



THE
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE
FIRST FRIDAY
BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, December 7, 2012, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by December 5th to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

First Friday
News & Views

DECEMBER
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12

ELECTION REFLECTION

By Jonathan Wilson

I was there. I have a memory and I'm going to use it -- and extrapolate from it. I was there when the Vietnam War ended. I remember the protests, the turmoil, the political upheaval, and the body bags. When we hit 50,000 of those, the critical mass in public opinion was achieved to end the war. Everyone knew that there was some threshold beyond which the people would no longer tolerate the continued slaughter of our children in a war that had no discernible purpose. No justification in reality. That threshold turned out to be 50,000 body bags. At that point the moms and dads of this country rose up as if with one voice and said, "The war is over. We don't care whether you call it a win, a loss, or a draw. It matters not. It's over." And it was, almost overnight. Burned into my memory are the pictures of helicopters evacuating people from the roof of the US Embassy in Saigon. Beating a fast retreat to a waiting aircraft carrier.

The US election of 2012 documents almost as graphically that the culture war against law-abiding gay and lesbian citizens is over. Take a quick look at the results. A president was re-elected who had opened the US military to gays and lesbians and endorsed gay marriage. Three states by popular vote approved gay marriage. Minnesota voters rejected an anti-gay constitutional amendment. Wisconsin elected to the United States Senate lesbian Tammy Baldwin. Iowans retained on the Iowa Supreme Court Justice Wiggins who had joined the unanimous court in legalizing gay marriage. The Iowa Senate, that had stood up against attempts to put a state constitutional amendment on the ballot, was kept in Democratic hands under the leadership of re-elected Mike Gronstal. He would not be martyred for the cause as our detractors had planned for him.

There's more. In seven states openly LGBT candidates won election to the state legislature for the first time, including Florida, West Virginia, North Dakota, and Pennsylvania. That brings to 40 (80%) of the states with at least one "out" state legislator. The Speakers of the House in California and Rhode Island are gay. Thanks to the 2012 election, two more will become House Speakers in Colorado and Oregon. And Arizona elected to Congress the first out bisexual.

There has been much debate over the similarities and differences between the racial civil rights movement and the LGBT civil rights movement. There are both. The rapidity of progress on the latter is a notable difference and not without explanation. In advancing the racial civil rights movement, people of color have had to appeal to enlightened, fair-minded members of the majority race. By contrast, we have blood ties into the "straight" majority. When we come out and phone home (in the parlance of E.T.), no matter who answers the phone -- mom, dad, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousins -- likely they are straight, they love us uncontrollably, *and they vote!* You do the electoral math; it's pretty easy.

You can read in history books the names of folks who said and did things in the ear-

(Continued on page 2)

Election Reflection (cont.)

ly days of the racial civil rights movement that are nearly incomprehensibly ignorant (and embarrassing) today. In our civil rights movement you'll be able to look up such names in the phone book. Bob Vander Plaats, for example, comes immediately to mind.

Listen to the likes of Rush Limbaugh who has been ranting and raving in his post-election lambast against gay people. Mercy, what a doofus. If that's not a word, it should be. Remember this: those who are afraid of water don't get really agitated and vocal until they find themselves in the path of a rising tide. And no amount of indignant pomposity will change it. In fact, it might even speed up the accelerating changes that are taking place, much as "Rev." Fred Phelps's tirades have done. Limbaugh can read the same indelible writing on the wall that the rest of us can, and he's experiencing a sense of impotence that no amount of Viagra will be able to fix.

We should all be students of history. One of the lessons to be learned from the ending of the Vietnam War is that there is a threshold in public opinion and, once crossed, there's no going back. Hearts and minds only change in one direction on LGBT issues. It may not be possible to predict the threshold with precision, or to quantify what it is in advance, but it's there.

Burned into my memory is the election of 2012. The outcomes on November 6, 2012, told me that the LGBT civil rights movement has now unequivocally passed that threshold of history. From here on, our detractors will be increasingly marginalized. We win.

Incumbent Sheriff Comes to Town

By Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker at the November 2 meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club was Bill McCarthy, Polk County Sheriff since November 2008. His appearance at FFBC came just four days before he would be handily reelected to a second term by the voters of Polk County.

In its endorsement of McCarthy's re-election (October 24, 2012), the **Des Moines Register** wrote: "McCarthy takes credit for having established more professionalism within the department, evidenced by the creation of an Office of Pro-

fessional Standards that receives and investigates complaints from citizens about the department's deputies. That office, similar to one he helped create within the Des Moines Police Department, gives officers a sense of what conduct should be expected. Setting a high bar for professionalism in law enforcement may make some deputies uncomfortable, but it is in the best interests of the department and the public. That is why McCarthy deserves the support of Polk County voters."

Indeed, McCarthy's professional excellence shone through every word of his presentation to us. Clearly uncomfortable in his role as a political vote-seeker, he needed no rhetoric to embellish his extreme competence in, and devotion to, his profession. His outline of the care with which he administers the jail, for example (only one of his many duties as sheriff), was fascinating and inspiring.

William McCarthy is a life-long law enforcement official who began his career in 1969 as a Peace Officer. He joined the Des Moines Department in 1970 and held numerous positions within the department, eventually serving as Chief until his retirement in February 2006.

Sheriff McCarthy has received numerous awards for his work with neighborhood and business groups and for his outstanding service to the citizens of Des Moines and youth groups throughout the community. He led the initiative for what is now known as Community Policing and was the driving force behind the city of Des Moines's Homeland Security initiative, a plan now funded by the County and every municipal government within Polk County. His emphasis on establishing meaningful relationships with all minority groups and respecting their diversity is well known: last March he was presented with the Mary Louise Smith Human Rights Award for his long-term commitment to raising the level of awareness and concern for human rights in the Des Moines area. Sheriff McCarthy continues to be active in many civic and community organizations.

Sheriff McCarthy earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master of Public Administration Degree from Drake University. He attended Harvard's Senior Management Institutes for Police and the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Program. Sheriff McCarthy was born and raised in Des Moines, and he and his wife Linda of 43 years have two children and three grandchildren; he served in the United States Marine Corps and is a Vietnam Veteran.

Majority rule only works if you're also considering individual rights. Because you can't have five wolves and one sheep voting on what to have for supper. -L.F.



The re-election of an African American president is of greater historical significance than his original election.

Reality just is, and science is our way of figuring that out, of understanding it, and discovering more.

Argo

Review By Gary Kaufman

Argo, based on a true story, is a film that chronicles the rescue of six Americans who escaped from the American Embassy in January of 1980 when it was overtaken by a mob of Iranians. Those who did not escape were caught inside the embassy, held as hostages, and tortured. The film also chronicles why the Iranians were so upset. For 2500 years the Persian Empire (Iran) was ruled by Shahs. In 1953 the Shah was replaced by a prime minister, who did not honor one-sided foreign contracts to extract oil and, instead, used oil proceeds to benefit the Iranian people. A few years later the western countries orchestrated a coup d'etat and replaced the prime minister with another Shah. The Shah gave the oil rights back to foreign companies and lived a lavish life-style while the rest of the country lived in poverty. His wife was said to bathe in milk, and he would have his meals flown in by jet from abroad. He ruled through terror carried out by his secret police. He then tried to "Westernize" Iran which upset almost all the clerics in the country. The Shah was eventually overthrown but managed to escape to the United States. After the Shah's overthrow there was a period of harsh retributions and executions to even the score. The Iranians demanded that the United States return the Shah to Iran so that justice could be carried out. The United States refused.

The film really captures the intensity and fear of people living in such a country. Iranians were taken out into the street and shot for merely having someone with a western name on their phone list. The Americans who were captured in the embassy were tortured – at one point the men were blindfolded, taken into the basement, faced a firing squad, and the triggers were snapped but without any bullets in the gun. The trauma these men went through with the emotional agony of thinking they were about to be shot had to have been tremendous. The six who escaped went out into the streets and eventually were able to hide in the Canadian Ambassador's home.

The CIA was tasked to brainstorm how to get them out. The US State Department proposed to give them bicycles and have them ride out of Iran, a distance of 300 miles – a ridiculous idea. The pressure on the White House was tremendous; it was a time when Walter Cronkite would end the news each evening with, "This is the 69th day of the holding of the American hostages," etc. The CIA agent brought in to brainstorm with the State Department, Tony Mendez (Ben Affleck), recommended that the six pose as members of a film crew in Tehran to scout out locations for filming a Star Trek-type movie. In order to do this they needed to have the background story well covered so that the scheme would be believable. They contacted John Chambers (John Good-

man), who had worked with Tony in the past and was a prosthetics specialist with movie connections. They needed a movie producer and talked Lester Seigel (Alan Arkin) into producing a fake movie. It is a hoot to watch John Goodman and Alan Arkin in these roles as they line up a script (Argo) and have media events to convince the world that this is a real movie about to be made. You get to see some of the insider stuff that the rest of us never know goes on in producing a movie.

Finally, the State Department gives the go-ahead to do the rescue after this exchange, "Is this the best bad idea you have?" "Yes," is the response. Back to Iran where Tony must both prep the escapees and convince them that his plan will work. As Tony is driven by a cab into the city, he sees a man in a suit, who looks a lot like Tony, being hanged from a piece of construction equipment. The tension really builds in the movie, and you are on the edge of your seat as the escapees and Tony go through the three checkpoints required of all air passengers. It was expertly put together. I highly recommend you see it.

If you do see it, be sure to sit through the ending credits. There, Jimmy Carter tells of his involvement at the time and there are side-by-side shots of the real events and those portrayed in the movie. It is incredibly right-on!

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the December 7 meeting no later than December 5. Email JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be FFBC member, the Reverend Jonathan Page of the Ames United Church of Christ.

Thanks to Ken Hanson for his introduction of our November speaker, Polk County Sheriff Bill McCarthy.

Consider making an end-of-year tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC Scholarship Fund..

Mark your calendar for the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus Winter Solstice concert, MAY YOUR GAYS BE MERRY AND BRIGHT, is December 14th and 15th at the First Christian Church at 25th and University Ave. in Des Moines. Tickets and info at dmgmc.org.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Barry McGriff for coordinating the book exchange

Connection or Technology

By Tony E Hansen

www.tigersndragons.com

Technology has been helpful with increasing our communication capability and has undeniably altered the way people interact. With the increased capability via the myriad available devices, we have seen a change in how people interact and in how people view patience. Further, people seem to have replaced compassion with a text. We forgo personal interaction in favor of instant communication through our devices, and we forget how to self-reflect.

In Sherry Turkle's TED talk "Connected, but alone," she describes the profound nature of technology intersecting with human intimacy that is worth our attention. She asserts that messages can be like getting a hug when you need it, but too many can be a problem. Turkle posits that "if we're not able to be alone, we're going to be more lonely" because we have used technology to replace the human intimacy and connection. This is a revelation about how people have turned toward using these devices to build connections rather than understanding parts of our innermost being.

With chat rooms, messenger programs, social media, and our devices, technology has provided ample opportunity for communication. Technology can be so exciting that we sleep with the devices, and we take them on vacation with us. Yet, is that technology helping us to understand ourselves?

Technology changes what we do as well as our perspectives and, if we do not take care, it can change who we are. The etiquette for using these devices has changed what we consider proper behavior. Consider the perspective of being able to get instant communication on a 2-to-5 inch diagonal screen. Your focus is there in that semi-private conversation (regardless of where you are) rather than observing what is around you and learning from that.

It was only a few years ago that this instant communication was not possible. Now, one can find a group of friends who are *together* in a room but having their conversations with completely different people not even in the same city. Whether at funerals, at the dinner table, during a movie, or during a work meeting, messaging removes us from the location and the experience of what we are doing (whether grief or enjoyment). We should think about what is so important that we forgo the experience before us with the often grammatically incorrect bursts coming from our devices.

In *Star Wars*, Master Yoda spoke to Luke Skywalker, "All his life has he looked away... to the future, the horizon. Never his mind on where he was." Later, "always with you what cannot be done." Luke was so focused upon what was missing (regardless of relevance) that he would easily forget the graces and resources that were there with him.

We are lost in our many bursts through our devices that we cannot see what is beautiful here. Where does self-reflection happen if you are never alone? Further, real-time observations



www.ted.com

and notations are not required because we can present things in the way we want to present them at the pace we can control. Real-time conversations and human relationships lose their richness and rewards but instead become more like annoying attention demanders.

Messaging is good for getting small bits like saying "thinking of you," but they do not help us truly gain a context for the person (learning and understanding differences). Yet, people will easily prefer texting over talking. Moreover, if a message response is not fast enough, people may be offended via the assumption that the bits of texting are automatically more important than the other person enjoying or learning where they are at that moment (never mind possibly driving). Thus, enjoyment and learning of the moment are forever lost in the inferred priority of perpetual bursts from unrelated elements.

We can attempt to "hide" our real emotions by ignoring the current circumstance via instant gratis with people through our devices. Contrastingly, some vividly show their pain and vulnerability in the online-self that you would think their world is a total disaster. Do these not ultimately reflect what people expect from the technology or from others? What scares us that we immerse ourselves in our technology instead of intimacy? What illusions trap us in the technology that we avoid our basic humanity?

Perhaps we think "no one is listening." Perhaps, we must "spend time with machines that seem to care." Maybe something is happening in the world (drawing our attention) that we would rather be doing at that moment. These can be captivating questions about personal vulnerability and comfort. We could choose to "unplug" for a while and attempt to rediscover the humanity within ourselves. Whether one intentionally chooses to "unplug," people will ridicule those for being "offline." Again, why is that considered odd behavior? Consider why people go fishing or hunting. Some enjoy the game, but many will relate to the quietness of being somewhere without disturbance, of being able to self-reflect without noise.

Ms. Turkle also advocates "reclaiming" spaces at home and work where conversation is primary. I can relate to this because my kitchen table is a place for dinner or coffee with conversation, often over a card game of gin-rummy. Here, my husband and I can relate and learn about each other. Here, we can build upon each other without technology interfering.

Consider your holiday rituals and festivities, remember why you are there, and enjoy the moment fully. Escape the technology in favor of the intimacy of family and friends (regardless of irritations or boredom). Those are moments that make us human and they teach us to use what we have rather than worry about what we do not have. Those are moments that teach us etiquette, compassion, and mental reflection. Those moments are the ones that teach us real understanding and love.



Experience is the cruelest teacher; it gives the test first and the lesson afterwards. William Anderson

From the Pastor's Pen The Shifting Moral Ground for Gays in the 2012 Election

By Rev. Jonathan Page

In recent years Jonathan Haidt has made quite a name for himself by applying insights of moral psychology to politics. In his book **The Righteous Mind**, Haidt argues that there are five moral foundations that have arisen through evolution, and that our instinctual moral reactions to different situations can be attributed to one of these five foundations. For example, people have an innate revulsion to harming others. We have evolved to care for other people because caring for others usually leads others to care for us. Similarly, we are morally indignant when we think people who owe us, or others, some favor renege on their assumed obligation. This moral hard-wiring is useful in determining whom to trust. The same holds true for our instinct to be loyal to our group and to see betrayal of the group as the ultimate sin. Furthermore, we innately respect authority because authority leads to order and justice within our group or our world. That stability usually translates into security, even if it comes at the cost of the occasional abuse of authority. Finally, we create boundaries of holiness and purity out of our evolutionary instinct in order to preserve that which brings us, or our group, benefits. These are Haidt's five moral foundations of social behavior: care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity.

According to Haidt, the emphasis on these five moral foundations varies by political affiliation. He has surveyed a significant number of people and found that liberals tend to stress the first two moral foundations, care and fairness. On the other hand, conservatives tend to stress all five in more or less equal proportion. This explains, among other things, why conservatives are often more organized, why they tend to respect authority and the way things "should be done," and their loyalty to the group. Compare Occupy Wall Street to the Tea Party. This different emphasis on moral foundations also explains the conservative repulsion to homosexuality. LGBT people violate traditional purity codes/taboo, which is particularly unnerving to conservatives, whereas liberals usually prioritize the care of others over purity concerns. Think of Pat Buchanan's famous quotation in reference to gays, "It's not who you are that bothers me. It's what you do."

Regardless of what you think of Haidt's proposals -- any such categorization is prone to flaws -- it is a useful lens for considering the sea-change in this election with regards to LGBT issues. After more than thirty consecutive defeats at the ballot box for gay marriage, this election saw four (or five if you include Iowa) favorable gay marriage referendums. What happened? How could such a turnaround occur so rapidly? The biggest obstacle to gay marriage has been, and continues to be,

After more than thirty consecutive defeats at the ballot box for gay marriage, this election saw four (or five if you include Iowa) favorable gay marriage referendums.

conservative religion in the United States. Yet, the churches have not softened their opposition to gay marriage, with the exception of some African American churches in response to Barack Obama's endorsement of gay marriage. Nor have political alignments changed in any significant way. The voting trends we saw in the election of 2008 continued with the election of 2012. There are not more liberals than there were before. So what happened? Here is where Haidt's perspective can explain things more easily.

Historically, liberals have embraced gays and lesbians because liberals stress the virtue of caring more than purity. Once a liberal gets to know someone who is gay or lesbian, his or her views begin to shift. Moreover, as traditional taboos become less important to someone, that person becomes more liberal. The shift in this election with regards to gays could represent a leftward movement of the electorate.

Yet, I would argue that we are seeing something different in the 2012 election. Rather than more people prioritizing care for gays and lesbians, American views on purity/sanctity are changing. In the past, someone might not know what to do about homosexuality, but they were good liberals and cared for those around them in spite of the culture's heterosexism. Now, it seems, the nature of purity/sanctity has changed and homosexuality is no longer taboo. Being gay has finally moved into the mainstream.

If this is true, and if we take Haidt at face value, we should expect two things to follow. First, there will be rapid advances in gay rights as the taboo over homosexuality changes. Second, whereas before, if someone supported gay rights, that person was most likely a liberal, now someone can maintain his or her conservative strictures on purity and still embrace gay rights. Gays must still follow certain purity codes, but being gay is okay. In other words, as gay rights expands, we will see fewer, rather than more, gay or gay-friendly liberals. For the record, we already see this happening. Look at the rise of gay evangelical Christians or the founding of the new, and ultra conservative, GOProud group within the Republican Party. It is worthwhile considering what implications this will have for being gay in 21st Century America.

FFBC member Jonathan Page is senior pastor of the Ames United Church of Christ, 217 6th Street, Ames, Iowa. Sunday service at 10:45. He can be reached at jon@Amesucc.org.



Charm is the quality in others that makes us more satisfied with ourselves. Henri Frederic Amiel

Riding an evangelical tiger can be fast, fun, and exciting -- the problem comes with the dismount.

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

DECEMBER 2012

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My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

Henry VIII and the 2012 Elections

By Steve Person

What possible connection could an historical novel set in sixteenth century England and the 2012 national American elections possibly have in common? The answer: PLENTY!

Wolf Hall, by English author Hilary Mantel, explores the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, the obsession of Henry VIII for Anne Boleyn, the rise of Thomas Cromwell, the intransigence of Katherine of Aragon and her equally stubborn daughter, Mary (later Mary I), the rise of the Church of England, and the fall of the Roman Catholic Church as the unifying religion of Europe for more than a thousand years.

The book is at times insightful, at times preposterous, and at times incomprehensible. Hilary Mantel deserves credit for making Thomas Cromwell, who for most is considered an evil player in the martyrdom of Sir Thomas More, into the hero of the book. Furthermore, her research reveals that More was certainly not the heroic figure portrayed in Robert Bolt's play (and later Academy Award winning film) **A Man for All Seasons**. In his role as Chancellor of England, More was no stranger to the use of torture and the burning of those he considered heretics. History has a convenient way of forgetting certain details when it wants to launder the truth. Like all historical novels I have read, the author takes literary license when creating dialogue for the historical characters and especially the inner monologues for her main character, Cromwell. Unless it is written down, it is difficult to read the thoughts of even the most transparent people. Finally, Hilary Mantel employs in the book—or rather does not employ—the convenience of “he said, she said” when writing dialogue. It becomes the reader's task to figure out who is saying what in many of the book's verbal scenarios. I find that extremely annoying. (Still, Mantel won the Booker Prize for **Wolf Hall** in 2009 and again this year for its sequel, **Bring Up the Bodies**.)

What does any of this have to do with the 2012 elections? Henry VIII was forced to deal with a Parliament that was not especially enthusiastic with his fascination for Anne Boleyn and the dumping of Queen Katherine in Anne's favor. Eventually—seven years to be exact—Anne was declared the rightful Queen and Katherine relegated to the Dowager Princess of Henry's deceased elder brother—and Katherine's first husband—Prince Arthur. Consider President's Obama's difficulties with the current Congress, and you get some idea of the insight one needs to be able to govern what has become an essentially ungovernable country. The preposterous factor of the 2012 elections was the \$6,000,000,000 + price tag to re-elect the President and a Congress not that much different in numbers from the current one, and all this with the maneuvering of outside money to influence voters. To be fair, I have to admit that the gay community made great strides in this election as did many women candidates and local measures. For those things, I am truly thankful. But I was sickened by the entire process, a process exacerbated by five members of the United States Supreme Court in their Citizens United decision. It is a piss-poor way to run a government—just as Henry VIII's “Divine Right of Kings” was ridiculous. What finally becomes incomprehensible—as of this writing—is that both sides in the “fiscal cliff” debate are pretty much where they were before this mess started. Metaphoric heads will roll, but whose?

It is never easy to govern, even in a dictatorship. I rarely agree with anything Donald Trump says, but maybe he is correct when he says we need a new form of government.