



Bulletin 146 of the Cedar Rapids AAUW Branch

November 2020

1:00 p.m. Saturday, November 14, 2020 Gender Based Violence Against Black Women

A Panel Discussion Presented on Zoom

Moderator: LaSheila Yates, Panelists: Lasharon Taylor (AAUW member)
Tiffany D. Flower and Lisa A. Ambrose, Amani Community Services

We acknowledge that there has been a higher incidence of domestic abuse and violence in general during the Pandemic. This program was recorded in March 2018 and aired on KCRG. LaSharon Taylor is a licensed therapist who is now deployed with the Army National Guard. After the panel discussion there will be a Q and A with Lisa Ambrose.

You must register for the program then you will be sent a link for the zoom meeting.

Call Sue Jorgensen 319-360-8757 if you need assistance

On December 5 at 10:00 enjoy a zoom program with highlites of the “Open Minds, Open Doors” STEM conference. The conference has been our signature project for 24 years and over 10,000 girls have attended the conference. Ten years ago Susie Green from the AEA became the director for the conference. She will give us an overview of the conference this year which is happening virtually.

Next be prepared for a treat as Letia Blanco tells us how her experience as an 8th grader lead her to an exciting career as an engineer and how she founded an annual STEM conference for girls in Houston. Now she is at Collins Aeronautics here in Cedar Rapids and hosted a workshop for girls ages 5-18 called “Design Your World”. This confirms that we have made a difference!

Announcements: AAUW book group will meet November 23rd at Sharon Vana’s at 7 PM The Henna Artist by Alka Joshi. (Possible Zoom).

A new book group will be launched soon. Thirteen members have signed up so far to read and discuss Waking Up White, and finding myself in the story of race by Debbie Irving. The book is available as audio too. The discussions will be on zoom. One of our members, Judy McCracken, is participating in a book study at her 2nd home in South Carolina Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. She added, “... same subject, but different angle”.

Calling all middle school girls! "Open Minds, Open Doors", a virtual event, is scheduled for November 12th. Here is the link to the webpage with information about the event: <https://www.gwaea.org/educators/student-enrichment-opportunities>

AAUW General Meeting and Program on Zoom 7:00 p.m. October 19, 2020
Report of the General Meeting and Program

16 past and present members and guests participated in a virtual meeting on zoom.

It was exciting to see so many friends. All of us yearn for normalcy and stimulating discussions! After greetings we got to business. The major question, "Is the Cedar Rapids Area Branch of AAUW viable?" Yes, It is, thanks to Linda Topinka who stepped up this fall and volunteered to be the Branch Administrator. A "core group" has been making decisions and planning programs. You are welcome to join in the zoom meetings. Just let us know and you will be linked in.

Introductions of the core group included: Linda Topinka who has been the public policy director for our branch for 7 years! She is a mental health therapist and is out in the community making connections. As the Administrator she continues to "steer" us even when she is too busy to be directly involved.

Circe Stumbo is our website manager and technical facilitator. She founded the Westwind agency 20 years ago and was recruited by Linda Topinka. Circe's expertise with technology and willingness to facilitate our zoom meetings has been a lifeline for the working group and the branch.

Carol Hills is the director of AAUW funds (annual giving in December). Carol always has practical solutions and encouragement when there are problems to solve.

Millie Peshek is the branch secretary and a mainstay on the working group. She has taken up technology so that she can carry out her role. Thank you for "reinventing" yourself, Mille (actually she said that she has been reincarnated)!

Trudy Sundermann renewed her membership with the goal of reenergizing the branch and she has done that. On any given day Trudy is on the frontlines and maybe substitute teaching, or watching her granddaughter at a tennis match.

Sue Jorgensen announced her candidacy for an "appointment" to fill the President position for the remainder of this term which ends in June 2021. Sue enjoys networking, teambuilding, and problem solving. Millie made a motion that Sue be appointed as President. There was a 2nd. Followed by a voice vote and it was official.

The Good News! In the last month ten people have pledged to renew their memberships and sent their dues checks. Thank you for your confidence!

The second piece of good news: Maria Dean reported that the "Open Minds, Open Doors" STEM conference for middle school girls which was canceled due to the Corona virus will be happening virtually in November.

Moving on to the AAUW mission: Gender Equity is the heart of the AAUW mission. Linda Topinka proposed that Racial Equity is the challenge facing America today and asked that AAUW advocate for racial justice and changes in policies right here in Cedar Rapids. Clearly the Association is addressing racial equity with offerings such as webinars and town hall meetings, so it is a national initiative. All present and past members of our branch received a phone call or email so that they could express their opinions. The response was that we value learning and we are empathetic with the black and people of color who are marginalized. The question is "How do we proceed?"

Circe Stumbo talked about the intergenerational power in our branch. Circe recommends "affinity book groups" of white people reading and discussing the book, "Waking Up White (and finding myself in the middle of race)". The rules are to be vulnerable, willing to challenge beliefs, and to use evidence that shows how systemic patterns have kept groups marginalized. Ultimately the white and black members will come back together. Gwen Randall encouraged us to have an action plan for when we will get together and get started.

We are beginning on a new journey. We welcome the opportunity to broaden our understanding of systemic racism. Those that participate in the book discussions will broaden their knowledge. Sharing requires listening to what **has** happened and **is** happening to our sisters, learning (**a whole lot of learning** about what is racism, what are the issues right here in CR, policies and current events), Thank you to our members who have experienced racial disparities and for helping all of us grow. We want to make a difference.

October 19 Program: Dr. Ruth White, Director of the Academy for Personal and Scholastic Success

The Academy is a rigorous 6 week summer program that happens on Mt. Mercy campus. Enrollment ranges from 25 to 60 students. This is not a remedial program although some students come with low grade point averages. Students, ages 14-19, are recommended by their teachers who see that the students are not working up to their ability. Dr. White empathized that "attitude is everything"! Students learn to value their culture and heritage, and learn that they can achieve and improve. Expectations and discipline are foremost. The carrot is that for those that have earned the privilege they will go on a trip at the end of the summer. Students develop leadership skills and form lasting friendships. The program has a 99 percent graduation rate among students who have completed at least one session of the program and a 90 percent postsecondary matriculation rate.

Kudos to Dr. White and the Academy

The Gazette newspaper featured an article on October 31, 2020 about students who are stepping into leadership roles. The Cedar Rapids School District and Advocates for Social Justice brought together Black student organizations from the city's schools. They are seeking systemic changes to policies and practices. Dr. White is focused on this legacy, "to reverse the clouds of stereotypes that hang over the heads of students of color. We may not save the world, but I'd like to think we intervened and changed the trajectory of lives. That's my mission." The mission is in motion.