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Bethlehem Bylines Brief

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DIVERSITY, INCLUSION and JUSTICE ***The March Program addressed RACISM***

On March 13, 2021 AAUW Bethlehem Branch hosted a Shape the Future Zoom event titled Diversity, Inclusion and Justice. Dr. Sirry Alang, Associate Professor of Sociology and Health, Medicine, and Society at Lehigh University was the guest speaker. She was raised in Cameroon but has lived in the US for about 15 years. We were pleased to have 25 members and two non-members attend this event.

Dr. Alang helped us to understand racism and how to dismantle structural racism in our society today. She focused on her specialty, which is how racism affects public health. Evidence of increased black maternal mortality and access to the Covid vaccine were given as examples.

"We are the system," said Dr. Sirry Alang on the AAUW Zoom program March 13, 2021. She meant that we the people are the government; we are the social system and our actions make the system racist or anti-racist. She started by talking about taking action and personally owning our racism, our implicit bias, our hegemonic whiteness, etc. right down to the local level, the microscopic level. If I want anything to change in my community, I must be willing to become an actor in that change process. There will be no hiding behind the curtain.

Racism and white nationalism have always existed in the United States. The difference is that racism is now recorded by people on iPhones, on neighborhood CCTV, and at police incidents where citizen-reporters surrounded George Floyd as he was murdered by a knee to the throat. Everyone can see racism's ugly head on TV news reporting. The question for me is what do I do about that. Racism relies on the silence and denials of 'good people'. I have to be willing to speak up for what I think is wrong. Dr. Alang says that - at the very least - I need to say, "I don't think your remark is acceptable" to someone who tells a racist joke or says an outrageous racist comment. Then, maybe I can go a step farther, and walk a person of color to the safety of her car when she seems threatened in the grocery store parking lot. My actions are the only thing I can change, but to do that, I have to stop 'looking away' and be willing to care. Caring is exhausting and relentless.

What Dr. Alang taught us is that it is okay to be vulnerable and to feel the discomfort of being exposed when we stand up for what we think is right. My conscious decision is to be more of a risk-taker this month and to instigate what the late Representative John Lewis called "good troubles".

Dr. Alang shared a very personal and scary experience with racism right here in Bethlehem. She reinforced that we must change laws and policies that support racism. But she also acknowledged that although we can't change the world immediately, we can speak up because racism relies on our silence to continue.

**Unless we do better as individuals to disavow racism when we see it,
nothing will change.**

\$15 MINIMUM WAGE

Who Needs It and Why Should I Care?

Jacqui Rogers
AAUW PA Public Policy Chair

will share the latest economic data, the myths about minimum wage, and current legislation to make the minimum wage a livable wage in Pennsylvania.

April 14, 2021
7:00 pm

Registration Required for this Zoom event



[Click here to register](#)



Who benefits from a higher minimum wage?

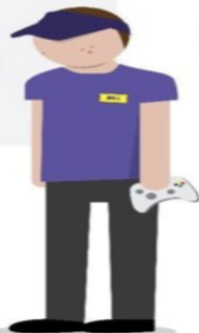
WHAT PEOPLE THINK

Teenager

Works part time after school

Lives with parents

Earning extra spending money



THE REALITY

Average age:
36 years old

89% are not teens, they're 20 or older

37% are
40 or older

56% are
women

28% have children

57% work
full time

On average, they earn **more than half** of their family's total income



Statistics describe civilian workers, ages 16+, that would be affected by an increase in the federal minimum wage to \$12.00 by 2020. The median age of affected workers is 32 years old.

ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE

go.epi.org/raisethewage

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INFORMATION

By the end of March, all membership renewal letters were mailed. When you renew your AAUW membership and dues this year, you'll notice that the national dues have increased to \$62, a 3 dollar increase. Our local branch is the same, and the total dues for 2021 are 88 dollars.

This past year has been challenging for all; AAUW is no different. Membership has declined, and if we want to continue the critical advocacy work AAUW is committed to, we must share the cost. And don't forget that all but \$3 of your national dues are tax-deductible!

When you receive your renewal membership letter, complete the form and return it with your check by June 30 to Linda Robbins, Finance Officer, to make sure the new yearbook will include your information.

Also, a critical vote is coming this spring on Open Membership for AAUW. Past Articles in the newsletter have outlined the "talking points" for opening membership to non-college graduates. The Zoom meeting on April 20 will have time for discussion on this topic. Most important, however, is that you take the time to vote.

Your vote is your voice.

Look for details and links for voting coming soon. All members who have no access to the internet or computers have received a letter including the "talking points" and the process for acquiring a mail-in ballot so they too can vote.

Executive Team Message

The Executive Team has continued with its diligence in meeting, organizing our Branch and keeping its membership informed of the on goings of our Branch, State and National AAUW.

Book Fair, while canceled for 2021, continues with sales through Amazon. Linda Robertson would love to hand off her portion of the Amazon sales as was stated in a special email sent to the membership in March. We are still looking for a willing person to take on this task. Please let Rita Bergstrom know if you are interested. Plans are being confirmed for 2022 - our 60th! Our goal of \$1 million in sales is VERY achievable.

Applause to the Program Team! What a wonderful year they have given us. When we all thought AAUW was going to be dormant due to the pandemic, Program Team came through with wonderful programs including the final one coming up April 20. Don't forget to sign up for the April 20th "Sup & Shop". While we can't go book shopping, we can vote for the current slate of officers for the branch, talk about Open Membership answering any questions, learn who our Branch Awardees are this year and have a bit of socialization via Zoom. Looking forward to seeing you there! Look for the information to sign up with Mary Lou Vernon.

The nominations for officers are as follows:

Finance Officer: Linda Robbins

Vice Presidents of Membership: Ann Brown, Nan Faust, Kathy Kahler

Be safe and be well. Keep checking on each other!

PA Public School Funding

The state of Pennsylvania has major problems in how it funds public education. After decades of under-funding, our state ranks 44th in the country in the percent of revenue states pay to their school districts. VT funds 90%, MN 70%, DL 60%. PA funds only 38%. Our state is definitely not paying its fair share. Local property taxes fund 57.6% of needed revenue. The federal government funds 3% and another 1.4% comes from other sources.

PA has one of the largest gaps of any state in the country in per-child spending between the states poorest and wealthiest districts. For example: □

- New Hope S. D. spends \$30,144 state and local revenue per child.
- Reading S. D. spends \$13,256. That's a \$16,88 difference.

Research shows that when schools are given resources to counter the effects of poverty, academic outcomes improve significantly.

In 2016 the state introduced the Fair Funding Formula to address the inadequate and inequitable situation. It sounded good at the time, unfortunately in 2019-20 only 11.2% of the state's basic education appropriations were distributed through the formula. So, something else must be done.

In 2014 six PA school districts brought a lawsuit against the state; including Panther Valley, Johnstown, Shenandoah Valley, William Penn and Lancaster. The lawsuit is asking the court to:

- ◆ declare the current funding system unconstitutional
- ◆ order the legislature to cease using an inadequate funding scheme
- ◆ order the legislature to create and maintain a funding system that will enable all students to meet academic standards.

If successful, this lawsuit would break the political impasse over funding public education, by creating an independent process based on cost analysis. In March the judge ruled that all parties will meet May 20 to determine the trial date this year. Let's hope it is successful. For more information contact FundOurSchoolsPA.org or PASchoolsWork.org

Reminder: PA primary election is May 18. If you have not received your application for Mail-In-Ballot and would like one, you can apply online at votePA.Com/ApplyMailBallot or contact your county election office:

Northampton 669 Washington St. Easton, PA 18042 610-829-6260

Lehigh 17 S. 7th St. Allentown, PA 18101 610-782-3194

Joan Howe Public Policy Chair

Vote to open AAUW Membership Tuesday April 20, 2021

Do you want more information on the critical vote to open AAUW membership to non-college members? Plan to join us on Zoom for an informational presentation of the "talking points" for and against this change, as well as specific directions on how to vote online.

We will have time for discussion and more questions as well as social chat time.

Mark your calendar and watch for coming information.

Group Information :

Diversity: Deeds and Dialogue: Members of this group come from the Bethlehem, Easton and Allentown branches. This group is concerned with social action as well as social justice. The group decided to try a new model. Over at least the next 6-8 months, the group will be using the free publication, ***Anti-racism Daily***. Two members will identify topics from among the ***Daily's*** publication and lead the discussions. Each new pair also will be responsible for handling the logistics of running the group--sending out agendas, following up, etc. Using various media, the group examines the role of society in the problems of diverse populations (age, gender, race, ability and religion). If you have questions, please contact Rosemary robaker356@gmail.com

Bacchae: Bacchae will meet again on Thursday, April 8, at 7:00 pm on Zoom. Fran will be our Zoom host and Sandy Utley and Louise Wisser will be co-hostesses. Please let them know if you will be participating or not so that they can deliver your wine packages and send the Zoom invitation. Any questions? Please contact Phyllis Wargo.

Mystery Paperback: Attention all mystery lovers! The Mystery Book Club will meet on Tuesday, May 25, at 1:30PM to discuss "The Witch Elm" by Tana French. Mary Dawson will lead our discussion and we are hoping we will be able to meet in person for the first time in more than a year. New members are welcome. Please contact Mary for more information.

Out to Lunch Bunch: Cindy and Joan look forward to organizing a lunch as soon as it's safe to eat in a restaurant again. Until then, stay safe everyone. Cindy Huhn and Joan Howe

Paperback I :Paperback I is online. It will be on ZOOM in April. Please contact Myra Saturen myra125@hotmail.com with any questions.

Paperback II: PPBII BOOK GROUP will meet on the second Tuesday in April, the 13th at 7:00pm. We have decided to meet in person at Debbie Spinney's home. We are reading "Where The Lost Wander" by Amy Harmon. Phyllis Wargo will review the book. Please contact Debbie Spinney to let her know if you will attend the meeting at her home-610-865-4843. We always welcome new members; if you are interested in joining our group contact me at: joanneflechwagner@gmail.com
Happy Reading! Joanne Wagner

An Actual Outing..... AN AFTERNOON AT THE MOVIES

ArtsQuest member Shirley Daluisio arranged for her AAUW Paperback II group to enjoy a private rental of the Frank Banko Alehouse Cinema at SteelStax. Twenty-one group members, Executive Team and guests were excited to attend a March 16 matinee, obeying social distancing and wearing masks except while enjoying refreshments from the Palette and Pour Restaurant. Members chose ROMAN HOLIDAY, starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck, from the Cinema's 700+ film archives. All attendees enjoyed the film and felt grateful to be out among friends not seen for such a long time!





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