



Murrysville Area. (PA) Branch

# FOCUS

Vol.55, No. 6

<http://Murrysville-PA.AAUW.NET>

February 2026



## Contents

Branch Meeting	p. 1
President's Letter	p. 2
Membership	p. 2
Reading for Pleasure	p. 3
Great Decisions	p. 3
January Meet Up	p. 4
Calendar	p. 5



In public memory, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. often appears as a saintly or a generic, safe, feel-good leader who stood only for justice and love. His views are also often distorted or cherry-picked today for political purposes. This presentation seeks to restore Dr. King to history, to capture him in all his human complexity and to explore the views that made him the controversial, and at times radical and reviled, figure that he was in his time.

Philip Nash is Professor of History at Penn State Shenango, where he has taught since 1999 and where he has won three teaching awards. He is Coordinator of the Multidisciplinary Studies Baccalaureate Program and the International Studies Certificate. His specialties are women in US foreign relations and the Cuban missile crisis. Earning his PhD from Ohio University in 1994, he held a post-doctoral fellowship at Harvard University and later was Fulbright Visiting Professor at the National University of Singapore. He is author of three books, most recently *Clare Boothe Luce: American Renaissance Woman* (Routledge, 2022) and is a frequent guest on the "Professor Buzzkill" history podcast (at professorbuzzkill.com).

## Snow Policy

If FR Schools are closed, AAUW meetings are canceled.

If FR Schools are delayed, AAUW meetings will be held as scheduled



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## President's Letter

"Life is like a box of chocolates . . ."

As I struggle to find a focus for my February letter, I find myself thinking of Forrest Gump's observation that "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get", words which were a reference to his mother's wisdom in conveying the unpredictable nature of life while encouraging the acceptance and the savoring of each experience, much like exploring one of those large, satin-covered heart-shaped boxes of Valentine chocolates.

AAUW "chocolates" for the season include our February presentation by Dr. Philip Nash which will examine unfamiliar aspects of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King. Our Reading for Pleasure group also returned to the 1960s as they explored the role of women nurses in the Vietnam war as they passionately discussed Kristin Hannah's book, *The Women*. February's selection will take the group further back in history (1754-1790) as they read *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhorn.

Other experiences to savor this season include not only watching the progress of library renovations but also in helping to prepare for the spring Used Book Sale. Chairwoman Jane Kerr encourages all members to save books, puzzles, Lego, and board games for upcoming sales in support of the Murrysville Community Library.

Moving outside the box, so to speak, please remember that the Board requests your input in nominating a slate of officers for our April election of officers. We will be selecting a new president and secretary. Please consider volunteering or nominating one of the many talented members of our Branch. Any Board member will happily accept your suggestions.

That Forrest's quotation referenced his mother's encouragement of acceptance spoke to thoughts very close to my heart. As your president for the past four years, I have come to cherish not only the diversity of opinions and political affiliations among our members but also to cherish the grace, acceptance, and encouragement which we show to each other. In a world where politics and world views so often divide us, I know AAUW as a place of acceptance, encouragement and love.

May your life be like a box of chocolates, too.

Happy Valentine's Day,

Diane Kaufmann  
President, Murrysville Area AAUW

## Membership

We are delighted to welcome our newest member:

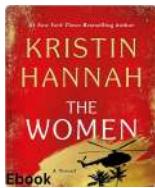
Alesia Perry

Please extend a warm welcome to each of our new members. They will be wearing a BLUE ribbon holding their name tag.

Susan Petrie and Debbi Ulusoy  
Membership Co-VPs



## Reading for Pleasure



After discussing a novel *The Women* set in a “historical” time that most of us remember, we are jumping back into a much earlier historical period (1754-90) to discuss a novel based on a historical person, Martha Ballard, of whom few have heard. *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhorne is “simultaneously a mystery, a manifesto, and a memoir”. Come and discuss! We will be meeting in the Conference Room of the Murrysville Community Library at 10:00 on February 26, 2026, to discuss this *New York Times* bestseller (I will email everyone if there is a change in the meeting place). Andrea Cole will lead the discussion.

I did finish Phaedra Patrick’s *The Time Hop Coffee Shop* in mid-December before my daughter Sharon arrived from Portland, Oregon to celebrate Christmas with the family. I partially listened to *The Women* for most of the month while driving on errands for the holiday preparations. Then after Sharon left on Christmas day, I was able to concentrate on finishing our January RFP selection. After that I couldn’t seem to finish any thing I picked up. I read sixteen pages of one book; I read the first two paragraphs of another; and I got to page 78 on a book my grandson Oliver gave me for Christmas, but nothing was appealing. I will get back to Oliver’s book since it’s from him, but....

The first full week in 2026 started out busy, and coming back home from one of our many appointments, I picked up a book I had ordered through the Mystery Lovers Bookshop. I have mentioned Jayne Ann Krentz before. She has written over a hundred twenty books under, at least, four different pseudonyms. I have been reading and collecting her since the 1970’s. Yes, I have pretty much a bookcase dedicated to her. Her latest *The Shop on Hidden Lane* just came out and I devoured it. My only regret is that I read her books so fast that I then usually have to

wait six months to a year for her next book. I might have to go back to her earlier books and reread or listen to them like I did with Terry Pratchett’s whole DiscWorld series. But now I can concentrate on reading our February selection, *The Frozen River*. See you February 26<sup>th</sup>, if not before.

Annie S. Rivers  
Co-Chair RFP

## Great Decisions

We may sponsor a Great Decision discussion group in the fall. Materials are available now for ordering.

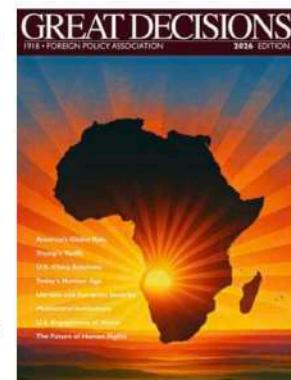
Foreign Policy Association



### Great Decisions 2026

We’re pleased to share that shipping has officially begun. For those who have already placed an order, your shipment is currently in progress and will arrive soon if it has not already. For those who haven’t yet placed an order, we’re now fulfilling new orders right away.

[Order online](#) or call (800) 477-5836.



Research documents, recommended readings, and videos related to each topic can be found in the [Topic Resources](#) section of [FPA.org](#).

Browse our Great Decisions topic resources and share your own.

### Virtual Discussion Groups

If your discussion group meets virtually and is open to welcoming additional participants, we’d be grateful if you could let us know. Please email [editorial@fpa.org](mailto:editorial@fpa.org) with your group name, meeting schedule, and contact information so we can compile a list of online discussion groups that anyone can join.

### Great Decisions Master Class Lectures

A DVD of eight, roughly 25-minute master class are available for 2026. The format of the lectures [can be sampled here](#). The master class lectures explore topics covered in the Great Decisions 2026 briefing book. They are [available for purchase](#) on DVD or via streaming.



Master class lectures are presented by Jeffrey S. Morton, the Pierrepont Chair in Political Science at Florida Atlantic University and a Fellow at the Foreign Policy Association. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of South Carolina and an M.A. from Rutgers University. Dr. Morton has delivered the Great Decisions program to live audiences since 1999.

## January AAUW Meet Up

On a very cold winter day, after enjoying lunch at the Old Route 66 Grille in Greensburg, our group of AAUW members and guests visited the Westmoreland Museum of American Art. A highlight of our visit was the installation, Winter Tales, with room size projections of winter scenes from the original works in the Museum's collections. The projections were animated and accompanied by surround sound, seamlessly blending art and technology to immerse the museum visitor in a wintery experience.

## THE WESTMORELAND MUSEUM of AMERICAN ART



The photo of the group includes the Liberty Bell replica created by Mandy Sirofchuck as part of the Bells Across Pennsylvania initiative celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States.



## February 2026

2/5	Thur.	9:45 AM	<b>Board Meeting</b> – Murrysville Municipal Meeting Room.†
2/12	Thur.	10:00 AM	<b>Branch Meeting</b> – Murrysville Municipal Council Chambers.†
2/14	Sat.		
		9:30 AM	<b>Duplicate Bridge</b> – at the home of Donna Beard.
2/16	Mon.		<b>Focus articles</b> are due to Donna Beard.  
2/26	Thur.	10:00 AM	<b>Reading for Pleasure</b> - Murrysville Community Library Meeting Room.

† Note that our meeting locations are temporarily changing due to construction taking place in the library. The Council Chambers are located across from the main entrance of the Municipal Building, 4100 Sardis Road.



The FOCUS is published monthly, except in July and August, by the Murrysville Area Branch of the American Association of University Women. President: Diane Kaufmann, Editor: Donna Beard, Email: [MurrysvilleAAUW@gmail.com](mailto:MurrysvilleAAUW@gmail.com). The American Association of University Women, founded in 1881, is open to all graduates who hold an associate degree or equivalent, or baccalaureate or higher degree from a college or university or academically accredited institution. In principle and practice AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability or class. Membership is not by invitation. AAUW advances equity for all women and girls through advocacy, education and research. The Murrysville Area AAUW has an affiliate membership available to anyone who does not hold an associate or baccalaureate degree.