



# IOWA INITIATIVE

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## Co-President Elect's Letter

Mary Gill, AAUW Iowa Co-President Elect

As a sophomore in high school, I was introduced to a quotation attributed to Winston Churchill, "Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it," a sentiment which is believed to have been uttered first by a Spanish philosopher in 1905.



Regardless of the exact wording, does it not seem like we are living its reality? Examples of what appears to be intentional erasing of history and repeating some of the most alarming aspects of U. S. and world history are far too prevalent today. Yet, among the distress, confusion, and wondering how we possibly could find ourselves where we are today, I take great solace in three heroes in our history. These heroes provide a means to weathering the chaos as we continue to create a better tomorrow, especially for equity for girls and women.

In our more recent history, I turn to former Representative John Lewis, a civil rights icon and former member of the U.S. Congress. John Lewis was born a sharecropper's son. Hearing Martin Luther King Jr.'s radio broadcasts inspired him to step out. Involved in mass lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Riders, and speaking at the 1963 Historic March on D.C. (if unfamiliar with these pivotal events, look them up), he was arrested over 40 times in the great war for civil rights. He is most noted as a champion for voter rights and was awarded the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award, in 2015 by President Obama.

One of his ideas I find most inspiring expresses that not every chapter makes sense while we are in it. He argues that one day we will look back and see the "thread of grace running through it all." He would encourage us all to "get in good trouble." That is, to remain steadfast in the fight for equity for girls and women and ever looking forward to a better time, despite setbacks. The making of "good trouble" keeps the issue warmed up and noticed which is essential to forward momentum. Following his example of seeing something and doing something that

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changed the world for the better offers us clear direction and motivation. We remain in a long-distance run, a brighter tomorrow over the next hill.

My other heroes for this context are a pair of trailblazers, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, leaders in the women's suffrage movement of the late 1880s and early 1900s. There is rich history on them as individuals and how they helped advance freedom, democracy, and rights through their decades of tireless work. A brief point to history here points to their determined work to achieve an amendment to the Constitution allowing a woman's right to vote. The initial result was crushing; despite repeated challenges, setbacks, and great frustration, they won voting rights, such as they were, for Black men. After all, the Constitution said "all men were created equal" so how could women be given the vote? So, back to the drawing board, planning, casting new strategies, and repaving the same campaign road to ultimately achieve success with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1920. Does it not feel as if we are in similar times?

We can take solace in the plethora of historical movements of social change having followed similar roads. Progress is made to find detours, and outright reversals, which require readdressing issues wished long settled.

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We must remain vigilant, knowing that generations following us require education and re-education, especially in today's standards. Seeking threads of commonality, we rebuild and make "good trouble" for a better future. One of AAUW Iowa's most illustrative examples of such a reality is our Stronger Together Initiative. The Family Policy Council does not share AAUW's stance on a woman's autonomy over her body expressed as a right to choose an abortion; yet, we effectively partnered with them on the Periods with Dignity Initiative committed to the standard that young women should not be limited by biological and socio-economic realities when it comes to their ability to be educated and contribute in all ways open to them at all times.

In these times, John Lewis holds the metaphorical banner to encourage us to make good trouble following his example—don't give up; go out and seek common ground wherever and whenever possible, never losing sight of the brighter tomorrow we seek to create for ourselves and the next generation.



Are you a college student, or do you know someone who is? You might enjoy the [Campus Newsletter at this link](#). It is a quarterly newsletter designed to meet the needs of campus professionals, students, and AAUW College/University leaders. The current issue has information about AAUW fellowships and grant information sessions, AAUW Virtual Economic Empowerment trainings, an awardee spotlight, opportunities to share networks, and more. Don't miss it.



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## Tama-Toledo Branch Supports Accessibility

Berleen Wobeter, Tama-Toledo Branch

The Tama-Toledo branch of AAUW took advantage of a unique and worthy opportunity to support inclusion and accessibility efforts for women by supporting a young woman in our community. Lisa Campbell, a 2006 graduate of South Tama County Community School District, was crowned Ms. Wheelchair America 2026 for Iowa. Lisa has used a wheelchair since the age of 5. She is currently a resident of our local Sunny Hill Care facility.

Lisa is an inspiration with her positive attitude and shares her message to keep trying until you find a way. It may be hard, she says, but don't give up. You may have to accomplish your goals differently.

Lisa learned about the Ms. Wheelchair America competition through a friend who encouraged her to compete. Lisa completed an application and an interview. Out of 25 competing, Lisa won the competition for the Iowa crown.

Learning that there is also a national competition, our organization contacted Lisa to learn about the national event and Lisa's plans. It was her desire to be part of the national event in Grand Rapids, Michigan, August 18-24. Part of the week-long activities are seminars on leadership and advocacy training. Each contestant will give a speech and have a personal platform.

Recognizing the importance of amplifying Lisa's strong and genuine voice, our branch offered a travel stipend to Lisa and her mother to help make this valuable experience possible. Lisa will be a strong advocate for the continued need to eliminate physical barriers and increase accessibility. We anticipate continuing our communication with Lisa after the national event to hear her story and promote this important work. Good luck, Lisa!



*Joanna Hofer, Pam Rutledge, Joyce Legg, Becca Chyma and Berleen Wobeter. Lisa Campbell with crown*

## Public Policy News

Diane Kearns, Public Policy Director

The summer has certainly slipped by. Hope everyone had time for some R and R. The political climate is heating up with off-year elections in 2026. Governor Reynolds and Senator Ernst are not running for reelection, so the field of those interested has begun to heat up. There will be several primaries on both sides. The state legislature will convene on January 12. I am anticipating having our Lobby Day on Wednesday, February 11.

On the national level, the “The Big Beautiful Bill” was signed. There are several areas of concern contained in that piece of legislation. The US Department of Education proposed a rule that would put countless nonprofit organizations and the communities they serve at risk. The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program was designed to support those who dedicate their careers to public service. Instead, this proposed rule would punish nonprofits and their employees for engaging in work that political leaders dislike. This rule would give government officials new power to decide which nonprofits are “worthy” of participating in PSLF. That authority could easily be abused to target organizations advancing gender equity, civil rights, immigrant justice, and racial justice, missions already under attack.

For Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations, the Senate advanced its Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies bill. This would level funding to the Department of Education and level funding to the Office of Civil Rights. The House is working on its Labor and Health and Human Services bill which would cut 15% of funding to the Department of Education and 33% of funding to the Office of Civil Rights. It is anticipated there will be a fight between the House and Senate versions.

Other items of interest: March 2025 – Restoring Public Service Loan Forgiveness by Executive Order; June 2025 – Department of Education convenes negotiated rulemaking; July 2025 – Department of Justice issues guidance on “unlawful discrimination”; August 2025 – Department of Education issues proposed rule on PSLF. If you are interested in commenting on any bills that are being debated, the Action Alert area of AAUW’s website provides letters which can be used. It is going to be an interesting fall and 2026 with the off-year election and filling vacancies. Stay informed regarding the candidates and keep in mind AAUW Public Policy Priorities. I participate in the AAUW SPPC (State Public Policy Coordinators) monthly Zoom meetings. Have a nice fall season.



### Is Your Contact information Correct?

You can access your AAUW personal snapshot and update your contact information and preferences.

Frequent users, click [LOG IN](#) as usual. Non-frequent users, click [LOG IN](#), then below the blue log in button, click FORGOT PASSWORD. Enter your email address and click **RESET YOUR PASSWORD** to receive and confirm a new password to access your Personal Snapshot. Need help? Email [connect@aauw.org](mailto:connect@aauw.org) and enter LOG IN HELP in the subject line.

### Iowa Trafficker Sentenced to Life in Prison

On September 3, a Hiawatha man was sentenced to life in prison for human trafficking a minor

Jarod Anderson picked up a teenager from Dubuque, brought her to a Cedar Rapids hotel, and during a span of two days, sold her for sex to various men. The teenager was able to escape and call for help.

More information can be found in Cedar Rapids news outlets.



**AAAUW Iowa Spring Conference**  
**April 25, 2026**  
**Diamond Event Center**  
**5307 Caraway Ln, Cedar Falls, IA**



## Palo Alto Branch Celebrates 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War with Archivist

Robert Hersom, Palo Alto County Branch Co-President

During our county fair, the Palo Alto Branch sponsored Trudy Huskamp Peterson, the retired Assistant Archivist and later Deputy Archivist and first female Acting Archivist of the National Archives. The presentation took place in the old Independence Township schoolhouse, now located on the Palo Alto County Fairgrounds.

Ms. Peterson's topic was celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolutionary War by dissecting and discussing Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*. The audience of 30 members learned of

inconsistencies and truths related to the midnight ride of Paul Revere and William Dawes as they warned the countryside and alerted John Hancock and Samuel Adams that the British troops were marching to Lexington and Concord on the evening of April 18, 1775. Later, Ms. Peterson explained the meaning of the lyrics of *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

AAUW members provided treats and encouraged anyone interested to learn more about AAUW.



Trudy Huskamp Peterson discusses "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere."



The audience assembled in an old country schoolhouse.



### e-Network's Programs for 2025-26

The e-Network Branch offers eight diverse presentations focused on the theme, *Striving for a Better Way*. Meetings take place via Zoom at 7p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month (September through November and January through May). Guests are welcome.

The dates and topics include:

September 23	Learning about Iowa Citizens for Community Involvement with speaker Tim Glaza
October 28	Latinas Rising Together with speaker Joanna Chavez De Leon
November 28	Hannibal's Invisible People with speaker Jane Nettleton
January 27	TRIO—Unlocking Potential and Opening Doors with speaker Heather Nissen
February 24	Navigating Challenges in Higher Education with speaker Ashley Farmer Hanson
March 24	Being Black in the Academy with speaker Sharde Davis
April 28	Building Bridges in an Era of Polarization with speaker Bill Doherty
May 26	Brain Health with speaker Jan Mitchell

A business meeting and discussion follows presentations at each of our meetings. Our June meeting is a business meeting for electing officers and sharing summer reading suggestions. Individuals wishing to visit a particular meeting, email Mary Gill, President, a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the meeting (mgill1956@gmail.com).

## Periods with Dignity at the Local Level in Cedar Falls-Waterloo

Maureen White, Periods with Dignity Task Force Chair

*The Cedar Falls-Waterloo branch has been a leader in the effort to provide period products to girls so that they do not miss educational opportunities. Maureen White is now the chair of this effort for AAUW Iowa. We present this information to assist other branches in that effort.*

### Why did we create “Gotcha covered. Period.”?

For over five years, AAUW Cedar Falls-Waterloo has donated pads, tampons, and underwear for girls in the Cedar Falls and Waterloo public schools because lack of access to period products means some girls may miss classes, entire days of school, or after-school activities. Access to products allows girls to attend school and focus on learning.

### Is this one of those partisan issues?

Period poverty impacts girls in households of all political affiliations in both rural and urban America. Girls may lack a sufficient supply of menstrual products because

- individuals don't have the money to buy products.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits or food stamps cannot be used to buy hygiene products such as pads or tampons.
- products are hard to find in nearby stores or are prohibitively expensive—or both.
- they lack transportation to stores.
- students in foster care—not living with a parent or guardian—may be uncomfortable talking about their need for pads and tampons.
- students who are unsheltered (homeless) may lack money, transportation, or a place to keep the products.

Increasing numbers of Iowa families struggle to pay for housing, put food on the table, and provide for other basic needs. When families have to choose—buy food or buy period products—they understandably choose food.



### What if girls don't have a sufficient supply of pads or tampons?

They face more than embarrassing odors, leakage, and stained clothing. Some may use wads of toilet paper, tissues, paper towels, cloth, rags, pieces of diapers or newspaper, none of which is adequate or sanitary. Or they may use a tampon or pad longer than advised, which is a health risk. Serious conditions like sepsis can kill.

### Why would we need this project here in the Cedar Valley?

We have provided products for the Waterloo and Cedar Falls public schools because (2024-25 school year data)

- in Waterloo, about 71% of the students in middle and high schools qualify for free or reduced lunch. That means of the approximately 2,500 girls, **about 1,786** may have difficulty obtaining period supplies.
- about 21% of Cedar Falls junior and high school students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Of that 21%, **about 379** of the approximately 1,300 girls may have difficulty obtaining period supplies.

### What can you do to help?

1. *We believe Iowa should provide funding so that every girl has equal access to these basic health and hygiene necessities, the same as soap, toilet paper or paper towels, in rural and urban public school district bathrooms. Ask your legislators to support this requirement and to allocate funding for it.*
2. *Join us in supporting girls through a contribution of any amount to help with the costs to purchase products for donation to the public schools in our communities.*

Make checks payable to AAUW Cedar Falls-Waterloo and mail to

AAUW Cedar Falls-Waterloo  
2607 Ryan Dr.  
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

### Sad News

AAUW Past-President (1974-1976) Margaret Jean Weltha of Ames passed away this past month. Margaret Jean was a resident at Green Hills Health Care for a number of years. When she went on Hospice her sons arranged to take her back to her home before she passed away. Margaret Jean was 95 years old. We will provide more information as it becomes available.

## You Can Help Public Schools

Dev Kiedaisch, Stronger Together Task Force Chair

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (ICCI) members create change through grassroots organizing, educating, and mobilizing on issues that impact our communities the most. Public School Strong is one of the initiatives of ICCI. Public School Strong and ICCI believe that every child – no matter their zip code, background, race, gender, identity, or ability – has an equal right to a quality education. That means fully funding our public schools, urban and rural, and it means we need local school boards free from partisan politics. Public School Strong is a national campaign made up of parents, teachers, students, and community members who want to ensure all children have access to honest, accurate, safe, and fully funded public education. Despite the increasing attacks on public education by politicians and corporate actors with deep pockets, everyday Iowans know that strong public schools are a cornerstone of our communities and democracy. By organizing in our neighborhoods and at local school board meetings, we can create positive, common-sense solutions to address the real issues our schools are facing.

Public School Strong (PSS) launched a statewide, locally led petition campaign for fully funded public schools. Help us collect signatures to urge your local school board to pass a

resolution calling on the Governor and legislature to fully fund our public schools at a 5% annual increase and to phase out private school vouchers. [Learn more and add your name here.](#)

Want to help collect signatures in your school district? You can download a [paper petition here](#), or send an email to [iowacci@iowacci.org](mailto:iowacci@iowacci.org) if you'd like us to mail you copies.

To learn more about our petition campaign, go to [FAQ](#).

Public School Strong has sent representatives to Keokuk three times in the past year to work on community education and planning. They are very knowledgeable and helpful. We are currently organizing the fourth meeting. We have over 100 signatures on the petition, but we are looking to increase that number. (We need 102.) We are also looking to organizations to co-sponsor the event. On Tuesday, October 7, there will be a community meeting at Trinity United Methodist, 2330 Plank Road, from 6-7 pm. Community members will be given information and have an opportunity to ask questions. I am attaching two sheets of information about public and private schools and their funding.



## Des Moines Branch Tours the Des Moines Water Works

The Des Moines branch of AAUW and a few guests toured the Des Moines Water Works on August 19, followed by lunch at Skip's. The DMWW conducted a great tour. They showed us their labs and showed us how water is tested. They showed the building where the water is filtered, and showed us where the nitrates are removed and fluoride is added. The Des Moines Water Works operates the largest nitrate removal facility in the world, and costs can add up to \$10,000 per day to operate. Nitrate concentrations in the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers, two of Des Moines' water sources, are DMWW's biggest water quality problem. Trending data shows that nitrate concentrations in the rivers has steadily increased in the past 25 years and indicates a continuation of this upward trend. Their microbiologist advised us to heed warnings when the Department of National Resources posts an advisory against swimming or fishing. She showed us pictures of a woman's leg that had become severely infected because she shaved before swimming in contaminated water. That leg had to be amputated.



*This impressive room made us think of what a Roman bath might have been like.*



## Branch Members Visit African-American Historical & Cultural Museum

On Wednesday, August 6, thirteen Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch members enjoyed lunch at Rodney's Kitchen and then toured the African-American Historical & Cultural Museum—the “boxcar museum”—located on East Fourth Street at Adams Street in Waterloo. The collections are fascinating and very well displayed, and staff members Kimberly Krough and Ryan Madison provided an interesting experience. Unfortunately, the museum has been unable to accept some donations, such as works of art, because space is limited.

The museum was initially founded in 1996 by Ada Tredwell and Ruth Anderson to narrate the “rich historical narratives of African Americans in the region.” With recent acquisition of 501(c)(3) status, the museum now can take tax-deductible donations (see their website, at [aahcmuseum.org](http://aahcmuseum.org)) and will be able to ex-

pand both their collection space and their collections. We thank Shelia Bullock and Ardelle Brown for coordinating this experience for us.



L-R: Nancy Hasenwinkel, Elaine Bruns, Judy Fogdall, Shelia Bullock, Gloria Tollefson, Rita Waggoner, Jane Close, Bonnie Smith, Karen Agee, Maureen White, Bees Downing, Linda Morgan, and Ardelle Brown

## Human Trafficking Iowa Law Enforcement Tip Line Announced

# LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT?

帮助您找方法 ¿ESTÁS BUSCANDO UNA SALIDA? ¿NECESITAS AYUDA?

## STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING

IT HAPPENS HERE IN IOWA

Iowa Network  
Against Human  
Trafficking & Slavery  
[www.iowanaht.org](http://www.iowanaht.org)

[facebook.com /iowaNAHT](https://www.facebook.com/iowaNAHT)

### IOWA LAW ENFORCEMENT TIP LINE

**855 - 614 - 4692**  
**855 - 614 - IOWA**

### NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

**888-3737-888**  
or Text **"Help"** to 233733(BeFree)

### IOWA VICTIM SERVICE CALL CENTER

**800-770-1650**  
or Text **"iowahelp"** to 20121

A new **Department of Public Safety Tip Line** has been created by the Office to Combat Human Trafficking. Recently, the NAHT Board of Directors met with Ray Fiedler, coordinator for the DPS Office to Combat Human Trafficking. The NAHT Board decided to include the tip line number on our new 6x4-inch stickers.

Twenty states have already established their own tip line stickers, and Iowa is now following their lead because the national hotline is not sharing tip information with law enforcement without the caller's permission. Most victims who call do not want to share the information with the police because they fear for their safety, and also fear being arrested.



## Human Trafficking Prevention “Red Sand Projects” in Iowa this Summer

Elle Sweborg, Melody Stone, Teresa Davidson, Mary Ann Ahrens

The **Red Sand Project** is a participatory artwork initiated by artist Molly Gochman. Aimed at raising awareness about human trafficking and exploitation, the project was launched in 2014. Gochman emphasizes the importance of community involvement and personal agency in addressing social issues, making the Project a compelling blend of art and activism. The project invites individuals to fill sidewalk cracks with red sand, symbolizing those victims who “fall through the cracks” of society. It serves as a powerful metaphor for the vulnerabilities that lead to trafficking.

In July, all branches and the Iowa Board received information about the purpose and process involved in sponsoring the event.

The Project has garnered significant participation, with actions taking place across all 50 states and in over 70 countries, engaging more than a million participants. It not only promotes awareness, but also encourages social media engagement, allowing participants to document their experiences and spread the message further. If you, your branch or other organizations may be interested this fall or next year, contact Chains Interrupted in Cedar Rapids at [Info@ChainsInterrupted.com](mailto:Info@ChainsInterrupted.com). They will provide instructions and supplies needed. This is an excellent youth and teen project to create awareness on their part since the number of trafficked teens has dramatically increased. The Global Coalition to Fight Financial Crime

estimated that human trafficking revenue grew to \$498 billion in 2023-2024.

In the last few years, only 200,000 documented victims received help. It is the tip of the iceberg because people are being trafficked more every year with greater violence, for longer periods of time, and for greater profit. This includes forced labor, sexual exploitation, and coercion into criminal activities such as online scams. Despite some progress, criminal justice responses remain grossly inadequate in tackling this rapidly growing crime considering the worldwide conflicts!



**Chains Interrupted** worked with youth organizations to do the Red Sand event in **Cedar Rapids**.



**Clear Lake** event organized by Melody Stone/others of the **North Central Iowa Coalition on Human Trafficking**



**Davenport-Bettendorf AAUW Branch** Red Sand event on August 8 in Leach Park, Bettendorf organized by Elle Sweborg



# A Global Look at Sex Trafficking and Other Sex-Related Crimes

Kathleen Wood Laurila, International Relations Director

Iowa members of AAUW have been addressing the issue of sex trafficking by advocating for measures to outlaw and punish perpetrators and developing safe havens and rehabilitation for survivors. We all likely realize this is an issue that primarily impacts women and girls all over the world, and that an act entailing sex trafficking can transcend state and national borders.

Another aspect to consider, however, is that of categorizing sex-related crimes to that of torture – [a patriarchal war](#) against women and girls. Current laws against torture are imbedded in global human rights treaties and are based on when a government entity or agent commits such a crime. Signatory countries agree to include torture in their criminal codes although resultant laws vary by country and only a few have done so.

The UN Convention Against Torture has so far resisted differentiating crimes in a way that considers a gender lens to any torture act, which, of course, would include sex-related crimes. However, there is a gaining awareness of torture that is perpetrated by family or group members, an [economic system](#) that rapes and tortures within the practice of "breaking in" a prostituted person, and cultural and religious practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM). "Ritual Abuse Torture (RAT)" goes beyond sex trafficking as it is the abuse and torture of children and captive adults within violent organizing family/group systems and gatherings that is based on the pleasure of the destruction of another person – and it is torture NOT perpetuated by the State.

"Non-State Torture (NST)" has become the accepted terminology for the women-led world-wide advocacy campaign to enact treaties and laws to address this lack. So far, countries have been resistive to enacting Non-State Torture laws but there are about 10 countries and areas within a few countries that have done so – including the U.S. states of Michigan, California and Alabama. This effort has been led for 35 years by two registered nurses who belonged to the AAUW counterpart organization in Canada, Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald. As they have testified at various national and global forums, "Torture isn't limited to covert military operations or just



inflicted on prisoners during wartime, the same type of horrific violence happens in homes and neighborhoods around the world." In fact, some women have testified they were two-years old when their family tortured and trafficked them.

Like so many "shame-based" issues, those who are subject to such torture rarely have wanted to speak about it. Based on Jeanne and Linda's personal experience with nearly 4,000 individual NST survivors, they have written a book, [Women Unsilenced: Our Refusal to Let Torturer-Traffickers Win](#), about their findings, and created a [Fact Sheet](#). A second book, [Healing](#), will be published in October and shares successes in advancing legal actions since 2021.

Torture is legally defined as beyond abuse and assault according to the UN Convention Against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment including: "the acts are committed for purposes such as inflicting punishment, or to intimidate or coerce, or based on discrimination of any kind."

Sarson and MacDonald have also conducted surveys of those who have experience ritual abuse. One such example from their Reproductive Harms Survey:

In 2007 we conducted a 10-question survey on reproductive tortures women reported suffering, within the context of ritual abuse-torture families/groups, in various countries, including Canada. Of the 233 respondents, 56% (131) stated being raped during forced abortions or torture induced deliveries; of 232 respondents 43% (99) stated they were forced to swallow aborted tissue.

Until there is legislation requiring data collection, it is impossible to supply accurate statistics. Therefore, NST does not exist. Women and girls who have survived such torture are "Invisible" and there is nothing for police to investigate and therefore the perpetrators are not held liable nor are they punished. The education of professional care givers doesn't occur so the tools for healing the sufferers are not available. However, using a list of the legal definitions for torture, survivors of Non-State Torture checked all of the same characteristics. Nevertheless, the laws are dependent upon "who" the perpetrator is and if it is not a government, there is no prosecutable crime.