

THE

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

VOTER

ONLY ONE LEFT – APRIL 16



## EAT, MEET, & GREET

Come enjoy food and fellowship while hearing from candidates who want your vote in 2024

**6 PM - 8 PM**

### THREE OPPORTUNITIES TO CLAIM YOUR VOTER POWER



**Tuesday, April 2**  
Letter Carriers Hall  
841 California Ave  
Pittsburgh 15212



**Tuesday, April 9**  
St. James A.M.E. Church  
444 Lincoln Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206



**Tuesday, April 16**  
Beulah Baptist Church  
201 Chalfont Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15210

*Voting Is Power (VIP) Pittsburgh Regional Coalition is made up of over 30 local nonpartisan organizations focused on educating and mobilizing our communities to utilize their right to vote. It is not associated with a specific political party or candidate.*



**Questions? Call**  
**412-212-8775**

## ***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE***

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK**



Our League was fortunate to have our new Executive Director of our State League of Pennsylvania visit Pittsburgh recently. Dr. Amy Widestrom told leadership here that she grew up in a very small town outside of Portland Oregon.

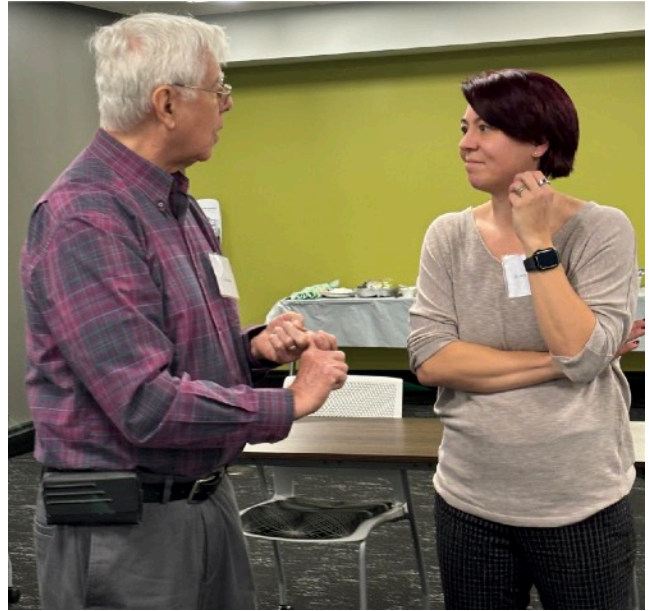
Not being native to Pennsylvania she had never been to Clairon County until this trip to the western part of our State. She visits Pittsburgh, Washington County, Westmoreland County, Erie, Mercer, and Clarion Leagues on this swing through western PA.

Dr. Widestrom was a theater major at Oberlin College in Ohio, was inspired to get her Master's degree in Political Science after tutoring incarcerated citizens in San Quentin Prison in California. She was chair of her department at Arcadia University here in Pennsylvania when she resigned mid-term to take this position as our State Executive Director.

Our new State Director feels she needs to turn attention to local Leagues to build them up. Her research indicates that voting is communal, or community based. She pointed out that not all Leagues are as robust and active as the League here in the Greater Pittsburgh region.

She sits in on meetings every week as our State Director with other groups such as Democracy Shenanigans and others. Transparency and the

sharing of documents and files among Leagues within the State are some of her goals. She wants to grow, expand, and diversify members across the State. Shoring up the State League is also an aspiration.



Don Naragon speaks with Amy Widestrom during her visit with the LWVPGH Board.

Dr. Widestrom will obviously focus on the upcoming election but also capacity building and sustainability. She states that "Our Leagues are labs of Democracy".

After Dr. Widestrom spoke, several presentations were made by a few of our Board Directors: Amy Kleissas, Ruth Quint and Preston Shimer. From Ms. Kleissas we learned that students today are often reluctant to register to vote. Ms. Quint told us in her design of the website she remembers that our website reflects our League's values. She feels that our website takes up the education of adults in Civic Education; it fills the education gap with Live Questions, Prebunking or Defusing, as well as providing Local Information.

We wish to thank Dr. Widestrom for her visit. We applaud her dedication to protecting voter's rights and defending Democracy and look forward to working with her at the local level.

*Michele Knoll*

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## LEAGUE MEETING STRUCTURE

### Board Meetings

- ✓ **Second Monday of the month..**  
Meeting: 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.,  
currently by Zoom.

### Local Area Unit Meetings

- ✓ **Pittsburgh Central:** Currently not meeting. Contact Martha Raak at 412-477-7572 or [marbiker1@gmail.com](mailto:marbiker1@gmail.com)
- ✓ **North Hills:** Currently not meeting. Contact Nancy Mott at 412-779-3089 or [namott001@gmail.com](mailto:namott001@gmail.com)
- ✓ **South Hills:** Currently not meeting. Contact Maureen Mamula at 412-760-9642 or [mamula159@hotmail.com](mailto:mamula159@hotmail.com)

### Other Ongoing Meetings

- ✓ **Education Committee**  
Currently not meeting.  
[education@lwvpgh.org](mailto:education@lwvpgh.org)
- ✓ **Voter Service Committee**  
1st Tuesdays, 12:30 pm. by Zoom. Additional meetings occasionally added as needed. Chair is Judy Clack at 512-731-0280  
[voterservice@lwvpgh.org](mailto:voterservice@lwvpgh.org)
- ✓ **Advocacy Committee**  
Currently not meeting.  
Chair Michele Knoll  
412-389-1387  
[advocacy@lwvpgh.org](mailto:advocacy@lwvpgh.org)
- ✓ **Gun Safety Committee**  
Currently not meeting.  
Contact Nancy Naragon at 412-366-2446 or [development@lwvpgh.org](mailto:development@lwvpgh.org)
- ✓ **Web Team**  
4th Monday of the month at noon. Contact; Ruth Quint, 412-630-8677 or [webmaster@lwvpgh.org](mailto:webmaster@lwvpgh.org)
- ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**  
3rd Friday, 10:15 am. Meeting place determined each month, see calendar. Contact Joan Cucinotta, 412-708-2335 or [joancucinotta@gmail.com](mailto:joancucinotta@gmail.com)

This column will be updated as changes are made.

## March-April Calendar

### April

1 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm (note change of date)
2 Tue	Voter Service Meeting, 12:30 pm, by Zoom
4 Thu	April program: <b>Role of Courts in Elections, 7:00-8:30</b> , by Zoom
8 Mon	<b>Last Day to REGISTER to VOTE before Primary</b>
16 Tue	<b>Last Day to Request a Mail-in or Absentee Ballot</b>
16 Tue	Meet & Greet at Beulah Baptist Church, 6:00-8:00pm
16 Tue	<b>Ballot Box Basics: AI and Misinformation</b> , 6:00-7:00 pm, by Zoom
19 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, 10:30-2:00
22 Mon	Web Team Meeting, 12:00 pm-1:00 pm by Zoom
23 Tue	<b>PRIMARY ELECTION DAY</b>

### May

7 Tue	Voter Service Meeting, 12:30 pm, by Zoom
13 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm
17 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, 10:30-2:00
27 Mon	Web Team Meeting, 12:00 pm-1:00 pm by Zoom



Allegheny Youth Huddle – Main room with Mayor Ed Gainey and and Pittsburgh Public Schools Superintendent Wayne N. Walters.



## CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY

by Amy Kleissas



This has been a season of Civic Education teams' collaborations with community organizations.

### Allegheny Youth Huddle – March 15, 2024

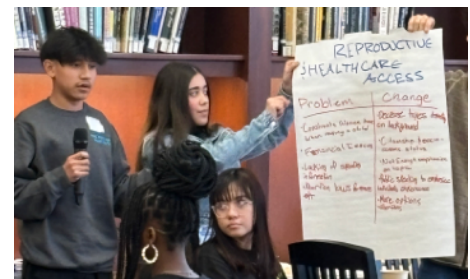
The Huddle event was created by seven community partners and despite some bumps along the way, turned out to be a roaring success! The National Council of Jewish Women and League member, Kate Rothstein, initiated this effort with a vision of pulling students together to promote voter registration with an added boost of civic education. Other participating partners were the PA Youth Advocacy Network, The Civics Center, PA Youth Vote, New Pennsylvania Project, the Alliance for Police Accountability, and Carnegie Library (Main). A big shout out to the Carnegie Library librarians for their ongoing support and for hosting this event.

Keynote speakers, Mayor Gainey and PPS Superintendent Walters (photo right), praised students for participating and provided living examples of how “government” can work for citizens. PPS K-12 Social Studies coordinator, Chris Taylor, and Erika Strassberger, District 8 Pittsburgh City Council member, came to support the effort, along with representatives from local media. About 60, mostly Pittsburgh Public Schools students, participated in the Huddle. Their energy and passion about the issues that affect them was on display throughout the 3-hour Huddle, which included a terrific group of students from South Fayette High School.



Equally amazing was the WQED student “Film Academy” crew who have partnered with our local League. We are looking forward to having a great relationship with students and adults from WQED with an end-product of inspiring content in the form of videos and social media. This content will be edited in the summer and be released in time for the fall 2024 General Election. A LWVPA pass-through grant is supporting the WQED-LWVPGH partnership.

During the event, League members Judy Clack and Amy Kleissas, who participated in monthly coalition planning meetings since summer of 2023, ran a role-play about completing the voter registration application. We distributed Ready Set Vote bags to all. After some brief instruction, students were asked to practice registering a participant they didn't know. We also snuck in some civic education content in the form of “10 Important Things to Know” that provided the questions for the game “Kahoot.” At the end of the day, one of the articulate young women wanted to know when our next Huddle would be! While we contributed significant time and effort to this collaboration, through members' efforts it came together and was well worth it all in the end!



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### Collaboration with Pittsburgh Public Schools

Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, LWVPGH High School Outreach was one of six community organizations partnering with **Pittsburgh Public School's effort to register students to vote**. LWVPGH volunteers have been registering students at **PPS Alderdice** and **PPS Carrick** when scheduled by Student Voice support teachers. We were also invited to support the Student Voice Voter Registration subgroup, meeting students at a kick-off in September 2023, and during monthly online meetings through the 2023-24 school year. This effort will continue through the end of May.

### IRO4C: Incarcerated/Reentering Outreach 4 Citizens

We have a new collaboration brought about by access to a "All Voting is Local" \$3000 grant. League members Ellie Siegel, Jenna Latour-Nichols, Amy Kleissas, and Terri Minor Spencer (West End P.O.W.E.R.) along with the NAACP, Pittsburgh Branch, are working on *new ways* to reach incarcerated and reentering individuals and their families with voter and election information. We have created a number of documents including a flyer and postcard for families. After reaching out to the Allegheny County Jail staff, their very positive response was to immediately upload two IRO4C documents to the tablets in the individual jail pods. These documents share voter and election information and have detailed eligibility requirements for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. We hope to do some effective in-person outreach in the fall and begin to address changes that might make ACJ voter registration more effective.

### Presentations

We are scheduled for a number of presentations. On **March 19<sup>th</sup>** we will have an in-person meeting at the League office to meet LWVPA new Executive Director, Amy Widestrom. As one of the presenters, Amy Kleissas will describe the LWVPGH civic education effort. She will also present the "Train the Trainer" slide deck for LWVPA's "Ballot Box Basics" virtually on **March 28<sup>th</sup>**. This will be an opportunity to share additional LWVPGH website resources with other Leagues across our state. On **April 17<sup>th</sup>**, Joanne Moore, Judy Clack, and Amy Kleissas will participate at CCAC in the "Honors Spring Speaker Series" with a 2-hour presentation entitled, "*Voting, Volunteerism, and Civic Engagement*". Joanne Moore and Susan Fair will present our High School "Why Vote" lesson at PPS Alderdice on **March 19<sup>th</sup>** for two periods in the Library. We have developed a relationship with the Social Studies department chair there who seems willing to get us into English classrooms, possibly in May. Ruth Quint and Amy Kleissas have applied to do a presentation at the **2024 LWVUS Convention** that will highlight our civic ed approach to our website design.

### Other Initiatives

**Ready Set Vote bags (2500)** went to many different groups for the Primary, including B-PEP (Black-Political Empowerment Project), VEEEM (Voter Empowerment, Education & Enrichment Movement), AKA (Alpha Kappa Alpha), West End P.O.W.E.R. (halfway houses for reentering citizens and recovery centers), Abiding Missions, Sewickley YMCA, Sewickley Library, Seneca Manor, Allegheny Youth Huddle participants, and Voter Service events.

Besides the three terrific [LWVPGH videos](#) created for the 2024 Primary, Michelle Grant has been working on three new videos. With Preston Shimer and Nancy Naragon, they have created a powerful video introducing the LWVPGH position on "**Changing the Gun Culture.**" If accepted, they will caucus at the LWVUS Convention in the summer to gain support for acceptance of our position. Michelle is also finishing a video on "Pennsylvania's Closed Primary" and "Not the Time to Be Cynical."

**My take-away from the "Huddle" and all of our collaborations is that this is an all-hands-on-deck, pull-out-all-the-stops moment!** We have to do ALL we can to make sure that our message spreads and makes a real difference. This is a half-time locker room pep talk! *We can be tired next year!*



## VOTER SERVICE REPORT by Judy Clack, Vice President Voter Service



### Candidate Eat, Meet, and Greet

LWVPGH has been co-sponsoring Candidate “Eat, Meet and Greet” prior to each election with B-PEP (Black Political Empowerment Project) and a few other mostly African American nonpartisan organizations. This year, our group has greatly expanded to over 30 diverse, nonpartisan groups. Our name is the *Voting is Power (VIP) Pittsburgh Regional Coalition*.

All Allegheny County candidates will get to speak for 5 minutes each. No questions may be posed since an opponent may not be present. At this time, there is one event left: **Tues.**

**April 16 at Beulah Baptist Church in Beltzhoover (South Side).** It will run from 6:00 – 8:30

pm with volunteers arriving at 5:15 pm. Email Judy Clack at [voterservice@lwvpg.org](mailto:voterservice@lwvpg.org) if you’d like to volunteer. Full details will be emailed to you.

The remainder of this month’s report consists of photos:



LWVPGH member Terrie Griffin reported that after spending 7.5 hours with access to nearly 1,700 inmates, going cell to cell, volunteers collected 101 new registrations with 129 completing an application for absentee ballot forms. Volunteers from National Council of Negro Women, Black Political Empowerment Project, and League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh participated. Pictured here are Kim Mudd, Lorraine Cross, and Tim Stevens.



Voting Is Power (VIP) Pittsburgh Regional Coalition has 31 nonpartisan partners including LWVPGH. Volunteers fanned out to four locations on Saturday, April 6 to register voters before the April 8 deadline. LWVPGH’s Genevieve Rosselot designed the poster.



An enthusiastic crew, led by Yvonne Rainey of the John Lewis Transformative Justice Coalition and the Pittsburgh Higher Ground Ministry, registered voters and distributed LWVPGH Ready Set Vote Bags in the Northside neighborhood surrounding Sweet Time General Store and Gathering Place on E. Ohio Street.



LWVPGH members joined B-PEP and PUMP to register voters in the Hill District neighborhood near Salem’s Market. 67 LWVPGH Ready Set Vote Bags were distributed. Ms. Lee, on the left, registered to vote. Kim Mudd, Lorraine Cross, Carol Caroselli, and Molly Taleb were among the volunteers.

*Continued on next page*





All these individuals volunteered at the April 2 Candidate Eat, Meet and Greet sponsored by the VIP Voter Is Power Pittsburgh Regional Coalition. Five Leaguers are in the center of the middle row: Tené Croom, Judy Clack, Ellen Christian, Kathy Herbst, and Judy Mancini.



Celebrating after the successful conclusion of the first of three Primary Election Candidate Eat, Meet, and Greets are LWVPGH members Judy Clack and Tené Croom (moderator), and Tim Stevens, President and CEO of B-PEP.



Ellen Christian and Judy Mancini served as timers for the VIP April 2 Candidate Eat, Meet, and Greet.



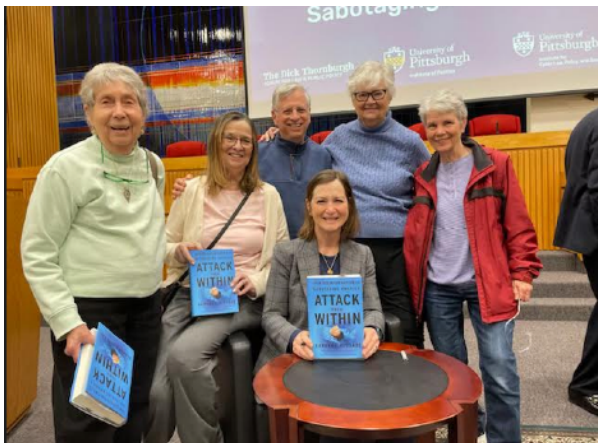
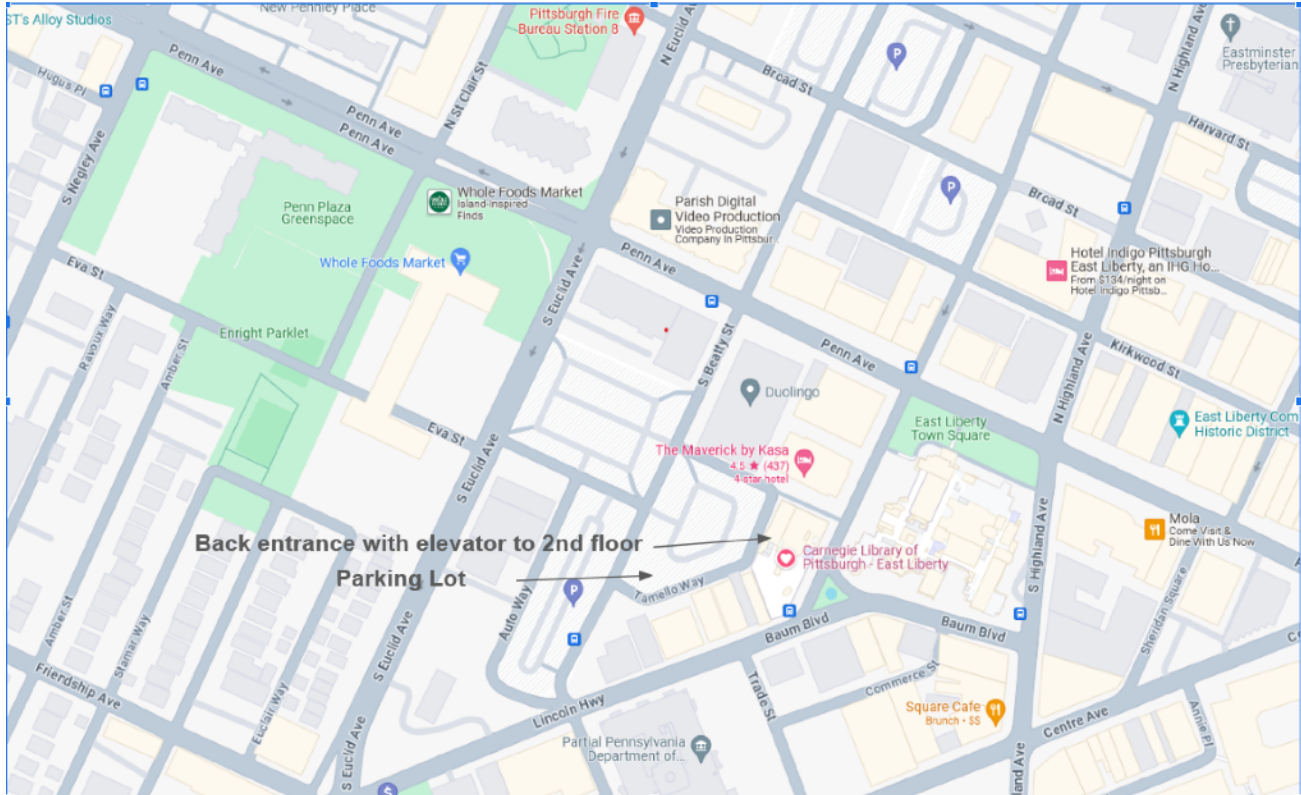
## BOOK CLUB REPORT by Joan Cucinotta

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

For our meeting on April 19, we will have done our own research into the topic of Artificial Intelligence and share our findings with each other.

### MEETING LOCATION

Despite some searching, no one has found a substitute meeting place in Squirrel Hill yet, so our next meeting will be in the 2nd floor meeting room at the East Liberty Library at 130 S. Whitfield St. There is a parking lot in the back, and there is an elevator inside the back door that will take you directly up to the 2nd floor.



For our meeting on May 17, we have chosen to read *Attack From Within: How Disinformation Is Sabotaging America* by Barbara McQuade.

Recently, a group from the Book Club were fortunate to hear McQuade speak at a Pitt Cyber lecture last week.

Photo: L-R Judy Schryer, Joan Cucinotta, Ron Bandes, Barbara McQuade, Carol Emerson, Marcia Bandes

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## Commentary on writings of James Baldwin

The focus of the March meeting was on the writings of James Baldwin, and we each selected our own text to share with the group. By sharing those various texts, we found common themes in his words that spoke to his commitment to social justice, especially in the areas of racism, gender, and identity in America in the 20th Century. Rather than focus on one of Baldwin's texts, this month's commentary will be an introduction and invitation to read any one of his works.

Baldwin was a voice of the Black experience in America and points out a major painful revelation waiting for every child of color.

It comes as a great shock around the age of 5, or 6, or 7, to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you.... It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity, has not, in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you... [and] that you are a worthless human being. (from "Baldwin vs Buckley at Cambridge")

This is a devastating discovery for a child---to realize that the world has devalued you. Worse, says Baldwin, is that after one becomes an adult "you've begun to see it happening, in your daughter or your son, or your niece or your nephew." The devastation minorities will feel at the discovery of their own presupposed inferiority is second only to seeing that same catastrophic discovery when it is made by their own children, an event that leads to what is currently called "the talk" in which parents of color must explain the dangers their children face and how to manage them.

It's a grinding paradox that Baldwin confronts as a Black American. How can he understand his identity as an American when that fact is patently denied at every turn? Although the 14th Amendment grants full citizenship including equal protection under the law to anyone born on American soil, African Americans have consistently suffered challenges to their rights from those who do not wish to see people of color as full American citizens, that is, white people who will brook no challenge to their dominance and control. Baldwin explains why it is so important to those challengers:

...the idea of white supremacy rests simply on the fact that white men are the creators of civilization ... and are therefore civilization's guardians and defenders. Thus it was impossible for Americans to accept the black man as one of themselves, for to do so was to jeopardize their status as white men. But not so to accept him was to deny his human reality, his human weight and complexity, and the strain of denying the overwhelmingly undeniable forced Americans into rationalizations so fantastic that they approached the pathological." (from "Stranger in the Village" in *Notes of a Native Son*)

In this way, much of Baldwin's work explores the white person's need to create a subjugated class, and he challenges that notion by turning the tables. As he says, "The question ... the white population of this country's got to ask itself, is why it was necessary to have a nigger in the first place. Because I'm not a nigger, I'm a man. But if you think I'm a nigger, it means you need it. And you've got to find out why." (from *I Am Not Your Negro*). With clarity here, Baldwin shifts discussions on race from (what was still called in the 1950s) *The Negro Problem* to *The White Problem*.

One of the great public intellectuals of the 20th century, Baldwin was a prolific writer across several genres. Below are some of his most famous with links to read them online.

[Notes of a Native Son](#) and [The Fire Next Time](#), both are autobiographical collections of essays concerning race in America and Europe

[Giovanni's Room](#) is a novel about the life of a gay American in Paris that raises questions about internalized homophobia, social alienation, and personal identity. As a gay man, Baldwin did not experience being Black as his only source of oppression. Published in 1956 it was quite controversial.

[Baldwin vs Buckley at Cambridge](#) is a film of this famous debate in 1965 in which these leading intellectuals argued the premise that the American Dream was not only built on slave labor but continues to be promoted today only through racist policies.

[I Am Not Your Negro](#) :Raoul Peck based this documentary on Baldwin's unfinished book (*Remember This House*) about his friends Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as on many of his other writings. The documentary illuminates many of his thoughts and writings with contemporary footage from the BLM movement that shows continued white racism along with white apathy.

LWVPGH Officers / Executive Committee		Local Area Meeting Chairs	
President (and Advocacy)	Michele Knoll	Pgh. Central 412-477-7572	Martha Raak
V.P.1 Administration	Preston Shimer	North Hills 412-779-3089	Nancy Mott
V.P.2 Voter Service	Judy Clack	South Hills 412-760-9642	Larvn Finder
V.P.3 Development	Nancy Naragon		
V.P.4 Program	Barbara Grabowski		
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		Vote411 & VG assistant	Michelle Zmijanac
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Community Information Center	Manager: Jenna Latour Nichols	Marcellus Shale Grant	Manager: Heather Harr
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