

**FFBC**

First Friday News & Views

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

August 2018

Volume 23

Issue 8

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, August 3,
2018
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:
Hoyt Sherman Place,
15th and Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

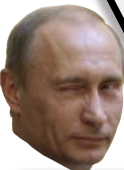


R.S.V.P.

JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com

or phone (515) 288-2500

or the website
by Wednesday,
August 1.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbc-iowa.org



Evidence of Collusion Abounds

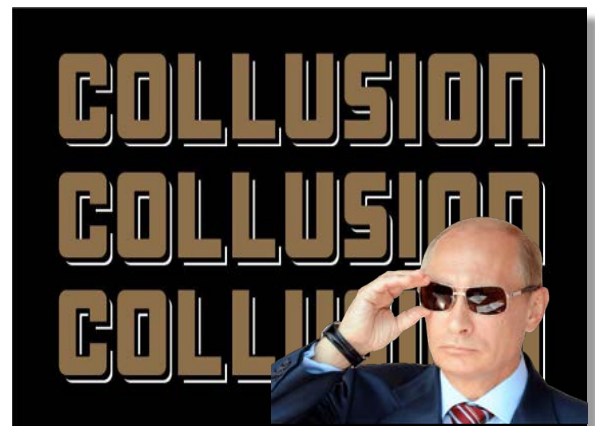
by Jonathan Wilson

I hear repeatedly that there is no evidence of collusion between Russia and the tRump campaign. Such declarations betray a lack of appreciation for *circumstantial* evidence, which *is* evidence. Crimes have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt based exclusively on circumstantial evidence.

Some who have made these declarations are attorneys, in Congress and elsewhere. They know better, which means they are purposely trying to deceive the American people. Circumstantial evidence can be as full-throated and compelling as a confession. Ordinary people can readily figure out what's going on based on their common sense, their experience, and their sound judgment, relying on circumstantial evidence. They do this daily, not just when sitting on a jury.

When there's been a hand in the cookie jar, a cookie is missing, there's chocolate around the mouth of a six year old who's the only other person in the house, the kid can claim as loudly and often as he wants that, "There is no evidence I did it." And it's true, if there weren't such a thing as circumstantial evidence. Any parent worthy of the name would have no difficulty concluding with utmost accuracy exactly what happened, based solely on circumstantial evidence. No genius required, and no law degree either.

There are myriad examples of incriminating, circumstantial evidence of collusion between the tRump campaign and Russia. For example, just hours after Donald Jr. had confirmed setting up a meeting with Russian operatives for the purpose of getting "dirt" on Clinton, candidate tRump, at a rally, promised a "major speech" the following week (about the time of the planned meeting) "discussing all of the things that have taken place with the Clintons." Coincidence? Just how naïve are you? tRump claims he didn't know about the meeting, but Donald Jr. placed or received calls from an undisclosed number going into and coming out of that meeting. tRump is known to have often used an undisclosed number sending and receiving phone calls. Again, how naïve are you?



[continued on page two]

[“Evidence of Collusion Abounds” / continued from page one]

The June 16, 2016, meeting happened and included Jared Kushner (tRump’s son-in-law) and Paul Manafort (the campaign manager). When the meeting was discovered, tRump personally dictated a press release saying falsely that the meeting was about Russian adoptions. When that was shown to be a lie, and it was disclosed that the meeting’s actual purpose was to get dirt on Clinton, it was then said that no dirt was obtained. Maybe, or just maybe the timing and method of releasing it were not deemed most advantageous to the campaign at that time. Better to have the material released through WikiLeaks?



We now know that’s what actually happened. The Russians used WikiLeaks as their conduit. We know that tRump adviser Carter Page was in contact with both Russian operatives and WikiLeaks during the campaign. And timing? The Democratic National Committee hacks were released (strategically? coincidentally?) at the beginning of the Democratic National Convention. The John Podesta (Clinton’s campaign manager) hacks were released right after the infamous *Access Hollywood* tape made the news (strategic? coincidence?).

Or consider another example. In a speech on July 27, 2016, tRump called on Russia – “if you are listening” – to locate Hillary Clinton’s missing personal emails and release them. It turns out the Russians were, indeed, listening, and twelve now-indicted Russian intelligence officers began *that same day* hacking into Clinton’s computer.


So far it has been determined that, during the tRump campaign, there were at least 82 interactions between high-level Russians and people affiliated with the campaign. And get this; one meeting was between Donald Jr. and the deputy governor of Russia’s central bank *for the purpose of creating “back-channel” communications between Russia and the campaign*. One option considered was doing it through the Russian Embassy in Washington D.C., away from the watchful eye of U.S. intelligence agencies.

What else do we know? Contextually, we know that the denials of collusion come from someone notorious for lying (as in falsely claiming the largest inauguration crowd in history, plus 3000+ more documented lies since, and still counting). We know they come from someone who has repeatedly demonstrated that he believes the ends justify the means. We know they come from someone who has refused to acknowledge Russian interference in the 2016 election, claiming that it could just as easily have been some 400 pound guy lying on a bed somewhere. We know they come from someone who, the day after firing FBI Director Comey because of the “Russia thing,” had in the Oval Office the Russian Ambassador to the U.S. and the Russian Foreign Minister, accompanied by only members of the Russian media.

There isn’t space here to enumerate all of the other compelling examples of circumstantial evidence indicating collusion between Russia and the tRump campaign/administration. And, it doesn’t touch on additional information that the Mueller investigation has doubtless uncovered not yet made public in indictments.


But, any “secret” about alleged collusion is hiding in plain sight thanks to already publically available and abundant *circumstantial* evidence. All that’s needed is one good parent in the room.

The poster features a black background with a jagged, white, starburst-like border. At the top, there are several yellow stage spotlights. A red checkmark icon is next to the text "Mark Your Calendar". Below this, the text "August's Speaker:" is followed by the name "Teree Caldwell-Johnson" in large, bold, black letters. A portrait of Teree Caldwell-Johnson, a woman with short grey hair and glasses wearing a yellow top, is shown. Below the portrait, a block of text provides details about the speaker and encourages attendance. The bottom of the poster has a jagged, white, starburst-like border.

 **Mark Your Calendar**

August's Speaker:

Teree Caldwell-Johnson



Our speaker in August will be Teree Caldwell-Johnson, President of the Des Moines Public Schools Board of Directors. You won't want to miss, especially because, in addition to historic challenges, schools are now a too-regular target for mass shootings. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!! Provide the name(s) of any anticipated guest(s) so we can have name tags for them at the registration desk.

**“If you are
ashamed to stand by
your colors, you had
better seek another flag.”**

(Anonymous)



Buyer's Remorse Yet?

by Byron Huff

You voted for Trump because...you thought he could run the country better (fiscally)? Record debt levels due to the tax cuts for the wealthy hit federal revenues sooner and more severely than originally estimated. The trajectory will have the U.S. bankrupt. China and Japan already "own" us by purchasing our debt as we mortgage our future.

You have seen other countries (Greece, Italy) hit fiscal crisis where their debt levels become unsustainable; the U.S. is headed there. If you don't believe me, look at the numbers (<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53651>).

The trade war created by Trump is hurting the very companies and people he has sought to help. The result of the trade war could very well be a full recession. The budget deficit numbers will get worse than currently projected should the country hit a downturn.



If you voted for Trump for social reasons, was it worth it to bankrupt you and your children's future? Is it really that important that I could marry my husband? Did it really impact your marriage?

The real problem seems to be that people vote against their own self-interest simply because they are convinced a particular issue is more important. The drive to cut taxes is great if it benefits the poor and middle class. Giving money to the wealthy (and hoping for trickle-down) has been proven to increase wealth and income disparity, which has continued to erode the middle class ever since the Reagan tax cuts (Reaganomics) in the 1980s. In eight years, those tax cuts tripled the deficit as a percentage of GDP; it appears history is repeating itself with dire consequences. **Wake up and vote!!!**

"Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself."

(Harvey Fierstein)

Briefs ✓ & Shorts:



Thanks to **John Schmacker** for introducing our July speaker, former Iowa Governor and former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack. Thanks to **Brian Taylor Carlson** and **Jordan Duesenberg** for their 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. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

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 **August 13, 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.

Save the Date: August 18, 2018, for the joint FFBC/PROS party at the home of Michael Thompson and Allen VanderLinden, 7500 Benton Drive, Urbandale, Iowa, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. No charge for paid FFBC members.

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 awarded eight scholarships this year. We've awarded more than **\$275,000** in scholarships to deserving Iowa high school students.

We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.

Tax 
Deductible
Donation Processing

Need a Break?

by Jordan Duesenberg

SUMMER



I don't think I need to go into too many details as to why the news has become overwhelming. If it weren't for my career, in all honesty, I would probably pay a lot less attention to the daily news. Given our position as members of the LGBTQ community, however, it is important to stay informed so we know what we're up against and how best to change what we can.

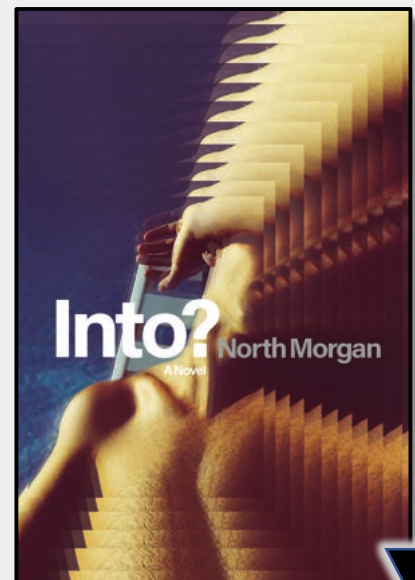
Sometimes you do just need an escape from the grim realities that are constantly being thrown in our faces. I took a massive break from all social media platforms for a couple of months late last year as a result of this. However, if you're not looking to go that route, here are three pieces of LGBTQ content that are bound to put a smile on your face and allow you to take a much-deserved break from whatever awful thing the Trump Administration recently did:

- **Queer Eye** – If you haven't watched Netflix's revival of **Queer Eye** (formerly **Queer Eye for the Straight Guy**), you should stop whatever you're doing and binge-watch the first two seasons. Almost every episode will make you ugly cry (with happy tears) because the "Fab 5" really takes the time to help whoever the subject is and improve every facet of their life. I've even gained little bits of wisdom from the show. Plus, it is worth watching for Jonathan Van Ness alone because he is absolutely hilarious.



- **Pose** – Although FX's **Pose** is on at 8 p.m. every Sunday, my boyfriend and I save new episodes of the groundbreaking show for Monday nights because it gives us something to look forward to. I say it's groundbreaking because it features the largest ensemble of trans cast and crew members a tv series has ever had before. It is Ryan Murphy's show (**Glee**, **American Horror Story**, etc.) about Ball Culture in the 80s. If you aren't familiar with Ball Culture, I strongly recommend watching the critically acclaimed documentary **Paris is Burning** (which is available on Netflix). However, if you don't have time for that, "Balls" were (and still are) spaces where "houses" (which are essentially surrogate families for displaced queer and transgendered youth) compete by dressing up and walking in made-up categories, like "Femme Queen Realness" or "Weather Girl Realness." Think small-scale runways. Although the show deals with some heavy subject matter such as racism, homelessness, and AIDS, to name a few, when the cast are attending the "Balls," it's nothing but pure joy, extravagance, and celebration. **Pose** also more than delivers the camp if you needed even more of a reason to tune in.

- **Into?** – If you prefer to distract yourself from a screen, then you should definitely check out author North Morgan's incredible novel **Into?**. The best way to describe this book is basically **Dancer from the Dance** but in the social media age. The book follows a handsome, wealthy gay man in his early 30s, Konrad, after he moves to LA from London to escape the reality that his boyfriend broke up with him for the guy they used to have threesomes with. Morgan's way of dissecting modern day gay culture into 300+ pages is equally sad and hilarious and, when not writing about wasting hours at the gym, a revolving door of unstable beautiful men, and the sheer monotony of circuit parties, Morgan makes many honest statements about what it means to be a gay man today. A couple of months ago I wrote an article about the shallowness of what I believe is the modern-day Clone culture, which I dubbed iClones (also known as #instagays), and this book is about what happens on the other side of the screens of the musclebound #instagays that we all drool over (solidifying my observations). I read this in one day because I couldn't put it down, and actually laughed out loud too many times to count. Follow North Morgan on Instagram too; he's equally attractive as he is talented.



Annihilation

Movie Review by Mark Turnage



The word “annihilation” conjures specific imagery and meaning in science fiction: an apocalyptic comet, a world-ending cataclysm, a sudden, dramatic upheaval of the status quo where everything known is gone, replaced with barren uncertainty and a new order completely different than the one before it. In director Alex Garland’s film, the word’s physics definition is much more befitting—a conversion of matter into energy—yet all of the aforementioned descriptions also apply to the titular annihilation threatening the setting of the film, just in subtler forms. If you’re looking for a slow-burn science fiction film that’s both mind-bending and a contemplative exploration on how trauma transforms a person, look no further than **Annihilation**.

The film opens with Natalie Portman’s Lena, a cellular biology professor, who has been grieving the loss of her husband Kane (Oscar Isaac) for months following his disappearance during a top-secret military mission. While she has accepted her husband is deceased, she cannot move on. She withdraws to her home, replacing and reworking elements of her interior design and her husband’s room constantly—that is, until he shows up suddenly on her doorstep, alive but a shell of his former self. Before she can get answers, he collapses, and during his rush to the hospital, the ambulance is ambushed by a government security force. Lena wakes up in a secure facility and is told her husband is the only survivor of his missing team, that had been sent to investigate a growing alien electromagnetic disturbance called “The Shimmer” that was transforming the plants and animals of the swampland into beautiful but terrifying freaks of nature. To find out what happened to him and his team, she must undertake the same mission, but with the help of four other women who are just as brilliant (and just as emotionally traumatized) as she is.

That isn’t to say the supporting cast does disservice to their all-female cast; each is a badass in their own way and puts up a hell of a fight when the creatures of The Shimmer turn monstrous. Think **Orange Is the New Black** meets **Aliens**, with a psychedelic dash of **2001**. Tessa Thompson (of **Westworld** fame) stands out especially as a botanist and suicide attempt survivor, and her scenes are magnetic for the charisma she brings to them. Each of the cast is discovering and learning as the film goes along, and **Annihilation** doesn’t spell things out, but prefers to let the viewer extrapolate from the conclusions their scientist characters are making. At the same time, this isn’t quite **Lost**, and the set of disturbing scientific enigmas that are presented feel intriguing, original, and cohesive, instead of just separate perplexing elements.

And, WOW, is the set design imaginative! The alien ecology distorts nature “through a prism,” as one character puts it, into beautifully dangerous (and memorable) threats, the most unnerving being a skinless bear that can mimic human screams. When the team begins to realize that their own biology is being transformed (corrupted?) by the environment, it ups the stakes in a compelling and captivating way and, faced with their own mortality, makes opening up to each other about their trauma that much more convincing. Their expressions of grief are also filtered through a prism, and like their environment, can be both beautiful and deadly to their teammates. The final sequence with two of the survivors is a powerful metaphorical visual experience that may leave a viewer with more questions than answers, but befits the revelation at the film’s ending.

Trippy visuals? Check. Mind-binding philosophical exploration? Check. But most importantly, an exploration of expression and how transformation is in our nature. Check. See it, and get yourself a sci-fi film that does all of the above.

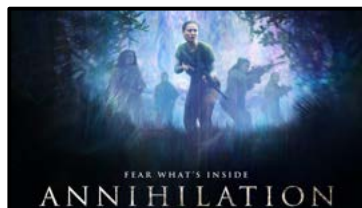




Photo by Gary Moore

Tom Vilsack was born, adopted, and raised in Pittsburgh PA, where he attended Shady Side Academy before going to Hamilton College in Clinton NY; he earned his BA there in 1972. He and his college classmate Christie Bell were married the following year; in 1975 he received a JD degree from Albany Law School of Union University, and the couple moved to Christie's hometown of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, where Tom joined his father-in-law's law firm. He became a civic leader, volunteering with the Chamber of Commerce and the United Way and, when the city's mayor was gunned down by a crazed citizen in late 1986, Vilsack was elected to replace him in that office. After five successful years as mayor of Mount Pleasant, Vilsack was elected (1992) to the Iowa Senate where, along with promoting other progressive legislation, he helped re-design Iowa's Workforce Development Department.

In 1998, upon Terry Branstad's (first) retirement as governor, Vilsack narrowly defeated Jim Ross Lightfoot to become the first Democrat to serve as Governor of Iowa in 30 years. He won a second term in 2002, and was a generally progressive governor, signing, for example, an executive order in 2005 allowing all felons who had served their sentences to vote, noting that "when you've paid your debt to society, you need to be reconnected and re-engaged to society." In late 2006, Vilsack announced his intention to run for President, but he dropped out of the race the following February, citing monetary constraints. Shortly thereafter he announced his support for Sen. Hillary Clinton, and was named national co-chair for her presidential campaign. When Barack Obama was elected, he nominated Vilsack to be his Secretary of Agriculture; the appointment was unanimously approved by the Senate, and Tom Vilsack served through all eight years of the Obama presidency, the only cabinet secretary to do that.

Tom and Christie Vilsack are the parents of two grown sons, Doug and Jess, and now make their home in Colorado and Iowa. Tom Vilsack can be contacted professionally at the U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC, of which he is president and CEO), 2107 Wilson Blvd, Suite 600, Arlington VA 22201-3061; telephone (703) 528-3049.

FORMER Governor and Ag Secretary FUTURE Senate Candidate?

by Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker on July 6, 2018, was Tom Vilsack, former Governor of Iowa (1999-2007) and Secretary of Agriculture in the Obama Administration (2009-2017). The Governor was convincingly confident, amusing, enlightening, inspiring, and a joy to listen to and converse with.

Speaking to a range of topics suggested to him on the spot by FFBC members present, Vilsack first voiced his urgent conviction that this fall's election is "the most important election in my lifetime." In recent years we have watched the Iowa legislature pass some of the most onerous legislation we've ever seen. We are going backward to a place where young people will not want to live and work here. Medicare/healthcare, education, reproductive rights, civil rights – all are under attack. You must pick a candidate/party/issue and give, and volunteer, and vote.

"Rural folks are good people," he then said, "and they share enough of our values that we can talk to/with them. But listen and respect, first." Then let's build a 21st-century rural economy of cutting-edge companies and technologies that lead us all to energy and food security. Such an investment will revitalize rural America, re-establish our moral leadership on climate security, and eliminate our addiction to foreign oil.

As FFBC member John Schmacker observed on Facebook later that morning, Vilsack's presentation was enthralling. I can do no better than quote from John's post: "I have been fortunate to hear many good speakers at FFBC over the years Several stand out in my memory: Rebecca Gruber is one for her personal story and joining the Gay Men's Chorus. The Reverend Anna Bladel is another. But this morning, Sec. Tom Vilsack addressed the group, and I still am feeling the awe of being in the presence of a great man. His ability to explain complex policy in easy-to-understand terms, his inspiring words left me wanting to be a better citizen, a better person. He left us with hope for the future -- a rare quality in today's political landscape."

You can hear, or re-hear, a complete audio recording of Gov. Vilsack's inspiring remarks and the Q&A which followed by going to our Website, <ffbc-iowa.org>, and clicking on the "Speakers" tab.



**Tom Vilsack was
introduced by
FFBC member
John
Schmacker.**

Photo by Gary Moore

Governors Ray and Reynolds: A Study in Contrasts

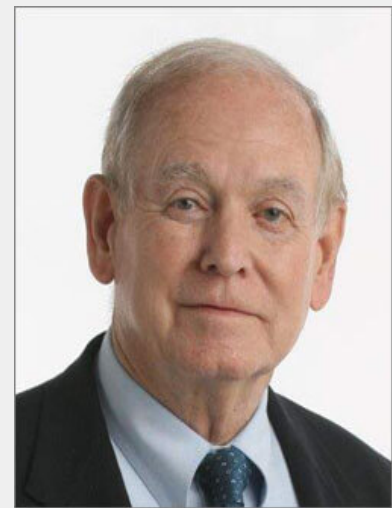
by Iowa State Senator Matt McCoy



The recent announcement by US Attorney General Jeff Sessions to separate families that are detained at the border represents inhumane, anti-family public policy. This kind of policy is what one would expect from a despotic dictatorship, not the United States. It betrays our country's commitment to act with moral authority and welcome all those who seek a better life as Americans. Our current national climate has impacted the states in a variety of ways. The Republican-majority Iowa legislature recently passed a so-called sanctuary city bill, which is designed to federalize local law enforcement and require them to enforce immigration detainers.

This policy has been opposed by local law enforcement, Sheriff Bill McCarthy and Des Moines Police Chief Dana Wingert. Law enforcement agencies throughout the state have been working to improve relationships between police and immigrant communities. They believe this policy detracts from local policing efforts, reinforces barriers between immigrant communities and police, and further stigmatizes a group of Iowans that aren't white.

Governor Kim Reynolds has signed this bill into law at a time when, by her own administration's projections, our current workforce needs 127,000 more Iowans TODAY to fill the jobs that are currently vacant. Clearly, Governor Reynolds is not serious about growing the Iowa economy. She has further demonstrated her intolerance for immigrants by asking Congressman Steve King to co-chair her election campaign. Congressman King has established himself as one of the most racist, xenophobic bigots in the United States Congress.



I am proud to have stood up against this sanctuary city bill, opposing the bill in committee as well as on the Senate floor. I have always stood with new Iowans and the immigrant communities that are working to make Iowa a more welcoming state. In my race for Polk County Supervisor, I've recently received the endorsement of the Asian & Latino Coalition, and I promise to continue supporting and advocating for the immigrant communities and for all new Iowans.

By contrast to Reynolds, recently deceased Governor Robert Ray, has been remembered for his compassion and courage welcoming to our state immigrants from Southeast Asia. He demonstrated leadership based on the highest tradition of Iowa values, and our state is better for it.

I encourage you to contact Governor Reynolds and Senators Ernst and Grassley about policies that are designed to denigrate immigrant communities, which have always made Iowa a more vibrant, welcoming place. *[Not to mention the need for more workers contributing to our Social Security system in order to maintain its continuing viability. Ed.]*



FFBC/PROS Party!

August 18, 2018

The joint FFBC/PROS party will be held at the home of Michael Thompson and Allen VanderLinden, 7500 Benton Drive, Urbandale, Iowa, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. No charge for paid FFBC members!



Mark Your Calendars!

Future FFBC Speakers Announced:

September: Brad Clark

(Executive Director
of the Gill Foundation)



October: Samuel Brinton

(Head of Advocacy and Government
Affairs for the Trevor Project)



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Of Directors**

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Breakfast Club, Inc.**

Three No Trump

by Steve Person

While I usually write a monthly book review, I am making a change for the August newsletter. Like many Americans, I am fed up with Trump. As one of my fellow Capitol tour guides at work said, "I can say the word 'President,' and I can say the word 'Trump,' but I just can't put both of them together." Amen!

After months of watching television coverage on MSNBC of the freak show that inhabits the White House, I have come to three conclusions about Donald Trump and what to do about him. I only wish I had the ability to sway the producers of the legitimate news organizations (I leave out FNN—Fox NOT News) on how to deal with this disaster perpetuated by the Electoral College in our Constitution.



First, Donald Trump is fixated on money. He breaks the law every day by thumbing his nose at the Constitution he swore to uphold on Inauguration Day. The emoluments clause in that document prohibits him from personal, outside financial gain while serving in office, but the Trump Hotel in the old U.S. Post Office in Washington, D.C., is the most flagrant example of his disregard for the government he supposedly heads. Add to that mix his various golf clubs around the country and world, supposedly managed by his incompetent older sons, and you have the makings of a scandal the current Congress refuses to touch. Hypocrisy, thy name is Republican!

Second, this degenerate man is fixated on ridding our country of anything that President Obama did in his two **LEGITIMATE** terms as the chief executive. Trump is determined to trash anything Obama did regardless of whether or not it benefited our country. Such pettiness is typical of the vindictive small brain that occupies the skull of this reprobate. The juvenile behavior he exhibits when he signs one of his usually hair-brained executive orders—holding the document up for the cameras as if to say, "See what I did? Aren't I a smart boy?"—is reminiscent of a second grader. (I mean no offense to second graders).

Third, it is time for the legitimate radio and television media to stop allowing his voice or his picture on any of their airwaves. By all means, they should report his tweets, what he says and does, but let the talking heads tell us without subjecting us to his foul mouth and ghoulish looks. Let Fox NOT News publicize him since he says any other news outlet is fake news. Once he begins to realize that his ugly puss is no longer on the mainstream networks, he won't have any ammunition to criticize them for being unfair to him. Likewise, the mainstream radio and television reporters should no longer attend Sarah Huckabee Sanders's press briefings. Leave her to the print media (**New York Times** and **Washington Post**) since it is well known that Trump hates to read anything more than a half sheet of paper that is double spaced. It's time to treat this excuse of a human being for what he is—a total nothing.

