

January 2022

CHIPS

The monthly newsletter of the Westchester Branch of the American Association of University Women, Westchester County, New York



Westchester AAUW Has Been
Empowering Women and
Girls Since 1933



Don't Miss

WESTCHESTER AAUW JANUARY MEETING!

IN PERSON on Saturday, January 8, 2022 at 10:30 AM
Greenburgh Public Library, 300 Tarrytown Rd, Elmsford

PROGRAM: Hostesses to History: Abigail Smith Purdy, Ann Fisher Miller, and their Revolutionary Houseguests

In 1776, and again in 1778, two Westchester women became historic hostesses when the Revolutionary War arrived on their doorsteps. Their high-ranking guests included George Washington, Charles Lee, and Horatio Gates. We'll explore the often-surprising stories of these two White Plains women caught up in the tumultuous and divisive events of the War of Independence, and the sometimes-tragic impact it had on their families.

This **hybrid: In-Person /Virtual Event** is limited to the **first 40 people that register for the "In-Person"** event [<https://greenburghlibrary.libcal.com/event/8535616> or call the library at 914-721-8225 and for the "Virtual" attendance, is limited 100 individuals via zoom. If you are not an AAUW member, please email westchesteraauw@gmail.com to receive the Zoom invitation.



SPEAKER: Stephen Paul DeVillo

Stephen Paul DeVillo is the author of *The Bronx River in History and Folklore*, *The Bowery: The Strange History of New York's Oldest Street*, and a forthcoming book on the Battle of White Plains. A member of the Bronx County and White Plains Historical Societies, he has led the Bronx River Rambles walking tours and other explorations of Westchester and Bronx history.

**IF YOU HAVEN'T YET,
THERE IS STILL TIME TO
MAKE A DONATION
BEFORE YEAREND. EVEN
SMALL AMOUNTS HELP
TO SPONSOR AAUW'S
MANY WORTHWHILE
PROGRAMS.**

**Yes, I would like to contribute to the
AAUW Greatest Needs Funds in the amount of:**

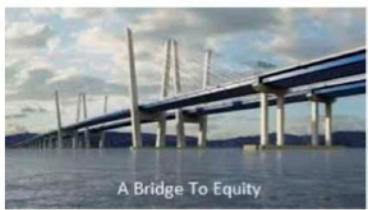
\$1000 \$500 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other _____

If you do not designate a specific fund in your check memo line, your contribution will be applied to the AAUW Funds, # 9110.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Please make your check out to AAUW Funds and specify in the memo line AAUW Funds or any particular fund to which you would like your contributions applied, and how much to each fund. Checks should be mailed to Mary Logan, 1204 Hall Ave, White Plains, NY 10604. Thanks for your support!



MISSION: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

VISION: Equity for All

VALUE STATEMENT: By joining AAUW you belong to a community that breaks educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance. AAUW is nonpartisan, fact-based, and values integrity, inclusion and intersectionality.

2021-2022 BRANCH OFFICERS

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westchester-ny.aauw.net

State Web Site

www.aauw-nys.org

National Web Site

www.aauw.org

Facebook at AAUW Westchester NY

The AAUW

Legal Advocacy Fund

provides funding and a support system for individuals seeking judicial redress for sex discrimination.

The AAUW Educational

Opportunities Fund

provides fellowships and grants to aspiring graduate women scholars in the US and around the globe.

Bridge Photo from NY
StateThruway Authority

ART INTEREST GROUP

We are so pleased to invite you to our 11 a.m. January 13, virtual walking tour, The Murals and Mosaics of Spanish Harlem: Telling the Story of a Community. Led by Leigh Hallingby, the fascinating tour guide who led our Audubon Mural Project and Feminist Walk Through Harlem tours, it will be a fundraiser for the AAUW Scholarship Fund, which awards grants to outstanding female students at Westchester Community College. Your generosity allowed us to do that last year and we are looking forward to doing so again this year. The cost of the tour is \$15, but larger donations are very welcome and appreciated.

If you would like to join us for this wonderful tour, be sure to email Shelli Pines by Thursday, January 6 at shellipines@gmail.com and she will send you the Zoom link the week before the event.

Please send your check, for \$15 or more, to Marilee Scheuneman at 27 Hillside Drive, Yonkers, NY 10705.

Please make out the check to "WCC Foundation " with "AAUW Scholarship" on the memo line. If you are unable to attend the tour but would like to make a donation to the Scholarship Fund, Marilee would still be very happy to receive a check from you.



THE HISTORIAN
Submitted by Elaine Weiss

On December 1st 2021 the Westchester branch of the AAUW enjoyed a luncheon indoors for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

Our most important guest was a woman who improved her life by studying and ultimately receiving a degree from Marymount College while incarcerated in the Bedford Hills Correction facility. There is always joy in spending time together while learning from a woman who improved her life with the assistance of programs we support.

Let's keep up our good work and enjoy our monthly meetings at the Greenburgh Public Library starting in January.

Please contact me at any time to proudly join the history group.

Happy 2022 to all.

CURRENT ISSUES GROUP

The Current Issues Interest Group will have a Zoom meeting on Friday January 7, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. One topic will be the 2022 NYS Elections. Two other topics will also be presented. For further information, please contact Selena Barron, Diona Koerner or Marie McKellar.

There are times when a one of our members is dealing with an illness, a loss, or another personal crisis.

If you know of a member who should receive our well wishes or support, please send the information to our corresponding secretary, Abby Hirsch, at ahirsch03@gmail.com.



**Have
You Seen
Our Web Site?**

westchester-ny.aauw.net

Board minutes are posted on the Web Page.

The AAUW New York State annual meeting will be held Friday, June 24 and Saturday, June 25. The meeting will be digital. President Janice Brown will be appointing a planning committee shortly.

JOIN AAUW WESTCHESTER BRANCH

Membership is open to anyone with an associate or equivalent, baccalaureate, or higher degree from an accredited college or university. To join, please complete this form and send a check payable to AAUW Westchester Branch to the address below. New Member Dues for 2021-22 are \$88, of which \$85 are tax deductible. When you join the Westchester Branch of AAUW, you also become a member of the AAUW New York State and National organizations. The Membership team can also provide you with more information about AAUW-Westchester's activities on our branch record form.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City:State:Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

College/University, Degree, Graduation Year: _____

Send check and/or branch record form request to: Judith Walsh at 2 Fountain Ln. Apt. 1V, Scarsdale, NY 10583 or 734-748-9318 or email: westchesteraauw@gmail.com



TUESDAY MORNING LIT GROUP

The Tuesday Morning Lit Group will meet on January 11 at 10 a.m. via Zoom. We'll discuss the novel, The Vanishing Half, by Brit Bennett. Cynthia Plater will lead the conversation. Please contact Wilma Gitchel if you'd like to join us.

EVENING LITERATURE GROUP

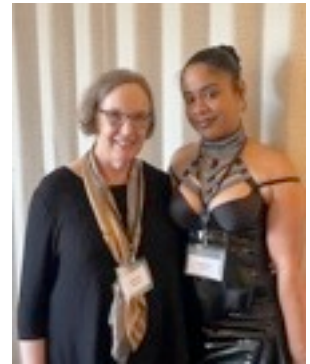
The Evening Literature Group will meet at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 12 at Stone Fire in Mt. Kisco. Marsha Savino will lead the discussion of The Only Woman in the Room by Marge Marie Bennett. Please email or call Marsha Savino if you plan to attend. If you have questions about this group phone Ellen Eschmann, the group leader.

TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH

By, Darryl Taylor, SUNY Purchase AAUW Intern

Jennifer Fecu teared up as she recalled entrusting a woman to take in her 9-year-old brother after becoming homeless at age 14. After moving to Brooklyn, her mother was arrested in New Jersey. Unable to contact family members, the children were left on their own. She discussed her own imprisonment and her process of trauma to triumph with AAUW Westchester at the December meeting.

Fecu sat down with Dorothy Muller for an extended talk about her life. Muller, a former mathematics teacher and an ordained Presbyterian minister, spoke about the Abuse to Prison Pipeline for Women. Muller helped start Woman 2 Woman: a prison visiting program matching local women with inmates at Bedford Hills and Taconic.



“When girls and young women are abused, they respond by being traumatized,” said Muller. “They respond with trauma and that trauma hard-codes the fight, flight, or fear response into your brain.” When abusive memories are triggered, the primitive brain reacts to the fear regardless of an immediate threat. A study from the Correctional Association of New York concluded that 90 percent of women incarcerated at Bedford Hills reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime. Muller acknowledged how Fecu is a special individual but her particular story wasn’t unique within the context of the inmates.

One of Fecu’s earliest childhood memories was witnessing her father punch her mother in the face, breaking her teeth. Eventually, the family broke away from the father. Within a few years, her mother married a new man but the same abusive tendencies persisted and the children were being hurt. The pattern continued with the next man and her mother never received assistance in straying from these relationships or recognizing toxic patterns. Since her mother worked at night, she was oblivious to the child abuse. When the family moved to New Jersey, a new man came into the picture. Fecu experienced sexual abuse by him and he groomed her by teaching her street smarts and encouraging the stealing of food. “He also taught me to do things like keep razors in my mouth and instructed me to spit them out if anyone were to stop me when I was stealing,” Fecu said. “I was 12 when I learned about the razors.” After going to the police to report the sexual abuse, the man’s family intimidated her mother, prompting Fecu to go back to law enforcement to change the story. They later moved to Brooklyn.

When Fecu’s mother was arrested, two of her siblings went to live with their aunt and Fecu and her brother were homeless for a few months. After entrusting her brother to a kind-hearted neighbor with a home, she entered foster care. During this time, Fecu’s two daughters were born. The foster mother put little effort into the parenting process. “My foster mother gave me a restraining order for my 18th birthday. She tried to keep my children but I took her to court and was able to win my children back.” Fecu went to live with her mother again.

By age 22, after being caught up in felonious activities, Fecu became an inmate at Bedford Hills. Before serving time, she had PTSD. During a six-year process, a psychotherapist helped with the coping and healing process. Attending college from within the prison seemed therapeutic for Fecu. Previously, she earned her GED based on her eighth-grade education, having never attended a high school class. “College was the place where I can feel free,” said Fecu. “My mind is wherever I take it. Any little money that I had, I spent on buying books.”

Fecu earned a bachelor’s in Sociology from Marymount Manhattan College and was released from Bedford Hills in February 2020. But tragedy struck when her daughter Imani died in June of the same year. “I bring Imani into every day of my life,” said Fecu. Imani’s Safehouse is designed to create safe spaces for the African diaspora impacted by the legal system.” The organization is a 501c3 and membership fluctuates depending on individual circumstances. A long-term goal is to provide additional housing as a component of healing. Contributions are accepted at imanissafehouse.com. Fecu has her dog training certificate and plans to adopt one. Her plan is to train the dog for therapeutic purposes and to bring it into Bedford Hills to interact with the women.

STANDING UP FOR VOTER RIGHTS

-by Selena Barron

On their website, AAUW National, AAUW has taken a very proactive stand, advocating for voting rights to make sure that every voter can participate in elections. The following information is from their website. It is important for all Americans to take a stand demanding that restrictions to access for voting is removed.

In 2013, the Shelby County v. Holder Supreme Court decision gutted key protections in the law and made way for new discriminatory and restrictive voting laws. The Court found that section 4 was unconstitutional because times had changed and the old formula no longer applied. In finding Section 4 unconstitutional, Section 5 was made inoperable until Congress develops a new coverage formula that, as the Court stated, "speaks to current conditions."

The landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965 stopped states from enacting racially discriminatory voting restrictions. However, laws fostering voter suppression have been on the rise. The 2013 Shelby County v. Holder Supreme Court decision gutted key protections in the law, making way for many of these new discriminatory and restrictive voting laws.

Over the past decade, states and localities have enacted a growing wave of policies that make it harder to vote. So far in 2021, 49 states have introduced more than 400 anti-voter bills—and at least 18 states have passed 30 of them. During the 117th Congress, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, House Committee on the Judiciary, and the Committee on House Administration have held a total of fourteen hearings and found significant evidence that barriers to voter participation remain for people of color and language-minority voters .

It's time for Congress to enact strong national standards for voting access. With so much at stake each time we head to the ballot box, it's crucial that everyone is able to make his or her voice heard. Our democracy works when everyone can fully participate—and our electoral participation needs the protections in this legislation. The Freedom to Vote Act (S.2747) will:

- Require every state to have automatic voter registration
- Establish Election Day as a federal holiday
- Ensure the ability to vote by mail
- Protect communities vulnerable to disenfranchisement
- Ban partisan gerrymandering

A second bill, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R.4) passed the House with bipartisan support in August 2021. A compromise bill, The Freedom to Vote Act (S.2747) also passed in the House but both are stalled in the Senate. Elected officials routinely make decisions about issues that directly impact all of us. From our paychecks to paid leave, access to reproductive health care to access to education, our lives are on the line—and our vote is our voice. To create real change, we must be part of the conversation, and the most powerful way for us to chime in is at the polls.

Tell your members of Congress to support the Freedom to Vote Act (S.2747) today! I have been asked, "what can we do"? By contacting your NY State Senators, Kristen Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer and asking them to vote yes now, you are showing them the amount of support they have for the immediate passage of the bill! As a member of AAUW, you are a woman making a difference!



At our December 1 Holiday Luncheon at the Kittle House

Board members present were left to right: Abby Hirsh, Ellen Leuner, Marie McKellar, Susan Gardner, Judith Walsh, Rene Parmer, Marge Kingley, and Selena Barron.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES DECEMBER 2021– JANUARY 2022

by Jane Pendergast

What will advocacy priorities be in 2022 for POWHER New York, AAUW-NYS's statewide advocacy coalition? POWHER conducted a survey of priority choices with network partners and met with and shared priority issues with Governor Hochul. POWHER is working in early December to finalize advocacy plans, including legislation and budget asks. AAUW-NYS, represented by Public Policy Vice



President Nan Cinta, is representing AAUW in this process. Key focuses are likely to include childcare, fair pay for home care, as well as other issues, including equal pay through the pay transparency act. Plans for specific activities, including trainings, are in process. A comprehensive list of 29 choices was presented to members for ranking in the survey to determine priorities ranging across child care access affordability, fair pay for home and long term care workers, eliminating the Medicaid Global Spending Cap, equitable pay for human services contracts, health care coverage for the currently excluded, extension of excluded workers fund, equity in education funding, equitable health coverage post-partum, good cause eviction, climate and community investment act, adult survivor's act, sexual harassment laws, comprehensive sexuality education, solutions not suspensions act, culturally responsive education, end predatory court fees act, clean slate law, abortion access bills, New York State voting rights act. Please stay tuned for future updates on specific plans, including opportunities to participate in advocacy efforts. If you would like more information, please contact me at jpendergast2@msn.com.

Westchester Women's Agenda has worked hard over recent months to gain agreement from the county administration to increase budget support for WWA-related service organizations amounting to an additional 7%. WWA has worked directly with the administrations in recent years, with continuous support from its member organizations to inform and directly communicate with the county government.

EQUAL PAY NEWS IN NEW YORK CITY

December 15th the NYC Council voted to require all employment postings to include the minimum and maximum salaries! When law, jobseekers will have the information needed to negotiate fairer pay and businesses will interview candidates that better match the job. With this change in hiring that creates greater wage transparency, NYC takes another step toward closing the pernicious gender and racial wage gap. Thanks to Council Member Helen Rosenthal's tenacity and commitment, Int. 1208 moved forward in the final days of the session and before she leaves office. PowHerNY's Equal Pay Committee, especially our partners especially our partners Legal Momentum, NELA/NY, CWA Local 1180, Equal Rights Advocates, Solange Charas and Board Member Yolanda F. Johnson, were part of this victory for pay equity. Next up is a New York State law!

POWHER New York State has been an effective force in gaining passage of this transformative equal pay law in New York City. POWHER New York State is advocating diligently now for the New York State Legislature to pass a similar law on pay transparency.



JANUARY 2022

1/7	Current Issues Discussion Group	Zoom	10 a.m.
1/8	Branch Meeting(Saturday!)	Greenburgh Library or Zoom	10:30 a.m.
1/8	Board Meeting		12 p.m.
1/10	Deadline for submitting for CHIPS		
1/11	Tuesday Morning Literature Group	Zoom	10 a.m.
1/12	Evening Literature Group	Stone Fire Restaurant, Mt. Kisco	5:30 p.m.
1/13	Art Interest Group	Virtual Walking Tour Fund Raiser	11 a.m.
1/18	Poetry Interest Group	Zoom	1:30 p.m.

On line bridge is scheduled every Monday at 1 p.m.