



Carletta Knox-Seymour, AAUW Iowa President 2020-2022

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Greetings,

As we are all still navigating our way through this pandemic, it is my hope that our families are kept safe and out of harm’s way. The challenge of learning how to rethink, reorganize, improve, and communicate in our lives more effectively, has made us stretch our abilities as to who we are as individuals and as groups. I believe we, as a people, are absolutely the better for this challenge. It is when our backs are up against a wall, and it seems like there is no way out of a particular situation, that our creativity kicks in to survival mode and we learn so much more about ourselves than we did before. That is also where AAUW is at this time.

On the national front, AAUW is fighting for its life as an organization. For many good years, AAUW has enjoyed the prominence of being one of the most top rated women and girls organizations, nationwide and internationally. For the past couple of years, we have seen a considerable drop in that level of prominence. The organization is now asking, “Where did we lose our status, and how can we get it back?” And, a further question is, *can* we get it back? I submit to all our members that yes, we can get back what has been lost, but we must do it with a different mindset than before. Some of that mindset changing has to do with the current climate our nation is in, which is regarding the statement and movement that Black Lives Matter. We know inherently that all lives matter. But what has made its way to the forefront of many headlines of newspapers

and magazines is the fact that, until the murder of George Floyd, seen worldwide during the height of the pandemic, Black lives really did not matter. And, the reality that Black lives have not always seemed to matter is showing up or being exposed in many of our woman-led organizations. AAUW is one of them, and we must look at that fact nationally and locally in the state of Iowa.

Our organization is changing from what used to be a well-founded organization, for the most part, of scholarly, privileged White women. And quite frankly, I do not see any real harm in that. An organization has to start somewhere. What perhaps has happened is that the organization did not keep up with the changing times throughout its history to acknowledge as much as it should have the necessary, fundamental inclusion of women of color at the top decision-making tables in order to make real, meaningful differences. This statement is supported in an article posted in **The Lily** magazine of July 13, 2020. The article by Caroline Kitchener lays out a particular argument focusing on feminist organizations that are plagued with racism. It is a rather long article, but for those would like to read it this is the link:

<https://www.thelily.com/how-many-women-of-color-have-to-cry-top-feminist-organizations-are-plagued-by-racism-20-former-staffers-say/?utm>

Former employees say that toxic white feminism runs deep at National Organization for Women (NOW),
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OUR RIGHT TO VOTE 2020 - SPEAKER PANEL

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing and protecting women's constitutional right to vote.

Explore its relevance to the issues of equal rights today with this panel of speakers, including

State Representative MaryAnn Hanusa, Congresswoman Cindy Axne and Senator Joni Ernst.



**Tuesday, August 11
10:00 AM
Live Facebook Event**

The American Association of University Women advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. AAUW advocates public discussion to ensure enlightened decisions and works to increase the number of women and other underrepresented populations in policy and other decision-making positions.

This event will be LIVE on Facebook and is free to attend.

Loess Hills Branch Co-Sponsors Right to Vote Speaker Panel

The Council Bluffs Library will co-sponsor an equal rights event featuring elected officials on August 11 at 10:00. The event will be held live on Facebook. Like the Council Bluffs Library on Facebook to see the event. More information is available at the library's website here: <https://www.councilbluffslibrary.org/events/our-right-to-vote-2020-speaker-panel/>



The event will be taped, and will be posted on the library's website afterward, so if you miss the live event, you will still be able to see it later.

AAUW Ames 2020-21 Programming

Diane Patton, Program Co-Convener

AAUW Ames is collaborating with the League of Women Voters of Ames and Story County to host three electronic candidate forums this fall. The focus is on county and Iowa legislative offices that serve Story County residents. After the legislature convenes in January, the branch will have the opportunity to share AAUW's legislative priorities in an electronic meeting with those Story County representatives elected to the legislature.

The branch is gratefully utilizing AAUW Iowa's Zoom account to schedule branch and book club meetings for 2020-21. Programming will include reports from AAUW-funded grants to AAUW Fellows and Start Smart Workshops at Iowa State University. Additional programs include Progress in Iowa's Fight to End Human Trafficking, The Impact of Covid-19 on Women-Owned Businesses, and Becoming an Ally to Dismantle Systemic Racism.

Virtual Panel on the Pay Gap for Black Women August 13

Equal Pay Day for black women is August 13. According to the U.S. Census, on average, Black women were paid 61% of what non-Hispanic white men were paid in 2018. The



Des Moines branch of AAUW will host a panel on the gender pay gap for African-American women on August 13 at 6:00 p.m., using Zoom. Members and guests of other branches are

invited to join in. Panelists will include: Representative Ruth Ann Gaines, Iowa 32nd District; Izaah Knox, Executive Director, Urban Dreams; Carletta Knox-Seymour, AAUW Iowa President; Representative Phyllis Thede, Iowa 93rd District.

Members are encouraged to invite your friends. Audience members will be able to submit questions to the panel using the chat line during the event.

To Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?pwd=WXcyREhjclllOZlNQMUMtZjJlCU0RQQQT09>

AAUW Iowa Board Practices Meeting Safely

The AAUW Iowa board of directors met in person and using Zoom at Treasurer Pat Higby's home in Tiffin on July 25. Board members were careful to wear masks, maintain social distance, and sanitize surfaces. Three board members who were unable to attend in person joined



using zoom. We discussed ways to encourage colleges and universities to use the online Work Smart to take advantage of membership, issues involving voting rights for those convicted of a felony, the AAUW 5-Star Program, and possible future activities.



Meeting the Challenges: AAUW Iowa eNetwork Branch 2020-2021 Program

We meet the third Thursday of the month. Guests are always welcome. To find the link to join our sessions, log into <https://aauw-ia.aauw.net>, then click AAUW Iowa Web Meetings. Log in at 7:15 p.m. for our sessions scheduled from 7:30-8:30 p.m. Central Time. **You are invited to log in!**

September 17, 2020	Getting Out the Vote
October 22, 2020	Black Lives Matter
November 19, 2020	The New Jim Crow: book discussion and learning about the criminal justice system
January 21, 2021	Sharing Our Families' Immigration Stories
February 18, 2021	Immigration & Paths to Citizenship
March 18, 2021	Guardian Angel Program—for children who are not citizens
April 15, 2021	AAUW Virtual Branch Roundtable
May 20, 2021	AAUW Iowa: Looking Back and Looking Ahead with AAUW Iowa President Carletta Knox-Seymour
June 17, 2021	Summer Reading Ideas/eNetwork ReCharge

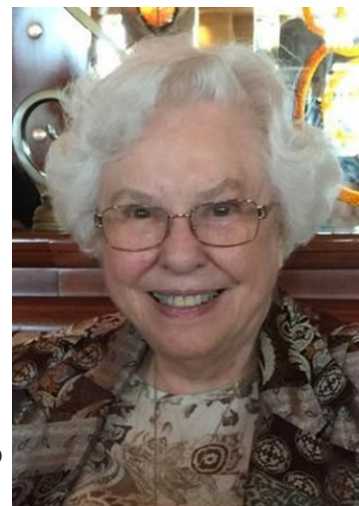
AAUW Member Betty Durden Women's Hall of Fame Honoree

Faith Sherman, AAUW Des Moines

The Des Moines branch of AAUW is pleased that Betty Durden has been chosen as one of the 2020 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame honorees. As an author, mother, mentor, educator and activist, she believed strongly in the importance of education and equity for women and acted on her beliefs. AAUW provided a platform for launching into her many positions of leadership in our community and state. These included YWCA Adult Program Director and Coordinator of Career Planning Service, Special Assistant to the President for Equal Opportunity Programs and Director of Human Resources at Drake University, the founder of the Governor's Commission on the Status of

Women, and chair of the second attempt in Iowa to pass the ERA.

Betty died in 2017. We join with her family and many friends and associates in recognizing and celebrating Betty's many accomplishments. In lieu of an in-person ceremony this year, the inductees will be honored digitally in a late August video, the date still to be announced. The in-person ceremony will be postponed until August 2021.



Betty Durden

Nominating Committee Report

The Iowa State Board works best when membership encompasses as many leaders from as many branches as possible.

We are pleased with the 2020-2022 AAUW Iowa Board. However, there is still work to be done. We are missing the Nominations Chair and another committee member. These two people should be from branches other than Algona, Cedar Falls, or Indianola. The Diversity Chair has withdrawn and needs to be replaced. In addition, Maureen White has agreed to serve one year on Public Policy and will need to be replaced next year. It would be perfect if one or two members would serve on a committee with her and learn the job. There needs to be a new Program Co-VP for next year, too. Finally, the new committee will need to get someone who will step into Carletta's shoes after next year.

In the last two years, committee members have tried to contact all branches to find potential board members.

Currently the following branches are contributing board members:

Algona	1	eNetwork	1/2
Cedar Falls-Waterloo	2	Indianola	4
Cedar Rapids	2	Loess Hills	1
Davenport	1	Palo Alto	3
Des Moines	1/2	Waverly	1

It is imperative that the all AAUW branches help with supplying the names of a potential new president and other board members. Diverse board membership from all branches will be solicited. Please step up. We believe that it is important to share positions and learn from each other. The current Nominations Committee are Janie Montang (Algona) 515-395-2992 or 515-450-2992; Jo Richey (Indianola) 515-360-8878 or 515-5544223; and Linda Morgan (Cedar Falls) 319-215-0373; and Kathie Farris 515-961-7647 or 238-2934 temporarily.

Clarion Branch Programming

The Clarion branch plans programs on the local superintendent, a candidate forum, law enforcement, writing workshop, stories that stick, children at risk, Google Chrome, and scholarship recipients.

Meeting Safely in the Age of COVID-19

Lois Enger, AAUW Iowa web technician, reports that web conferencing is a popular choice for our branches. Eighteen meetings using Zoom have been held since February 20, and 33 more have been scheduled from now until May 2021. Lois recommends going ahead and scheduling meetings with Zoom. If circumstances change in the future, and it is possible to hold face-to-face meetings safely, Zoom meetings can easily be cancelled. Contact Lois at engerl@mchsi.com with questions or to schedule a meeting.

Women's Suffrage Materials Available from Iowa Secretary of State's Office

The Iowa Secretary of State's Office has added a women's suffrage section to its Elections 101 curriculum that Secretary Pate offers to schools and civic organizations. The free online curriculum, available at <https://www.elections101.org/suffrage-101/>, provides customizable lesson plans that cover the 72-year history of the women's suffrage movement, as well as the history and influence of women as voters, candidates, and elected public officials.

In addition to other materials, a Winning the Vote powerpoint can be downloaded here: <https://www.elections101.org/curriculum/womens-right-to-vote/>

A Women's Political Participation powerpoint can be downloaded here: <https://www.elections101.org/curriculum/womens-political-participation/>

19th Amendment banners can be borrowed from your county auditor. Call or email your county auditor to learn more about their availability. The Iowa Secretary of State's Office has additional banners available, as well as bookmarks and buttons.



A Step Forward, But the Work Isn't Done

Maureen White, Public Policy Director

Governor Kim Reynolds issued an executive order on August 5 to restore voting rights to persons convicted of a felony who have completed their sentence. The system in Iowa for payment of the various fines, fees and restitution is complex. In her order, the governor did not make the right to vote contingent on payment of fines, fees or restitution to victims. Imposing those types of restrictions would have resulted in continued disenfranchisement of those who simply do not have the ability to pay or who gave up trying to navigate the system. These types of requirements also fall more heavily on persons of color or persons with low-income.

The executive order offers a second chance for so many of the approximately 60,000 Iowans who until now were denied the right to vote and gives them the opportunity to join other members of their community in registering and voting, a fundamental right of all citizens. A letter from AAUW Iowa president Carletta Knox-Seymour and the board of directors was sent to Governor Reynolds to

thank her for the executive order.

A constitutional amendment is the only way to permanently rectify automatic disenfranchisement of those convicted of a felony. The amendment process must start all over after the Senate this year failed to act on HJR 14, a bill passed with over-whelming bipartisan support in the House and favored by a majority of Iowans.

Thank you to all our members who contacted their state Senator asking for passage of HJR 14. When a bill for this constitutional amendment is again introduced, we'll go back to work on its passage. In the meantime, please thank your Senator who voiced support for it, and for those who said they would vote no, ask them to reconsider their position.

You or your branch may also want to offer to help with voter registration for those who will again be eligible to vote.

AAUW Iowa Capitol Corps Needs You

The AAUW Iowa Capitol Corps is a group of members who have agreed to contact legislators on behalf of AAUW Iowa on issues that affect women and girls during the time that the legislature is in session. Those contacts can be in person, by email, phone, or US mail. If you are interested

in working with the Capitol Corps during the next session, look for more information in upcoming issues, or contact Maureen White at mwhite@cfu.net or Ann Gale at ann.gale9@gmail.com.

Waverly Branch's Book Club

Kim Folkers

AAUW's Waverly branch, like its sister branches, is made up of strong, dynamic women of diverse backgrounds and interests. Nowhere is that more evident than in its Book Club. The Book Club meets monthly during the academic year, but in the summer months it meets every other week and often includes a field trip to follow up on something we've read.

So, what happens when a pandemic comes to town?

Fortunately, for the 15-20 active Book Club participants, AAUW Waverly has access to zoom and this summer we have been using it. Our gatherings are lively, and what we read is varied. The format is simple. A member of the group suggests a book or a topic and then leads the chatter. There are no limits on subjects or genre, so during planning session books of all sorts are listed. Good fiction,

mystery, current affairs, local authors, and sometimes a look at kid lit or science turn up.

A recent read was subject driven: racism was the topic, and during our zoom session at least a dozen different books on the subject were identified and reviewed by various participants during the discussion. We all left having discovered more to read!

And yes, sometimes we all read the same book. One such read was *The President is Missing*, by Patterson and Clinton. It led to a lively discussion! Sometimes we read for fun! This was followed up some months later by reading any kind of whodunit by someone like Scott Turow.

The Book Club in Waverly is alive and well, and you can check it out on our website. Go to Waverly, Iowa, AAUW and click on Book Club. You'll find an amazing array of books and some very good reads – of almost ANY genre. Happy Page Turning!

Carletta Knox-Seymour, continued from p. 1

Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) and AAUW. For sure, these organizations have led the way on issues such as workplace equality and reproductive rights, and fighting for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. The problem with these organizations, as Kitchener points out, is that they are dominated by white leadership. For example, 10 of NOW's 11 presidents have been white women. Twelve of its current 17 board members are white. According to the article, these organizations have not made room for women of color, especially black women, according to interviews with 20 former staffers from AAUW, FMF, and NOW. Former employees say staffers of color are concentrated in lower level positions, with white leadership shaping organizational priorities that feel largely irrelevant to women who are not white, straight, cisgender, highly educated and upper-middle class. Employees of color were often made to feel like "tokens," many said, rolled out to show diversity but derided and dismissed within the confines of the office. As the article points out, "At both NOW and AAUW, the membership helps determine the organization's mission and focus, voting on certain policy and leadership decisions.

When staffers of color tried to address issues of race at these organizations, white leadership would often shut them down, many former employees said. "They think because they're nice ladies who care about social justice issues, that means they don't have any work to do on race," said Raina Nelson, who worked at AAUW from 2017 to 2019. Nelson says that the leaders at AAUW think "they are fighting for equality for all women, but in

practice...they really fight only for white women."

NOW once had a clear set of goals and took steps to accomplish them in the 1960's and '70's. In 2020 NOW is far less prominent than it once was, states the organization's historian, saying that perhaps it's harder to define an agenda. AAUW faces a similar problem, said Nelson: "There isn't a clear vision of what the world looks like when their work is done." Originally, AAUW strove for women's liberation, states Nelson, but clearly focused on white women's liberation. "Upper-middle class white women no longer need the kind of help they once did."

Kimberly Churches, CEO of AAUW, stated that she's aware that the organization has "historically had a predominantly white membership" and "faces challenges when it comes to diversity and inclusion," according to a statement provided to The Lily. "We don't run away from our problems or pretend they don't exist — we try to work on them in real time to improve our workplace."

Kim's statements were focused on the workplace at AAUW's headquarters. Her acknowledgment of the historical and predominantly White membership helps us as volunteers of this organization to make necessary changes. As Kim said, "We don't run away from our problems or pretend they don't exist..." I say, this is our time to rethink, reorganize, improve and communicate a more diverse membership model so that we can in fact rise to the challenge of diversity and inclusion. Do we move the needle of progress or do we remain stagnant in our development? It's totally up to us.