

AAUW Convention Daily

Providence, Rhode Island | www.aauw.org

**Women
in Charge**
Bold. Innovative. Collaborative.

Monday, June 23, 2003

Triumphs and Trials

"Thank you for celebrating my tale of being a victor, not a victim," Bari-Ellen Roberts told a capacity crowd at the LAF Awards Dinner Sunday night, when Roberts accepted the 2003 Speaking Out for Justice Award. Graciela Chichilnisky, an LAF-supported plaintiff, and outgoing LAF president Sylvia Newman also addressed the group.

In 1996 Roberts won a class-action racial discrimination lawsuit against the Texaco Corporation; the \$176 million settlement benefited 1,400 of Roberts' co-workers—and countless others across the country.

"[The settlement] made corporations sit back and think, 'We don't want to be the next Texaco,'" said Roberts, who has since written a book and started a company devoted to diversity training. Through that work, she said, she has learned that "being willing and able to be inclusive or tolerant—or whatever we're calling it this week—really is a learned skill."

Chichilnisky, a tenured professor whose 10-year battle against sex discrimination and pay inequity at Columbia University remains unresolved, delighted the crowd with her bold advice: "The key thing here is to turn shit into fertilizer—you will never run out of raw material."

LAF Dinner, cont'd on page 2

Newman's Departure Marks End of Era

After four years at the helm of the Legal Advocacy Fund and many more as an AAUW member, LAF President Sylvia Newman gave her final address at the LAF Speaking Out for Justice Awards Dinner Sunday night.

"Like the women LAF serves, Sylvia speaks out for justice on behalf of the Legal Advocacy Fund," said AAUW Executive Director Jacqueline E. Woods.

Newman, who became the Fund's second elected president in 1999, oversaw the adoption of 12 cases for LAF support. Having been quoted in publications such as *The New York Times* and *Seventeen* magazine, she then spear-

headed the publication of LAF's first research report, *A License for Bias: Sex Discrimination, Schools, and Title IX*.

"Under her direction, LAF went

from a fledgling organization to a self-sustaining corporation," said Amy Barry Houghton, Director of the Legal Advocacy Fund. "She has been instrumental in that transformation."

Prior to her tenure at LAF, Newman taught school for 17 years and owned her own busi-

ness. Next, she plans to visit the Grand Canyon with her son and cruise from New York to Nova Scotia with her daughter.

At the end of the evening, Newman received two standing ovations. ■



Sylvia Newman takes a final bow.

Delegates Retain Degree Requirement

At Sunday's business session #2, delegates voted to retain AAUW's membership requirement of a four-year degree. In a vote on a proposed bylaws amendment, they rejected a proposal to open membership to all who support AAUW's mission. That amendment failed 1,069 to 369.

In a second vote that was still being counted when the session ended, delegates opposed opening AAUW's membership to people with associate degrees. Bylaws changes need a two-thirds vote to pass; this proposal fell 122 votes short. The results will be formally announced at business session #3 on Monday morning.

Delegates passionately debated both sides of the proposals.

Impassioned Debate, cont'd on page 2

Convention Daily

TODAY'S CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

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Business Session and
21st-Century Recognition 8-11:30 a.m.
Plenary 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
Untold Triumph 1-2:30 p.m.

Best Practices Workshops 2:30-4 p.m.
Gloria Steinem Book Signing 5-6 p.m.
Foundation Reception 6-7 p.m.
Foundation Night Banquet 7-10 p.m.

The logo for the American Association of University Women (AAUW), featuring a stylized triangle with horizontal lines.
AMERICAN
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UNIVERSITY
WOMEN

Impassioned Debate Over 4-Year Degree Requirement

cont'd from page 1

"I respectfully remind members of our diversity policy, which says there are no barriers to participation on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or class, said Patricia Ho, President of the North Shore (MA) Branch. "Class is determined in large part by economic status, and there is a direct correlation between economic status and education. We would be working in opposition to our own diversity policy."

Helen Sirett of the Kingsport (TN) Branch disagreed, emphasizing two points. "It's not a question of inclusivity. I don't think we're elitist. Many organizations have membership requirements. You need an engineering degree to join the Engineering Society," she said. "The requirement is a fundamental cornerstone of our organization. It's what differentiates AAUW from other organizations. We can't be all things to all people."

Delegates also failed to adopt an amendment to add a membership category for businesses and organizations.

"What happens if Hooters wanted to join?" asked Cathlene Thackaberry of the Carlsbad (NM) Branch. "If we don't have criteria set, we could be accused of discrimination." Membership Vice President Patty Hankins responded that the board planned to develop criteria. "At the bare minimum," she said, "businesses and organizations would be required to support our mission." Some delegates were hesitant to give businesses and organizations a vote; wouldn't we be selling ourselves out? Others spoke of current strategies for collaborations that work with businesses.

Delegates also took these actions:

- Created a separate position of Legal Advocacy Fund finance vice president. Currently a co-finance vice president serves the Association and LAF; so that person often is scheduled to attend two meetings simultaneously, or the two corporations may have different views that requires the officer to refrain from voting.
- Clarified a bylaws change made in 2001 that two representatives of the regional directors sit on the board.
- Established with enthusiasm an international affairs standing committee.
- Lengthened the time a branch could be inactive before forfeiting branch status, better reflecting actual practice.

Two amendments did not pass: Giving the eight non-board regional directors a vote at convention and adding a director-at-large position to the Executive Committee. ■

LAF Dinner

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Although she won her original case against Columbia, the school reneged on its obligations and later filed a countersuit in February 2003, alleging breach of loyalty to her employer. Columbia has yet to produce documents or policies that dictate professional loyalty.

Chichilnisky's perspective is still a positive one: She said the lawsuit has made her a "better person."

"I intend to win this lawsuit, and I want to win it for all of us," she said. "The true source of happiness is to feel useful to others."

Newman thanked LAF donors for contributing more than \$700,000 to fight against sex discrimination on campus. She also announced the new Justice Fund, an endowment created to form a "steady stream of income" for LAF, Newman said.

"I applaud the Legal Advocacy Fund for putting its money where its mouth is," Roberts said. ■

Be Part of History

Just 30 years after the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion, women's reproductive freedom is hanging by a thread. That's why AAUW is collaborating in what promises to be the largest pro-choice rally in history. Mark your calendars for Sunday, April 25, 2004. AAUW will co-sponsor the March for Freedom of Choice. For details visit www.matchforchoice.org. ■

Radio Raves

On June 20, opening speakers Julianne Malveaux and Deborah Perry, AAUW Executive Director Jacqueline Woods and AAUW President Nancy Rustad engaged in a lively discussion on "Vital Women," a program on radio station Coast 93.3, which will air early summer. AAUW and Women in Charge were also featured in two issues of the *Providence Journal* and Bari-Ellen Roberts, LAF President Sylvia Newman, and Woods were interviewed for the African American *Providence American* and WHJJ news radio. ■

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The *Convention Daily* is available online at
www.aauw.org/wic/convention/daily

AAUW promotes equity for all women and girls, lifelong education, and positive societal change. In principle and in 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.



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