

## A Toast to Karlyn Bowman

At a dinner in her honor at the American Enterprise Institute, 31 March 2022

Christopher DeMuth

When I arrived at AEI in 1986, I was a firm opponent of “public opinion.” My interest, and I assumed AEI’s interest, was in right policy, not in what hoi polloi might say in response to loaded questions from some politically progressive pollster. Plus, in my recent position in the Reagan White House, my brilliant policy brainstorms had sometimes been shot down with offhand assertions about the latest polls, wielded with great authority by a political staffer, who shall go unnamed, who was an alumnus of Karlyn Bowman’s *Public Opinion* magazine.

Karlyn promptly turned me around 180-degrees on the matter. In a democracy, right policy is not derived on a think-tank blackboard and handed down from on high. It is limited and molded for better or worse by popular attitudes and beliefs, aspirations and apprehensions. As AEI Distinguished Fellow Gerald Ford put it on the morning he assumed the presidency, “Here the people rule.” A much lesser president, Woodrow Wilson, referred to public opinion as “a clumsy nuisance, a rustic handling delicate machinery.” That perfectly combined Wilson’s aloof ignorance about the nature of government with his contempt for the society government was supposed to serve.

Karlyn’s policy views were almost as sound as my own, but she was an unflinching empiricist. She was then honing the singular techniques that would make her one of our most respected and closely followed public intellectuals. When the morning headlines announced an exciting new poll on abortion, crime, pollution, term-limits, or how Congress or the President were doing their jobs, she would prepare a time-series of all the results over the decades since the questions were first asked, and ferret out differences yielded by various wordings of polling questions, sampling methods, and other variables. In this manner, she would transform a few numbers that could be interpreted any which way into genuine knowledge about the dynamics of time, culture, and policy with the thinking of the citizenry.

Moreover, public opinion was often, as Karlyn would gently put it, “deeply ambivalent.” In our raucous, heterogeneous nation, opinion on difficult questions often features sharp conflicts. Digging deeper, she would show that the conflicts are not only between individuals and groups but within them, within most of us: we want clean air *and* economic growth, high employment *and* low inflation, personal freedom *and* strong families. The cynic would say that this shows the public is ignorant and lazy and unable to see the trade-offs. The better view, Karlyn’s view, is that it shows the public is smart and realistic and three-dimensional. In our democracy, most policy choices are made not by the Dayton Housewife but by the politicians who represent her. Studying Bowman, one sees that that Burke’s view, that representatives should be trustees rather than delegates, is not an ethical argument but a necessity. Representatives who study Bowman equip themselves to be better trustees.

Those in this room know another rare and wonderful thing about Karlyn: that a woman of her talents and productivity simultaneously devoted herself selflessly, backstage for more than 40 years, to the health, education, and welfare of AEI and its people.

In my years as AEI's president Karlyn was my daily counsellor and consiglieri. This included many decisions central to the substance and reputation of our work: appointments, publications, the selection of Bradley, Boyer, and Kristol lecturers, topics and participants for the World Forum. In these matters she exhibited the sound judgement and good taste that were transparent to all in her years as founding editor of *The American Enterprise*. She collaborated with many AEI colleagues, especially Jim Wilson. And she carefully edited many of our most important institutional publications. Talk about selfless: when she sent Tom Sowell a few light edits to his Boyer Lecture, his response sent her running to my office in tears.

She also devoted herself to many quotidian matters, from the arrangement of tables in the lunchroom to the handling of hallway controversies, that are cumulatively essential to the esprit and collegiality of an organization. In the 1980s and early 1990s, women of all ages and rank were joining office life in large numbers. AEI was in the forefront of making employment accommodations and cultural adjustments to help this wonderful development succeed. That was due in no small part to the wisdom of Karlyn Bowman, who soon became the Mother Superior of our female interns.

AEI's great strength, and distinction among think tanks, is that it is firmly devoted to limited government, free enterprise, a strong defense, and a healthy culture – and is also firmly realistic about our political institutions and social frailties. Karlyn has been the embodiment of this duality. In recent years she has been the dean of AEI – the senior member of its research staff (Norm Ornstein has some claim to this title – a complex calculation that I will call a tie) . I would say that she has also been the soul of AEI – and will continue to be through the great legacy she has created.

Let us raise our glasses to Karlyn in appreciation and admiration, and extend to her and Jim our heartfelt wishes for long life, good health, and much happiness.



DINNER IN HONOR OF  
*Karlyn Bowman*

IN CELEBRATION OF YOUR EXCEPTIONAL WORK AND  
INNUMERABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO AEI AND THE  
UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION.

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022

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M E N U

**GRILLED SPRING ASPARAGUS**  
CARA CARA ORANGE HOLLANDAISE, LABNEH,  
CURED EGG YOLK, HERBED BREADCRUMBS



**PAN SEARED HALIBUT**  
PEARL BARLEY CACIO E PEPE, BROWN BUTTER ROASTED MAITAKE  
MUSHROOM, LOBSTER BUTTER, WILD SCALLION OIL



**GREEK YOGURT PANNA COTTA**  
MACERATED STRAWBERRIES, MEYER LEMON GRANITA,  
CANDIED PISTACHIO

CHEF SAM MOLAVI

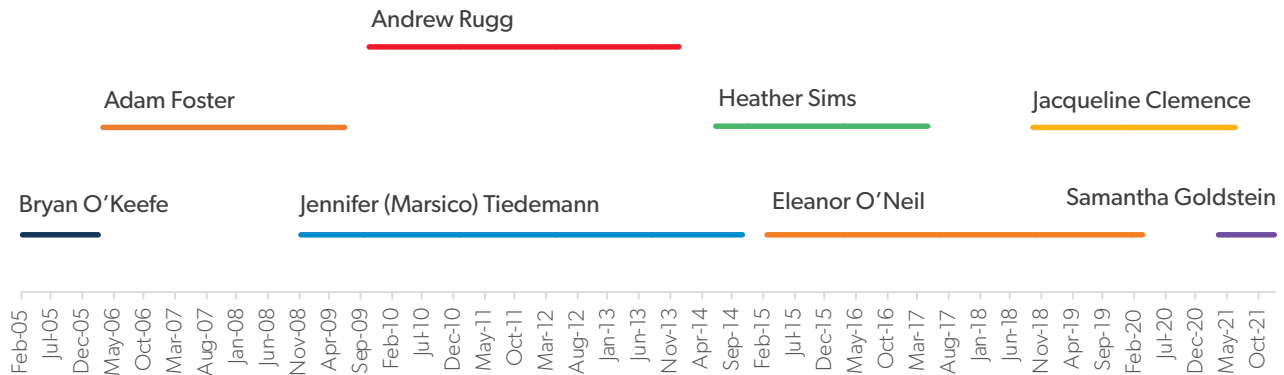
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## Political Report and Gender

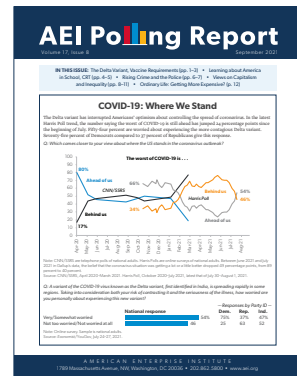
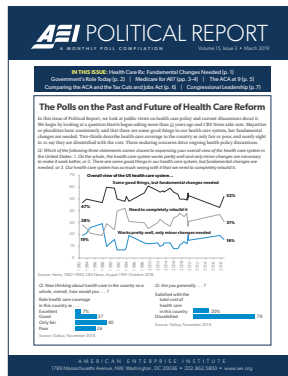
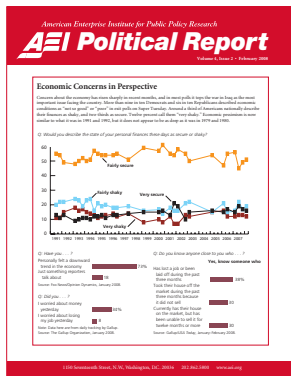
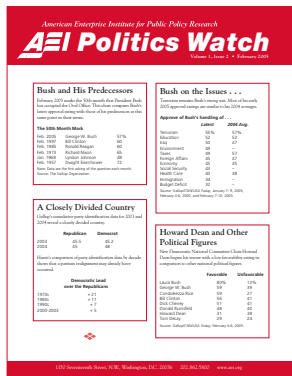
Since its inauguration in February 2005, the *Political Report* was published 184 times (including 18 double issues). The first issue was named *Politics Watch*, and the last 12 issues were published as *AEI Polling Report*. During the span of 17 years, a large number of editors, associate editors, assistant editors, Political Corner research assistants, and interns worked closely under the supervision of *Political Report* creator and senior editor Karlyn Bowman.

For the first three years, Karlyn’s staff consisted exclusively of men. This began to change in 2008 with the arrival of Jennifer (Marsico) Tiedemann. A turning point was reached during the period of 2009–13, when a woman and a man were jointly editors for the *Political Report*. With the departure of Andrew Rugg in December 2013, the era of women editors began, and men no longer held any editor positions for the rest of the *Political Report*’s existence. Was Karlyn consciously or subconsciously trying to encourage and train more women to enter the field of public polling? The readers will draw their own conclusions.

### AEI Political Report Editors 2005–21



Note: “Editor” includes “Associate Editor.” Several editors helped as assistant editors before becoming editors or associate editors. Their time as assistant editors is not reflected in the figure above. Several people made valuable contributions to the *Political Report* in their role as research assistants without ever becoming editors; they are not included in the figure. Apologies to Matt Weil. :-)

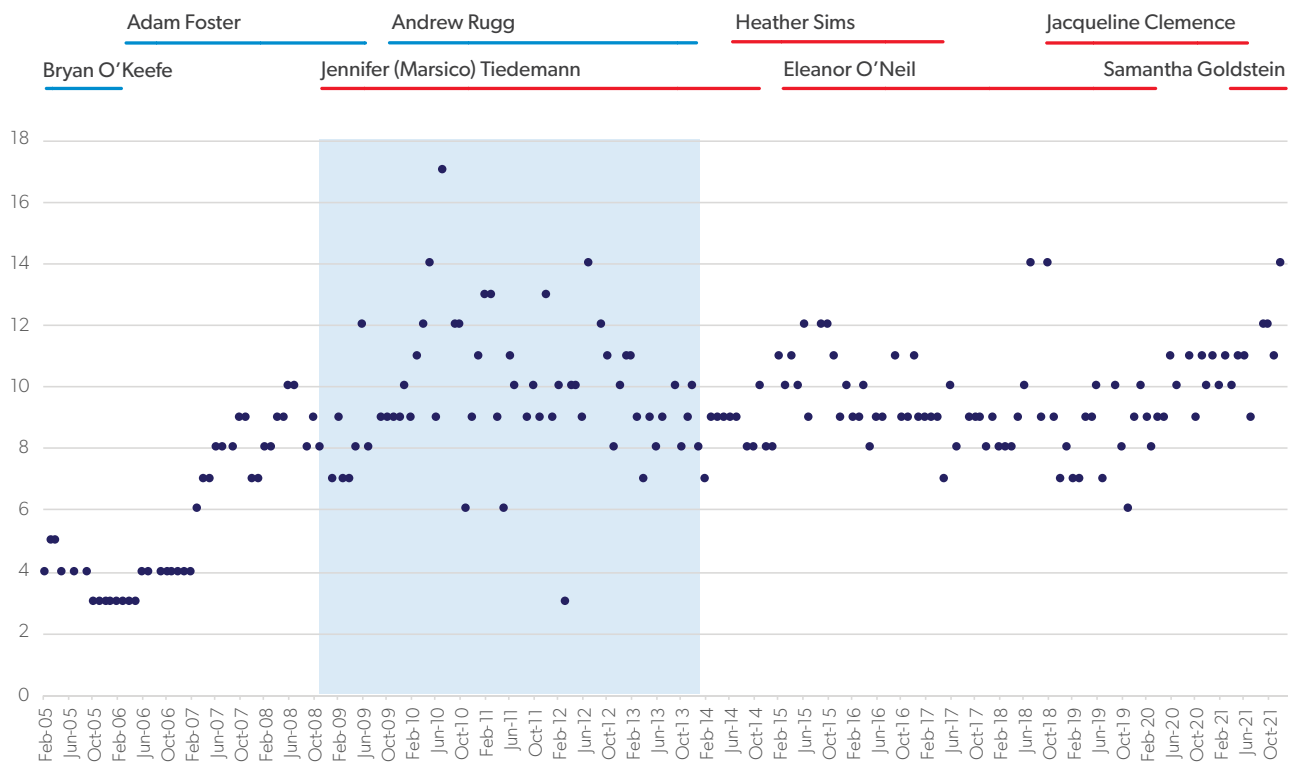


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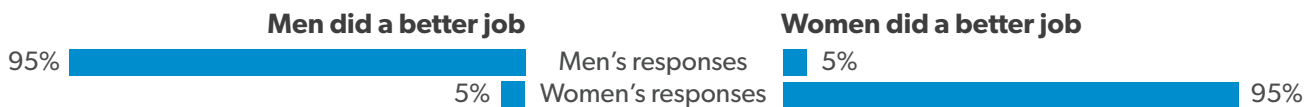
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On this page, we take a look at which era of the *Political Report* was most productive—the era when only men were *Political Report* editors, the era when men and women were editors together, or the era when only women were editors. Over its 17-year existence, eight editors—three male and five female—wrote a total of 1,606 *Political Report* pages under the supervision of senior editor Karyl Bowman. Men held editors’ positions for a total of 104 months, and women for 213 months. The time when men only were editors lasted 39 months. During this time they produced 220 pages of *Political Report*, an average of 5.6 pages per month. The era of all women editors lasted 88 months and resulted in a total of 833 *Political Report* pages, an average of 9.5 pages per month. The period when a man and a woman were editors together lasted 57 months. Together they produced a total of 553 pages of the *Political Report*, an average of 9.7 pages per month, making this the most productive era.

### Number of Pages per Issue of *Political Report*



Q: Do you think men or women did a better job with the *Political Report*?



Note: Telephone poll. Sample is national adults.





## Notes to Karlyn

Karlyn and I began our AEI tenure a few months apart, and have shared our lives, experiences, and offices since early in 1979—42 years. Through a slew of research assistants and countless interns she has mentored, through all the ups and downs the institution has experienced. No one would have bet that the two of us would be the longest-serving people at AEI! Karlyn has joked many times that we are like an old married couple, being able to finish each others' sentences.

The fundamental reality is that we have had a rare and valued friendship and professional relationship over all those years, something that has meant so, so much to me. Karlyn is of course formidable—whip smart, deeply knowledgeable, and perceptive—but more important, no one could find a better role model for her intellectual honesty, empathy, loyalty, integrity. It is hard to imagine AEI without her.

—Norm Ornstein



In my fifty years of involvement, as a consumer and occasional producer, of public opinion polls, I have never encountered anyone more gifted than Karlyn Bowman at analyzing opinion with a clear eye, without regard to her own (often strong) political beliefs. It's a rare talent, one I trust she will share widely even in retirement.

—Michael Barone





**1. Karlyn, the advocate for young people in Washington.**

Karlyn has helped more young people in Washington than anyone I know.

**2. Karlyn, AEI archaeologist.** No one knows more about the history of AEI than Karlyn, both through her lived history and her labors in the dungeons of the AEI archives. In her role as archaeologist, I picture her unearthing a 1946 memo with AEI's first study of the minimum wage or airline deregulation.

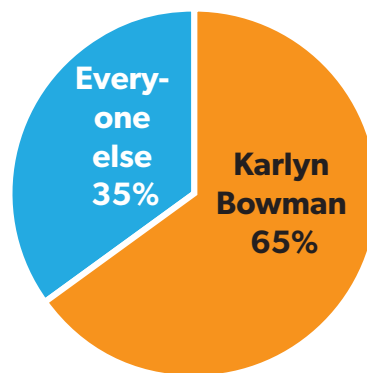
**3. Karlyn, the walking encyclopedia of polls.** In her mind, and in her files, Karlyn has encyclopedic knowledge of the history of public opinion.

I have a fictional vignette in my mind of a smart young pollster revealing a new poll finding, billed as something new and original, but Karlyn already knows that three variations of that question were asked by different organizations in 1953, 1967, and 1991.

**4. Karlyn, the conciliator.** Election Watch is the longest running election analysis program in Washington, with Karlyn and Norm Ornstein two of the original participants in 1982. It is an analytic and generally civil program, but if anyone could manage the occasionally spirited disagreements between Norm and the late Ben Wattenberg and Norm and Michael Barone, it is Karlyn. She not only delivered her analysis with grace and precision, but she made sure that the other panelists interacted with good cheer even while voicing disparate opinions.

—John Fortier

*Q: As a young person, who in Washington has helped you most with advancing in your career?*



Note: Online survey.

Karlyn is the best and fairest person for whom I have ever worked. She is patient and takes her time to mentor all of the junior staff, many of whom are in their first real jobs! But I'll always remember my first day at AEI (my first real job!) when I didn't know anyone and was only a week into living on my own in a new city. Karlyn offered to drive me home—coincidentally we lived quite close to one another—

which began a somewhat routine experience. I'll always cherish those chats, one-on-one times to pick Karlyn's brain. I aspire to be as thoughtful and kind as she was with me. Congratulations on an amazing 40 years at AEI!

—Matthew Weil, 2006–08

*Today Matt is the director of the Elections Project at Bipartisan Policy Center.*





It was a rare gift to work for Karlyn. She was an amazing teacher—schooling me in the tools of public opinion report by report, data point by data point, line edit by line edit. I remember one afternoon, not too long after I had started as a full-time research assistant, desperately trying to draft a piece of analysis for the *Political Report*. After hours of attempting in vain to get it ever-so-right, Karlyn came back to her desk, saw that we needed to get something to Claude, and wrote the perfect analysis in one draft. It was insightful, concise, and perhaps most

importantly, correct. I felt like a deflated balloon. The fact that she generously gave me writing credit on the report somehow made me feel even worse. What I eventually came to realize was Karlyn’s amazing talent as a commentator on public opinion came from day in and day out, thinking and engaging on these issues, carefully looking at the data, and talking to people about them—even her lowly research assistant right out of college. It was an education of incalculable value. And that wasn’t even what I look back at most fondly. She showed me what it meant to care deeply about her profession, to better her colleagues, and to be a leader of grace. She became the reflexive benchmark that I came to hold other jobs and even myself against. I hope that in her retirement, she is able to see the incredible legacy she’s built not only in her intellectual influence but her incredible contribution to people’s lives. I hope one day, when I grow up, to be like Karlyn Bowman.

—Andrew Rugg

Today Andrew is the president at Certus Insights, a market research firm that does both polling and media analytics.







Dear Karlyn, Working with you early in my career was truly a blessing. You were an amazing mentor to me and countless others at AEI—always kind, always understanding, always generous with your time. You made us feel smart and important even though we were just getting our feet wet in the world of public policy, and you made me love that world as much as you do. I still carry so much of what you taught me into my daily life: how to be a careful editor and how to know which polling sources to trust, the importance of saying “hello” in the morning and “goodbye” at the end of the day to your coworkers, and perhaps most importantly, the etiquette rules that I still use. Trust me, I am forever grateful. Best of luck to you and congratulations—sending you all the well-wishes in the world!

—**Jen (Marsico) Tiedemann**, AEI Political Corner 2008-14

*Today Jen is deputy director of communications at Goldwater Institute and visiting fellow at Independent Women’s Forum.*



I feel so lucky to have started my career with Karlyn as my boss. I could fill multiple pages with stories about how wonderful it was to work with her and still have more to say. Not only is Karlyn deeply dedicated to her work, but she also truly cares about and invests in the people who work with her. Throughout my time at AEI, she taught me

so much and built up my confidence by showing that she valued my thoughts and contributions—even when I was a new RA and knew relatively little about the field. She was unfailingly kind, even in stressful or challenging situations, and made it clear that she cared about me as a person, both professionally and personally. (I will always remember the Thanksgiving she invited me to spend with her family when I wasn’t going to be with my own, among many other kindnesses like making professional introductions, treating us to Starbucks on busy days, and sharing articles that she knew related to my personal interests from research to baking.) I wouldn’t be where I am now without her, and she is the type of leader I aspire to be—inspiring excellence through the high standards she sets for her work while remaining incredibly humble and gracious, and encouraging others’ growth by providing opportunities for them to learn, gain valuable experience, and make connections. AEI won’t be the same without her.



—**Eleanor O’Neil**

*Today Eleanor is a research director at Echelon Insights.*





Karlyn was my first boss and, without a doubt, the best boss I will ever have. She took an interest in me, encouraged me to publish with her, and actively sought opportunities for my professional development. Karlyn was also the consummate professional. She prepared for every commitment, no matter how large or small; she earned the trust and respect of her colleagues by first showing them the same; and she carried herself with grace and dignity, regardless of the circumstance. As I prepared to represent my first client in my first hearing as a student-attorney, almost four years to the day after leaving AEI, I thought of Karlyn and drew on the gentle confidence she had exhibited years earlier.

I have only one picture with Karlyn. In fact, I don't even have the original picture; I have a picture of the picture when AEI's communications team posted it on Instagram. And the picture is not of Karlyn and me; the picture is of us laughing at one of Norm's jokes during my farewell toast. But this is very fitting. In her gracious and humble nature, Karlyn never wanted to be the center of attention, even when she had rightfully earned her place in the spotlight. And a tribute to Karlyn would not be complete without Norm. Karlyn and Norm are the dynamic duo on whose shoulders AEI's political team stands. AEI will forever be indebted to their academic ingenuity and political foresight, just as I will always be indebted to their mentorship, generosity, and friendship.

Karlyn, for all of us whose lives you've touched, thank you. You will never know the depth of our gratitude for you. May we make you proud as we carry on your legacy.

—**Heather Sims** (Research Assistant, 2014–16; Program Manager, 2016–17)

*Today Heather works as an associate at King & Spalding LLP in Houston, Texas.*



I had the absolute pleasure to work for and with Karlyn for almost three years. The lessons you learn from working for Karlyn last a lifetime: attention to detail, industriousness, fairness, and inquisitiveness. Many years later when I think of Karlyn—which is often as I use lessons she taught me everyday—two things about her always stand out: her unfailing excellence and her uncommon kindness. These two things always lead to a third though: an enormous smile. Congratulations Karlyn!

—**Adam Foster**

*Today Adam Foster is an attorney in the Los Angeles office of Baum Hedlund Aristei & Goldman.*



My dearest Karlyn,

It's bizarre to be writing this knowing it is a farewell version of PR (especially with the countless proofing hours we spent together!). Karlyn, I am forever thankful I met you as an intern years ago and was lucky enough to be your RA for two years. It is hard to think about AEI without thinking of you as well—for me, you are the institution. Your commitment to understanding the public's thoughts and the methods pollsters used to best convey this to the nation is unmatched and your accomplishments clearly show it. The impact you have had

on your RAs and interns is one that is immeasurable, especially on the women who have been inspired by you to pursue their passions. But for me the largest impact was not what I learned about polling and analysis from you, but your kindness, grace, and giving heart. I do not know what I did to cross paths with you many years ago, but I am beyond thankful I did. Thank you for the mentorship, hugs, support, fun emails, morning chats, and life advice all of these years. You are truly one in a million. All my love and best wishes,

*Today Jackie studies at Loyola University Chicago School of Law.*



—**Jackie Clemence**



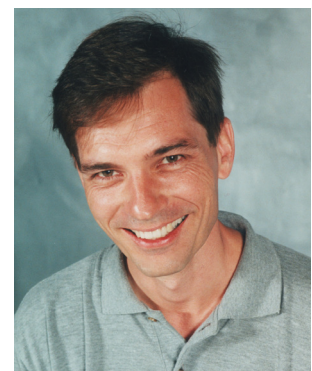
Over 17 years of working with Karlyn—several of which she was my direct supervisor as head of AEI Press—I've developed a closer relationship with Karlyn than with any other AEI scholar.

Karlyn met my family at AEI picnics. At the time, these were held on a Sunday on the grounds of the Washington International School. When my daughter, Naomi, (now almost 20) was still young enough and willing to accompany me to the office for a day, Karlyn would always spend some time talking to her and making her feel welcome. Naomi still has fond memories of these encounters. Over the years, Karlyn has taken great interest in my hobbies, and we have exchanged a lot of information about our common interests in M&Ms: music and mushrooms.

While working with Karlyn on the Political Report, I've always been struck by how respectful she was about my schedule and considerate about giving me enough time for design and typesetting. Early heads-ups were the norm, and communication was always clear. When it was necessary to shorten text to make it fit, Karlyn would edit at a moment's notice, without ever holding up the process.

I don't think there could have been a better senior editor to work with than Karlyn. I will miss working with her, and I hope we can continue to share information about our hobbies.

—**Claude Aubert**



Working with Karlyn Bowman has been one of most rewarding experiences of my life. As a 2020 graduate entering the workforce from my childhood bedroom, I had no idea what to expect from the woman I had only ever interacted with over Zoom. As quarantine dragged on, we got to know each other better. We bonded not only over our passion for public opinion research, but over silly Washington newsletters, opulent wedding features in Vogue, fine wine, and office gossip, of course. I gained an incredible mentor and found my calling. This industry can be quite the boys club and watching Karlyn navigate it with grace and self-assuredness is truly inspiring.

It is hard to describe just how much Karlyn means to AEI, to her myriad research assistants and interns, and to her friends all over Washington. She imparts wisdom and poise, and she cares deeply and fiercely. Her ability to bridge political divides and to objectively analyze American public opinion is something I will always strive to do myself. I feel so lucky to have been her research assistant, even if it was only for a short time.

Karlyn, I am so grateful for your mentorship. You have had such an impact on me and so many others at AEI and beyond. While we may not be office neighbors for much longer, I'm heartened to know you'll still be close by, even if that means trekking down to G2.

—**Samantha Goldstein**



*Not even public polling experts saw the 2016 Trump election victory coming.*

