



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

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#### CALENDAR

- ▼ No July meeting. See you at PROS on July 24th.
- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, August 6, 2010 at Hoyt Sherman Place.

R.S.V.P. by August 3 to  
[JonathanWilson@  
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288-2500 by phone.

# First Friday News & Views

JULY  
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## UNWITTING ALLIES

by Jonathan Wilson

It's disconcerting indeed to see protesters holding signs that read, "God hates Fags." Fred Phelps and his ilk are famous for them. It inspires media attention, counter-protests, law enforcement protection for him as much as or more than anyone else, and it doubtless raises money for his continued efforts. He aims to shock, and he succeeds.

It's also disconcerting to hear Bryan English of the Iowa Family Policy Center assert that the Iowa Supreme Court is powerless to establish the law in Iowa regarding same-gender marriage. He claims that only the Iowa Legislature has the requisite power to address that issue and, until it does differently than it has, the law remains unchanged as established during the Branstad administration, restricting marriage to one man and one woman *at a time*. He insists that one need only consult the printed Iowa Code where that limitation continues to be expressed by statute, and that's supposedly the end of the matter -- for him.

It's disconcerting, too, to hear gubernatorial candidate Vander Plaats say that, if elected governor (which, at this point, would appear to be less than likely), he'd immediately issue an executive order banning implementation of the unanimous Iowa Supreme Court decision declaring the purported limitation on legal marriage unconstitutional.

And it's disconcerting to hear Charles Hurley admonish pastors who have expressed support for same-gender marriage, call them "pseudo pastors," and claim that they're leading their flocks astray.

Take heart. Those who are afraid of water don't get agitated and vocal until they find themselves in the path of a rising tide. We have the good fortune to be in such a time. Thanks to the courageous and tireless efforts of our forebears, there is a rising tide. We can see it and our detractors can see it also. Their outlandish protestations confirm it. The louder and more preposterously desperate they become, the more encouraged we should feel.

Fred Phelps draws the demarcation line between his position and ours SO far to the radical right that folks who had no idea they were on our side are placed there by where he draws that line. He's creating allies unexpectedly -- unexpected to us and even to them. More power to him.

Bryan English is a poor student of government. He must not have been paying attention in 5th grade (or thereafter). Since **Marbury v. Madison**, the principle has been indisputably established, as it needed to be for the sake of the survival of our constitutional democracy, some branch of government has to be the final arbiter of what is and what is not constitutional. That's true whether we're talking about the US Constitution or the Iowa Constitution. When a legislative enactment is declared unconstitutional, that's that. No frustration with the Court or disagreement with its decision will change that fact.

When the US Supreme Court invalidated anti-misogyny laws in **Loving v. Virginia**, that was all that was required. No further legislative enactment was necessary. The fact that it took twenty more years for the Virginia Legislature to pass corresponding legislation was of no consequences to the intervening right of people of different races to marry. Same is true when the Supreme Court abolished all remaining anti-sodomy laws in **Lawrence v. Texas**. No further action by any state legislature was necessary.

(Continued on page 2)

Vander Plaats is at least an equally poor student of government – embarrassingly so – when he proposes with a straight face that, as governor, he'd issue an executive order to stop enforcement of the Iowa Supreme Court marriage decision. Bottom line, he's a theocrat at best, and, at worst, an anarchist. Without a reliable arbiter of constitutionality, there is no Constitution.

Chuck Hurley is partly right. He's right that the Bible warns us against false prophets. But false prophets cannot be expected to acknowledge that that's what they are. It is left to the rest of us to figure out which among competing voices are those of the false prophets. One litmus test, it seems to me, is to figure out who stands to profit from the competing voices. False prophets pursue profits using falsehoods. What Hurley is talking about is my life and his livelihood. Enough said.

These detractors are doing us a favor. Unbeknownst to them, they are actually agents of worthwhile change. They are driving to our side good students of government, people of good will, and people of religious enlightenment. The Lord works in mysterious ways.

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*Why is there a light in the fridge and not in the freezer?*

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## **Featured Speaker at FFBC Scholarship Award Meeting Discusses Homophobia**

Robert N. Minor, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas, discussed the nature of homophobia at the June 4 meeting at Hoyt Sherman Place. Speaking not only to the FFBC membership, but also to the recipients of this year's scholarships and their families, Dr. Minor defined homophobia as it is explained in his pamphlet, "Homophobia: A Diagnosis and a Cure." Stating that homophobia is the fear of getting close to one's own gender, Minor went on to point out how this powerful fear is destructive to both heterosexuals and homosexuals alike.

Dr. Minor said that homophobia is taught from birth and then is promulgated throughout society in "most of culture's institutions -- economic, political, social, entertainment, educational, and religious." He exhorted his audience to ignore those who would justify homophobia and its defined roles. Perhaps

his most compelling argument is that "homosexuality had no part in the rise and fall of cultures and cultural institutions such as the family." That, of course, is the most fervent argument put forth by the religious zealots who portray gay people as agents of the decline of civilization. According to Dr. Minor, "No religious tradition has spoken with one voice regarding gay people."

While Dr. Minor asked people to take a stand regarding homophobia, he cautioned not to argue about sex or sexuality. "Most societies -- the U.S. in particular -- are very sick about sex and sexuality of any sort. *Notice how we are conditioned to confuse closeness and love with sexual activity.* \* \* \* Most straight people are very conflicted about sexual morality. Getting caught up in discussions of sex and sexual acts is futile."

Dr. Minor distributed copies of "Homophobia: A Diagnosis and Cure" to all attendees at the June meeting. He is the author of **Scared Straight: Why It's So Hard to Accept Gay People and Why It's So Hard to Be Human (2001)**; **Gay and Healthy in a Sick Society (2003)**; and **When Religion Is an Addiction (2007)**, all three of which have been purchased and added to the FFBC lending library. Proceeds from the books sold at the meeting were donated to the FFBC scholarship fund. Dr. Minor's web site is [www.fairnessproject.org](http://www.fairnessproject.org).

## **An Observation** By Fred Mount

I saw the most touching sight at the last FFBC meeting. At a table about two tables away from where I was sitting sat a young man who received an award. I do not remember where he was from because that was not important. Seated with him was his father. When the young man got up to receive his award, his father had the biggest smile on his face that you can imagine and clapped enthusiastically because he was obviously so very proud of his son. You could just see in his face and eyes he was saying, "That's my son. I'm proud to claim him." It almost brings tears to my eyes remembering the experience, partly because I find myself wondering whether my own father could ever have felt that way about me.

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*All of us could take a lesson from the weather; it pays no attention to criticism.*

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*There are two kinds of pedestrians: the quick and the dead.*

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# Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

Review by Gary Kaufman

The last time most of you probably saw Jake Gyllenhaal he was getting quite animalistic with Heath Ledger while herding sheep in the mountains in Ang Lee's breakout movie of gay love and lust, **Brokeback Mountain**. Since then he has certainly buffed up; is cute as ever, especially with that short trimmed beard; and recently has moved on to a Disney action fantasy film, **Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time**. Many reviewers lamented the loss of swashbuckling in the recent Russell Crowe movie, **Robin Hood**. Well there is swashbuckling in spades in the **Prince** film. Gyllenhaal's acrobatic leaps remind one of Douglas Fairbanks in **Thief of Bagdad**, with plenty of hand-to-hand swordplay and other forms of combat. But it also has bits that remind one of the adventures of Indiana Jones and James Bond all rolled into one! What a man! Rather than climbing that mountain with the sheep, he is scaling walls by grabbing arrows shot into the castle wall by his ragtag army, swinging on ropes to unleash scalding horror upon the enemy troops, and then signaling to his brothers-in-arms that the castle has been breached and to begin the attack.

The title of the movie derives from a magic knife that was given by the gods to a young girl who asked them to take her as a sacrifice rather than eliminate all of humankind. They were so moved that they spared both humankind and the child and gave her the knife. The knife, if pressed, releases the Sands of Time and time moves backward with only the person who presses the knife. That person can then change what happens and achieve a different outcome. The knife only contains a limited amount of sand, so its holder can only go back in time a minute or two. If more of this sand can be found, the holder of the knife could assume tremendous additional power.

Jake's female co-star is Gemma Arterton, who is also the female lead in **Clash of the Titans**. In this film, she is the beautiful Princess Tamina of the holy city of Alamut whose duty is to protect the knife from falling into the hands of others.

Jake Gyllenhaal's character, Dastan, is one of the king's three sons. The other sons, Seso and Garsiv, are biological sons, but Dastan was adopted after the king saw in the orphaned lad the makings of greatness. The king believed that

the "bond between the brothers is the sword that protects his people." Soon there is family betrayal amongst the brothers and Dastan becomes a hunted outlaw. The film demonstrates a lot of good story telling technique. The two leads, as often happens, initially hate each other. Yet, due to their circumstances, they have to rely on each other and then fall in love. There is a comical bandit character, Shiek Amar (Alfred Molina), who eventually changes loyalties and joins Dastan. He is a much more evil character and can mystically find where people hide while he is dreaming.

It all makes for a rather exciting film. If you like fantasy action flicks, you should enjoy this. And you will certainly enjoying seeing Jake Gyllenhaal all buffed up and scantily dressed while climbing those castle walls!

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*Life is sexually transmitted.*

## BRIEFS & SHORTS

**No July meeting is scheduled because of the Fourth of July weekend.** On July 24, Allen Vander Linden and Mike Thompson will host a party for FFBC and PROS members at their home in Urbandale, 7500 Benton Drive. Details and directions will be distributed via e-mail closer to the event. The next meeting will be August 6. E-mail [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or call him at 288-2500.



Thanks to Charles Carnes for introducing our June speaker, Dr. Robert N. Minor of The Fairness Project.



Congratulations to our 2010 FFBC Scholarship winners: Dane Buchholz of Waverly; Jessica Garraway of Sioux City; Stormy O'Brink of Waterloo; David Pope of Clear Lake; Molly Richardson of Norwalk; and Taylor Smith of Marshalltown. A special thanks to the Scholarship Committee for their hard work in tabulating the scholarship applications and attending the recognition ceremonies at the various high schools.



Thanks to the following FFBC members who "manned" the FFBC 2010 Pride Booth: Rick Davis, Chris Correy, Tony Hansen, Chris Knudson, Randy Swarts, and Michael Thompson.



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*How is it one careless match can start a forest fire,  
but it takes a whole box to start a campfire?*

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# Of Language, Religion & Culture: A Response to an Arrogant Email

Tony Hansen

I received a rather arrogant and rude email chain letter that basically placed Australia's Prime Minister on a pedestal for publicly refusing to let Australian Muslims practice sharia law. The email also denounced diverse languages in public discourse and denounced religions outside of supposed "normal American" Christian religion. The message argued that immigrants must adapt to host cultures. When one reads the arguments carefully, there are several implications expressed in the scornful tirade. Essentially, the email content was arrogant and narrow-minded, and stank of unrepentant bigotry. To a point, immigrants will, in time, adapt to the host culture, or at least, mutual understanding will be achieved. Ironically, the prideful ignorance of the message provided a strong argument for atheism, as well as public education and guaranteed rights.

An idea implied in the email was to have everyone be narrow-minded people blindly following a set of beliefs: a society where women stay home and are subservient to men (regardless of treatment or how interested each is in being married). In that society, people can only listen to certain music, have to follow Biblical codes, eat certain foods, can only date certain people, and are not free to think outside of those constraints. This puts society into a role that does not respect or grow with other cultures. That world view historically fosters hostility and war between cultures. Just look at Israel and Iran (not to mention our history with Native Americans). We should not be fighting Islamic extremists (Taliban) by becoming them.

Further, no democratic government should force someone to follow a religion or to pray if one chooses otherwise. If someone wants to follow a religion, by all means, they should do so. Yet, people should not be forced to believe in, or be subjected to, some tradition that may have been concocted to make people fall in line with those having big egos and dangerous ambitions.

With respect to making people speak English, refusing to learn a language becomes one's own limitation. The person who wrote the email is one of the same people that go to a non-English speaking country (if at all) and wonder why people do not understand them. At the same time, those same people still demand to be understood. How arrogant is that? As well, people who refuse to learn English here do themselves a disservice; if they are making an effort to learn and to adapt, why not help them? Their isolation is sufficient incentive to inspire adaptation; no coercion is necessary.

Moreover, language is part of every culture. Why is it so wrong to learn another language (and maybe expand our minds)? For instance, when I learned Japanese and French, I

learned whole new ways of thinking about words. Different languages express concepts in wholly different ways. Europeans learn multiple languages in order to get around the continent. Why not have more language training here that allows people to learn something other than sports in school? A nation that refuses to grow its language skills is destined to failure because that nation cannot possibly trade competitively or learn from other cultures. Each culture brings richness to the whole.

Incidentally, Canada, referenced in the hateful message, is bilingual. Canada and the United States are nations of immigrants, and we should be free to speak languages that are part of our individual cultures. Bosnian, Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Chinese are just a few of the languages that one can hear around Des Moines. To my ear, this sounds like poetry.

Finally, a government in a free society cannot be allowed to impose its will arbitrarily upon minorities because the democracy then devolves into a tyranny of the majority. As fickle as the masses can be, do we really want this? As well, that is the essential reason for protected equality (e.g., gay marriage or racial integration). Civil rights and equality should never be based upon a majority vote because protected constitutional rights are what keep the majority from taking rights away. Equality and tolerance help cultures adapt and expand. Each culture expands when attempts are made to learn from each other rather than force a cultural conformity that actually breeds more hostility.

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## Congratulations to FFBC 2010 Scholarship Winners



David Buchholz accepts his award





Stormy O'Brink



Jessica Garraway



David Pope



Taylor Smith



Molly Richardson

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*Hypocrisy is the art of never having to live up to your own standards.*

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*The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.*

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# FFBC

*First Friday  
News & Views  
Des Moines, Iowa*

*JULY 2010*

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## My M.O. (Monthly Observations) Are Some Anniversaries Best Forgotten?

I went to the Des Moines City Hall the other day to see what had been placed in the time capsule in the building's cornerstone in 1910. So many artifacts of what our city was like 100 years ago told the story of a young and growing metropolis. It was an exhibit that I was happy to see in order to learn what people a century ago felt was important to be remembered.

At about the same time, I was reading Tatiana de Rosnay's book, **Sarah's Key**, a novel set simultaneously in 1942-occupied Paris and in the 2002's sixtieth anniversary of the roundup of the city's Jews on July 16. The two main characters, Sarah Starzinsky and Julia Jarmond, were worlds apart in age, geography, outlook, and religion. Yet these two women, being unacquainted, still shared a dark and disturbing secret.

The bifurcation of the novel, jumping back and forth between 1942 and 2002, was initially disconcerting, but I eventually understood the necessary separation of the two stories, both of which merged into a whole by the last third of the book.

Sarah was a ten-year-old carefree Jewish girl who, along with her father and mother, was arrested on July 16, 1942, during the roundup of Paris's Jews by French police. To protect her three-year-old brother, Sarah locked him in a cupboard in the family's apartment, telling him that she would return later to let him out when it was safe. She took the key with her to the internment camp.

Julia is a middle-aged American journalist married to a Frenchman for 15 years and living in Paris in 2002. When her editor tells her to write an article about the 60th anniversary of the Jewish roundup in 1942, Julia discovers an ominous and sickening secret that had affected her husband's family for decades.

When the ghastly secret is finally discovered by the up-until-then unknown family members, one of the post-war generation states, "Bringing back the past is never a good idea, especially whatever happened during the war. No one wants to be reminded of that, nobody wants to think about that."

Such thinking seemed to pervade the French after the war was over, and it wasn't until the 1990s that the government finally owned up to its responsibility in its treatment of French Jews during the war.

History can be humorous and at the same time grotesque. Perhaps that is why History is personified on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on the Iowa Capitol Grounds as a haggard and ugly old woman, relating the past to the young child at her feet.

Should some anniversaries be forgotten because they bring back unpleasant memories, or should we treat them as learning opportunities? I'm sure that in all of our lives we can recall unpleasant memories associated with a certain date. The important point is that we remember them regardless if we do anything about them or not.

- Steve Person

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*A compromise is an agreement whereby both parties  
get what neither of them wanted.*

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