

AAUW Little Rock Branch February Meeting  
February 12, 2022 (via Zoom)

The meeting was called to order by Co-President Zenobia Harris at 11:03 A.M.

Seventeen members and six guests ultimately joined the Zoom call (see attached roster of attendees).

#### PROGRAM

Co-President Maria Jones introduced special guests Janai Taylor Harris and Katie Clark. Co-President Harris then provided an introduction to the program, "Period Poverty in Arkansas," and to the background and qualifications of the speaker, Janai Taylor Harris, who heads the organization, "More Chances, Period". Major points of Ms. Harris' presentation and the following question and answer session are included in the attached Select Highlights. Period supplies will be distributed on March 5<sup>th</sup> at the Penick Boys and Girls Club, 1201 Leisure Place in Little Rock. Donations will be accepted at that location on that date.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Maria Jones announced that the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony is scheduled for April 20<sup>th</sup> in the Wally Allen Ballroom of the Statehouse Convention Center in downtown Little Rock. The reception is scheduled from 5:30-6:30 pm and the dinner and program from 6:30 to 9:00 pm. One of the inductees will be Dr. Margaret Clark, the first African American president of the AAUW Fayetteville branch and of the State AAUW organization. Maria noted that the organizers are planning a very "COVID-aware" event. Arkansas AAUW has reserved a table for ten. Individual tickets can be purchased for \$200. Members wishing to attend should contact State Finance Officer Nell Matthews to reserve a place.

The co-presidents described developing plans for the Arkansas AAUW State Convention. It is scheduled for one day only, Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup>. The convention will be virtual. Members were advised to be on the lookout for an interest survey, on which they may indicate their program interests and preferences. The topic of today's program will be added to the survey.

Vice President for Membership Dr. Mary McGehee was thanked for putting together the 21-22 Membership Yearbook which members recently received. Members were advised to contact Mary (mary\_mcgehee@comcast.net) with corrections or if they have not received a copy. Copy for the yearbook is now in Microsoft WORD, which will facilitate corrections and preparation of future yearbooks.

Zenobia and Maria described the open Leadership Positions at Branch and State Levels. State positions to be filled are President and Secretary. Felisha Perrodin is not eligible for another term. Secretary June Lloyd is eligible and willing to be nominated for a second term. Nominations for both positions are welcome and members are urged to step forward and/or to nominate fellow members for either or both positions. Maria explained that current by-laws allow for only three elected State leadership positions with the remaining positions being appointed by the President.

At the Branch level the Co-Presidents announced that Lula Brooks and June Lloyd have agreed to serve as the Nominating Committee. Open positions are Maria's Co-president's position and Vice President for Programs. Maria thanked Debra Tillery for her service of three years as Vice President for Programs. Members were urged to volunteer or to nominate fellow members for these positions. They may contact either Lula Brooks ([lpbb10@att.net](mailto:lpbb10@att.net)) or June Lloyd ([jacyll47@gmail.com](mailto:jacyll47@gmail.com)) to volunteer or to make suggestions.

Membership V.P. McGehee described planning activities for an in-person Membership Reception at which appropriate social distancing would be possible. Venues being explored are The Root Café, Innovation Hub, Museum of Discovery and the Butler Center.

The Co-Presidents announced that the Branch will be participating in Get Loud Arkansas, a "civic engagement group working to register, engage and mobilize voters ....." The organization was founded by State Senator Joyce Elliot. Maria noted that AAUW is one of many participating community organizations and that AAUW's role will be "a supportive, rather than a leadership role". Get Loud Arkansas is focusing on the Black vote during February and during March will be focusing on the Women's vote.

The Co-Presidents announced that this year the Little Rock Branch is celebrating the Branch 100 Year Anniversary. AAUW National has notified Little Rock that they will feature the Branch in their on-line publication. Participation in the Planning Committee was invited. To date the Committee includes the co-presidents, Diana Glaze, Maureen Terrafranca and Kathryn Buriel.

Maria and June urged members to go to the AAUW National website and view the gallery of entrants in the National Art Contest. Each AAUW member is allowed to vote for 10 entries. Winning entries will become the note cards which all members receive. Voting ends on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully Submitted (for Secretary Susan Holt),

June Lloyd

## LITTLE ROCK AAUW BRANCH MEETING ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS: Lottie Adams

Lula Brooks

Kathryn Buri

Devita Harden

Zenobia Harris

Maria Jones

June Lloyd

Nell Matthews

Mary Alice McGehee

Jean Pennucci

Sandra Smith

Winifred Stamps

Maureen Terrafranca

Debra Tillery

Ella Walker-Rolfe

Jim Wohlleb

Carol Young

Veronica Tess Myers (AAUW National Member)

GUESTS: Sylvia Brown

Katie Clark (Period Poverty advocate)

Denise Ennett (State Representative)

Janai Harris (Period Poverty advocate)

Sarah Thompson (Fayetteville AAUW Branch Member)

## PERIOD POVERTY

Presentation by Janai Taylor Harris

Select Highlights

### DEFINITION

Period Poverty is the inability to afford or obtain sanitary supplies. Ms. Harris' work in this arena began in 2019. She is the founding leader of the organization, "More Chances, Period".

### THE PROBLEM

Large numbers of women and girls in Arkansas experience period poverty. Thus, they are missing work and school days because they lack period supplies. This fact results in lowered self-esteem and negative effects on overall educational and career outcomes.

Using substitutes such as newspapers and other inappropriate materials may lead to health problems and even fertility issues.

Fifty-nine percent (59%) of all Arkansas menstruators report being unable to afford supplies at times. Nationally, 25% of female students report missing at least one day each month due to lack of supplies. One tenth (1/10) of college students report missing some classes due to lack of supplies. Among first generation college students this figure rises to one fifth (1/5) or one in five college students report missing classes due to lack of supplies.

Supplies for a 5-day cycle cost \$12-\$15. Supplies for a longer cycle may exceed \$20/month. (This may be magnified by the number of women and girls in any family). The average woman spends \$7,000 on supplies over a lifetime.

Period supplies are taxed as "luxuries" in Arkansas further raising the costs.

### ATTEMPTS TO MITIGATE THE PROBLEM

In 2021 Ms. Harris' organization provided supplies to 8,256 menstruators. They also have established partnerships with businesses and schools.

Distribution is accomplished through seven (7) state sites or supplies will be shipped to those unable to pick them up. The next distribution is scheduled for March 5th at Penick Boys and Girls Club, 1201 Leisure Place in Little Rock. Donations may be made on the same day at that site. Menstruators need not be homeless to access the supplies.

## ADDITIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

Eighty-six percent (86 %) of adults believe period supplies should be available free of charge. (In Scotland they are totally free.) Eighty-nine percent (89%) did not know where they could access free period supplies.

In California and Louisiana movements are underway to remove the luxury tax from period supplies. In Illinois “menstrual equity” is being guaranteed by mandatory availability in school restrooms.

There is need for education on how best to use period supplies.

Many grants for which communities and schools apply specifically preclude funds being spent on period supplies.

Arkansas Act 933 of 2021 specifically notes that schools may use public funds to provide period supplies.

<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Acts/FTPDocument?path=%2FACTS%2F2021R%2FPublic%2Ffile=933.pdf&ddBienniumSession=2021%2F2021R>

However, it is not mandatory, and most schools choose to spend the funds on other needs.

State Representative Denise Ennett noted that the Department of Education may do a Commissioner’s Memo to all school districts notifying them of the option to use funds on period supplies. Similar information needs to be provided to school counselors, social workers, school nurse organizations and district superintendents.