

April 2025

DESERT BREEZE



Las Vegas (NV) Branch

American Association of University Women

April MEETING

Saturday, April 19, 2025

11:30 AM

THE SUMMIT

2215 Thomas Ryan Blvd.

Las Vegas, NV 89134

Come join us at The Summit. The cost is \$25.00 per person. The price includes the room fee, technical equipment, lunch from the menu, and a drink. Guests are welcome, so bring a friend. No reservations are needed.

Guest Speaker

Claudia Merrill, M.ED

American Soprano

Artistic Director & Founder

Grace City Opera Theatre

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Our March meeting speaker was Janai McFarland, one of our scholarship recipients. In April, Claudia Merrill, one of our members, will be our speaker.

Just a reminder that members receive an email when it is time to renew your membership. Membership now expires at various times during the year. So be sure to renew your membership when you receive that notice.

AAUW National dues will be increasing by \$2.00 effective April 1, 2025. Members were sent an email with this information. There will also be another \$2.00 increase in National Dues effective April 1, 2026. Renewing your membership beginning April 1, 2025, will be \$100 for members. Student membership remains at \$18.81 and Lifetime members dues remain at \$17.

We need continue to watch for changing policies that impact women in the upcoming months and be sure we make our voices heard.

We continue to stay focused on our mission of gender equity and economic security.

JANIS AND MARILYN



Janai McFarland, Scholarship Recipient

**GUEST SPEAKER
CLAUDIA MERRILL
AMERICAN SOPRANO**



Founder and Artistic Director of the Grace City Opera Theatre, Claudia has performed all over the United States and Europe singing Opera and performing as a Concert Artist. After making her debut at Carnegie Hall singing John Rutter's Requiem with the New England Symphony, she then went on to become the first African American Principal Soprano for the Las Vegas City Opera.

Claudia has performed several roles and has performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Michigan Opera Theatre, Nevada Opera Theatre, Nevada Grand Opera and Arbor Opera Theatre. In addition to her opera work, Claudia has performed as a solo artist in Handel's Messiah, Faure Requiem, Dubois' Seven Last Words of Christ, John Rutter's Requiem, Mozart's Magnificat, Vivaldi's Gloria, Mendelssohn's Elijah, John Carter's Cantata, Joseph Joubert's Oh Glory and many others.

Ms. Merrill is a graduate of Detroit Public Schools, University of Detroit Mercy, and Wayne State University with further Music and Opera studies at Marygrove College and University of Michigan.


Ms. Merrill founded Soprano Expressions in 2015 and The Grace City Opera Theatre in 2016. The Grace City Opera Theatre is a 501c3 non profit organization committed to the preservation, education and performance of the works of African American and African Descent Classical Composers and Artists.

Ms. Merrill is a member of the Voice Foundation, the world's oldest and leading organization dedicated to the care of the voice, National Association of Teachers of Singers, and The American Guild of Musical Artists. The 2019 Tribute to Marian Anderson concert marked the World Premiere of the Opera "Witness" written and composed by Ms. Merrill.

In October 2023, Ms. Merrill made History in the state of Nevada by opening the first ever African American Founded Opera Company and the first African American Opera Company to be led by a Woman in the state.

Though the Opera Theatre's beginnings were in Farmington, Ms. Merrill still made history as the first African American Opera Company in years, with a focus on the Master Works of African American and African Descent Classical Composers. As a Composer herself, Ms. Merrill continues to compose Prophetic Opera and Social Justice Opera.

**CLAUDIA MERRILL, M.ED.
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER
GRACE CITY OPERA THEATRE**






Unsung Voices:
Arias and Art Songs by African American
and African Descent Classical Composers

Throughout history, many African American and African Descent classical composers have made significant contributions to classical music, yet their legacies often remain overlooked. Despite the barriers they faced due to racial prejudice, these composers created powerful works that continue to resonate today. Their stories and compositions highlight important and often forgotten chapters in the history of classical music from the creation of mankind to today.

Sunday, April 6 | 3 PM
Clark County Library
1401 E. Flamingo Rd.

Free and open to the public.
Call 702-507-6021 for more information.



725-333-2158

[HTTPS://GRACECITYOPERATHEATRE.ORG](https://gracecityoperatheatre.org)

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND GROWING OUR BRANCH

Let's grow our branch membership. Every member can be a recruiter. Most individuals join AAUW and other organizations because someone they know told them about the organization and invited them to a meeting or activity.

So, we challenge all our members to bring guests to our meetings and activities, so we can grow our membership with individuals who support the mission and work of AAUW.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Membership renewals now occur throughout the year. Most of our branch members have June 30 membership expiration dates. Newer members and those members who renew after the three-month grace period will have a membership renewal date that occurs in a different month. The Membership Directory includes each member's renewal dates.

Members will receive email notices from AAUW regarding renewing your membership approximately three months prior to the expiration date. There will be a link to renew, using a credit card, or you may still send a check to our treasurer, Letti Dowell. Her information will be included in the renewal notice as well.

Members will continue to receive them through the grace period, which is three months after the renewal date or until the member renews their membership, if sooner. After the three-month grace period, members that have not renewed their membership are dropped from membership.

Membership dues remain at \$100 for branch members, \$18.81 for student affiliate members and \$17 for Honorary Life Members.

Honorary Life Members should send their membership dues of \$17 to Letti Dowell, Treasurer, at 9633 Gavin Stone Ave., Las Vegas, NV, 89145, by June 30.

SUPPORT OUR SCHOLARSHIP FUND

While we hold our annual fund-raising event at our November meeting, we want to remind you that donations can be made throughout the year.

To make a tax-deductible donation to the Scholarship Fund, checks should be sent to the Public Education Foundation, P.O. Box 26243, Oklahoma City, OK 73126-0243. Be sure to designate that the check is for AAUW Las Vegas Scholarships. The Foundation will acknowledge your gift.

You can also donate online to our Scholarship Fund at www.thepef.org. Again, be sure to indicate that your donation is for AAUW Las Vegas Scholarships.

Non-Deductible contributions can also be made at any time by writing a check payable to AAUW Las Vegas. Checks can be given to our treasurer, Letti Dowell, at any meeting or mailed to her at 9633 Gavin Stone Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89145.

*Together
We Can!*

The Las Vegas Branch needs a President, Vice President for Membership, and Treasurer for the 2025-2027 biennium. If you are thinking about any of these positions, we would love to have you on the Executive Board. Contact a member of the Nominating Committee: Chairman Judy Ingham, Janis Schoen, or Ruth Johnson.



Register for Grassroots Lobby Days: April 6-7, 2025

Grassroots Lobby Days offers the opportunity to network with experienced and emerging leaders, learn how to advocate for women and families, gain in-depth insights on timely issues, and meet with legislators.

To register, go to...

<https://default.salsalabs.org/Tf1794de5-ac02-44fd-9524-42a03385f032/d9975712-6cd3-4d0d-ae69-efa42dc02340>

SAD NEWS KELLI DESPAIN

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our past AAUW Las Vegas Branch member and friend, Kelli Despain. She passed away in December 2024. Kelli was the past newsletter editor for our branch. She hosted many AAUW gatherings at her home and at her business, the Bottega Exchange. We will miss her!

SAVE THE DATE
APRIL 26, 2024
10:00 A.M TO 12:30 P.M.



2025 AAUW Nevada SPRING
C O N F E R E N C E
LIFE TRANSITIONS:
FINDING JOY AT ANY STAGE!
Every Breath Can Bring a Change



Mary Brabant,
Director of Disability and Volunteer Programming
Goodwill of Southern Nevada

Shirley Bolden,
Motivational Speaker

 Saturday,
April 26, 2025

 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.,
via ZOOM

> "Unlocking Happiness at Every Phase of Life,"
Mary Brabant

> "Imparting Joy to Be the Best Version of You,"
Shirley Bolden

- JOIN US TO LEARN AND TAKE ACTION!
- Attend from the comfort of your OWN home.
- [Click here to R.S.V.P.](#)

Reserve your spot now for our 2025 all-virtual conference and hear the impressive lineup of women leaders!

Convention information will posted soon on our website at <https://aauw-nv.aauw.net/convention-news/>. Keep checking for updates.

RSVPs are required, so click here to sign up:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScIVz1ukL9PaIY0GiwW3kVnyAR9n6k1Arxj-IEBFdFsgULnXQ/viewform>

The Zoom link will be emailed on April 24, 2025 to all who RSVP to attend. If you do not receive a link, please email info@aauwnevada.org.

AAUW Nevada Leadership Council

*AAUW Boulder City Branch
Annual Wine and Chocolate Tasting*



Date: Saturday, April 26, 2025

Time: 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**Place: Boulder Dam Hotel Patio
1305 Arizona Street**

Donation: \$25 for souvenir wine glass

Fundraiser - Supporting AAUW Scholarships for local college students continuing their education.

Donated wines & chocolates.

Tickets available at Boulder Dam Hotel, April 10.

Show ticket for special price on dinner at Restaurant 1933, event day only (dinner not included in ticket price).

Thank you for your support!



INTEREST GROUPS

- **Bridge: Cam Usher (702-456-0702)**
- **Book Club: Kathryn Robinson (702-458-1747)**
- **Out to Lunch Bunch: Janis Schoen (516-376-9856)**

*You're Invited!
Join Us!*

OUT TO LUNCH

THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025

1:00 PM

**SETTEBELLO PIZZERIA NAPOLETANA
9350 W SAHARA AVE SUITE 170
(NEAR S. FORT APACHE RD)
LAS VEGAS, NV 89117**



**CONTACT JANIS SCHOEN
BY TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025
516-376-9856 (CALL OR TEXT)
AAUWSCH@GMAIL.COM (EMAIL)**

welcome!

**New Member
Alexis Vann**

Special Announcements



Birthdays

Teddie Brewer 4/13
Sharon Edwins 5/27

AAUW Meetings

April 19 The Summit
May 17 The Summit
June 21 The Summit

Officers & Committee Chairs 2024 - 2025

Co-Presidents: Janis Schoen & Marilyn Zimmerman
Vice President Membership: Shirley Hills
Vice President Programs : Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert
Secretary: Afi Bruce
Treasurer: Letti Dowell
Immediate Past Co-Presidents: Shirley Hills & Judy Ingham
Public Policy: Evelyn Thompson-Hilbert
Newsletter: Judy Ingham
Scholarships: Marilyn Zimmerman & Shirley Hills
Sunshine: Marian Stanton

Mission

Gender Equity
Economic Security

Values

Intersectional
Inclusive
Intergenerational
Empowering

Focus

Economic Security
Education
Advocacy