

AAUW FALLS CHURCH FLASH

Volume 72, Number 1

January 3, 2022



Co-Presidents' Message



Dear Members,

Happy New Year!

This week, I (Sharon) was thinking about being branch co-president. I'm tired of organizing and attending meetings, sending so many emails and announcements (& worrying that I should attend more meetings and send more information), and worse, watching changes in the law and policy related to so many issues that I care about apparently head south.

So, I decided to ignore all that and instead read the Sunday paper thoroughly. After many COVID articles, I found an obit, "*Karen Ferguson, 80, Lawyer Who Changed Pension Laws*," by Katharine Q. Seelye (NY Times, Jan 1, 2022, p. A16, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/30/business/retirement/karen-ferguson-dead.html>). I read on. Ms. Ferguson came to Washington DC after law school and, in the early 1970s, was a Nader Raider. She volunteered to work on pension law and "within a few short years, she became one of the country's foremost experts on pension law." (This quotation and all quotations following are from the obit.)



She founded the Pension Rights Center in 1976 with \$10,000 in funding from Ralph Nader, "who told her 'go make pensions an issue.'" Serving as director "for more than four decades, Ms. Ferguson successfully lobbied Congress for numerous pension reforms." "She also personally handled thousands of individual claims from people who had worked all their adult lives and found themselves being denied their full retirement benefits for one reason or another – corporate bankruptcies, say, or anticipated insolvencies, or chicanery." "She jump-started a national grass-roots movement for better pensions in this country," Karen Friedman, executive director of the center, said in an interview. "This included strengthening protections for widows and divorced spouses. Ms. Ferguson had been hearing from widows who weren't receiving benefits because their husbands, unbeknown to them, had signed away their rights. Ms. Ferguson helped draft, and fought for passage of, the Retirement Equity Act of 1984, which President Reagan signed into law. Among other things, it required qualified pension plans to provide automatic survivor benefits and allow for waivers only with the consent of both the participant and the spouse."

"Her son said that even in the last weeks of her life, Ms. Ferguson was on Zoom and on the phone with people who had lost their retirement benefits and had nowhere else to turn. 'She was a typical Washington workaholic,' he said. 'Here she is in the middle of dying and she's helping out this individual in any way she can. She did it because it was meaningful to her.'"

Ferguson's accomplishments are magnificent and far-reaching, and her dedication to providing a better life to millions is awe-inspiring. So, I guess I'm ready for a few more emails and re-energized for the fight.

Are you ready to rededicate yourself to fighting for changes in law, policies and practices to further the principles – equity, fairness, economic security -- that you think are important and are also part of AAUW's focus? Our January program will inspire you. As you will recall, one of our greatest successes as a branch in 2020 and 2021 was writing 11,000+ postcards for Reclaim Our Vote ("ROV"), a campaign urging voters to vote and people to register to vote. **On January 9, at 2 p.m.**, hear more about the impact of the ROV campaign from Roxanne Rucker, of ROV and Common Cause, at our FC AAUW branch meeting (via Zoom). We hope to see you on the small screen!

Also, in your planning for this year, please include AAUW. In February, the nominating committee will be nominating persons for the offices of President, Vice President - Programs, and Secretary. Pam Martinov also needs help publishing the newsletters. (She is publishing newsletters for 2 organizations right now!) Please say yes if the Nominating Committee gives you a call and asks you to serve as an officer.

The mini book sale at the Falls Church Community Center was a resounding success; congratulations to Dianne Bodeen and Sarah John! They convinced the doubting Thomases among us (myself included) that we should hold the sale. Dianne was there both Saturdays, hawking books like Monte Hall on "Let's Make a Deal." Becky saved the day by bringing us back up to speed on the use of Square and making credit card sales possible.

Finally, thanks to Susan and Becky for a fabulous holiday lunch. We had a surprise guest, Marybeth Connelly, Deputy Mayor of Falls Church, who updated us on various developments in Falls Church.

Sharon Zackula (and Elizabeth Kessel)
Co-Presidents

Next Branch Zoom Meeting



Mark your calendars for Sunday, **January 9th, at 2 pm**. Join Falls Church AAUW Branch via Zoom to learn more about the Reclaim Our Vote (ROV) campaign we supported with all those postcards last summer and fall.

Local contact Roxanne Rucker will tell us about ROV in Virginia and the associated Center for Common Ground. The Center was founded to educate and empower under-represented voters in voter suppression states to engage in elections and advocate for their right to vote. Hear about the campaigns we worked on and what they have planned for 2022.

Zoom information will be provided several days ahead of January 9th.

Public Policy State Lobby Day Canceled

After consideration of the public health warnings about the new COVID variant and the rising number of cases in Virginia, the 2022 in-person AAUW/VA State Lobby Day, scheduled for January 19, and the reception for Virginia's women legislators have been canceled.

As was the case in 2021, AAUW members will be asked to support legislation virtually through emails and phone calls to your elected representatives. You will be provided with fact sheets, talking points, and other materials you can use to contact your elected delegate and senator. The Virginia General Assembly session begins on January 12 and ends on March 12.

In lieu of the reception for women legislators, the State Public Policy Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy hope to host a Zoom session with Virginia women legislators from both political parties on **January 25 at 6:30 pm**. As plans for the virtual reception develop, you will be informed.

If you would like to participate in “virtual lobbying”, please send your email address to Marilyn Falksen (fcaauwpublicpolicy@gmail.com) so that she can forward the necessary resources to you.

VA Public Policy Meeting Scheduled for January 5

The first AAUW-VA Public Policy meeting of 2022 will be held on **Wednesday, January 5, at 5 pm** via Zoom. AAUW-VA priorities and expectations for the 2022 General Assembly session that begins on January 12 will be discussed at the meeting. All members interested in sharing with Virginia legislators AAUW-VA’s position on legislation important to women and their families are encouraged to attend. The link is provided below.

Topic: AAUW-VA Public Policy Meeting

Time: Jan 5, 2022 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81896955850?pwd=dmkzd0hURUY4Unh6eTRYOHJNTkZKUT09>

Meeting ID: 818 9695 5850

Passcode: 659505

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

Meeting ID: 818 9695 5850

Passcode: 659505

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81896955850?pwd=dmkzd0hURUY4Unh6eTRYOHJNTkZKUT09>

Alexandria Branch

On January 14th, we will be having our fundraiser at the Little Theater of Alexandria. Susan Werner has the tickets. The ticket price is \$35 and the name of the play is *Bright Star*. It should be a lovely evening.

Arlington Branch / McLean Area Branch



Saturday, **January 22** 10:00 am – ***Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*** – The Arlington and McLean Area Branches will join with others in Virginia for a statewide program meeting on *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* with the theme of creating inclusive spaces.

Mount Vernon Branch News

On Thursday, January 20 at 4:00 p.m. we have our branch Zoom program. Dr. Angela Hattery will moderate a panel discussion, featuring Dr. Loretta Prater, Charlotte Woodward, and Dr. Earl Smith. The topic is *Police Use of Force: Its Impact on People with Disabilities, the Mentally Ill, and Other Underserved Populations*. The discussion will include recommendations for social action. You will need to register for this program: <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/8511469>

Vienna Branch News

Monday, January 3, 2022, 7:30 PM to 9 PM, Virtual Event via Zoom

Join us to hear from the two Vienna Area delegates to the Virginia House in advance of the 2022 opening session.

What will the changes in the Virginia legislature mean this year? What are the chances for passage of AAUW priorities such as paid family leave, child care, and paid sick leave? Come with your questions for a lively exchange of insights.

This program is open to the public and is co-sponsored by the Patrick Henry Library in Vienna. Attendance is limited and advance registration with the library is required [here](#).

Movies, anyone?



Stuck: Unable to move from a particular position or place, or unable to change a situation

Together: When two or more people or things are with each other

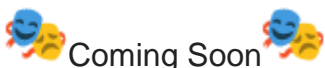
Stuck Together: To become and remain attached

The new year for the film group begins with the French film *Stuck Together*. In the movie we follow the lives of 7 families who remain in Paris during the COVID 19 pandemic and lockdown. During their stay at home confinement, the stuck together residents

experienced joy and stress, fought and reconciled, discovered each other and became close.

The title of the French film made me think about what it meant to be stuck, what it meant to be together and what it meant to be stuck together. In our lockdown, we experienced the frustration of being unable to go to the theater (or Capitol Hill, or in person meetings) but we opened up to learning new things such as zoom (Google meet, Microsoft Teams) and meeting new people with shared interests. COVID 19 has been and remains tough. Through it though perhaps we have discovered new things too.

Watch *Stuck Together* on Netflix Streaming and join the group virtually via zoom on Wednesday, **January 26th at 7:00 PM**. Please call or text Aida at 703 966 8050 if you are interested in joining any of our film discussion evenings. All are welcome!



Passing February 23 at 7:00 PM

Cloudburst March 23 at 7:00 PM

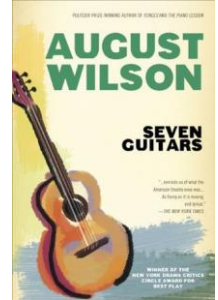
Book Club News

FC AAUW Book Group Winter/Spring 2022 Line Up:

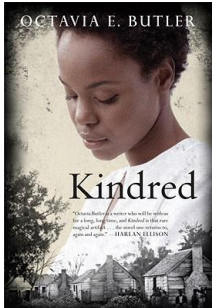
You recommended and you voted and here's what you chose for the first 5 months of 2022:

January 18-Play- *Seven Guitars* by August Wilson (7:00pm on Zoom)

It is the spring of 1948. In the still cool evenings of Pittsburgh's Hill district, familiar sounds fill the air. A rooster crows. Screen doors slam. The laughter of friends gathered for a backyard card game rises just above the wail of a mother who has lost her son. And there's the sound of the blues, played and sung by young men and women with little more than a guitar in their hands and a dream in their hearts. August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* is the sixth chapter in his continuing theatrical saga that explores the hope, heartbreak, and heritage of the African-American experience in the twentieth century. The story follows a small group of friends who gather following the untimely death of Floyd "Schoolboy" Barton, a local blues guitarist on the edge of stardom. Together, they reminisce about his short life and discover the unspoken passions and undying spirit that live within each of them.



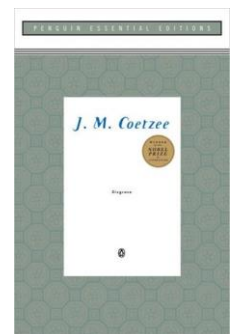
February 15-Science Fiction- *Kindred* by Octavia Butler



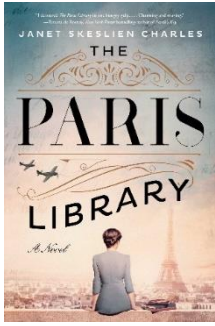
The first science fiction written by a black woman, *Kindred* has become a cornerstone of black American literature. This combination of slave memoir, fantasy, and historical fiction is a novel of rich literary complexity. Having just celebrated her 26th birthday in 1976 California, Dana, an African-American woman, is suddenly and inexplicably wrenched through time into antebellum Maryland. After saving a drowning white boy there, she finds herself staring into the barrel of a shotgun and is transported back to the present just in time to save her life. During numerous such time-defying episodes with the same young man, she realizes the challenge she's been given.

March 15- Book by a Nobel Prize Winner- *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee

Set in post-apartheid South Africa, J. M. Coetzee's searing novel tells the story of David Lurie, a twice divorced, 52-year-old professor of communications and Romantic Poetry at Cape Technical University. Lurie believes he has created a comfortable, if somewhat passionless, life for himself. He lives within his financial and emotional means. Though his position at the university has been reduced, he teaches his classes dutifully; and while age has diminished his attractiveness, weekly visits to a prostitute satisfy his sexual needs. He considers himself happy. However, when Lurie seduces one of his students, he sets in motion a chain of events that will shatter his complacency and leave him utterly disgraced.



April 19-Historical Fiction- *The Paris Library* by Janet Skeslien Charles



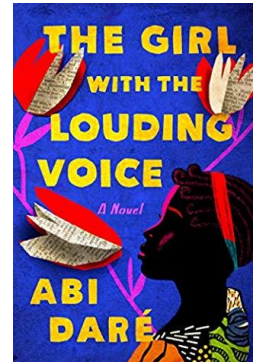
Based on the true World War II story of the heroic librarians at the American Library in Paris, this is an unforgettable story of romance, friendship, family, and the power of literature to bring us together, perfect for fans of *The Lilac Girls* and *The Paris Wife*.

May 17: Book by an African writer -*The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Dare

The unforgettable, inspiring story of a teenage girl growing up in a rural Nigerian village who longs to get an education so that she can find her “louding voice” and speak up for herself, *The Girl with the Louding Voice* is a simultaneously heartbreaking and triumphant tale about the power of fighting for your dreams.

We hope to see you on Zoom for our book discussions on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 P.M.

Polly Rosenstein for FC AAUW book group



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 5	5:00pm	First AAUW-VA Public Policy meeting of 2022
January 9	2:00pm	Branch meeting via Zoom- Reclaim Our Vote
January 18	7:30pm	Book Club via Zoom- <i>Seven Guitars</i>
January 24	7:00pm	FC AAUW Board Meeting
January 25	6:30pm	Zoom session with Virginia women legislators from both political parties
January 26	7:00pm	Movie Group via Zoom- <i>Stuck Together</i>

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.

