



AAUW Ashburn-Leesburg (VA) Branch Newsletter

October 2008 - Volume 1, No. 5

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, November 12, 2008, 7 pm

Event: **Membership Meeting**
Speaker: Andrea Powell, FAIR Fund
Topic: Human Trafficking
Location: Old Dominion University

Thursday, November 20, 2008, 7 pm

Event: **Great Decisions**
Topic: Blacklisting the Enemy
Location: Pam Gershkoff's House

Saturday, December 6, 2008, Noon

Event: **Holiday Luncheon**
Location: Clyde's Willow Creek Lodge
42920 Broadlands Boulevard
Ashburn
Contact: Luncheon reservations required;
RSVP to sylwhite52@yahoo.com
by December 2, 2008
**Optional
Donation:** \$5 for the Education Fund/
Legal Advocacy Fund (EF/LAF)

Saturday, January 24, 2009

Event: **Art Field Trip**
Location: TBA

Membership Meetings begin 7 pm; Branch members are encouraged to attend. Speakers start their presentations at 7:30 pm. The general public is welcome. We also encourage potential members to attend any of our scheduled meetings.

For questions regarding the **Great Decisions** program, please contact Barbara Fountain at barbarann1100@msn.com.

New Members

Our newest members are Peggy Johnson and Eileen Murdock, who brings our total branch membership to 22. Welcome to the branch, Peggy and Eileen!

Elections, Voting, and Political Parties: How Decisions Are Made By Those Who Show Up

At our October 27 meeting, Dr. Rosemarie "Ro" Pelletier enlightened those present with her dynamic, interactive, and timely talk on the American political process. She started with the fact voting is the basis of democracy.

One of her focus points delineated how not everyone's vote is weighted the same because Congressional districts vary in size. Thus, the size of the population determines the fractional importance of your vote. Every vote counts, but the vote's significance varies. For example, in California one vote represents 18 million individuals, and the state holds 55 electoral votes. In Virginia, the ratio is one vote to 3 million people, and there are 13 electoral votes. Dr. Pelletier also provided a clear analysis of both the pros and the cons of keeping the electoral college.

In closing, she discussed the reality that American society is reactive rather than proactive in nature, and we share a communal dislike of discussing subjects that make us uncomfortable.

We thank Dr. Pelletier for a fascinating and informative lecture.

Notices

If you know of someone you think would be interested in joining AAUW and our Branch, please invite them to a meeting or provide them with membership information. If you need additional materials, please contact Denise Moldover [denise@moldover.net].

Members, both new and old, are needed to provide refreshments at our meetings. Two providers for each meeting—one for drinks and the other for snacks—are recommended. Please contact Sylvia White [sylvwhite52@yahoo.com] to sign up.

Our Branch is in need of individuals to serve in the following positions:

- Membership VP (one person or two as Co-Vice-Presidents)
- Parliamentarian/Bylaws
- EF/LAF Chair

Anyone who is interested in any of these positions should contact Pam Gershkoff [positivelypam@hotmail.com].

Ideas or articles for the next newsletter are requested. Please contact Abbie Henrickson at dhenrickson@verizon.net.

Calendar

April 25, 2009

AAUW of Virginia Convention, Richmond, Virginia

June 26-29, 2009

AAUW National Convention, St. Louis, Missouri

Last Issue's Trivia Questions

1. **Maryland slaveholders offered a reward of \$40,000 for her capture. Who was she? Harriet Tubman**

Born into slavery in Maryland, Harriet Tubman's courage and daring were truly inspirational. In 1849, Tubman escaped her enslavement when her owner died and she believed she was about to be sold. "Tubman was not content with her own freedom, and over a ten-year period she made nineteen trips into the South to free others. At least three hundred men, women, and children escaped slavery through her efforts on the Underground Railroad. None of the people she assisted were ever caught . . . Tubman was well known to abolitionist leaders and even aided John Brown in his plans to raid Harper's Ferry in Virginia. She aided the Union Army in the South during the Civil War as a cook, nurse, spy, guerrilla fighter, and commander of scouts. Like many women, she worked in makeshift hospitals attending to wounded soldiers. Yet unlike most women, Tubman, only five feet tall, commanded soldiers on raiding expeditions, most notably on one up the Combahee River in South Carolina in 1863, when three hundred black soldiers rescued more than seven hundred slaves. She also organized networks of spies among slaves in Confederate territory." (*Handbook of American Women's History [Second Edition]* by Angela M. Howard and Frances M. Kavenik, Editors, page 577). As a side note, "No black person who met John Brown thought him crazy. Many black leaders of the day—Martin Delaney, Henry Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and others—knew and respected Brown. Only illness kept Tubman from joining him at Harpers Ferry." (*Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James W. Loewen, page 177).

2. **In 1862, Houghton Mifflin Company took over publication of what novel (originally published in serial form from June 1851 through April 1852) that has never gone out of print since? Uncle Tom's Cabin**

"*Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in serial form in the *National Era* from June 1851 through April 1852. In the first year after publication, the book existed in forty different editions and had sold over 350,000 copies in the United States. It was issued in England by over forty publishers, and English reviewers called it 'the Iliad of the blacks.' It has been translated into over twenty languages. Since taking over publication in 1862, Houghton Mifflin Company has never allowed the book to go out of print." (*Handbook of American Women's History [Second Edition]* by Angela M. Howard and Frances M. Kavenik, Editors, page 548).

The success of Harriet Beecher Stowe's fictional novel is proof that books have the power to transform national perceptions. "In each of the last two centuries [1800s-1900s] America's most popular novel was set in slavery—*Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell. The two books tell very different stories: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* presents slavery as an evil to be opposed, while *Gone with the Wind* suggests that slavery was an ideal social structure whose passing is to be lamented.

Until the civil rights movement, American history textbooks in this century [20th] pretty much agreed with Mitchell. In 1959 my high school textbook presented slavery as not such a bad thing. If bondage was a burden for African Americans, well, slaves were a burden on Ole Massa and Ole Miss, too. Besides, slaves were reasonably happy and well fed. Such arguments constitute the 'magnolia myth,' according to which slavery was a social structure of harmony and grace that did no real harm to anyone, white or black." (*Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James W. Loewen, page 140) One final note, "Margaret Mitchell, the author, was an Atlanta girl who had walked out of a history course at Smith College when an African American student was admitted to the class." (*America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* by Gail Collins, page 369).

3. **During the Civil War, this woman arrived at an army camp in Cairo, Illinois, and went to work cleaning and nursing without official permission for the next four years. Who was she? Mary Ann ("Mother") Bickerdyke**

If you guessed Clara Barton, you wouldn't be far wrong. She, too, worked very hard to provide nursing to soldiers during the Civil War. "Mary Ann ("Mother") Bickerdyke first arrived at an army camp in Cairo, Illinois, to deliver a relief fund. Seeing the filthy, overcrowded hospital tents, she simply got to work cleaning and nursing, without asking anyone's permission. In her Quaker bonnet, she trotted across nineteen battlefields in four years, lantern in hand, searching for the wounded. She was famous for ordering everyone around, and her reputation gave her the clout to get away with it. An army surgeon who challenged one of her orders was told: 'Mother Bickerdyke outranks everybody, including Lincoln.' When a brigade marched past her, exhausted after a long day of rush toward the front but forbidden by the officer in command to rest Bickerdyke simply yelled 'Halt!' and was able to distribute soup and coffee before the officer could get his men moving again." (*America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* by Gail Collins, page 201).

New Trivia Questions

1. Who was born Phoebe Ann Moses in Ohio in 1860?
2. Sarah Breedlove was an entrepreneur who became famous under what name?
3. Who was the first woman member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science?

The answers will be given in the next issue.