

### American Association of University Women

#### Letter from the President's Desk



This year we commemorate 100th year since women won the right to vote in this country. This issue pays homage to all the trailblazers who had the foresight, vision, and tenacity to imagine a better, more equitable world.

Throughout history, countless women have forged paths where society told them they could not. You and I have reaped, and continue to reap, the benefits of their sacrifices, so that we might have the choice today to sit in, or sit out. This issue, *The Lillian*, is named after the first AAUW/CT chapter president, Lillian Pruden (a history lesson delivered to us by our intern Mari). Pruden is an example of these trailblazers who had the audacity to think bigger and broader and better than the eye could see. With limited resources, limited economic means (and without the benefit of the Internet), they fought for justice. They had everything to lose; but they still fought for a better world because they knew one was possible.

In this commemorative year, trailblazing women – those we know of such as Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, or Ruth Bader Ginsberg and the countless others whose names are not forged in our history books, names belonging to our mothers, and those before them, serve as role models to remind us that we too are cut from the same cloth. Each day, we should be working to strengthen the links that bind us, being mindful that we are only as strong as our weakest link. We must illuminate inequalities that persist in communities of color, so that we might extricate them. In the words of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “the way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.”

The centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which protected the constitutional right of women to vote, is a monumental accomplishment that many still cannot celebrate fully. This was a victory for only White women. African-American women were not granted the right to vote until 45 years later, with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited racial discrimination in voting. Yet, many continue to be disenfranchised. The truth is that in 2020, Black and Brown women, suffer at disproportionate rates across the spectrum – from access to voting, inequalities in education, health disparities, fair pay, economic equity, leadership opportunities, and more.

The call this year is not one of celebration, but a reminder: the work must go on. We are inextricably

bound to one another in our common humanity, and until all of us have fair opportunities to achieve our full potential as human beings, the rights we applaud remain under threat.

For those of us who champion issues of women’s empowerment and human rights, we understand that we stand tall on the shoulders of women who dared to dream that equal work deserves equal pay. These were women who dared to challenge the status quo that gender should not be a qualifier in having a seat at the table; who dared to dream that their daughters, sisters, nieces, mothers, grandchildren should have equitable opportunities as their male counterpart. They had the vision to see beyond their own provincial understanding and to imagine a world more just. We honor their spirit of courage, moral fortitude and determination that have led us to today, and applaud the resolve of those willing to take the mantle and lead us to a brighter tomorrow.

In solidarity,  
Nana Amos  
Vote: 2020



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## Letter from the Vice President's Desk

by Judith Slisz

Many of you may know that AAUW-CT participated in a strategic planning process during 2020, despite having to conduct most meetings via zoom. We engaged Laura DeVeau to facilitate this process. A summary of her report and recommendations can be found on page five.

You will note on reading the summary that some of the key recommendations included a membership audit. We reached out to the nine branches in CT as follows and asked them to submit a list of members and their email addresses:

- Storrs/Willimantic
- Lower CT Valley
- Shoreline
- Middletown
- New Britain
- Greater Meriden
- Danbury
- Bridgeport
- New London

We hired an intern, Marielis Cruz, to organize our database of members along with our college and university partners. We hope to add scholarship awardees and alumnae of the National Conference of College Women Student Leaders, whose attendance was funded by AAUW-CT and the branches.

We plan to publish a newsletter three times a year to keep members statewide abreast of programming and activities offered by the branches and often open to women beyond the host branch. We plan to share best practices on recruiting and retaining new members. News from National AAUW will also be highlighted.

We are also making progress on connecting with our college and university partners to provide them and their students access to programming and scholarship opportunities. We hope you will support and further the action steps recommended in our strategic plan and do your part in ensuring that branch membership will grow as a result of our getting the word out on our commitment to the education of women and the continuing need to take action on issues relating to women including economic security, racial and reproductive justice, childcare, housing, healthcare, and pay equity.

The Executive Board voted and adopted the Plan on May 26, 2020. We will publish our progress on the major initiatives throughout the coming year. You can find the summary and Branch President Responses by visiting our website, under strategic plan.

WHEN WOMEN VOTE,  
THEY CHANGE THE CONVERSATION.

[bit.ly/its-my-vote](https://bit.ly/its-my-vote) | [#itsmyvote](https://twitter.com/itsmyvote)



### How to Get Involved in the 2020 Elections

Three ways to help motivate civic engagement, even in a time of lockdowns and social distancing.

Visit: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/get-involved-in-elections/>.

We encourage all to fill out and mail their absentee ballot application. These applications are being sent out in the upcoming weeks. This application will allow you to vote from home via mail.

## Scholarships

Fellowships and Grants Available now for 2021-2022 for women pursuing education. For more information, please visit <https://www.aauw.org/resources/programs/fellowships-grants/>.

## Programs

Wednesday, September 9 | 4pm ET  
COVID-19 and the Labor Economy: What's Next?  
Register here: <https://www.aauw.org/resources/events/equity-network/events/>.

## The 19th Amendment: Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote by Mary Mazur

Are we still being required to count 'Jelly Beans'?"

Turn back the pages of time to the 1820's; and many of those among us, women and especially women of color were denied the right to vote. Women were denied some of the basic rights enjoyed by male citizens: married women couldn't own property, had no claim to money that they earned, lost their citizenship if they married a foreigner, and above all were not allowed to vote. Our role was housework, motherhood, child-rearing, being the pious, submissive wife, and certainly not political! Men of color were required to correctly count the number of jelly beans in a jar before they could cast their ballot! Then stepped up some courageous women in 1848.

The movement for women's rights launched on a national level with the Seneca Falls Convention organized by these courageous women Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony. Their platform was that women should be afforded better opportunities for education, employment and their own political identities. The movement lost momentum with the onset of the Civil War and again after the war when suffrage leaders objected to the proposed 15th Amendment which would give black men the right to vote (hence the jelly beans), but failed to extend the same privilege to American women of any skin color.

Fast forward to May 21, 1919, U.S Representative James R. Mann, a Republican from Illinois and chairman of the Suffrage Committee, proposed the House resolution to approve the Susan B. Anthony Amendment granting women the right to vote.

The measure passed the House and two weeks later passed in the Senate. Within six days of the ratification cycle six states followed suit and by March of the following year a total of 35 states had approved the amendment just shy of the three-fourths needed for ratification. Seven states were adamantly opposed and on August 18th, 1920, one hundred years ago, Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, barring federal or state governments from denying U.S. citizens the right to vote on the basis of sex and it was ratified here in CT on September 14th, 1920. On November 2 of that same year, more than 8 million women across the U.S. voted in elections for the first time. It took over 60 years for the remaining 12 states to ratify the Amendment and Mississippi was the last to do so, on March 22, 1984!

The battle to secure the vote for American women was a long, hard and at times, a brutal one. Demonstrations regularly picketed the White House and as a result some women were even arrested and served jail time. A century of American suffrage history is the story of the passionate, tenacious, complex activists who worked tirelessly for women's rights to influence the laws that govern us! In the months to come, we cannot let them down!  
**WE THE PEOPLE SHALL BE HEARD!**



"AAUW Votes for Women" by Gexydaf is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0





## Call-to-Action by Marielis Cruz

You might be thinking, "What now?" You've read the strategic plan, have understood the steps needed to reach our goal, and have the drive to help the org; but what can you do as a member of AAUW? Many of you may have this lingering question and I am here to give you six tips to strengthen your involvement with AAUW.

- Follow us on social media. Social media will help promote all of our events, programs, and scholarships. And serve as an outlet to show our followers who we are as an organization. Share as much as possible on your own social media platforms.
- Check out the updated website and direct new members to <https://aauw-ct.aauw.net>. Use the website as a tool to promote.
- Stay connected. Read the Newsletter to keep up-to-date with the org. The Newsletter will be distributed on the website and through Mailchimp. Mailchimp will be utilized to send members updates and information on the org.
- Get involved with programs and events with your local branch. There are great local programs happening right now on Zoom.
- Do not hesitate to communicate with your Branch President about any ideas you may have about programs or events! We welcome new and fresh ideas.
- Implement and use the AAUW Events Calendar. Our members may have access to view any and all events across CT. You can find it here: <https://aauw-ct.aauw.net/events/>.

As an organization, we are transitioning into a new era. While we continue our core programs and events, we invite new ideas to integrate into our organization. Our communication is crucial to grow as an organization. It will aid us gain new members, promote our organization and establish a stronger presence in CT.

## AAUW Statement on the Passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

by AAUW CEO Kimberly Churches



"Associate Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Visits WFU" by  
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"America lost one of our most beloved role models tonight, a pioneering jurist and iconic feminist who blazed new trails, not only in her own life, but in the lives of the countless women she championed — and inspired. On behalf of AAUW and its members and supporters who recognized Justice Ginsburg with a 1999 AAUW Achievement Award, we extend our condolences to her family, her colleagues and to every American whose lives and hearts she touched. The nation owes it to her — and to all women — to honor her final wishes and refrain from naming a replacement until after a new president is inaugurated. "

## Programming Related to Crisis

by Judith Slisz

You may notice in this newsletter and in your various branch newsletters that many of the branches have planned programming for this year in response to current and relevant topics in the news and on our minds and in the books we are reading in book discussion groups. These include the upcoming election and the importance of voter rights and being informed about the role of social media in the election; social justice, white and male privilege, anti-racism, climate change, and the economic crisis and how it relates to women.

Some examples include the following:

- Storrs/Willi branch meeting, Sept 2: "Racism as Power and Self-Interest: A Bridge to Equity Activism."
- Mer/Wlfd branch meeting, Sept 21: Speaker: Julia Horne, President of Danbury Branch; sharing some of the experiences she had as the first Black principal in Danbury.
- Mer/Wlfd branch meeting, Oct 19: Richard Hanley, Associate Professor of journalism at

Quinnipiac University will speak on "How Social Media Sets the Electoral Agenda."

- LCV Branch meeting, Oct 14: Patty Sisson, recently retired science teacher, Middletown High School, will speak on "Your Part in Solving the Climate Crisis."
- LCV Branch meeting, Nov 13: CT Women's Hall of Fame will present a program on suffrage titled "Votes for Women."

With so many of our branch meetings being conducted via zoom, and with the audience capacity generally able to accommodate up to 100 participants, it is possible for us to join meetings from various branches to hear speakers who will inform and challenge us to further our understanding of the key issues facing the state, the nation, and the planet and ways to take action to address the racial, economic, and reproductive injustice roiling our country. We encourage branches to publicize their events and list a contact for zoom registration and whether members beyond the host branch are welcome.

## Mature Women's Scholarship Program

by Judith Slisz

Several of our branches offer scholarships to mature women, i.e., women 25 and over who are returning to college to complete a degree or furthering their education by enrolling in a graduate program or changing careers by enrolling in a program in a new direction. Some women have been stuck in low paying service or technician jobs and now find themselves in a key role in providing for their family. The COVID pandemic has increased the financial pressures on women and their families, particularly Black and Brown women. We have heard from Student Services professionals and faculty at the community colleges examples of women who began furthering their education at eighteen without sufficient guidance or motivation as to how to complete the requirements toward a degree that will lead to employment. When these women return several years later, oftentimes their financial aid has run out but their motivation is much deeper.

These are some of the cases we hear about that have inspired fund raising and connecting with local colleges to identify women who could truly benefit from scholarship aid. AAUW CT branches have stepped up their scholarship program for mature women even as fundraising has been severely curtailed this year.

For example, the Meriden-Wallingford Branch, with a match from CUNO, a local manufacturing company, distributed 5 scholarships this year of \$2,000 each to the following students:

- Virginia Rivera, a BSN studying for Family Nurse Practitioner at SCSU.
- Samantha Banaszek, enrolled in a Dental Hygiene Program at Tunxis Community College (Tunxis CC)
- Janice Herrington, studying to become an instructor of Dental Hygiene at Middlesex CC.
- Carmen Acevedo, studying for an A.S. in Human Services, Middlesex CC.

- Elana Butler, enrolled in a BSN program at Charter Oak State College.

The Lower CT Valley (LCV) Branch made the following scholarship award this year: Tabitha Rahmann, who holds a B.S. in biology, is currently sole provider for her family as a Veterinary Technician (part time); she is enrolled in an accelerated nursing program at UConn-Avery Pt. Tabitha was previously awarded \$2,000 and received \$1,000 this year to complete her program. LCV also awards scholarships to women 21 years and older entering their junior year in a bachelor's program, as oftentimes, by junior year, local scholarships have run out. This year LCV awarded \$2,000 to Kelsey D'Amico, a junior from Killingworth majoring in Animal Sciences at Purdue U. and Juliette Linares, a junior from Chester majoring in Education and Speech and Language Pathology at Seton Hall U. Grant recipients must be at least 20 years of age, hold a high school diploma, and be pursuing an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. In considering applications, emphasis has been placed on awarding grants to mature women. This is the eleventh consecutive year that the branch has granted such awards.

The Storrs/Willimantic Branch also awards a scholarship to a student entering her junior year at one of the local colleges. This year's recipient was Joselyn Clark from West Hartford CT. She is majoring in biology and digital art at Eastern Connecticut State University.

In October, the Storrs/Willimantic Branch will host a talk by Victoria Martinez, MFA Yale University and an AAUW Fellow winner. She will discuss her creative work and the value of this AAUW fellowship to her career development.

Other resources for college students can be found at [www.ecmc.org](http://www.ecmc.org). Director Holly Franquet can be contacted at The College Place <https://www.ecmc.org/students/index.html>. This org provides free college, career, and financial aid assistance to students "of all ages" in CT. The focus is on low income, first generation, immigrant, and undocumented students and their families—those who need extra help understanding postsecondary education and financial aid.

## State Officers

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### AAUW Mission:

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

### AAUW Vision:

Equity for all.

### AAUW Values:

Nonpartisan. Fact-based. Integrity. Inclusion and Intersectionality.

### AAUW Diversity Statement:

In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, and leadership team and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation on the basis of age, disability, gender, location, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

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