WOMAN'S CITY CLUB OF GREATER CINCINNATI

THE BULLETIN

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2026

LIGHTING THE FIRE LEADING THE WAY SINCE 1915

OUR MISSION

to educate, empower, and engage the citizens of Greater Cincinnati to act together to promote the common good.

OUR VISION

is a just, inclusive, thriving, and sustainable community where all are informed and engaged in shaping our shared future.

OUR VALUES

Civic Literacy | Citizen Empowerment | Collaboration | Equity and Justice | Support for Children and Youth

JOIN US

PROGRAM COMMITTEE UPDATE

INVESTING IN US: COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AFTER THE ELECTION

AN IN-PERSON PUBLIC FORUM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18 | 6-7:30 PM

Doors open at 5:30 PM

The program committee has been working diligently to curate a series of public programs that deliver timely, relevant discussions on good government, healthy communities, and civic engagement—all toward **building a stronger democracy.**

Our program season kicked off with a powerful "doubleheader" on Cincinnati city reform, bringing together two stellar panels of experts who truly knocked it out of the park. This conversation picked up right where the November 2024 forum on the **Cincinnati Futures Commission Report** left off. While these discussions will continue with specialized workshops in the spring, you can dive into our upcoming programming sooner.

Save the dates for our next three compelling forums:

Investing in Us: Community Priorities After the Election
When: Wednesday, November 18, 2026
United Way of Greater Cincinnati (2400 Reading Road)

The holiday season, post mid-terms is the ideal time to talk with knowledgeable local experts about giving strategies in an era of shifting variables and resources. This forum is a moderated discussion with representatives from organizations that meet unfilled needs, with emphasis on data-driven gaps and indicators—short and long term, that guide local support for those in need.

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LET US GIVE THANKS AND REMEMBER OTHERS

The sun is going down sooner, the leaves are starting to turn crimson and gold, and we are expecting frost any time now! Before you know it, we will be gathering for Thanksgiving, and we have lots to be thankful for—our friends and family, our livelihood, and good fortune.

As Woman's City Club's president, I am grateful for our hard-working and conscientious board, our loyal members, and our generous donors. This is the time of year when we ask you for a little extra contribution to our **Annual Fund** in order to balance our budget (See page 6.), and I hope you will find us worthy of your support.

We continue to contribute to Cincinnati's civic conversation. In September and October, our **forums** on the structure and accountability of city government attracted large audiences. We are grateful to our prominent panelists and cosponsors, including the Charter Committee, Cincinnatus Association, Greater Cincinnati Voter Collaborative, Fortify Democracy, and Invest in Neighborhoods. We also appreciate that Lucy May interviewed three of our October panelists on WVXU's *Cincinnati Edition* the week before. That panel proposed several good suggestions about how to improve city government to enhance its management structure, economic sustainability and fairness. (See page 3.) If you missed these events, you can watch the recordings via a link on our website.

As we gather with friends and family to express gratitude for our blessings on Thanksgiving, we must also remember those less fortunate, especially those who are in greater need because of federal budget cuts. Our November forum will highlight giving by private and public sources to meet those in need in our community. (See page 1.)

"We continue to contribute to Cincinnati's civic conversation."

Among those we're thankful for are the feisty women (and men) who have shown extra spunk and determination in making Cincinnati a better place. We always look forward to celebrating them at our **Feist Tea** on the first Sunday in December. (See page 4.) The stories of our honorees are always so amazing, and the gathering is so welcoming. Please plan to join us on December 6.

Looking ahead to next year, we will present our **33rd National Speaker Forum** at Memorial Hall on April 6. Our speaker will be Julia Angwin, an award-winning investigative journalist, a *New York Times* contributing Opinion writer and co-author with Ami Fields-Meyer of *On Courage: How to be a Dissident in an Age of Fear*, (Mariner Books, 2026). This *New York Times* bestseller is a primer for activists and whistleblowers on how to make societal change.

And **I hope you voted on November 3!**

BETH SULLEBARGER
PRESIDENT

WCC FORUMS EXAMINE CINCINNATI'S STRONGER MAYOR SYSTEM AND PROPOSE REFORMS

A lively two-part forum series this fall focused on the dynamics of our city government and boosted civic engagement in real time through a phone-based poll. Most participants thought the stronger-mayor system has weakened council and left too little accountability at City Hall. Instituting an Inspector General was the most popular reform along with changing the way the City Manager and Police and Fire Chiefs are hired and fired.

The first forum, entitled, "**Stronger Mayor, Stronger City?"** held September 22 at the Cincinnati Public Library, featured three panelists—Mike Morgan, Tim Burke, and Kate Botos. Historian Anne Delano Steinert, director of UC's Center for the City, moderated and set the stage by tracing the charter to 1924, when the club helped replace the Boss Cox machine with council-manager government. City Charter changes that took effect 25 years ago gave Cincinnati a directly elected mayor who names council's committee chairs, controls council's agenda and alone can start the firing of the city manager, the professional who runs day-to-day operations.

Attorney Tim Burke, a longtime Hamilton County Democratic Party leader who helped defeat a 1995 strong-mayor amendment, called the 2001 system "a product of a compromise" whose mistake was taking power from council. "I would like to see some power put back into city council," he said. Morgan, who spoke at both forums, observed that "**The city manager has one boss, the mayor. And that's not really a city manager form of government."** Council Member Jeff Cramerding, who was in the audience, favors a more traditional council-manager system, and observed that several of the mayor's powers "came at the expense of council."

The live poll, using a phone-based app created by Matt Koesters of Fortify Democracy and funded by a grant from the Stephen H. Wilder Foundation, was taken before and after the discussion. Comparison of results showed a shift in opinion; those saying the mayor should have less power rose from 32% to 60%, and those saying council should have more power rose from 23% to 51%. **At the end, 71% said the city manager should be more independent of the mayor**.

The second forum, entitled "**City Management: Who Really Runs the City?"** and held on October 22 at the Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church, was moderated by Laure Quinlivan, a documentary filmmaker, investigative reporter, and



Anne Delano Steinert



Kate Botos



Tim Burke



Mike Morgan

Sept. Forum Panelists

(Continued on page 7)

FEIST TEA

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO HONOR OUR "FEISTY FOUR!"

LAURIE FRANK



Join us on **Sunday, December 6**, from 2 to 4 pm at the Kennedy Heights Arts Center Annex when Woman's City Club members and friends come together for one of our most beloved traditions—**Feist Tea**, a celebration of Greater Cincinnatians who aren't afraid to speak up, stand out, challenge the status quo, and work toward a stronger community.

Held at the Kennedy Heights Arts Center Annex, 6620 Montgomery Road, the 2026 Feist Tea will once again shine a spotlight on individuals whose passion, persistence, courage, and commitment embody what it means to be truly feisty. Our honorees come from many different backgrounds and areas of service. What connects them is a willingness to get involved—and the determination to keep going when the work isn't easy.

Their examples remind us that meaningful change begins with people willing to ask difficult questions, lend their talents, and stand alongside others. Feist Tea offers a chance to recognize that dedication while finding inspiration for our own involvement in the civic life of Greater Cincinnati, whatever form it may take.

This year's honorees

Jeff Dey, WCC's first male President and current VP for Governance, has been an active member since 2005, serving on every committee as well as providing valuable tech support for all WCC events. He also shares his commitment to community service with several other organizations, including the Cincinnatus Association and the Kennedy Heights Arts Center Board.

Edna Keown, a WCC member since 2021, is active with the National Speaker Forum committee, assuring its success as co-chair of the "Money Team." Among her many other contributions, she has been an ambassador and exhibit interpreter/docent at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center since 2003, a board member of the Cincinnati Parks Foundation and Urban League, and a poll worker for the past three presidential elections.

Toilynn O'Neal Turner is founding director of the Robert O'Neal Multicultural Arts Center (ROMAC), which is under development in the iconic Regal Theater in the West End. She is also board chair of the Queen City Foundation, which provides educational opportunities to minority students.

2026 FEIST TEA

HONORING JEFF DEY, EDNA KEOWN, TOILYNN O'NEAL TURNER AND MARTHA STEPHENS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6 | 2-4 PM

Kennedy Heights Arts Center Lindner Annex
6620 Montgomery Road

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THE COURAGE TO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

BETH SULLEBARGER

For more than three decades, Woman's City Club's **National Speaker Forum** has brought nationally recognized women's voices to Cincinnati to inform, challenge, and inspire our community. This year, WCC is pleased to announce the selection of Julia Angwin, prize winning investigative reporter and co-author of a new book fit for the times, ***On Courage: How to be a Dissident in an Age of Fear***.

Ms. Angwin will draw from the book in her timely presentation, "The Courage to Fight for Freedom." Based on interviews with more than 100 dissidents, activists, and thinkers from around the world, ***On Courage***, co-authored with Ami Fields-Mayer, explores what enables ordinary people to confront powerful institutions and political systems for their beliefs—to overcome fear, take meaningful risks, and defend the freedoms and institutions they value.

Besides being a bestselling author, Julia Angwin is New York Times contributing Opinion writer and a leading voice on technology, privacy, accountability, and the role of independent journalism in a democratic society.

More than a lecture, the Forum is intended to spark conversation, deepen understanding, and encourage participants to remain informed and engaged in their communities. With Angwin's talk, **"The Courage to Fight for Freedom,"** the 2027 National Speaker Forum continues the tradition of inviting our community to consider an enduring civic question: What does courage require of each of us when the values and freedoms we care about are tested?



2027 NATIONAL SPEAKER FORUM

THE COURAGE TO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

PRESENTING

JULIA ANGWIN

AWARD-WINNING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST
SHORENSTEIN CENTER ON MEDIA, POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY
HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL

GIVE TO WCC'S ANNUAL FUND AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

In these times, support of civic literacy and engagement in your community is as important as ever. WCC provides public forums on civic issues, advocates for positive public policies, brings people together and amplifies the citizen voice. We also support future citizens through our education awards to promising high school seniors.

We hope you will contribute to our **Annual Fund Campaign** request and give as generously as you can to keep WCC strong and viable. Membership dues cover only about 20% of our annual operating budget. We do a lot with a little, but, like you, we must pay our rent and monthly bills to keep going. Think of it the way you think of contributing to public radio or public television. **You may not participate in all our activities, but you can support the important role we play in the Greater Cincinnati community**, bringing the civic voice to the table on issues like compatible development, good city government, voting rights, education funding, environmental issues, and more.

The easiest and fastest way to donate, on a one-time or monthly basis, is through our website, womanscityclub.org/donate. You can also mail a check to Woman's City Club or call us at (513) 751-0100 to donate by credit card. You can set up a recurring gift through your bank or credit card, or work with your financial advisor to explore other ways to support us. You can lower your income tax by contributing from your required minimum distribution (RMD) from an IRA!

Your support will enable WCC to continue to **Light the Fire** of equity and opportunity and Lead the Way forward to a just and sustainable community where all citizens are engaged in shaping our shared future.

BETH SULLEBARGER
PRESIDENT



SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER FORUMS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

former council member. The panelists were current Council Member Jeff Cramerding, attorney Mike Morgan, attorney Karl Kadon and former CEO of the Greater Cincinnati Water Works David Rager.

As a solution to decades of budget deficits, Kadon, a former Cincinnati deputy city solicitor, suggested instituting an Inspector General (IG). He described an independent office with subpoena power, like in Cleveland, that would audit city operations and take confidential reports of fraud and abuse. Morgan, who co-chaired the city's 2013 Charter Review Task Force, enthusiastically supports the idea. "If you had someone who is untouchable, that can actually look at the budgets and the numbers and the efficacy of how departments are or are not operating, then you're going to see real change." **The idea of an IG received 88 percent support from the 25 people who participated in the live poll at the October forum.**

David Rager, former head of Greater Cincinnati Water Works, was more cautious. "I think the devil's in the details," he said, noting the city already has an internal auditor and asking who would direct the new office.

The process for hiring and firing the city manager and the police and fire chiefs drew the next-strongest support for study, at 64%. Cramerding said council should be able to fire the manager with six votes. Morgan said a council ordinance spelling out the process would spare taxpayers the lawsuits that have followed past firings.

Speakers also liked the idea of reinstituting the city's safety director, a civilian who oversaw police and fire. Rager, who held that job, said whoever does it must be able to hire and fire the chiefs. At the September forum, former council member Jim Tarbell called the position's elimination "absurd," adding, "we've suffered from it ever since." Former City Manager Scott Johnson recalled naming Rager to the post. Cramerding said one of the three Deputy City Managers oversees police and fire today, whereas, Johnson reduced the number of Deputy Managers from three to one in the early 1990's, with one position being replaced with the Director of Safety position.

District elections divided the panels. Kate Botos, past president of the Madisonville Community Council, called districts "a no-brainer" for a city with 52 neighborhoods and nine council members. Kadon proposed four districts, each with a piece of downtown. October forum moderator, Laure Quinlivan, a former council member, said residents often contact all nine members at once, so offices don't know who is handling what. Cramerding said he likes council members serving the whole city; however, Rager warned that district members tend to trade votes. Morgan said he likes a hybrid of district and at-large seats.

Oct. Forum Panelists



Laure Quinlivan



Jeff Cramerding



Mike Morgan



Karl Kadon



David Rager

(Continued on page 8)

2026 FEIST TEA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Previously she was visual arts director of the Arts Consortium of Cincinnati and director of diversity at St. Ursula Academy. Toilynn has also served on the boards of the Cincinnati Arts Association, Cincinnati Ballet, Invest in Neighborhoods, and the Clifton Cultural Arts Center.

Martha Stephens, author, retired English professor, and civil rights activist, was the primary whistleblower uncovering unethical, Pentagon-funded human radiation tests conducted on predominantly low-income, Black cancer patients at Cincinnati General Hospital between 1960 and 1972. She located victims' surviving family members and helped launch a federal class-action lawsuit that led to a multi-million-dollar federal settlement in 1999 and the installation of a permanent memorial plaque honoring the victims.

This is just a sample of the amazing accomplishments of our honorees. To learn more about them and their activism, please join us on December 6. Gather with friends, meet some of our region's most interesting and inspiring changemakers, hear their stories, and celebrate the feisty spirit that has long been part of Woman's City Club.

Make your reservation now at **womanscityclub.org**. Admission is free for members, $20 each for non-members.

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER FORUMS

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Asked how they want to stay involved, October respondents chose workshops on specific topics (68%), forums with city officials (64%) and a plain-language guide to City Hall (60%). "This is an important conversation that needs to continue," said Beth Sullebarger, the organization's president.

Cheri Rekow, WCC Vice President for Programs, introduced both panels, which were co-sponsored by the Charter Committee, Cincinnatus Association, Fortify Democracy, Greater Cincinnati Voter Collaborative, and Invest in Neighborhoods. Future workshops and other forums focusing on democracy are in the works.



For video replays of previous forums, visit WCC's website under media tab.

A Message from the VP for Civic Engagement

DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES

DAVID SIDERS

We established our **2026-2027 Civic Engagement Committee in September**. As Chair, I am grateful for the support and commitment from several members who have joined our effort: Melissa Currance, Sarah Gideonse, Matt Koesters, Susan Noonan, and Beth Sullebarger.

After deliberative dialogue, our team endorsed the CPS Levy, and the Winton Hills School District Levy—both on the 2026 ballot. We also support a NO vote on Ohio Issue 3, since voter fraud protections are already in place, and we do not endorse an Ohio Constitutional amendment as part of Issue 3.

We **established several calendars** of legislative meetings and activities on the WCC website. We also worked to build awareness of anti-ICE activism and resources, such as the Immigrant Dignity Coalition, and the Neighbor To Neighbor storytelling initiative. We plan to support the Program Committee efforts, by creating casual community conversations about issues such as voter reform, and topics such as "What would our communities do without property tax?"

Next steps? We are currently evaluating and discussing community propositions on creating more affordable housing, and we are assessing community impact on potential data centers in our communities. Stay tuned! If you are interested in joining our team, please e-mail: dbsiders@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Who is at Risk in the Era of AI?

When: Mid-January 2027

We are revisiting a topic of rapidly growing importance. As a follow-up to our 2024 National Speakers Forum (NSF) featuring Cathy O'Neil, author of *Weapons of Math Destruction*, this panel of local experts with national recognition will deliver essential AI advice. AI and algorithms have major impacts on our daily lives—both good and bad—but it is up to us to recognize the difference.

The Power of Whistleblowers

When: Mid-February 2027

Serving as a prologue to our April 2027 NSF featuring Julia Angwin (co-author of *On Courage*), this forum will honor local whistleblowers who changed history. We will highlight local individuals who made immense personal sacrifices to expose shocking, inhumane practices and violations of human rights.

The Common Thread: Protecting Democracy

By now, you can likely see the common thread tying these events together: **democracy**.

When daily survival must take priority, when we are targeted by algorithms we do not understand, or when our policymakers are influenced by outside special interests rather than the citizens in their own districts, holding elected officials accountable becomes a growing challenge. In this modern era, active vigilance and self-education are no longer optional—they are the very foundation of a government by and for the people.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming forums as we tackle these vital issues together.

CHERI REKOW, VP PROGRAMS

GET TO KNOW – AURORE BYRD

JO-ANN HUFF ALBERS

New member **Aurore Byrd** joined WCC "when I was between jobs at the recommendation of my grandpa-in-law, Jeff Dey (Papa Jeff).

"I was development coordinator at Your Store of the Queen City for nearly three years, but when the executive director and board decided to close Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli, I was let go. While looking for my next gig, I wanted to build on my experience and understanding of nonprofits, so it felt like a natural fit." Interest in nonprofits runs in Aurore's family. "We take a lot of pride in the fact that we all work for nonprofits," she said.

Today, she is corporate partnerships coordinator of NewPath Child & Family Solutions that was founded as St Joseph Orphanage in 1829 and has continued to meet the ever-changing needs of children and families for two centuries. A behavioral health and educational treatment agency, it helps children and their families on the road to recovery and success by igniting hope and changing futures. "I bring funding, in-kind donations, partnerships, and volunteer groups to our organization," she said, adding she would be happy to give any interested WCC members a tour of NewPath's central campus in Bond Hill.



A native Cincinnatian, Aurore loves Northside. "As long as I am in Cincinnati," she said, "I hope I'll be in Northside." It's where she grew up in the house her parents—Betsy and Chuck—still occupy and where she and Marek Maloney-Smith, her boyfriend of eight years, live in an apartment a few blocks down the street with their one-year-old kitten, Laszlo. Marek is a sous chef at Mita's, in downtown Cincinnati, with over 10 years of cooking experience.

Looking forward to her 26th birthday in December, Aurore graduated from the Cincinnati School for Creative and Performing Arts with a focus on creative writing and from Ohio University in 2023 with a B.A. in English in Creative Writing.

Aurore really enjoyed the WCC annual meeting "when I first got to meet everyone and learn about the history of the organization." She said she believes advocating for groups, uplifting communities and giving individuals tools to empower themselves are the greatest gifts WCC can and does give Cincinnati.

An avid reader, she said, "There is nothing I love more in this world than cozying up in my pink reading chair with a good book, my cat and a dirty gin martini with blue cheese stuffed olives, with some Rosemary Clooney softly swirling out of my boombox."

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SIP.SHARE.CONNECT. EVENT

LAURIE FRANK

Woman's City Club's annual program year kick-off, the **Potluck in the Park**, was held on Sunday, September 20, 2026. And what a wonderful time was had by all!



Held at the French Park Pavilion, 23 people enjoyed a fun-filled afternoon socializing and connecting with fellow members, playing cornhole, and enjoying delectable potluck fare. In addition, attendees heard about WCC's upcoming member events, future forums, and possible ways to be involved with WCC.

Look for future member events in the *Weekly Updates* or on the organization's website - womanscityclub.org.



BOOK CLUB ... A SIP.SHARE.CONNECT. PROGRAM

SARAH GIDEONSE

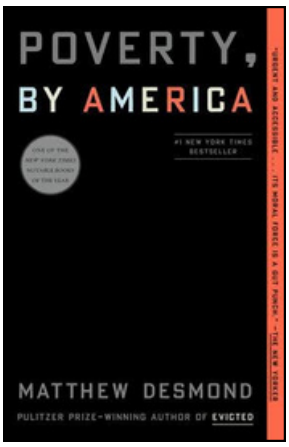
WCC Book Club meets once a month on the third Saturday morning at 10 am. (Circle the dates on your calendar!). Most times we will be discussing a book that intrigues, surprises, and leads to an engaging discussion about an important issue. Watch *Weekly Updates* and the bi-monthly *Bulletin* to learn about the next book.

No need to wait for an invitation: All members may join the discussions, either regularly, schedules permitting, or when a book interests you. An occasional joiner or a new WCC member should email the Book Club organizer at sarah.gideonse@fuse.net to obtain the email link. EVERYONE – if needs must, you can now find zoom links on WCC's calendar, accessed on the homepage of our website, womanscityclub.org (bottom of leftmost column).

NOVEMBER BOOK CLUB

Poverty in America

by Matthew Desmond



Saturday,

November 21

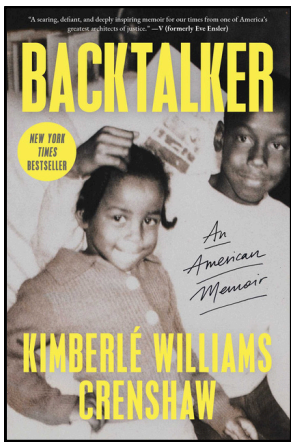
10–11:30 am via Zoom

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Evicted*, sociologist Matthew Desmond reimagines the debate on poverty. He asks, why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages? Desmond draws on history, research, and original reporting to show how affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. He presents a devastating answer: to paraphrase, we have met the enemy and it is us.

DECEMBER BOOK CLUB

Backtalker

by Kimberle Crenshaw



Saturday

December 19

10–11:30 am via Zoom

Backtalker is the memoir of scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, one of the most influential public intellectuals in the world and the architect of the two biggest ideas—critical race theory and intersectionality-- to reshape the American conversation about race, gender, and equality. Crenshaw offers the intimate story of how her lived experience gave birth to these ideas.

SEASON OF CHANGE
TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE AUTUMN

JEANNE NIGHTINGALE

As fall ushers in its stunning transformation, it's not just the leaves that are changing--our planet is too. The beauty of autumn is fleeting, but the actions we take today can make a lasting difference for future seasons.

Integrate these eco-friendly practices into your routine as you savor the beauty of autumn. Each small action contributes to a healthier planet, ensuring that bountiful harvests can be enjoyed for generations to come.

1. **Lower your thermostat**: for 8 hours a day to reduce your household's carbon footprint, slowing the rise in global temperatures.
2. **Reduce Food Waste**: Rising temperatures threaten global food production. By planning meals, freezing leftovers, and composting food scraps, you help reduce methane emissions from landfills and ease the strain on our food systems.
3. **Protect Pollinators**: To ensure future harvests, pollinators are essential, yet their populations are in decline. Purchasing organic or pesticide-free produce supports farming practices that protect pollinators, directly impacting fall's harvest and future food availability.
4. **Leave the Leaves**: Rather than raking and bagging all those fallen leaves, let nature take its course. Fallen leaves play a critical role in supporting ecosystems by enriching the soil as they decompose and providing habitats for insects and small creatures.
5. **Join Past Plastic Coalition Cincinnati** in its fight to pressure petrochemical plants to phase out the production of plastics, especially single-use plastics. The world can no longer recycle its way out of the plastic pollution crisis.

