

February 2026

## **What Happens Next? On Letting Go of Certainty**

**By Peg Carlson-Bowen, Public Policy Committee**

Even as we see courts and special elections align with AAUW values, worry dominates. But HOW we frame the "what happens next" shapes what we do. Rebecca Solnit's words from "No Straight Road Takes You There" are wiser than mine: "...we pretend that life, like art, has plots and that we know how the story ends, whether it's an election or a cultural shift or the outcome of any major event, and we often err not on the side of caution but on the side of conventionality: the future will look like the present... But [we shouldn't] ignore the past, which is full of the strange and unpredictable things that transpired to create the present, reminders of how often destiny hangs by a thread and turns on a dime, how often the unexpected happens anyway."

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech was not scripted; it came about because Mahalia Jackson called out to him as he was partway through a more pedestrian, scripted speech, "Tell them about the dream, Martin! Tell them about the dream!", and he... shifted into the more prophetic voice of that greatest of American speeches. It almost didn't happen." Ms. Solnit, when reflecting on writing about hope, found that "a lot of people liked certainty, even grim certainty, more than the genuine uncertainty about what would happen next. If you pretend the future is preordained, you don't have to do anything."

Don't give up—do whatever you can do!

- Call Congress using the 5 Calls app.
- Write non-partisan postcards with us to encourage infrequent voters to vote.
- Join marches.
- Display signs.

Email [publicpolicy@aauwsanjose.org](mailto:publicpolicy@aauwsanjose.org) for information.

## Upcoming Events & Activities

### January 1–April 15

#### Local Scholarship 2026 Applications Open

The Local Scholarship team would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2025 Give the Gift of Education Campaign. Thank You to the Interest Groups and individuals who donated the raffle prizes.

A huge Thank You to everyone who donated to the Scholarship Fund! This was our most successful campaign to date, raising more than \$74,000. There are so many deserving young women trying to complete their education. Your generosity makes a difference in their lives and is appreciated. Now, it is time to focus on putting those funds to work helping young women complete their education. Help spread the word about our scholarships with your friends, family, and acquaintances.

The criteria to apply for one of the scholarships awarded by AAUW San José is:

- Permanent home address in Campbell, San José, Milpitas, or Santa Clara
- Completion of two full years at an accredited college or university
- Minimum 3.0 GPA in college courses
- Enrollment in a four-year institution as a junior or senior

Applications are accepted through April 15. More info at [scholarships@aauwsanjose.org](mailto:scholarships@aauwsanjose.org).

[Click here to get the full details to email to your email list and/or share on your social media channels.](#)

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### Saturday, February 21, 10am–12pm (doors open 9:30am)

#### Michael Mulcahy & Dr. Ruwan Amila Silva

#### Information on our Community and Aging Eye Health

Join AAUW San José Branch for a cup of coffee/refreshments and to get updates on our community from our [D6 Councilmember Michael Mulcahy](#). Also learn about eye health from our second speaker, [Ruwan Amila Silva, MD](#), who will review aging, eye health, and how artificial intelligence is used in the

medical field.

**Free. Open to the Public. Register |**

<https://form.jotform.com/260123657743154>

**Questions or Information |** [Programs@aauwsanjose.org](mailto:Programs@aauwsanjose.org).

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### **Saturday, February 28, 10am–12pm**

#### **Join Us: Coffee & Convo**

Reserve time on your calendar for our next casual get-together for current and prospective members! We will gather at Headquarters on Saturday, February 28, 10 am–12pm, and enjoy coffee, tea, and other goodies.

Learn about our 501(c)(3) Community Action Projects, our fun and informative interest groups and events, and ways we can all advocate for women's education and pay equity. Reconnect with members you haven't seen in a while and meet new friends.

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### **Saturday, March 14, 10am–12pm**

#### **Neighbors Helping Neighbors: March Donation Drive**

We will be having a donation drive at AAUW headquarters on Saturday, March 14 from 10am–12pm. We are collecting new items for two of our non-profit partners:

- **Family Supportive Housing:** Brand new pillows are needed for clients when they move to permanent housing. Amazon has two for about \$19.00 on their website.
- **Sacred Heart Community Service:** Children's diapers/pullups are needed in all sizes.

Donations can also be dropped off at headquarters any time before March 14. As always, thank you for your continued generosity in supporting our community.

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### **Saturday, March 21, 1–3pm**

#### **The Struggle for Equity: Local Women Tell Their Stories**

SJSU professors and officers of the History Club of Los Gatos describe their years of struggle for equity and relevance. You are invited to hear the inspiring stories of leaders in academia and women's philanthropy as they describe their struggle to achieve professional equity and maintain their philanthropic

impact.

In “Our Stories, Our Future,” three SJSU professors and two officers of the History Club of Los Gatos will take us on a journey through time, describing their respective setbacks and accomplishments and their vision for the future of women in academia and philanthropy.

### Speakers Scheduled

- Mairead Donohue, President, History Club of Los Gatos
- Jamie Schwarzfeld, Vice President, History Club of Los Gatos
- Tanya Bakhru, Ph.D, SJSU
- Lois Helmbold, Ph.D, SJSU
- Susanna Gallardo, Ph.D, SJSU

Location: Willow Glen United Methodist Church, Kohlstedt Hall.  
Sign in at 12:30 pm.

RSVP at <https://form.jotform.com/260176204993157>.



### **Gearing up for Summer STEM Camps**

Although we are just at the beginning of a new year, members of the San Jose branch Tech Trek CAP are already thinking about the summer. Not about summer vacations, but about the annual STEM camps sponsored by the [AAUW CA Tech Trek organization](#).

Members of each branch’s Tech Trek committee review the applications and essays, interview the students, and select who is best qualified to attend the camp. Branch members donate the funds to sponsor students for the camp.

Student interviews will take place at each of the schools in March. For AAUW members interested in participating as an interviewer,

please send an email to  
techtrek@aauwsanjose.org.

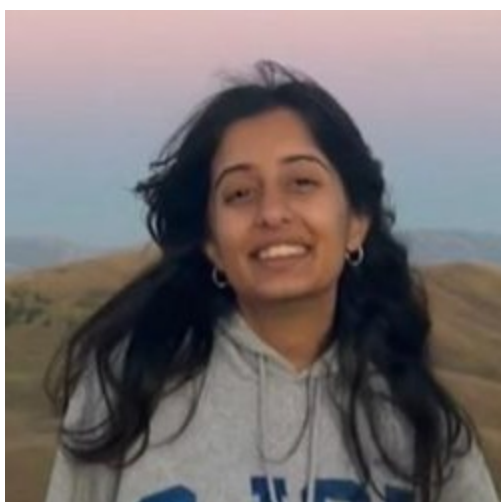
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### **Additional Support for AAUW Members and Committees**

We are happy to announce that AAUW SJ has a new Administrative Assistant, Ashna Gandhi. She will help us expand our community outreach, post content on social media, track AAUW-supported legislation, and help with certain member-recruitment activities. Inquiries about Ashna's availability should be directed to the PR/Communications ad hoc Committee (consultants@aauwsanjose.org).

### **Meet Ashna!**

Hi! I'm Ashna, and I'm excited to be the Administrative Assistant for AAUW SJ. I am from the East Bay (San Ramon/Dublin) and am a second-year business marketing major at SJSU. I'm on the pre-law track and love being involved in spaces that create real impact. My expertise is in research, social media, and public speaking. I'm also a research intern at SJSU and a debate coach for Diablo Valley HS. I enjoy drawing, making bracelets, trying new foods, and generally helping wherever I'm needed. I'm looking forward to working with everyone!



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[Click Here](#) | [Full Up-to-Date Branch Calendar Online](#)

**IN OTHER AAUW NEWS**

## AAUW Morgan Hill

Invites all to register (or volunteer) for their popular **2026 Wildflower Run** scheduled for April 12, 2026. [Click here for more information.](#)

## AAUW California

Seeks **candidates for several state-level positions**. Application deadline is March 14, 2026. [Click here for more information.](#)

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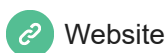
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## BONFIRE Newsletter

E: [BONFIREeditor@aauwsanjose.org](mailto:BONFIREeditor@aauwsanjose.org)  
1165 Minnesota Ave., Suite 100  
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Published 11 times a year (no July issue) [Submit Articles Online](#) (Currently publishing reduced content largely focused on specific upcoming events.)

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