

AAUW-Orange, Durham, Chatham Branch

From the President: Bea Keller

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From the President	1
Women Photographers	2
Save the Date	
President's Message (continued)	
Public Policy'	3
Time to Renew	
Meet & Greet, September 13	4



We are living in a time when the poor are blamed for their poverty. I read with interest about the early life of Elvis Presley. His family, like many others in Mississippi, lived in abject poverty and relied on the kindness of others. His father spent several years in Parchman Farm Prison for adding a zero to a \$4.00 check, his twin brother was buried in a shoebox, and housing insecurity was a fact of life. Elvis understood poverty and what poverty can do to a family—and how the kindness of family and strangers helped his family survive. For this reason, he gave generously and without blame. So too, public policy needs to be structured within a dispassionate and humane framework.

This past week, branch representatives were invited to the NC Justice

Center to attend workshops on issues pertaining to women. One workshop focused on poverty. Poverty is pervasive when one does not earn a living wage—it affects every aspect of life. Issues associated with poverty are best addressed holistically with the following components. 1.) Good public education—it bonds people under one nation and provides opportunities and hope for a better standard of living. Currently, it is under attack. 2.) Affordable and non-discriminatory practices—they help everyone, but especially those mired in poverty. Research from the Economic Policy Institute finds that infrequent adjustments to the federal minimum wage have left many people in poverty despite working two or three jobs. Housing and transportation are a constant struggle for many individuals and families.

3.) Lax laws regulating predatory schemes (payday lending, insurance scams are examples) target the poor who may feel they have no alternative to pay rent, car repairs or other large bills. 4.) Access to good healthcare is often out of the reach of the poor and even the middle class. Medicaid Expansion would greatly reduce the number of people who have no coverage and only receive medical care in emergencies. 5.) Fair tax laws are critical to creating an economy that works across the state. Tax caps and flat tax rates hurt the poor and middle class. Five percent of a \$20,000 salary for a single mother or a retired couple is a burden and benefits the wealthier person who has ample money to cover his or her lifestyle. Lowering and capping the tax rate means less money for schools,

Of Interest to Our Members:

THE CHAPEL HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY Presents Bayard Wootten:

Trailblazer for Women Photographers in the South

Presentation by Jerry Cotten, Photographic Archivist

Sunday, September 16, 2018 3:00-5:00 PM, followed by reception 4:30-5:00 PM

Meeting Room B, Chapel Hill Public Library

Save the Date!

Thursday, September
13
5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

@ Michele Hoyman's
634 Kensington Dr.
Chapel Hill, NC

AND

Women in Politics
October 10
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Sonja Haynes Stone
Center for Black
Culture and History
UNC-CH
150 South Rd.
Chapel Hill, NC

Bayard Wootten, perhaps North Carolina's best-known photographer in the first half of the twentieth century, is the subject of a presentation on September 16, by Jerry Cotten, author of *Light and Air: The Photography of Bayard Wootten*. Wootten embraced an artistic style of photography known as Pictorialism and operated studios in several NC towns, includ-

ing Chapel Hill (1928-1954). Her landscape images and insightful portraits of Southerners, both black and white, resulted in numerous exhibitions, lectures, and books illustrated with her photographs. Wootten was known for her independence and determination as a woman and as a photographer. Her ca-

reer was at its peak during the 1930s. Originally published in 1998, *Light and Air, The Photography of Bayard Wootten* was reprinted by the University of North Carolina Press in 2017 and features striking new scans of the illustrations using the best digital technology.

President's Message(continued)

emergencies, social programs, healthcare and the public sector. 6.) A cohesive immigration and refugee policy that promotes the fair treatment of immigrants, regardless of race, ethnicity, or country of origin. Unfortunately, immigrants are often excluded from other programs that offer legal services to low-income people. Consequently, immigrants are more likely to become vic-

tims of abuse by unscrupulous businesses and employers. 7.) Protection of workers' rights, workplace equity for women, enforcing and expanding policies that ensure safe workplaces, fair treatment, a living wage and a strong safety net in times of hardship are policies that improve the well-being of working families and enable workers

to access economic security.

AAUW's mission aligns with all these efforts. Our November program on Poverty in NC will illustrate what it means to be poor in our communities. On a lighter note, I hope to see all of you at Michele Hoyman's house on September 13 for good company and conversation!

Public Policy—Pigs in a Poke

- * Stay tuned for more activity on the proposed 2019 NC Constitutional Amendments! Here is what we know now—**none of the amendments that will be on the ballot are the actual law that will be added to the constitution.** They are the proverbial “pig in a poke”.
 - * The amendment requiring voter ID does not specify what ID will be acceptable to vote. It could prevent more than 200,000 eligible voters without voter ID from voting, including disabled, veteran, elderly voters, and the poor. And who will pay for it? (Hint: the voters)
 - * Constitutional amendment to reduce the income tax rate in NC to a maximum allowable rate of seven percent. (It is currently at 10%). This amendment would hurt our ability to fund vital public needs like roads and schools, and to address natural disasters. It provides a permanent tax shift to help the rich at the expense of everyone else and will force lawmakers to increase other taxes such as property and sales taxes which will cause hardship to the poor and middle class.
 - * Judicial appointments amendment will allow legislators to pick judges who would rubber stamp their agenda, and to impeach judges so that they might fill the “vacancies” with judges more aligned to their agenda. In time, it could result in ending our ability to elect our judges altogether. (Lawmakers will meet again in a special session to rewrite it and the following amendment in an attempt to get it on the ballot in November).
 - * Election and Ethics Amendment gives legislators authority to take away the governor’s power to appoint members to hundreds of state boards including the state elections board and the board that regulates utility companies (think coal ash ponds). The amendments do not include checks on legislators’ power.
 - * Victims’ Rights Amendment ignores our state’s existing robust victim’s rights laws and would cost tens of millions of dollars per year to implement with no details on where the money comes from.
 - * Hunting and Fishing Amendment is written to benefit the corporate gun lobby, deceives voters into thinking their rights are under attack for the sole purpose of drawing them to the polls, recreating protections that already exist, with no known threats.

TIME TO RENEW FOR 2018-2019!

You may renew in two ways:

- ◆ Online at www.AAUW.org with a Credit Card and your Member number (Look on the address label of your AAUW Magazine or Call Karen Piplani at 919-929-6553 for number.)
- ◆ Send Check for \$80.00, made out to AAUW-Chapel Hill to Karen Piplani, 1502 Halifax Rd, Chapel Hill, NC 27514-2728.



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