Suzanne Nossel's final words in her *Time* article: "The phrase 'parents' rights' may have a nice ring to it, but the agenda now afoot in its name should sound alarms for all those who care about the future of public education."

Please do read more at: Pen.org and Nea.org. These provide very specific numbers and information. For example:

- From July 2021 to June 2023, PEN America's Index of School Book Bans recorded 5,894 instances of book bans across 41 states and 247 public school districts.
- "Copycat bans" have emerged as a key component of the book ban movement, with a portion of titles removed seemingly because another district removed it elsewhere.

Is California in a safe place with Gov. Newsom's signing of AB1078, which bans "book bans" in schools, prohibits censorship of instructional materials, and strengthens California law requiring schools to provide all students access to textbooks that teach about California's diverse communities? SCOTUS may have something to say about this issue, so remember to be an influencer on Lobby Days, be a volunteer for LWV's Voter Registration for high school students, and be sure that you are a voter in California's Presidential Primary Election March 5, 2024.





SAVE the DATE

AAUW FREMONT PRESENTS 2024 SPEECH TREK



TOPIC: HOW CAN WE ENSURE A ROBUST PUBLIC-SCHOOL CURRICULUM THAT IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL AND TEACHES HISTORICALLY ACCURATE INFORMATION?

SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2024 PLACE AND TIME TBA



- BRANCH NEWS

<u>New Member:</u> Kate Alessandri



Kate Alessandri joined the Fremont branch in October after participating in a panel discussion sponsored by our One Book One Community Read on banned books.

Kate, under the pen name of Katryn Bury, is the author of *Drew Leclair Gets a Clue* and *Drew Leclair Crushes the Case*, aimed at middle grade readers. Her books have garnered three prize nominations and have also been banned in at least one state.

Kate says: "I wanted to join AAUW because I saw the depth of passion that members showed about books and stories at the AAUW banned books event in September. Historically, women's

voices have been sidelined in so many ways, and I appreciate this organization's dedication to making sure those voices are heard."

A lifelong true crime nerd, she has a bachelor's degree in sociology and criminology. Her short and serialized fiction can be found in *Suspense* Magazine and *The Sleuth*. Kate works with middle grade readers as a library technician by day and writes mysterious coming-of-age stories for those same readers by night. She lives in Oakland with her family, along with a vast collection of pop-culture knickknacks and Nancy Drew books.

Pros and Cons of the Open Membership Measure

This spring AAUW members are being asked to vote on a proposed change to the bylaws that will eliminate college degrees as a membership criteria. For more information, click on **Opening the AAUW Membership to Everyone** and the AAUW National **site**.

Arguments for and against the open membership measure are listed below.

Pro: From the Open Membership Discussion

- At present, we are declining in numbers but not passion. The drive to form AAUW is what causes it to continue – we ultimately strive toward inclusion and equality. As such, opening the membership to those without a degree fundamentally supports the purpose of our organization. Removing the degree requirement is not meant to take anything away from current member accomplishments. Instead, it's a way to celebrate all that makes our members extraordinary with a larger pool of driven individuals. Treating each other fairly, with love and compassion, is the foundation of AAUW and serves as the catalyst for our current and future efforts.
- We recognize that in today's world higher education degrees are one of several paths needed to advance equity for women and girls. Professional certifications, on the job



training, career technical experience, and life experience all are alternative paths to obtaining education and the skills needed to become leaders and advocates for ending discrimination against women.

- We can continue to change without forgetting our roots our commitment to higher education as a path to success, our support for fellowships and grants, and more. We just will allow those who have taken parallel paths to join us as we work for gender equity.
- It removes the contradiction introduced in 2009 when we approved an organizational overhaul to better prepare the organization for its future. We dropped "uniting graduates" from our purpose (it had been missing from the "mission" for years) and replaced it with "advancing equity"."

Con: 2021 Alameda County IBC

Various members from the Alameda County Inter-Branch Council (IBC) refuted the AAUW position in 2021. Comments made then are reprinted here. (Note that these comments are not a reflection of the official IBC position, just some members who put together these thoughts.)

- There is no need to remove the education requirement: AAUW's bylaws already allows members with AA degrees and already allows college student members who don't have degrees yet. Bylaws should be re-written to allow local branches to decide on a case-by-case basis if honorary membership should be given to a person based on her/his background if/when such a person comes forward. There is no data showing that a significant number of members have been turned away due to the education requirement.
- <u>Procedural problems exist with a vote to remove the education requirement:</u> Given the age demographic of AAUW's membership, an overwhelming number of members may not read emails from AAUW because they do not keep up with emails or don't use technology on a regular basis. They will not know they must vote "no" to keep the education requirement.
- American Association of University Women fills a niche
- Women are proud of their higher education
- The change to open membership will result in loss of dues-paying members: Eliminating the education requirement might actually result in a large loss of current dues-paying members, who have loyally renewed membership for decades. The average age of AAUW members is 60+. Loss of members will not only decrease dues earned by AAUW National, but also gut the vitality of local and state branches because active members will no longer volunteer their energy and resources to highquality programming that serves local communities.



AAUW-CA HAPPENINGS

As part of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative, learn about a woman who changed the face of AAUW. AAUW-CA will hold a webinar about Mary Church Terrell, the first black member of AAUW (she joined after winning an anti-discrimination lawsuit). If you missed the live talk on January 6 by the Berkeley and Oakland-Piedmont branches, the webinar will be held Sunday, February 4, at 3 pm. We will hear from Dr. Alison Parker, author of *Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell*, as she recounts stories and major successes in the life of this extraordinary woman. You can sign up **here**. . . Nominations are now open to choose a branch member who has done outstanding work in supporting the programs and goals of the Fremont branch. If you know of someone who should be chosen as the branch's Named Gift Honoree, send an email to Jennifer Foster before February 25 at **jejenfo@yahoo.com**. . . AAUW-CA is

Board of Directors

President - Phie Dai Vice President - Kathy Garfinkle Secretary - Carolyn Hedgecock Branch Treasurer - Kimmi Tang Program Chair - Kathy Garfinkle Membership Chair - Jo Szeto Membership Treasurers - Kris Sandoe and Jennifer Foster Public Policy Chair - Jeanne Delp AAUW Fund Chair - Jennifer Foster

Foundation for Local Scholarships

President - Randy Fewel Secretary - Avis Kresin Chief Financial Officer - Ashlee Nelson Programs Officer - Sowjanya Vutukur Development Officer - Mary Lynn Pelican

Special Interest Chairs

Afternoon Lit - Joyce Ruiz Book Talk - Margery Leonard Cultural Cuisine - Judy Wolf Exploring the Arts - Karen McCready One Book, One Community Read - Margery Leonard, Jeanne Delp, Jo Szeto, Kris Sandoe, Carolyn Hedgecock, Phie Dai, and Becky Denevan Tuesday Chat - Jui-Lan Liu Yoga for Body and Spirit - Jo Szeto looking for enthusiastic, proven leaders to join the state board. They are looking for a secretary (2024-2026), four directors (2024-2026), and another director (2024-2025). Nominations will appear on the ballot in the order they are submitted. You can apply here... The AAUW-CA website is being reorganized and updated with the goal of making things easier to find. Branch Tools and California Business pages are the latest to be updated. . . Please join us for Lobby Days 2024! The event is scheduled for Tuesday, April 2, 2024, and Wednesday, April 3, 2024, and will be a wonderful opportunity to meet with state legislators and advocate for our priority bills. Meetings will be held via Zoom as well as in person in Sacramento. In order to participate, you must complete the sign-up form by February 15 and attend the mandatory training. The sign-up form was emailed to all members in January, but it is also available here.





Peter Angelides



Funeral services for former AAUW member Peter Angelides were held on February 1 at St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in San Jose, where the Angelides family had been members since 1974. Peter, husband of longtime member Genevieve Angelides, died January 17.

"Peter was a faithful supporter of every AAUW program and event since 1975, when Genevieve joined," said Mary Lynn Pelican."He also became a member of AAUW. He was very proud of Genevieve's leadership in AAUW, especially her involvement in the One Book One Community Read program."

Peter and Genevieve, who died in 2020, were also instrumental in helping get the ESL Chat group at the Fremont Main Library off the

ground, and Peter was very proud of Genevieve, Randy Fewel, and Mary Lynn when they published a booklet in 2006 titled *From Near Disbandment to Success,* about implementing a business plan to reverse the trend of declining membership of the Fremont branch.

Peter and Genevieve are survived by their children, Phil and Petrina, and six grandchildren.

Alíson Kieft

A memorial service will be held in the spring for long-time AAUW member Alison Kieft, who died January 24.

Alison, co-president of the Fremont branch in 1998-1999, was also a Named Gift Honoree in 1997-1998 and held many more jobs in the organization over the years.

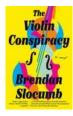
Said Kathy Scrivani, "She was a very vibrant, dynamic, generous, kind, and welcoming woman to people with a big warm smile. She and her husband Bruce have a daughter, Kimi Kolbe; son-in-law, Mike, and a granddaughter, Cami, who was the light of her life."



Linda Pearson agreed."Alison loved her family, friends, and socializing with marvelous tea parties and adventures to the Wine Country for special tasting experiences. She enjoyed travel and working with the City of Fremont and Fremont Schools to teach art history and art. She taught all sorts of crafts and art skills."

Besides AAUW, Alison was involved with several Red Hat groups, and spent countless hours making lap blankets and other things for the elderly as a member of the Niles Discovery Church.





Afternoon Lít

Afternoon Lit meets February 20 at 2 pm at home of Joyce Ruiz. Holly Walter will review *Violin Conspiracy* by Brendan Slocumb. Please let Joyce know if you plan to attend.



Book Talk

On February 26, at 2 pm. Book Talkers will gather at the home of Becky Denevan for her discussion of *The Last Days of Night* by Graham Moore. This "enlightening" work of historical fiction depicts the rivalry between Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse (with an appearance by a quirky Nikola Tesla).



Cultural Cuísíne

This month we will go to Isla restaurant for Filipino food. It is located at 5720 Mowry School Road. The date is Tuesday, February 20 at 6:30 pm. No, it is not a repeat - we did not go in August because of a Covid outbreak.

In March we will be celebrating Fremont's second restaurant week. Last year I went to Papillion to celebrate and it was very enjoyable. The special dinner was priced at \$39.00 without drinks. Look for updated information in the March *Twig* for that outing.

Please RSVP to Judy Wolf at judyjudyjudy1940@gmail.com.

Exploring the Arts By Karen L. McCready



Olive Hyde Art Gallery

The Olive Hyde Art Gallery proudly presents our biennial **Hidden Treasures, Local Talent** exhibition showcasing artwork in all mediums by talented local Fremont and Bay Area artists.

Visit the gallery Thursday-Sunday, Noon to 5 PM, Washington Blvd. at Mission Blvd. across from the Mission.





Triton Museum

Mesopotamian Art will be the topic on Wednesday, February 7, at 9:30 for Executive Director and Curator Preston Metcalf. The prelude and "appetizer" for this experience is reading Agatha Christie's *Murder in Mesopotamia*, featuring Hercule Poirot. Carpools depart Fremont at 8:15 AM.



Executive Director Preston Metcalf on the Power of Art:

"It is always exciting to see a new exhibition arrive at the museum and the installation process begin. I am especially thrilled with the exhibition by the artist Chukes. The work is powerful, but one piece in particular arrested me in my tracks as we unwrapped it. "Protector of the Next Generation" is a stunning work of profound sensitivity. While I know it has meanings beyond just a depiction of a father and child, it does -- to this father -- melt my heart. It fills me with emotion and hope. Through his art, Chukes has touched me and reminded me of what it means to be human. This is the power of art."

The opening reception was held on Saturday, January 20, for this exhibition by Chukes, as well as exhibitions by Yunan Ma, Miha Sarani, and Lost San Jose. All four exhibits will remain until at least April or into May.

Note: Avis Kresin and Karen McCready enjoyed the reception, and Preston said he would be honored to speak about women in art at our Women's Day event in March. He never disappoints.

Interested in an Oscar Movie Week Pass?

Last year, a few of us were steeped in cinema, attending as many of the nominated movies as we could fit into our calendars, all for a moderate charge. Let me know if you'd like to join us at Union City's Cinemark at Union Landing in March. Leave a text on my cell: 510-304-6844.

Tuesday Chat With ESL Students



Tuesday Chat meets every Tuesday afternoon from 4pm to 5pm at the Fremont Main Library, 4200 Stevenson, Fukaya Room A, to chat with ESL speakers about everyday topics. The program is to help people from foreign countries improve their English conversational skills.

People new to the USA living in the Tri-City area come to the library and meet with native English speakers and work on conversation. Several of

the tutors have been AAUW members. During the covid pandemic, the group met on Zoom. Now the ESL chat is back at the library.

If you enjoy talking and meeting people of other cultures, this is a way to expand your world-wide experiences. Please consider joining the group.

For more information, call Jui-Lan Liu at the Fremont Main Library at 510-745-1444, or email her at **jliu@aclibrary.org**.

February 1, 2024





Yoga for Body and Spírít

This group meets every Thursday at 11:15 at Jo Szeto's house. Lunch is included. For more information, call Jo.

MEMBER COLUMNS

Money, Money, Money

Minimizing Medicare Premiums

By Judy Wolf

Are you paying Medicare premiums? This year the Medicare premiums are about \$175.00 monthly - up \$10.00 a month from the 2023 amount. That is the base rate. As your income goes over \$97,000 for a single person, your Medicare premium will increase. What can you do? It your pension amount is over \$97,000, there really nothing you can do.

However, those retirees who have IRAs and need to take out Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) do have options. If you have your financial institution send the charitable contributions you want to make directly to the charity, these withdrawals will limit your income, not be taxable to you, and keep your Medicare premium closer to the minimum.

If you were planning to give a large chunk away to charity, giving by using all or part of your RMD is a great way to go.

What's New in the Garden

Seed Starting

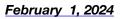
By Kris Sandoe

February is a great month to start seeds indoors. You have more of what plants you can have in your garden compared to with the plant selections later in nurseries. Once you've perused your seed catalogs and ordered some seeds, it is time to get going!



Many seeds can be directly planted outside in a couple of months, when the weather warms up. But some seeds are good to start inside, such as peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, herbs, and many flowers.

I have a grow-light system set up in my laundry room, but you can easily start seeds on your windowsill as well. I start my seeds in small pots and use a spray bottle to water the top soil. I also have a small heating pad that I use under my grow lights that helps with



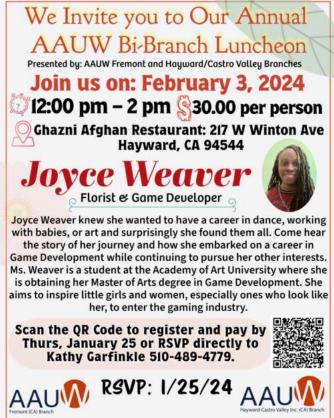
seed starting, as my laundry room is quite cool. (I'm wondering why we did not put a heat vent in that room!)

As far as pots, you can use small pots - be sure they are clean - or egg cartons, or even egg shell halves. You can purchase lovely seed starting trays that will hold many starts. Don't forget to label your pots! Relying on memory has never worked for me.

Use potting soil or even a seed-starting mix to grow

healthy plants. Starting seeds is a great activity to cure those winter doldrums. And the varieties one can grow are almost endless.

THIS 'N THAT Important Dates



Advancing gender equity through research, education, and advocacy.

•All members are welcome to attend the next Branch board of directors meeting on February 2 from 10am to noon at Artist Walk, 3888 Artist Walk Common, Fremont. If you would like to attend but can't meet at 10am on a Friday, please email us at **aauwfremontbranch@gmail.com** and let us know your availability.

•Should we open AAUW membership to any individual who supports AAUW's mission of advancing equity for women and girls? Vote online from April 3 to noon on May 15. Results will be announced online May 15. For more information, click on **Opening the AAUW Membership to Everyone**.

•The annual Fellowship luncheon with the Fremont and Hayward-Castro Valley branches will be February 3 at noon at the Ghazni Afghan Restaurant, 217 W Winton Ave, Hayward. The speaker will be Joyce Weaver, recipient

of a career development grant from AAUW, who will speak of her life's journey so far.







http://fremont-ca.aauw.net

Support Our Members



Katryn Bury is the author of the tween detective series *Drew Leclair Gets a Clue* (nominated for 3 book awards), and *Drew Leclair Crushes the Case.* Click on the image to learn about Katryn's third title, debuting Fall 2024!



Enjoy new and bestselling titles for all ages personally curated by Amy and her staff at Banter Bookshop in downtown Fremont! **AAUW Fremont book club titles receive a 15% discount.** Click on the photo to browse Banter's in-store events.



Contact your friendly Farmers Agent Nkechi Comfort Uzoegwu : nkechi.prodriguez2@farmersage ncy.com



Alice's Photoland, your Twig Curator Alice Manfredi's professional portrait studio, covers all types of shoots such as: Family, Mother & Child, Maternity, Engagement, Graduations, and more. Click on the logo to see samples of her work.