

AAUW FALLS CHURCH FLASH

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Co- Presidents' Message



Dear Members:

On June 14, we met *in person* at the picnic shelter in Cherry Hill Park. It was a time to discuss the future, and to glory in seeing, yes, actually seeing, old friends and laughing together. It was a pleasure to talk with all of you, to observe Edison's enthusiasm for the great outdoors and the playground and to meet April, our newest member. Again, welcome, April!

Thank you to Becky Gaul and Susan Conklin, who did a great job last year on programs. However, their programming is best when they get input from members. What are your programs ideas and interests? Especially for some of you who have not attended recent meetings – what are your interests?

Three Cheers for Those Who Keep Us Up to Date. Pam Martinov has done a wonderful job keeping all of us informed as our newsletter editor. She has also published more newsletters than past editors to keep us in contact during the pandemic. Thank you, Pam. In addition to our print/email communications, we also really want to a website that remains current. Thank you to Aida Loomis, who has agreed to be our webmaster!

Fall Book Sale. The Board met on June 28 to discuss whether it was appropriate to plan a fall book sale, and decided it was not. We weighed many factors, especially the public health concerns regarding the spread of the very contagious Delta variant of COVID-19, and uncertainty regarding the availability of the Falls Church Community Center for large public events during the fall months and whether we could get student volunteers, among others. Later this year, we will discuss holding an April 2022 book sale.

Policy Issues and the November Elections. We are lucky to have Marilyn Falksen, who is on top of public policy issues as they develop for the FC Branch. We also have two very knowledgeable AAUW–VA Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy, Susan Burk and Denise Murden. On June 23, they organized a public policy discussion. A representative of the Family Friendly Economy Campaign discussed family and medical leave proposals. Contact Marilyn for updates.

The League of Women Voters of Falls Church has contacted us and we anticipate collaborating with them on appropriate issues in the fall. More details as we get closer to the election.

Thank you and enjoy your summer. We look forward to seeing you (via Zoom or otherwise) at our September 13, 2021 meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Sharon Zackula and Elizabeth Kessel
Co-Presidents

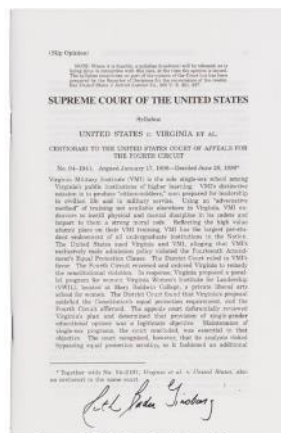
Public Policy

AAUW of Virginia Marks the 25th Anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court VMI Decision and Supports a Robust Response to the VMI Equity Audit and Investigation

As we mark the 25th anniversary of the June 26, 1996, landmark Supreme Court decision *United States v. Virginia et al.*, which struck down the long-standing male-only admissions policy of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), the American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Virginia speaks out about the continuing need for action to make VMI a truly inclusive institution.



As an advocate for advancing equity for women and girls, AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and supports the constitutional protection of the civil rights of all individuals. We believe that high-quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society and advocate for equitable access to education and climates free of harassment, bullying, and sexual assault.



Writing for the 7 -1 majority, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg stated that VMI failed to show "exceedingly persuasive justification" for its sex-based admissions policy and that a proposed parallel program for women would not afford women the same opportunities and connections as male cadets received at VMI. She concluded that, "There is no reason to believe that the admission of women capable of all the activities required of VMI cadets would destroy the Institute rather than enhance its capacity to serve the 'more perfect Union.'" While the decision led to the admission of hundreds of women in the years since, a recent investigation into the racial and gender culture of VMI reveals ongoing

inequities and barriers that prevent women and others from realizing those opportunities.

AAUW of Virginia applauds VMI graduate Governor Ralph Northam and the other state leaders who ordered an outside investigation into VMI's climate and culture. The detailed findings of the resulting [report](#), "Marching Toward Inclusive Excellence: An Equity Audit and Investigation of the Virginia Military Institute," produced by the law firm of Barnes and Thornburg LLP, reveal the barriers and adverse climate that women and minorities face. However, unless VMI and the Virginia General Assembly consider the report's comprehensive recommendations and take immediate remedial action, this effort will meet the fate of far too many other investigations and be relegated to a bookshelf collecting dust.

The report confirms that VMI's culture "creates and reinforces barriers" to confronting disparate treatment of cadets and faculty based on race, gender, and sexual orientation. It identifies several areas requiring immediate reform, including an environment that tolerates gender inequity, sexual harassment and assault; racist views and harassment; and discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ individuals. In addition, the VMI report questioned the equitable operation of the VMI Honor Court whose decisions result in a disproportionate expulsion of minorities. AAUW of

Virginia supports the report's recommendation that VMI should treat racist behavior, sexual misconduct, and discrimination against LGBTQ individuals with the same seriousness as Honor Code violations. There is no honor in racial, gender, and sexual orientation discrimination.

The report highlighted the Institute's continued inability to ensure cadet safety. It found that "Sexual assault is prevalent at VMI. . . . Many female cadets reported a consistent fear of assault or harassment by their fellow male cadets." We find it inexcusable that "These fears are exacerbated by some procedures at VMI, including the inability to lock their doors."



As an ardent supporter of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in education programs receiving Federal financial assistance, AAUW of Virginia deplores that ". . . the investigation revealed that some sexual misconduct incidents do not make it into that Title IX process due to victims' concerns of being ostracized for or retaliated against for reporting—or simply because their reports are ignored. . . . Cadets reported that VMI administrators have intimidated female cadets to reconsider assault reports, including by asking them to consider the impact on the male assailants' careers."

As a state-supported institution, VMI must uphold its responsibility to Virginia's taxpayers by taking swift and robust action to remedy the abhorrent practices that discriminate against minority, female, and LGBTQ cadets that attend VMI. AAUW of Virginia will watch to see if VMI and our lawmakers take the necessary actions



to ensure that the diversity, equity, and inclusion climate at VMI is one that ensures every cadet, no matter their gender, race or sexual orientation, is ensured an equitable and safe education.

[AAUW](#) is a national organization that advances equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. This nonpartisan, nonprofit organization has more than 170,000 members and supporters across the United States, as well as 800 college and university partners and 1,000 local branches, 24 of which are in Virginia.

Remembering Kitty Richardson

Sadly, Kitty Richardson died late January 2020. Then the pandemic overwhelmed us. From being our Membership VP to serving in Lobby Corps, AAUW was a big part of Kitty's life. She was always there to lend a helping hand. A Remembering Kitty committee is being formed to honor Kitty. If you are interested, please contact me at sconklin00@aol.com or sconklin00@gmail.com. The committee will figure out the when, where and how.

Movies, anyone?

Let's Go To The Movies Virtually premiered June 2020. Many members thought this would be a great way to stay connected during Covid doing with what many of us enjoyed doing, watching films and talking about them. One year and twelve films later, the film group continues with the summer series.

The film group will be discussing on July 14th the Israeli series **Transkids**. It is about four Israeli teenagers who undergo the process of life-and-identity-saving gender transformation in a country where military service is mandatory and Orthodox Jewish religion is the law. This is a 5 part 50 minute series in Hebrew with English subtitles. If interested in watching, contact Aida for the link.

The summer series ends on August 11th with Netflix's **The Woman In the Window**. It is a psychological thriller that follows an agoraphobic woman who begins to spy on her new neighbors and is witness to a crime



Thank you for the support, interest and participation in our branch film group. Member participation and flexibility have contributed to its success. We look forward to a fun summer of film watching. With theaters opening, I look forward to when we can safely meet and watch a film. In the meantime, contact Aida at 703 966 8050 for any questions.

Book Club News

We have selected four books for our Fall reading:

SEPTEMBER 21 BIO/MEMOIR:

The Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston, 204 pages

OCTOBER 19 BOOK BY A FOREIGN AUTHOR:

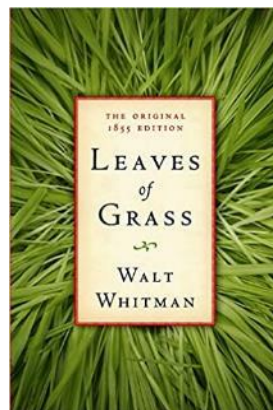
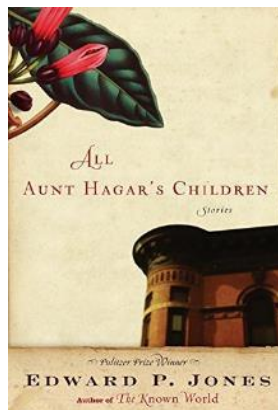
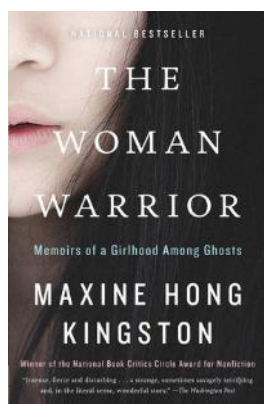
Strange Weather in Tokyo by Hiromi Kawakami, 176 pages

NOVEMBER 16 BOOK BY A D.C. WRITER:

All Aunt Hagar's Children: Stories by Edgar P. Jones, 399 pages

DECEMBER 21 POETRY:

Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, 624 pages



All meetings are on the third Tuesday evening of the month at 7:30 P.M. For now the meetings are on Zoom.

Also for the summer we are discussing what we have been individually reading and want to share with the group.

Next up: Tuesday July 20th. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Here are the books recommended at the June meeting:

Martha Trunk: *While Justice Sleeps* by Stacey Abrams (mystery), *Under a White Sky: The Nature of the Future* by Elizabeth Kolbert (science), *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein (history)

Elizabeth Kessel: *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig (fantasy), *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris (mystery), *Mill Town: Reckoning with What Remains* by Kerri Arsenault (memoir)

Nadyneq Rosin: *The Chalk Circle Man* by Fred Vargas (mystery), *The Outlander* series by Diana Gabaldon (historical fiction), *The Premonition: A Pandemic Story* by Michael Lewis (science), *Europe: A Natural History* by Tim Flannery (history)

Aida Loomis: *Strengths Finder 2.0* by Tim Rath (business)

Peggy Howard: *Mike Nichols: A Life* by Mark Harris (biography), *Green Lights* by Matthew McConaughey (memoir), *The Soul of a Woman* by Isabel Allende (feminism)

Polly Rosenstein: *Shuggie Bain* by Douglas Stuart (historical fiction)

We hope to see you at our July 20th meeting as we share our book reading experiences.

Polly Rosenstein for FC AAUW Book Group

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 7	7:00pm	Movie Group via Zoom
July 20	7:30pm	Book Club via Zoom
August 11	7:00pm	Movie Group via Zoom
August 17	7:30pm	Book Club via Zoom
September 13	7:30pm	Branch meeting via Zoom

In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team, and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

