

**FFBC**

# First Friday News & Views

Monthly Newsletter of the *First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.*

March 2018

Volume 23

Issue 3

The next FFBC meeting is  
Friday, March 2,  
2018  
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:  
Hoyt Sherman Place,  
15<sup>th</sup> and Woodland,  
Des Moines, IA



R.S.V.P.

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or phone

(515) 288-2500

by Wednesday,  
February 28.



FFBC Website:  
[www.ffbciaowa.org](http://www.ffbciaowa.org)

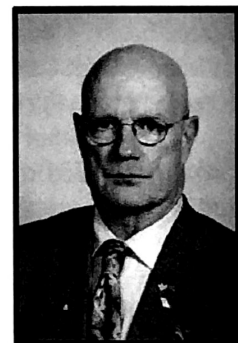


## The Death Penalty Debate

by Jonathan Wilson

I don't know Iowa State Representative Steven Holt (R-Denison) from Adam's off-ox, but to his credit, he withdrew his sponsorship of House Study Bill 569 that would have instated the death penalty for acts of murder. From sponsor to opponent, a 180 degree turn. His change of heart happened because he bothered, genuinely, to study the issue. He believed, and apparently still does, that having a death penalty is not morally wrong, but his reach toward greater enlightenment on the subject brought him to the conclusion that having the death penalty does not deter murderers from murdering (which is statistically correct), and the poor are far more likely than more affluent murderers to receive that punishment (which is also statistically correct), and he withdrew his support for the measure. That kind of mind change, and the integrity to own and defend it, is rare -- too rare.

Iowa State Senator Brad Zaun I do know and, to his discredit, he has announced his continued support for Senate Bill 3134 that would impose the death penalty for killing a police officer, raping and murdering a child, and terrorism. The two, fact-driven reasons that changed Representative Holt's mind have apparently been lost on Senator Zaun, and, knowing him, they will probably continue to elude him.



For the reasons that changed Representative Holt's mind, I have opposed the death penalty for as long as I can remember. But, in the spirit of Representative Holt and somewhat inspired by his example, I have given the death penalty some additional thought.

I have come to the conclusion that there is a time and place for imposition of the death penalty; two of them actually.

[continued on page two]

# Death Penalty

## FOCUS

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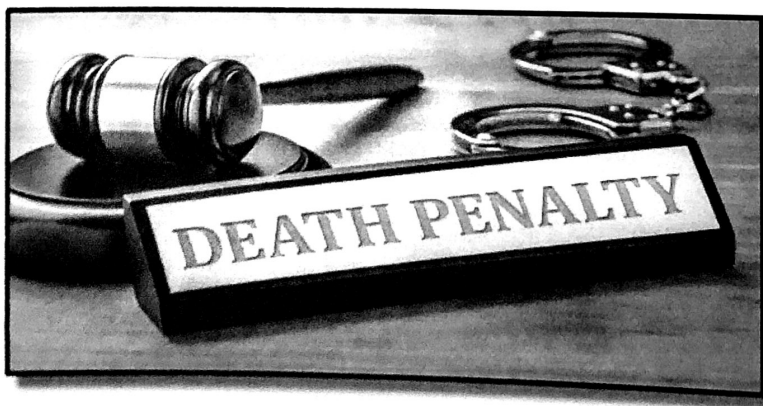
**["The Death Penalty Debate" / continued from page one]**

The first arises in the limited circumstance where law enforcement officers have surrounded a perpetrator who is holding hostages, and no one so far has been murdered. In such situations, the perpetrator has no opportunity to escape and is characteristically calculating the pros and cons of his next move. I want the police officer on the bullhorn to have maximum leverage in that perpetrator's calculation. I think the death penalty may provide that. I want the words coming out of that bullhorn to be, "You're going to die here or go to the slammer, maybe even for life. But, surrender without killing the hostages and you won't die here today and you won't be put to death. If you kill even one of the hostages, we have in this state the death penalty awaiting you. Count on it. Put that in your calculations. We're offering you a pretty good deal." That's the thought anyway; the officer is welcome to put it in his own words. In that limited circumstance, the death penalty just might be a deterrent.

The other place where I think the death penalty has a legitimate place is, when, already in prison, a prisoner kills a guard or another inmate. For starters, people are in prison to give them a "time-out" from society, perhaps even for their entire remaining life, and they have lots of time to think about their past behavior and their future behaviors as well. More importantly, however, if that prisoner -- despite time to reflect upon his/her anti-social behaviors -- kills a guard or a fellow inmate, the murderer has demonstrated that he/she simply cannot be safely incarcerated in our prison system. Continuing their imprisonment for a life-time, or, as recently happened, one or more consecutive life-times, imposes no greater or different punishment for the in-prison recidivism. Continuing the incarceration, at ongoing taxpayer expense, is no longer feasible. They will have shown themselves to be a ticking time-bomb or a loaded spring gun, either of which is indiscriminately and randomly lethal. Ticking time-bombs and loaded spring guns aren't legal and we should not be planting them in our prisons.

Society may have failed an early enough intervention to keep the person from becoming a murderer. If so, that's just history, and the debate over the lack of early intervention can be had. The history for that individual can't be changed, and that individual has taken away from society the option of continuing the incarceration.

In the spirit of Representative Holt, I'm willing to do a 180 degree change in those limited circumstances.



March's  
Speaker:

**Ann  
Selzer**



**Mark Your  
Calendar**



Our speaker in March will be  
**Ann Selzer**, founder of  
**Selzer and Associates**, a  
polling firm. You won't want  
to miss. You are also  
encouraged to invite some  
of your friends to attend!!

**Hospitality is  
making your guests  
feel as if they're at  
home, even if you  
wish they were.**

*Reader's Digest*

# Call Me By Your Name: Gorgeous, & Yes, It's Gay

by Jordan Duesenberg

For anyone who hasn't seen *Call Me By Your Name* yet, stop what you're doing and see it immediately. Hands down, it is one of the best movies I've seen in the last couple years. The narrative is incredible, the actors are both dreamboats (with plenty of man-action between them), the soundtrack is mesmerizing, and the cinematography is top notch. Personally, I believe the movie should scoop up all the awards at the Oscars this year, but that remains to be seen. While the movie is receiving praise from audiences and critics alike, the pesky Internet always has someone to point out how the movie is "problematic."

There's an article in *The Advocate* that I recently read called "*Call Me By Your Name*: Gorgeous, but is it Gay?" by Ben Ratskoff, which takes issue with a number of things. For starters, Ratskoff has a problem with how the film presents itself as a "utopia" where the two characters are presented as just two men who happen to fall in love vs. two men who identify as gay who fall in love. Ratskoff states that "*Call Me By Your Name* depicts an enchanted utopia where the social realities of gayness cannot intrude." He then states that the problems lie with the fact that the characters are heteronormative (or at least as heteronormative as two men who sleep with one another can be), aren't femme, don't mention gay culture, nor ever bring up the topic of AIDS (the movie takes place in the early 80s).



First off, the writer is completely ignoring the spectrum of sexuality and the fact that there's more than just gay and straight, so perhaps he should check himself before looking for problems elsewhere.

Secondly, what I love about this movie is how it is a movie about two characters who fall in love, who just happen to be two men. Isn't that what we've been fighting for this whole time? Although the 1970s saw the LGBT community make advances, it's not hard to imagine that individuals who had same-sex attractions but weren't 100% sure about their sexuality, might want to hide this fact or, at the very least, not participate in gay culture. Plus, even today, not all gay men participate in popular gay culture or, as they say, they're "not into the scene."

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## Briefs ✓ & Shorts:



Thanks to John Schmacker for introducing our January speaker, Carol Hunter, Executive Editor of *The Des Moines Register*. Thanks to **Brian Taylor Carlson** for his work on the FFBC website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru.

A special thank-you to those FFBC members who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be March 12, 2018. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and get it to me by the copy deadline. It'll be interesting, good therapy, or both. Caring is sharing.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. **Book donations are always welcome.** Thanks to **Scott Kuknyo** for helping coordinate the book exchange.

**Consider a tax deductible contribution** to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We are in the midst of our principal fundraising effort so that we can maximize the number of scholarships that we can award. Thanks to a generous contribution from member **Gary Moore**, every dollar contributed goes exclusively to the scholarship program. We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.



We had a terrific scholarship fundraising reception to thank everyone who gives to the scholarship fund. There was some food left over, and it was divided into individual Ziploc bags and distributed to the homeless encampment west of 13th Street, north of MLK Jr. Drive.





# My Fellow FFBC Members & Friends,

by Iowa State Senator Matt McCoy

It has been my honor to serve you in the state legislature these past 26 years. I have worked very hard on many important issues facing this state. I have been an advocate for providing a strong K-12 education system, resisting the Branstad/Reynolds decision to unilaterally privatize Medicaid, ensuring that we work to find solutions to the mental health crisis in our state, and many other important issues.

Last week, I announced that I would not be seeking re-election to the Iowa Senate. I have instead announced that I'm running for the Democratic nomination for Polk County Supervisor District 5. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working for you at the statehouse, but I'm excited for this next endeavor.

Actions taken by local governments affect residents every day, from human services and public health, to safe drinking water, and quality of life issues. There is no better place to bring a progressive people-centered work ethic than the local government level.

My focus will be to expand mental health services, advance progressive healthcare initiatives within the county, and actively speak out for the most vulnerable among us—children, seniors, and those with physical and mental disabilities.



## POLK COUNTY

Local governments are going to be called upon to do more for citizens with fewer resources, and many federal and state programs are going to be block granted or eliminated for cities and counties. Polk County will soon transform into a county of more than a million people, and, with that, our challenges are going to be bigger, not smaller. This will pose challenges for growing counties like ours, but also present opportunities. It's important now more than ever for there to be competent, seasoned, and bold leaders at the local level. I will take my progressive problem-solving skills, along with my accumulated experience in state government, to go to work every day for the people of Polk County.

While I am running for public office on the local level, I am still committed to serving my constituents of Senate District 21, and all Iowans, until my senate term ends in January 2019. I will continue to be a bold voice at the legislature, host public forums, and attend community events.

I want to draw your attention now to two bad bills recently introduced in the legislature. Nineteen Senate Republicans co-sponsored **SF 2154**, better known as the Religious Exemption bill. There is no doubt that freedom of religion is important. It's one of our nation's fundamental values and is already protected by the First Amendment. This bill is much different. It would open the gates to legalized discrimination.

In the other chamber, **HF 2164** was introduced, better known as the Bathroom Bill. We've seen states that have tried to pass or successfully passed legislation similar to these two bills. It had economic ramifications that are still felt today, let alone the blatant discrimination taking place. Many businesses opposed these types of bills in other states, and Iowa is no different. Many lobbyists representing businesses have registered against the bills. I will be watching these bills very closely as the session moves forward.







# Call Me By Your Name

Movie Review by Mark Turnage

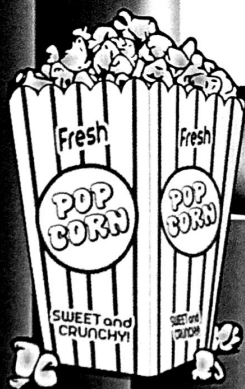
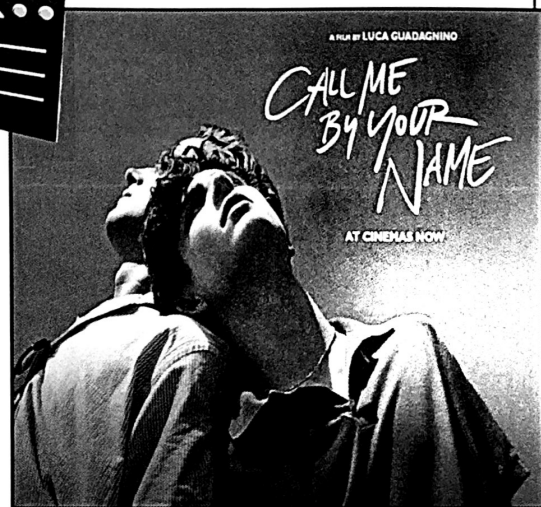
It's an accomplishment that we live in a time when there is enough LGBT media to offer tropes, both positive and negative, that LGBT viewers can identify with: homophobic parents, conflict with religion, superficiality, self-doubt, and awkward yet intense physical encounters. It's even more of an accomplishment that a proudly gay film such as Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me By Your Name* can avoid these in favor of the quietly unexpected, painting a compelling and emotionally resounding portrait of love in paradise.

Admittedly, this relationship between 17-year-old Elio Perlman (in an Oscar-worthy turn by Timothée Chalamet) and Oliver (Armie Hammer), a grad student studying with Elio's father and staying with his family in the idyllic rural Italian countryside, is problematic, given the difference in age between the two. The film's way of deflecting this is quickly establishing mutual sparks of interest and consent in both characters, and the entire first half of the movie is dedicated to their mutual courtship and infatuation. In a fascinating narrative choice, the only resistance to these characters' love is each other. Elio is prodigiously intelligent, living a studious, "unplugged" lifestyle surrounded by artifacts, academia, music, and literature; and the depth of his pursuits alienate him socially from his peers. Initially, Elio finds Oliver's carefree, extroverted personality annoying and repulsive. But, over time, Elio begins to discover his attraction to Oliver through long walks, witty conversations, and family dinners, culminating in a subtle confession of his love on a routine trip with Oliver to the post office, a beautifully staged scene using a town square as symbolic of the physical and emotional space between them both.

It is in those family dinners we get to know the two minor characters who are given the richest beat material—Elio's parents, played by Michael Stuhlbarg and Amira Casar. Both parents skip feigned ignorance or condemnation of the budding romance between Elio and Oliver—they're aware of their secret, and they support them both. These are the dream parents of any closeted LGBT youth—accepting, understanding, protective, and supportive. Nowhere is this more powerful than in a silent car ride home with Elio and his mother, and in the penultimate scene between Elio and his father. The final monologue Stuhlbarg's character gives stays with you, and is a triumph of dialogue and delivery.

The film's third act is truly exuberant and dreamlike in its joy, encapsulated perfectly by Sufjan Stevens's original compositions for the film. There are moments when this joy feels ominous, but this too is a lesson in clever misdirection—the truest threat to any relationship is time, and how fleeting it is. The final scene is silent, wordless, yet an absolute rush of emotion, and it is this one scene that solidifies Timothée Chalamet's acting as Oscar-worthy.

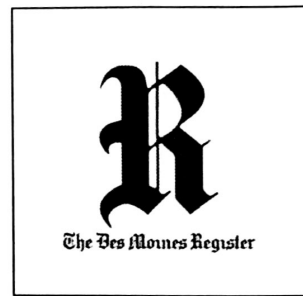
*Call Me By Your Name* prefers the sensual to the erotic (although one scene's unorthodox combination of both is unforgettable), the genuine to the dramatic, and the surprise of falling in love to the predictability of love stories. See it; it deserves to be called a masterpiece.





## Hunting for Profitable Journalism

by Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker on Friday morning, February 2, was Carol Hunter, who joined *The Des Moines Register* in 2004 and has been the organization's executive editor since November 2016. She presented us with a clear-eyed and frank-but-always-positive account of the state of the *Register*.

Hunter, who is clearly proud of her staff, and who acknowledged two of her colleagues in attendance that morning as FFBC members, gave us numbers for what most of us have been watching, and have usually lamented: for example, "more than one-half of today's audience comes to us on a mobile device." Using 2016 figures, she said that, because of the continuing growth of digital access, print quantities for the daily *Register* have declined 45% in the almost-35 years since 1984; for the Sunday *Register* the quantity is down 40% since 1993. Thus, newsrooms are now one-half the size they were just ten years ago, she noted. Everyone is doing more with less, and doing it much differently.

So, news sources' "reach" is now measured not in circulation figures but in numbers-of-views – and, by that measure, the *Register's* influence matches that of KCCI 8 News; the two regularly trade the first two spots in monthly ratings, with WHO-TV coming in third. The main thrust of all news organizations now is to grow their digital audiences, and this development poses a challenge – a welcome challenge, said Hunter – for writers and editors (and photographers and videographers) to produce valuable content that will attract and keep consumers. She was particularly proud of recent, change-making *Register* reporting of such timely issues as the privatization of health care in Iowa, the stresses on and tragic failures of the Iowa Department of Human Services, and the need for better enforcement of drunk-driving laws. *You can hear, or re-hear, a complete audio recording of Hunter's talk by going to our Website, <ffbc Iowa.org> and clicking on the "Speakers" tab.*

Carol Hunter grew up on a farm in Kansas and cites her 4-H membership among her credentials as a bona-fide mid-westerner. She attended the University of Kansas, earned her B.S. in Journalism there in 1979, and immediately began working for Gannett as a copy editor at the Bridgewater (NJ) *Courier-News*. Over the course of 17 years she moved up through positions as reporter, night news editor, metro editor, and managing editor, to editor of that paper. In 1997, she moved to Wisconsin to become editor of Gannett's *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, a position she held until 2004, when she came to Iowa. At the *Des Moines Register* she served first as editorial-page editor (2004-2009) then, through early 2012, as political editor, directing coverage of the State House and the Iowa caucuses. She then spent two years (2012-2014) as a senior news director, responsible for the *Register's* local news reports, including politics, state news, business, metro, and communities. In November 2014, named news director, Hunter led the entire news-writing and editing staff and their supervisors, including investigations, politics, metro, communities, business, features, and sports. Since November 2016 she has guided the *Register* as its executive editor, responsible for producing content across multiple digital platforms and the print *Register*, working with politics, state, metro, business, and features reporters and editors. You can reach Carol Hunter on Twitter at @carolhunter or at [chunter@dmreg.com](mailto:chunter@dmreg.com).



Photo by Gary Moore

**["Call Me By Your Name: Gorgeous, & Yes, It's Gay"]**  
continued from page three]

Ratskoff also has issues with "coy and cowardly framing of [the character's] sex (or lack thereof)," and mentions how it takes away from how gay life really is. Although I would've loved it if the film had turned into a Sean Cody film, I also don't think this is of importance and, personally, if the film were more graphic, it would've taken away from the general feel of the film. This is a story about love, and even though sex is a big part of that, we don't need a breakdown to find it believable.

I think my big issue with Ben Ratskoff's article, and why I decided to write an article about his, is the fact that he seems to forget that just because he views gay life one way, it doesn't mean that everyone who is gay (or who is somewhere on the spectrum of not completely straight) has to be like him or share his view on homosexuality. Because the characters in the film aren't femme and don't participate or discuss gay culture and identity, they aren't gay enough to him. I guess at the end of the day, I don't understand why he can't take and enjoy the film for what it is, a fantastic love story about two men that's blowing critics and audiences away, instead of focusing on finding problems.

Speaking of gerrymandering: Saying that the other party did the same or worse is the kind of excuse I used to get from my kids when they were about six years old. Enough already! Folks in Iowa's Capitol and in Washington D.C. need to grow up. The Bible says it best [paraphrased], "When I was a child I spoke like a child and acted like a child. But when I became an adult, I put away childish things."

## Mark Your Calendars!

### FFBC Speakers Announced:

**April: Sergeant Paul Parizek**  
(Public Information Officer for  
the Des Moines Police Department)



**May: Keith Snow**  
(CEO of the personal data "mining"  
firm, B2E Data Marketing, Inc.)



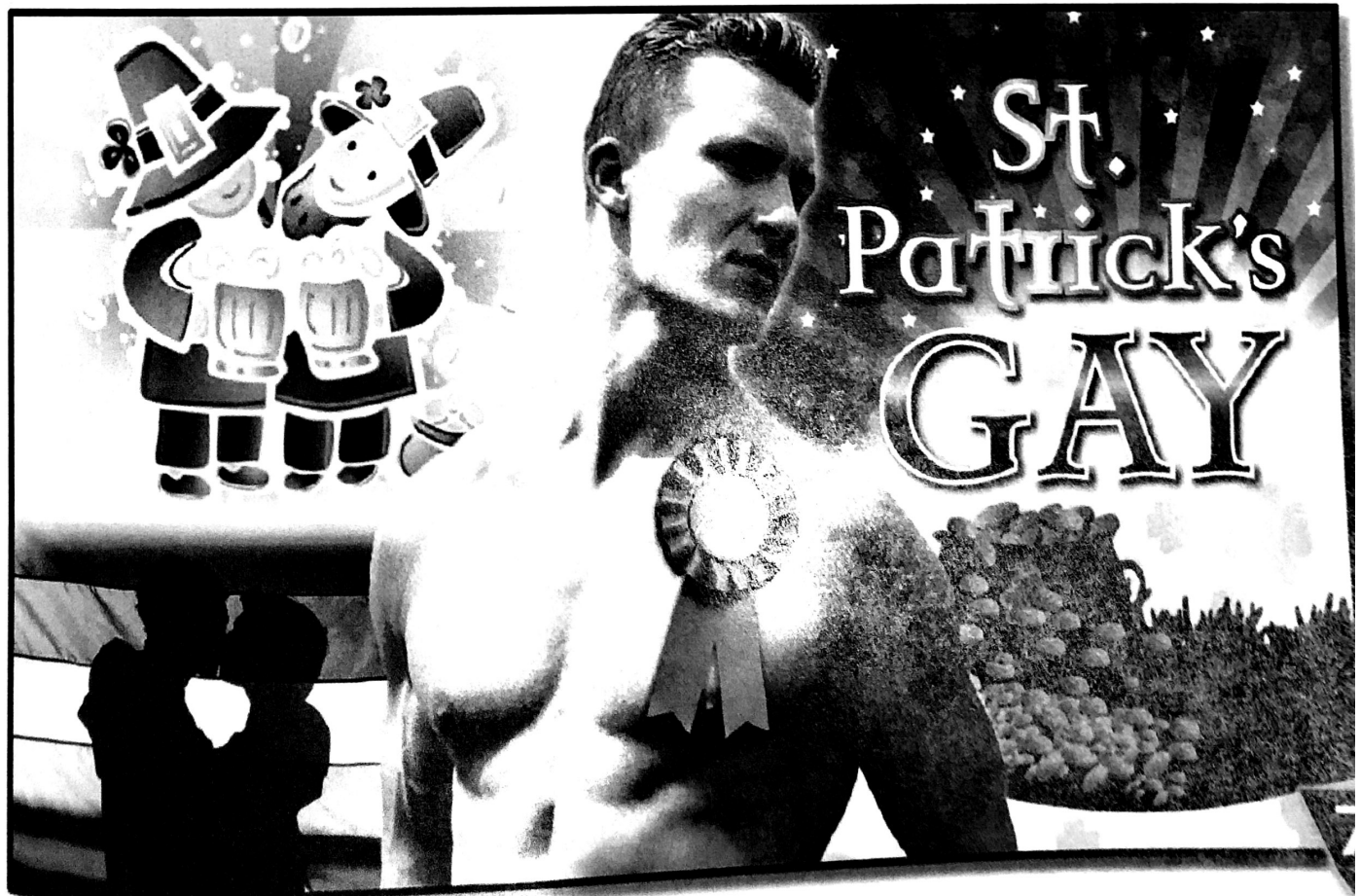
**June: Brad Clark**  
(Executive Director of the  
Gill Foundation)

**July: Tom Vilsack**  
(40<sup>th</sup> Governor of Iowa and  
former United States  
Secretary of Agriculture)



**Fake News:** A source of news that does not  
correct mistakes that are made.

**Genuine News:** A source of news that  
promptly endeavors to correct mistakes that  
are made.





# The End of the World

by Tim Schreck

Century 21



Recently I took a journey of a lifetime, travelling to rural Uganda for two weeks. This was a "mission trip" through an organization called **Orphans of Teso** (<https://orphansofteso.com>), created several years ago by the two brokers at my CENTURY 21 Signature Real Estate office. Since 2015, I have sponsored a child, one of 650 served by this organization, and when the opportunity came to meet him in person, I went! **Orphans of Teso** provides support through an international non-profit called Children's Hope Chest which operates 16 "care points" in Uganda. Our organization is the primary support base for 3 of those care points.

I took off with three others, driving to Chicago, then flying through Brussels to Entebbe, Uganda. The first flight was a piece of cake; the second was the polar opposite, and I thought, "If I can't deal with these two kids in the row behind me, how will I ever deal with 650!" We landed at 11 P.M. in Entebbe, 24 hours after takeoff. Greeted by our driver, Syedi, we were whisked away to our hotel, to wake the next morning on the shores of Lake Victoria. Very cool and very beautiful.

From there the journey began. First up was a drive through Entebbe and the heart of Uganda's capital, Kampala. So many people. I mean sooooo many people walking, carrying things, talking on their phones, riding motorcycles, and selling stuff. Along every paved road, someone was selling something, generally from a very small shop. There were lots of cell service and money transferring businesses, but, also, pineapples, clothes, tires, half-a-goat, lumber, security gates, bedframes, sofas. In one section of the city, there were two to three blocks of shops just selling used bicycles, from delivery/utility size to pink with training wheels. We were told the bikes came from the U.S.

We arrived in the city of Jinja in time for lunch, and our savvy driver found the place "safe" for visitors (i.e., Caucasians). I think they do look for spots where food issues can be avoided, which tends to be where all the other people like us go. That restaurant was the last place where I saw a white person for the next nine days. And, I'll add here, I NEVER felt unsafe, never felt threatened, never felt anxious during the entire trip. But it is an unusual perspective to be the clear minority for that long.

We travelled in a three-row van, accompanied by about 4,000 similar vehicles which operate as the bus/taxi service, and 10 times more motorcycle "putt-putts" also offering ride services -- sort of their version of Uber. The paved roads have or had at one time a yellow center line, but today it is one nationwide game of chicken out there. Between walkers, motorcycles, bikers, vans, goat herds, the occasional larger bus, and service trucks, all us foreigners were thrilled to have a skilled driver at our service. The gravel or dirt roads were even more exciting, but somehow, by the end of the trip, it was sort of a non-issue. Syedi had us covered.

Our primary purpose of the trip was to check in at the three care points, spend time supporting the staff and, most importantly, interact with the kids. Joe, one of the brokers from CENTURY21, does this on an annual basis, and the rest of us tagged along. The care points are a place for kids who qualify (orphaned in some way) to receive one to two meals per day, some skill training, medical/health awareness, counseling, love, and discipleship. They go to public or boarding schools and have the care point for other needs. Many live with a guardian or someone in the family who has agreed to take them in. Most have experienced loss of one or both parents due to war, AIDS, typhoid, alcohol, or simply abandonment.

The morning we arrived at the first care point, Bukedea, we were stopped in our tracks about a quarter mile from the front gate, and our van was swallowed by a crowd of children and adults, so excited to see us! We got out of the van and were swarmed by kids who wanted to hug us, hold hands, sing songs, welcome us. I walked to the care point, with a local band playing songs and dancing, with a half-dozen young ones holding my hands. We spent some time seeing the various skills development projects, including sewing, making soap for sale, aluminum casting, and a bakery. These were not only future skills for these kids, but self-sustaining funds for the agency.

[continued on page nine]



OGOLOI | BUKEDEA | ONGONGOJA

At playtime, it felt like there were at least 150 kids ages 3-18 playing three games of soccer, volleyball, baseball, jump rope, tag, and "take my photo" all on the same field. It was absolute madness for this old man used to reclining with a sip of wine and my favorite programs. Jeez! As soon as one game would stop (or they destroyed the volleyball), 38 kids were looking at you wondering, "Now what're we gonna do?" I had some anxieties the first day or two, but got to the point that just sitting around and guessing which hand held the rock could entertain for 30 minutes. It was so great! At times, I would see a few of them whispering and looking at me, so I would say, "Yes, you may touch my ghostly white arm," at which point six sets of hands were rubbing the hair and pushing on the pink spots.

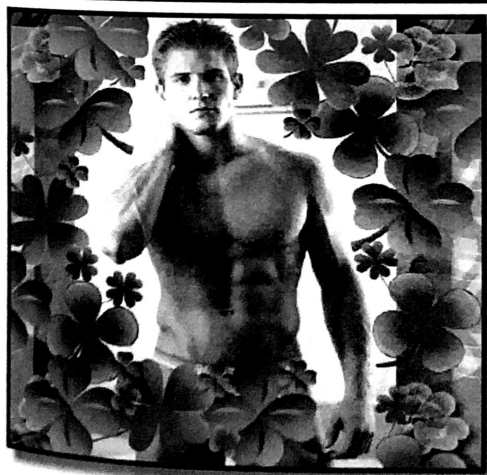
The same things happened at the other two care points, Ongongoja and Ogoloi -- warm welcome, games with kids, and impressive accomplishments. The primary difference I experienced was at Ongongoja, which translates to "the end of the world." This was the area of most evident poverty and challenging circumstances for many of the kids, in the northern area of Uganda where recent wars tore the very fabric of the community to shreds. And yet, the people were warm, receptive and welcoming; the children laughed and interacted easily; and hope was in the air.

The child I sponsor, Martine, lives in Ongongoja, and I had the opportunity to meet him and visit his home. Martine is pretty smart and on track in school. He is the oldest child in his family. In one of his first letters to me he said one of his favorite things to do is fetch water for the family, in 20-liter containers, one to two miles from his home. If they're lucky, the water comes from a well (in our travels we saw many children along roadsides dipping their containers in nothing more than mud pits). When we arrived at Martine's home, we found his mother waiting for us with a six-month old child. As the care point staff explained to us, Martine's mother had "concubined" in order to have a man in the home to provide support. But when the baby came along, the man left. This is the fourth man Martine's mother has brought into her home in his 15-year lifetime. There are nine children in the home.

I hope you see that this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me. I would definitely consider going back again, except for Uganda's extreme anti-gay policies. In 2014, the president of Uganda signed into law criminalization of homosexuality, with a life-sentence in prison if found guilty. The original bill called for death. In August 2014, the Constitutional Court found the law to be invalid, but on procedural grounds, not on the content of the law.

Driving from Chicago after the trip, we were discussing our experiences and, as you've read, it was amazing. But I never felt I could be 100% present because I had to "hide" being gay. I wondered if I would have been so warmly received and was immediately told, "No way, you would not have been welcome -- or worse." (One of our group tried to soften the blow by saying that a guy who went last year was "much more obvious," and he was okay. What???). Would the kids, directors, NGO staff, driver, parents, and guardians who welcomed me into their lives, suddenly consider me evil and worthy of nothing less than life in prison if they knew I am gay? It breaks my heart, and I have to believe that I met more than a few gay kids while there who live under these conditions. My hope is that the services they are receiving will give them a chance to break away and find their community.

If you're still reading, I really appreciate it! This trip was so full of experiences I never dreamed I'd have, and even today I wonder how the kids are doing, if they had a meal last night, and if they feel safe in their homes. I know they feel safe at the care points. Despite the policies of the government there, I believe the people of Uganda are filled with love. I think it's a rare opportunity to be involved in an organization like this, to see the work that is being done, and to experience in person the value of that work. There are still 25-30 kids looking for sponsors, so if you'd like to know more, or even sponsor a child, check out <https://orphansofteso.com>, or send me an email at [tims@c21sre.com](mailto:tims@c21sre.com). I'd love to talk to you about the program and the beautiful children of Uganda!



**"The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it."**

-- George Orwell

# The Women's March, Round Two

by Steve Person

On January 20, I attended the Second Women's March held at the West Capitol Terrace. It was one of scores of marches held across the country to protest the regime of the current occupant of the White House. While last year's march in Des Moines drew approximately 26,000 protestors, this year's march was smaller—about 7,000 people. Even that number is impressive for a protest held at Iowa's Capitol. Technically, this year's event could be classified more as a rally than a march. More than a dozen speakers exhorted the crowd and their supporters not only to vote in the upcoming November 6 election, but also to organize the get-out-to-vote campaign, all the while urging women to get involved by becoming candidates themselves. Like the Gay Pride movement, which draws support from straight allies, the Women's Marches gain support from many men who believe in equity and equality.



I couldn't attend last year's march because I worked at the Capitol tour desk that day. Thousands of the marchers came into the building on January 21, 2017, many of them with their creative demonstration signs. My favorite from last year, carried by a young woman, read, "Just another slut for birth control." Among this year's signs, I noted some gems: "My heart is gold; my vagina is platinum"; "Keep the Republican elephant out of the womb"; "Our rights are not up for grabs, and neither are we"; "I've seen smarter cabinets at Ikea." My favorite said, "SupercalifragaracistsexistnazipOTUS!" A little old black lady carried this one: "Shitholer and Proud!" I couldn't have said it better myself.

I keep questioning what got our country to such a state in the first place, and the answer lies with the Founding Fathers. When they established the Electoral College in Article II of the Constitution (later clarified by the Twelfth Amendment), they scuttled the concept of One Man, One Vote. Unfortunately, there is not much that can be done to rectify this situation except to change the Constitution—not an easy task. I truly believe the Electoral College should be abolished since it promotes disenfranchisement. Furthermore, since our Constitution—a truly remarkable and even more flawed document—was written, women had no say in the process. Even Abigail Adams, during the Continental Congress debate over the Declaration of Independence in 1776, urged her husband, John, "...I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation."

Well, Abigail, it's taken over 240 years, but I believe your time has come. More power to you!

