



Branch Banter

APRIL 2025

PART II: CRITICAL RACE THEORY & CONTEMPORARY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

WHEN: Tuesday, April 8 7:00 PM
Social time 6:30 PM Business meeting follows program

WHERE: York Alliance Church, 501 Rathton Road, York

PROGRAM: Our speaker is Dr. Laura West Steck, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Sociology at York College. Her program will be a review of the basic tenets of Critical Race Theory, the latest information and will address common misconceptions that have been disseminated about CRT in recent years. We will also discuss additional issues and controversies surrounding contemporary conversations about race, including recent organizational expansions and retrenchment of racial justice initiatives, and public mis-/re-interpretations of terms such as diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, privilege, intersectionality and "wokeness."

Even if you missed her Part I last year, you will be able to understand this important topic that is in the news so often lately.

Suzanne Robertson & Darla Stover, Program Co-Vice Presidents

AAUW YORK GATEWAY TO EQUITY AWARD 2025

The York Branch will award the York County Confronting Racism Coalition (CRC) the Gateway to Equity Award at our April 8 meeting. The CRC is an organization whose mission is to create sustainable change by breaking down systemic racial barriers and by promoting healing, equity, and inclusion for all. Its vision is that York County is a place where differences are valued and equity prevails. An example of their work is the Quick Response Committee the CRC established when a racial incident occurred in the York community. Through their actions and philosophy, the CRC has shown that they advance equity for women and girls through advocacy and education. They share AAUW's vision of equity for all.

The other Branch awards will be presented at the May 13 meeting.

Lois Conaway, Awards Chair

REGISTRATION FOR THE AAUW PA 2025 SUMMER RETREAT IS NOW OPEN

The AAUW PA Summer Retreat will be held on Saturday, June 28, at the Wyndham Garden in State College. There will be a reception on Friday at the Wyndham for those who will be staying overnight. There will be opportunities for our members to carpool.

To register and for more information, visit the state website: <https://aauw-pa.aauw.net>

FROM THE PODIUM

Spring is here! We are beginning to see the spring flowers blooming and the trees budding. It is a season of new beginnings, renewal and growth. It brings hope and optimism to our lives. Our AAUW Branch is experiencing this sense of optimism. We have welcomed new members to our Branch and conducted a membership survey that has generated new ideas about how we can strengthen our Branch. With these new ideas, there will be more opportunities to enjoy the activities and friendships that have brought us together. These ideas will also help us find new ways to achieve our mission of advancing gender equity for women and girls. As a non-partisan organization, there are countless ways we can advocate for our mission and our vision of Equity for All.

As we enter spring, we look forward to the new beginnings that this season brings. At our April 8 meeting, we will be voting for our incoming officers (please see the list of incoming officers in the *Banter*). Our May meeting will be a time to celebrate what we have accomplished over the past year, install our new officers, and honor the recipients of our Branch awards. As a way of celebrating our accomplishments, our Program VPs have planned a special banquet at our May meeting (please see the registration information in the *Banter*).

I am looking forward to celebrating this season of renewal with you.

Barbara Woodmansee, President

BOARD MEETING

The April 1 Board meeting will be conducted virtually using Zoom. Barbara will email the agenda prior to the meeting, which will begin at 7:00 PM. Branch members are welcome.

HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

March has been a very productive month for our committee. We had a meeting on March 6 to solidify our plans and actions for giving scholarships this spring.

Carol Eicher, a member of our Branch, has donated \$5000 this spring for scholarships in memory of her mother, Doris Cohen. Doris had been a long-term, active member of our Branch. With this donation, the committee has decided to offer two (2) undergraduate scholarships of \$2500 each in memory of Doris. Additionally, we are offering one (1) graduate scholarship. This scholarship will be for \$3000.

Two students from Penn State York have been selected to attend the NCCWSL leadership conference. The conference will be held in late May at the University of Maryland. The students are in the process of registering for this event. Thanks to Bonnie Bluett, Amber Majeske, and Barbara Woodmansee for assisting in this process.

Although I never met Doris Cohen, I would like to know more about her. I am asking anyone in the Branch who knew Doris to contact me.

Being on this committee is a “do-gooders dream.” If anyone would like to join our team, please let me know.

Rita Meisenhelter, HESC Chair

VOTE – NOMINEES FOR OFFICERS FOR 2025-2026 – VOTE

The Nominating Committee presents the following slate of candidates:

President: Bonnie Bluett (one-year term)

Program Co-Vice Presidents: Lois Kulp & Anne McFeely (one-year terms)

Membership Co-Vice Presidents: Jenny Sears & Martha Fleischer (one year terms)

Co-Finance Officer: Becky Shives (two-year term)

Secretary: Sue McMillan (one year)

We will be voting at our April Branch meeting.

Jean Quickel, Gayle Brass & Carol Heintzelman, Nominating Committee

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

DEI has been a hot topic and under attack since the new administration has taken office more than two months ago. The impact has been felt nationally. Leaders, media and organizations have been vocal in educating the public as to how and who are being impacted with these changes.

As Thom Hartman, the columnist, on February 20, 2025, wrote, “To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace took form in the 1990s and early 2000s. It was never meant to elevate incompetent women and Black people into positions above their ability; instead, it was designed to prevent incompetent white men from getting jobs for which there are more competent women or Black people. In other words, by definition “DEI hires” are the most qualified people available, regardless of their race or gender. DEI programs are almost universally meritocratic; their goal is to simply open the hiring door to a wider variety of people beyond just white men.”

At a press conference on January 28, 2025, Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett of Texas stated that DEI is “so much more than helping Black people.” It’s giving protections to the LGBTQIA community, rural Americans, women, and disabled citizens, too. “It’s making sure that everybody has an opportunity” and that “governmental agencies look like who we are in this country.” It was “never just about Black people.”

The League of Women Voters states that “diversity, equity, and inclusion aren’t partisan; no one side “owns” DEI. Access to multi-racial, accessible, and inclusive environments is everyone’s right regardless of who they vote for. There are millions of voters who, as women, veterans, disabled people, older Americans, religious minorities, Black and brown folks, and more benefit from DEI.”

As we know more about the history and purpose of DEI, plus the wide range of Americans to whom it offers opportunities, one appreciates why it is a priority to us, AAUW on a branch, state, and national level, to continue to support DEI.

Rita Meisenhelder & Barbara Woodmansee, DEI Co-Chairs

MEMBERSHIP – 2025 MEMBER SURVEY REPORT

During the last weeks of February, our Board members conducted a phone survey of Branch members for their opinions about three questions. The survey results will be used by the Board for goals and planning. At the March 4 Board meeting, collated results from the first question about meeting times, places and attendance were reviewed and discussed. Results from the remaining two questions will be reviewed and discussed at future Board meetings and then summations reported.

This current calendar year, we have four daytime Branch meetings at Glatfelter Center and four evening meetings at Alliance Church scheduled. Note that Glatfelter cannot accommodate us in the evenings, and Alliance is not available on Tuesdays during daytime hours.

The survey results for preference of Branch meeting times and locations are as follows: 20 members were in favor of daytime meetings, 14 were in favor of both daytime and evening meetings, and 7 had no preference. There were 13 who cannot attend meetings or they retain membership only, and 8 who either had no opinion or did not respond to the survey callers.

In response to these survey results, the Board is in the preliminary stages of planning next year's Branch calendar and working with the future program chairs to schedule at least eight meetings, with a majority of daytime meetings and some evening meetings.

We also received a variety of comments about attendance. Many members noted that socializing and friendships with other like-minded women, and belief in the Mission of AAUW, are their primary reasons for belonging and attending. The Board will consider additional time or events for socializing in the future. A number of members mentioned that they avoid or cannot drive at night. There was also a gentle reminder that AAUW is a non-partisan organization. Several members suggested using Zoom or hybrid Zoom for meetings, which the Board will investigate. Some requested more lunch meetings, which will be considered. For now, did you know that there is a nice Bistro in Glatfelter that is available for lunch prior to our daytime Branch meetings?

Additionally, if you have been thinking about helping with or leading a Branch activity or project soon or in the future, please contact any Board member.

We thank each of you for giving your time and thoughtful responses toward the future needs survey of our York Branch.

Martha Fleischer and Joan Beekey, Membership Co-Vice Presidents

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS – TIME TO RENEW!

It is time to please renew your AAUW memberships, starting April 1. The Annual Dues Renewal Form is in this *Banter*, with information on how to renew online (encouraged) and to renew by check. If you renew for National online, please be sure that you renew your PA State and York Branch memberships too! Life members also may renew their State and Branch memberships online or by check. The National renewal is based upon the month in which you joined the organization, which is June for the vast majority of our members. **We kindly request that you pay your dues by June 15.**

AAUW FUND

During 2024, the York Branch and Branch members donated almost \$5,240 to the AAUW Greatest Needs Fund. This fund supports initiatives such as economic empowerment programs, policy advocacy, voter engagement campaigns, and continuing the fight for gender equity. These donations have entitled the Branch to choose members as Named Gift Honorees for 2024. The York Branch Board of Directors has chosen Carol Anderson, Lois Conaway, Carol Heintzelman, Betty Hooker, Judy Pena, Marguerite Bernstine (in memory), and Audrey Futer Eigenrauch (in memory). Thanks to everyone who donated to the AAUW Greatest Needs Fund.

Jane Long, AAUW Fund Chair

PUBLIC POLICY

On the evening of March 12, the Trump Administration, led by Linda McMahon, took the first massive step toward dismantling the Federal Department of Education with the firing of 1,300 workers. The Department of Education (DOE) and its various offices oversee both K-12 and higher education programs. The DOE operates these elementary and secondary education programs:

- Title I—provides support to school districts with proportionally larger numbers of low income families and helps to supplement the lower revenue these districts receive from property taxes;
- Title II—provides support for teacher training and professional development;
- Title IV—School Improvement Programs—rewards school districts adopting innovative approaches to teaching and learning;
- Title III—resources are used to support students who are English Language Learners;
- the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.) provides financial and other support to school districts enabling them to offer special education services for their students.

The DOE's Special Education and Rehabilitative Services supports and protects families with children who have disabilities.

On the Higher Education side, students from lower and middle-income families receive support through federal work-study, grants, student loans, and Pell Grants, as well as career and technical training and adult education programs.

It is hard to imagine what our country will be like if all this support vanishes. The Department of Education ensures fair and equitable education for all Americans. Please contact your federal legislators, regardless of party. Tell them we expect them to stand for our children and our future.

Carol Heintzelman, Public Policy Chair

SUNSHINE

If you know of an AAUW member who deserves a card due to illness, death in family, or thinking of you, please notify Linda Rupert.

GET OUT THE VOTE

Municipal Primary Election – May 20, 2025
Last Day to register – May 5
Last Day to request Mail-in and Absentee Ballots – May 13

Check this website for more information:
<https://yorkcountypa.gov/503/Elections-Voter-Registration>

The York County Elections and Voter Registration Office has two locations.
The newer office address is: 2401 Pleasant Valley Road Suite 219 York, PA 17402
The original location in the Administrative Center in York City remains open at:
28 East Market Street B003 York, PA 17401

Both locations can manage your requests, with one exception: the York City office cannot provide reports, walking lists, street lists, etc.

The May 20 Election is a Primary Election to select candidates for School Directors, Township and Borough Offices, City of York Offices, County of York Row Offices, and Judges for the Court of Common Pleas for the Municipal Election which will be held on November 4, 2025.

Betty Hooker, Get Out the Vote Chair

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group will meet on Wednesday, April 16, at 1:00 PM, to discuss *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride.

In case of inclement weather, we will meet via Zoom.

Please RSVP to Linda Palmer if you plan to attend.
If you are interested in joining a discussion, you can request a list of discussion questions.

BRIDGE GROUP

Janet Misiolek will host Bridge in her home on April 2 at 10:00 AM. Please bring a sandwich for lunch.

If you enjoy a friendly game of Bridge, we welcome you to join us as a substitute player at any time. We meet the first Wednesday of each month. For information, please contact Lois Kulp.

BANTER DEADLINE

April 25 is the deadline for articles for the May *Banter*.

Mission

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