

First Friday News & Views

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

August 2020

Volume 25

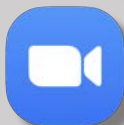
Issue 8

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, August 7,
2020
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:

ZOOM!



AUGUST MEETING

Current
Information
Inside This
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FFBC Website:
www.ffbcia.org



Where We Are Was Easily Predictable

by Jonathan Wilson

Our society is afflicted with systemic racism, and it has been since the nation's founding. Enslaved people of color were a part of our culture and our commerce even before there was a United States of America. And, our founders knew it, as evidenced by the original US Constitution that, among other compromises, documented agreement that the number of Congressional Representatives from any state were to be determined by state population, and only 3/5 of black people (slave or free) would be counted.

It is more than just systemic, that is, ingrained in our courts, financial institutions, schools, neighborhoods, health care, employment, access to the ballot box, and you-name-it. It's also ingrained in us *individually*. That dimension is termed "implicit" racial bias. It's racism that people are not fully aware of or don't acknowledge, even though it's there. I don't think I know anyone who actually says that they are unapologetically racist, with the possible exception of self-styled white supremacists who, by that gentler term, embrace racist sentiments. I guess it's a good thing that almost no one *wants to admit* to being a racist.

But it's also bad in the sense that the inability or unwillingness to recognize it means that implicit racists are able to go about our daily lives giving subtle expression to a variety of race-based discriminatory behaviors without any sense of guilt or shame, without any self-reflection on the subject, and without any motivation to change. That's particularly prevalent and pernicious in communities with few people of color like, for example, rural Iowa counties. In such communities there is a receptive audience for false stereotypes about people of color and anyone considered "other." They're suspect -- "You're not from 'round here are you?"

According to the preliminary 2020 Census figures, about 4 of 10 Americans now self-identify as non-white. And -- get this -- in the last decade, the white population has actually declined in the United States and population growth in the United States has been attributable solely to people of color! I'm about as white as you can get and two of my five beautiful grandchildren are mixed race.

[continued on page 2]



["Where We Are" cont. from page 1]

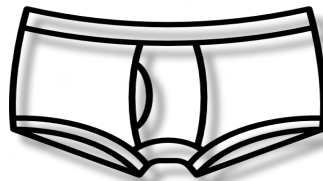
America is browning. That's the fact. White Americans know that some of our ancestors were slave traders; some of our founders were slave owners; some owners were brutal, some owners were rapists, and all of them were interested in profit based on slave-labor. Doubtless, they were comforted by Jesus's admonition that slaves should obey their masters (Luke 12:45-48). Or the admonition of St. Paul at 1 Peter 2:18. I'm not making this up. Slave owners, and their clergy, should have thumped the Bible less, and tried reading and critiquing it more.

After emancipation and a bloody civil war, our future was cast in stone. It's been somewhat like watching the end of apartheid in South Africa played out here in slow motion. Many white Americans intuitively fear that when white people are (inevitably) in the racial minority, people of color may treat us or our progeny as they and their ancestors have been treated. It is inescapable that we hate what we fear, whether the fear is articulated or not. Fear of reciprocity, expressed or not, creates fertile ground for those who want to appeal to implicit racism for political advantage.

You're known by the company you keep. Just so you know, when I see a Trump/Pence yard sign (and I've seen lots of them in rural Iowa counties), or someone is seen flaunting a confederate (treasonous) battle flag in their yard, I make some pretty unflattering assumptions about who those people really are. And, it's not patriotic, Christian, or American.

#45 is a real problem solver – if you slow down the testing there'll be fewer Covid-19 infections. Problem solved. Similarly, if you don't get on the scales, you won't gain weight. Problem solved; "Pass me another piece of chocolate cake."

Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **David Cotton** and **Ryan Weidner** for their work as our technology gurus. Thanks to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our website. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the **Donor Direct** program of **United Way**. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.



United Way



Thanks also to all those **Amazon shoppers** who designate FFBC as the beneficiary when shopping **smile.amazon.com**. Doing your Amazon shopping using **smile.amazon.com** means that a small contribution to FFBC will be made with every purchase. Proverbial, found money.

Our fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$325,000** for scholarships that are awarded to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a contribution on-line or by sending a check.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **August 17, 2020**. 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.

Consider a tax-deductible contribution to the First Friday Breakfast Club scholarship fund, or a tax-exempt testamentary gift, or both. We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us.

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

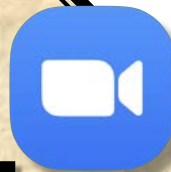
**COMING
SOON**

We will be transitioning soon to a new data-based system for meeting reminders, RSVPs, and on-line payment options for dues. This should make these activities much more convenient and efficient, and much less labor intensive. There is some cost associated with setting it up and operating the new systems. **Those costs are being underwritten by FFBC members Brad Holland, Joe Raetz, and Ascendant Wealth Management Group**, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC.



**Thank
You!**

August Virtual Meeting



There will be a virtual meeting using ZOOM in August. The announcement with the Zoom login information will be circulated on-line. Make sure we have your current email address so you don't miss out on future announcements. You can contact David Cotton for assistance figuring out how to participate if you need that personal assistance.

zoom



**August
Speaker:**



**Tim
Thompson**



Our virtual speaker in August will be **Tim Thompson.**

The topic will be the ManKind Project with focus on their LGBTQ efforts referred to as ManKind Pride mankindpride.mkpusa.org

If you click on "Talk to a LGBTQ Man," Tim is listed under "Central Plains." You won't want to miss and, since the meeting is virtual, there's no reason why you should not be able to participate.

You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend virtually -- simply share the participation instructions!

Will White Supremacy Finally Be Dismantled?

by John Schmacker



**OVERCOMING
RACISM**

What many have been calling the “black problem” in America is really the white problem in America. White supremacy, and its derivative, white privilege, and its weapon, racism, are what need to change in this country. White Supremacy is nothing new. It is America’s original sin and it still lives.

The abolition of slavery was a hotly argued topic during the 1787 Constitutional Convention of white men in Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin became an ardent abolitionist after having owned a few household slaves in his earlier years. George Washington owned hundreds of slaves and treated them very badly (actually, the Mount Vernon slaves were the property of his wife, Martha. George had married well). The two of them, Franklin and Washington, were fast friends. They argued long and hard about the role of slavery in the new nation they were midwifing. As the constitution was adopted with slavery intact, Ben Franklin predicted that it would probably take a civil war to finally end slavery in America. Fast forward to 1861: Franklin was right.

The delegates assembled in Philadelphia settled on some compromises to keep the southern slave-holding states from walking away. Not to compromise would have caused the collapse of the whole project of birthing a new nation. Those compromises included, according to some historians, the Second Amendment and the Electoral College, two provisions that remain controversial today. The Second Amendment preserved the armed slave patrols in the South, a continuation of the habit of controlling black bodies, a practice that continues today in our

law enforcement. The Electoral College assured the southern states that their smaller populations would not disadvantage them in presidential elections. Our founders also settled on the worth of enslaved (black) humans as 3/5ths the value of white folks. Despite progress, we haven’t really budged much from that since.

Racism as a weapon is as American as apple pie. A poisoned one. Racism is so pervasive, the mantle of white privilege so easy for white folks to slip into without a thought, that it escapes notice by many white folks who don’t realize they are being affected by it. It is as common as the oxygen in the air we breathe: we are so used to the acrid smell of racism in our atmosphere that we tend not to notice until, as is now happening in America, we are figuratively gasping for breath. White America gasps for breath, but Black America can’t breathe. Systemic racism, the weapon of white supremacy, poisons our social institutions, our governments, our churches, our schools, the military, corporations, and our politics. It poisons all of us.

Black Americans have a lot to be angry about. America has short-changed them in education, housing, jobs, access to credit, health care, equal justice, and much more. We emancipated the enslaved, and then imposed Jim Crow. We gave them voting rights, and then found draconian ways to suppress that vote. We enlisted them into combat but denied them the GI Bill. We decide where they may live. Black Americans live disadvantaged lives because of intentional public policy. That is something we can fix.

When you hear politicians

make the claim that “racism has no place in America,” you should consider that a naïve statement, wishful thinking. Racism “should have” or “must have” no place in America, but those are different, aspirational, statements that mean nothing so long as white supremacy exists.

The pandemic has laid bare many of the inequities of our society and of our rapacious, unbridled capitalist economy. We are, sadly, not all in this together. Violence against Black Americans has finally become impossible to ignore. We may be at a turning point as a nation, a people fed up with the status quo, finally noticing the stench in the air we breathe, and ready to make systemic changes towards a more perfect union. We must not let this opportunity go to waste.

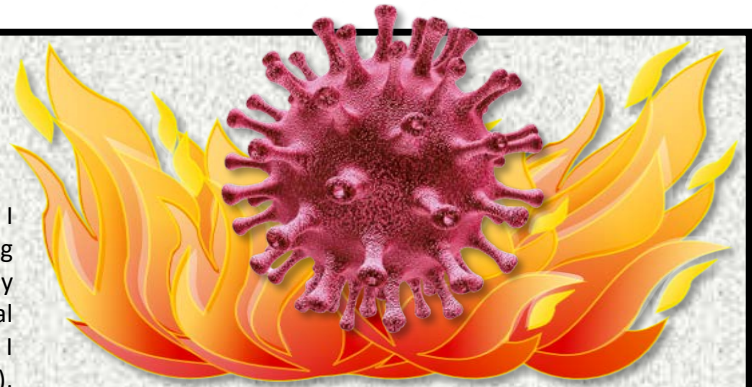
It is up to White America to fix this problem, our problem. America’s shame is that it is the protests of Black America that must shame White America into doing that.



**RACISM
WRONG**

Fire Island Fury

By Jordan Duesenberg



It's 4:53 pm on a Friday, and I just looked at a text I missed from earlier in the day inviting me to a pool party starting at 4:30 p.m. I've set out to write this very article but immediately I have that familiar pang in my stomach that feels like an animal trying to claw its way out of captivity. You know the feeling? I guess most people call it FOMO nowadays (Fear Of Missing Out), and if the kids are calling it something else, I'm sadly very behind on such matters. The rational part of me tells me you've been to a 1000 pool parties before, you have to write this article, and oh yeah, it's a global pandemic. The irrational part of me says you've lost over 15 lbs. since quarantine, you just bought a Speedo and it's time to show the boys what you're made of. The irrational part of me also forgets that even though I bought the Speedo one size up, it still makes me look like a packed sausage, and I need to go ANOTHER size up. Just what any homosexual wants to realize (especially one who just lost 15 lbs.).

I lay out this information, because just last week over the Fourth of July weekend, the gay media and very much so gay social media (trust me they're very different) was immersed in controversy regarding musclebound Speedo-clad gays partying on Fire Island, not socially distanced and without a face mask in sight. This isn't anything new, we've seen people flock to bars and beaches since state's have started reopening. We've also seen cases of COVID-19 soar as a result. Perhaps the reaction to the Fire Island gays was as big an issue because NYC was hit particularly hard in the first wave of coronavirus. Another reason had to do with an individual by the name of Corey Hannon (a.k.a. "Corona Corey") who knowingly went to Fire Island even though he suspected he was positive with COVID-19, something he would later retract in an 'apology' video which definitely needs to be looked up if you haven't seen it. So, it makes complete sense that the gay community is in a digital uproar.

Our Queer elders, often times folk that survived a tremendous amount of hardships, everything from outright homophobia, shame, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, etc., are particularly vocal in their outrage. Cleve Jones, one of the more well-known HIV/AIDS activists of our time had this to say about the gays on Fire Island:

"Words rarely fail me but I can't express the depth of anger and disgust I feel towards many of the younger people (and some older) in my own community today. You who are so self-absorbed, so nonchalant in your irresponsibility, so arrogantly ignorant and selfish. The last pandemic killed half of my generation of gay men. They died hideously. Are you not aware of that history? Right now we desperately need our young people to lead the way – to defeat Trump, fight racism, protect our democracy and save the planet. Then we can meet and drink and party the night away again. But not now, not today, not with infection rates skyrocketing and hospitals overflowing. How many will die before you wake the fuck up? You break my heart."

Interestingly enough, the day before all of this came to light, I was scrolling through Instagram on Friday, July 3, and came across a post of a screenshot of an infamous *New York Times* article called "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals" that I've come across dozens of times. Each time I read the article, a foreboding sense of dread descends upon me and I immediately try and imagine what the men that were just like me must've felt when they first read this article. Were they immediately concerned? Scared? Did they not think to themselves, "Well, that's unfortunate for them, but it probably won't affect me," and then go on with their fabulous 4th of July celebrations? It's impossible to know.

Of course, the *New York Times* article that I'm talking about (that I heavily encourage you to read if you haven't before) is the very first media report about what would later be known as HIV/AIDS. This might have been the first report, but it certainly wouldn't be the last, as we all know HIV/AIDS decimated our community.

When I came across the Instagram post of that article, I once again tried to envision myself reading that for the first time, which made me consider what my initial reaction was towards the news regarding COVID-19. To be completely honest, I can't even really remember the first time I read about it. I think it was sometime in January, but not thinking much of it because, at the time, it seemed like another virus that came from China that would probably be news fodder for a while and disappear in a bit. Hadn't we seen this before? Even as cases made their way to the United States, I still didn't think much of it – pretty much along the lines of "Well, that's unfortunate, but it probably won't affect me," and I went on with my fabulous life. Hell, the first two weeks of March I went to LA to run the LA Marathon and partied it up there for my 30th birthday, all while cases of COVID-19 soared and I did my best not to read news that might rain on my parade. It wasn't until I landed back in Iowa and the quarantines were put in place pretty much that day. So, I guess I kind of answered my own question, what my initial reaction would've been if I had been the one to read that article in 1981 about a rare new cancer showing up in my community.

There are, of course, a lot of parallels with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the current COVID-19 pandemic, but first I do want to stress I am in no way trying to trivialize or minimize anyone's lived-experience through either one of these devastating situations. But, back to my point, there're obviously parallels with a new, unknown, and deadly virus and the Republican administrations that blatantly ignored the pandemics until it was too late. In fact, that Cleve Jones's

[continued on page 6]

["Fire Island Fury" continued from page 5]

social media post reminded me an article written by another LGBTQ+ elder and leader, the late Larry Kramer, in response to the gay community during the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. If you're not familiar with Larry Kramer (which I'm guessing most of you are), he is infamous for a number of things. For starters, he gained his initial notoriety for the 1978 publication of his scathing satiric critique of gay culture, *Faggots* (which I'm sure a lot of people could argue is still pretty relevant today; was the co-founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC,) which is the world's largest private organization assisting people living with AIDS still today; was the playwright of *The Normal Heart* (you can see the film depiction on HBO Go/Now/Max); and, most prominently, was the founder of the radical protest group AIDS Coalition (ACT UP). At one time, he was called "the angriest man alive!"

Published in March 1983 in the *New York Native*, Larry Kramer posted a scathing piece directed at the gay community for their malaise, inaction, and lack of justified outrage towards AIDS after two years of dealing with the virus. The article is titled, "1,112 and Counting." There's a lot of information in the article and I encourage everyone to read it. A lot of the information contained in it -- you guessed it -- could be used to critique individuals today. Kramer starts the article by stating, "If this article doesn't scare the shit out of you, we're in real trouble. If this article doesn't rouse you to anger, fury, rage, and action, gay men may have no future on this earth. Our continued existence depends on just how angry you can get." Kramer goes on to list startling statistics about the growth in numbers, the serious cases, and to stress there is a large number of people walking around without knowing they had the virus, and the doctor's lacked knowledge regarding this new virus and treatment of it. Sound familiar?

The quote that sticks out most to me in this article is when Larry Kramer states, "I am sick of guys who moan that giving up careless sex until this blows over is worse than death. How can they value life so little and cocks and asses so much? Come with me, guys, while I visit a few of our friends in Intensive Care at NYU. Notice the looks in their eyes, guys. They'd give up sex forever if you could promise them life." Then to end things, he closes this portion of the article by saying: "...I am very sick and saddened by every gay man who does not get behind this issue totally and with commitment - to fight for his life."

So back to the Fire Island gays and every gay man out partying, not wearing face masks, or social distancing -- what gives? COVID-19 isn't exclusively a gay issue, but we certainly have a responsibility as humans, and our community is more susceptible since there are members of our community who are at higher risk. How could these individuals be so callously careless? Do they really value life so little and romps with beautiful men so much more? I don't want to make excuses for anyone, especially not Corona Corey -- seriously that guy is a dirtball -- but seeing my initial reaction to being invited to that pool party, I get it. I'm bored, I miss being an object of desire, and most of all, I miss my community. People are human and make mistakes, especially when you are young and still feel invincible. But it's important that we look to the past to learn to make better informed decisions that not only benefit us, but society at large. I ended up not going to that pool party and I ended up buying that Speedo another size up (even though my pride is suffering). I'm not sure what it's going to take for people to start taking COVID-19 more seriously, I just hope it happens before more people are hurt.

President #45 has an approval rating of about 38% of eligible voters, a point that is about where Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush were at the same point prior to the November presidential election. That's pretty miserable, yes. But there are about 157,600,000 eligible voters in the United States, and 38% of that number means there are still 59,888,000 eligible voters who think the guy is doing a good job. That number of people drank the Kool-Aid in 2016 and are apparently belling up to the bar for another round in 2020. Jonestown revisited. Embarrassing for sure, but also highly motivating.

hello
August



Talk, Talk, and More Talk

by Jonathan Wilson



Much in the news lately has been nationwide – even worldwide -- protests triggered by the George Floyd homicide at the knee of a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, assisted by three other officers. Predictably, news media have interviewed countless public office holders and law enforcement “experts.” Mostly those being interviewed merely restate the problem and wax eloquent about the need to actually *do* something this time to address systemic racism that continues to plague this country. To me and to many others, that’s pretty much the same-old-same-old that follows every new example of the problem.

The problem is not confined to law enforcement by any means, but law enforcement tends to be the more visible tip of the proverbial iceberg because law enforcement is the one branch of the “system” with powers to racially profile, to confront citizens of color, to arrest, and to do it with lethal force deemed appropriate by the individual arresting officer. It’s not an enviable task; it can be very dangerous and often requires split-second decisions. Those split-second decisions will inevitably be second-guessed by Monday-morning quarterbacks who enjoy the self-righteous hindsight gained over the course of hours or days.

With almost everything being videotaped nowadays, incriminating video sometimes prevents a white-washing incident or arrest report that officers could file in days-gone-by, and thereby get by with misconduct. The George Floyd homicide is a perfect, and horrifying example. Those video images defy white-washing. A botched attempt to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill should not result in the death penalty.

After insisting that we need to do something *this time*, I’ve heard those being interviewed by media asked repeatedly some version of, “What exactly should be done?” So far, I’ve not heard much of substance

or specifics in response, and the interviewees usually circle back to more waxing eloquent about the need to do something.

I don’t have the answer, and I’m confident there isn’t a single answer. I do have a couple of suggestions. First, a federal law, enacted in the aftermath of the Rodney King 1991 beating by the LAPD, authorized the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate law enforcement agencies suspected of a pattern of racial bias in law enforcement. The DOJ under the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations initiated numerous investigations that resulted in multiple consent decrees that put police departments under the supervision of the federal courts. Only one such investigation has been initiated under the Trump administration. The DOJ needs to get off its butt and get involved with investigations and enforcement. Under the current, politically motivated Attorney General Bill Barr, fat chance. But it *should* happen.

The second suggestion has to do with accreditation of law enforcement agencies. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) is U.S.-based and was established in 1979 (more than 40 years ago). I’m a believer in accreditation in multiple disciplines. We accredit colleges and universities. We accredit zoos. Many other endeavors. Accreditation is a terrific mechanism for circulating “best practices” and generating public confidence in quality performance. Proper accreditation is not static; accrediting criteria are continually being updated, and accredited agencies are regularly reviewed to determine whether they are continuing to follow “best practices.” If they are found not to be following “best practices,” they can lose their accreditation.

Unfortunately, the CALEA website, in touting its virtues, seems to focus mostly on reducing liability

exposure for law enforcement agencies, the potential loss of liability insurance, and the risk of smaller agencies being bankrupted by liability claims if they lack insurance. That’s certainly one compelling reason for seeking and maintaining law enforcement accreditation.

If properly operated, however, the CALEA is in a perfect position to leverage systemic changes in law enforcement policies and practices. The CALEA can update or give increased weight to accreditation criteria that encourage training in ways to reduce the use of lethal force in law enforcement, training and retaining in de-escalation skills, education about implicit racial bias (as the Des Moines Police Department has been doing), and greater community involvement of police officers (as the Des Moines Police Department does by encouraging officers to volunteer on local non-profit boards and agencies).

But, get this, aside from the need to focus more on promoting best law enforcement policies and practices *for the sake of the community being served* rather than merely reducing liability risk so insurance and solvency aren’t compromised, only about 2% of law enforcement agencies in the United States are currently accredited by the CALEA. Therein lies an opportunity to leverage systemic changes that have been needed for many years.

It’s not a singular solution, but public officials pressuring the CALEA to step up with promulgating criteria focused on “best practices” in order to obtain and keep accreditation, and insisting that law enforcement agencies under their supervision be accredited, would be something specific, tangible, and most likely to accomplish systemic change that is so desperately needed.



American Son

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage



Adapting a play to film poses its own unique challenges: in film, the space of the stage becomes infinite; sets and scenery can cut and transform instantly. Yet sometimes, the powerful emotional investment obtained with live actors on a stage can be lost in its translation to celluloid. *American Son*, based on the Broadway play by Christopher Demos-Brown, is a claustrophobic and caustic exploration of one Black mother's experience with police racial profiling in investigating the disappearance of her teenage son. Although *American Son* is sometimes too heavy-handed with its dialogue and more dimension could be offered to its characters, its overall message is important, and the film does contain teachable moments in recognizing institutionalized racism and racial profiling.

American Son opens in a South Florida police station waiting room, with worried mother Kendra (Kerry Washington) trying to call her son Jamal, who has been missing for eight hours following an argument with Kendra. Fearing the worst when her calls go unanswered, she goes to the police for help, only to be stonewalled by Officer Larkin (Jeremy Jordan), a white graveyard-shift cop. Officer Larkin's initial condescension to Kendra's panic begins to slip from dismissiveness into an insulting interrogation about Jamal's description, including casually racist comments like insisting Jamal has a criminal record and a "street name." Kendra, angered at Larkin's racist insinuations but forced to stay collected as a Black woman in the face of police authority, gives more details about her home life as she tries to obtain whatever information she can about her son's disappearance. It becomes clear that Kendra and her now ex-husband have worked hard to ensure Jamal and herself have the same privileges as the white families around them: a well-paying job in a peaceful neighborhood and access to a good school, for example. Kendra explains why she's so concerned about her son becoming another statistic of police violence, but Larkin becomes offended and leaves the room. When Kendra's white ex-husband Scott (Steven Pasquale), also a member of law enforcement, arrives at the station, Larkin mistakes him for a superior and divulges more than he's let on, revealing alarming details about Jamal's case and his opinion of Kendra as a "ghetto bitch"—within earshot of Kendra. You can imagine how well that plays out—but it's a cringy moment more for its lack of depth than its blatant racism. The conversation between Kendra and Scott that follows unveils more layers of racial frustration between the two parents and exposes the underlying reasons for Jamal's recent behavior and Kendra's fears.

The film is very much a straightforward play adaptation—the entire movie takes place in one room and the cast is just four characters. There's a bit of a *Waiting for Godot* element in that the plot is propelled forward by two threads: what happened to Jamal, and waiting for the day-shift superior Lieutenant Stokes (Eugene Lee) to arrive. When he does, Stokes acts as a *deus ex machina*, fully explaining the mystery (and horror) of Jamal's disappearance while chastising Kendra for "not being careful enough" as a parent of a Black teenager. It's an ugly surprise to hear, as Stokes is both Black and a police officer, but as Kendra points out, his admonitions and callousness to her situation are no different from that of Officer Larkin before him. It's almost absurdist (the play genre) in how Stokes appears, explains away the central plot, scolds, then disappears—on stage, I feel this would

have been more impactful than how it appears on film. Stokes' appearance marks a finale that's meant to be chilling, powerful and socially relevant, but instead becomes a sharp narrative drop-off that feeds into a horribly tone-deaf closing and completely took me out of the raw energy of Kerry Washington's performance. Yet aside from this rushed (forced?) ending, the points that *American Son* explores in its first and second acts are worth seeing. *American Son* isn't meant to answer any tough questions—it's meant to start a dialogue, and despite being a little clumsy in its third act, it does the job.





At **One Iowa**, our work is centered around advancing equality and inclusiveness through education, workplace culture, and increasing access to quality healthcare for LGBTQ Iowans across our state. We're excited to plug in more folks to our mission through this newsletter and get more people plugged in with our work. Here's a snapshot of what we have on the agenda for the rest of the summer.

One Iowa Virtual Older Adults Conference Wednesday, August 5th at 4:30 p.m.



The One Iowa Older Adults conference is an annual event where experts can join alongside LGBTQ+ folks to share vital resources, make connections, and help older adults in the community age safely, openly and well. Allies, service providers and family caregivers are welcome to come and learn at any of our older adult events. This year, Dr. Imani Woody, a nationally recognized leader on inclusion and diversity, will present on The future of LGBTQ/SLG aging in the U.S. You can register for the Older Adults Conference by going to <https://oneiowa.org/event/olderadultsconference/>

One Iowa Virtual Gala Saturday, August 22nd at 7:00 p.m.



Each year, we host a Gala to celebrate the accomplishments over the past year, honor those who have helped lead the way, and look ahead to how we will continue the fight in 2021. We are hosting **virtual Gala** this year and are partnering with Des Moines hotspots – Bartender's Handshake, Bellhop, Lucky Lotus, Art Terrarium (just to name a few!) – to offer special deals to Gala attendees. ***We will also have an amazing silent auction filled with art made by local Iowa artists!***

It is bound to be a magical night that you don't want to miss out on! You can register for the Gala at <https://oneiowa.org/gala2020/> Registration is free but donations are encouraged as it is our biggest fundraiser of the year.

If you don't already, make sure to follow us on social media to stay up to date on what we're doing at One Iowa and discover ways you can get involved in the fight for LGBTQ equality in Iowa.

Follow us: <https://www.facebook.com/OneIowa/>
<https://www.instagram.com/oneiowa>
<https://twitter.com/oneiowa>

A group of lions is called a pride. A group of birds is called a flock. A group of hogs is called a herd. A herd of hogs at the public trough is called a Congress. The Lincoln Project defines a group of GOP U.S. Senators as a "coward."



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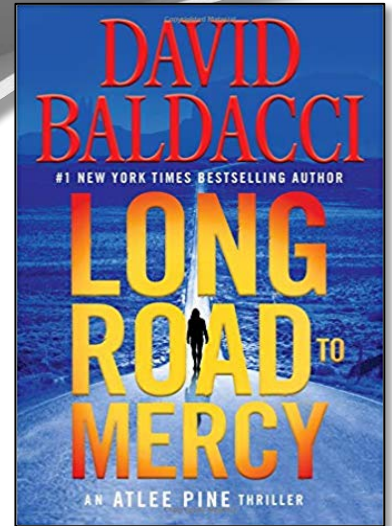
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A Book Review by Steve Person

Long Road to Mercy

By David Baldacci



David Baldacci is a prolific writer of thrillers. I believe him to be the quintessential author of that genre. It is also why I have to pace myself when I read one of his books; I simply cannot put it down and leave all other chores to a later time!

Long Road to Mercy features a female main character by the name of Atlee Pine. Atlee is an FBI special agent but one with an independent streak. She does not fit in well with the stereotypical image of FBI agents. She took the post of Resident Agent in the tiny Utah town of St. George. She was the sole agent in the office and had an assistant by the name of Carol Blum. Blum will be a major player later in the story.

Atlee Pine had a twin sister by the name of Mercy. When the girls were six years old, a man broke into their house and abducted Mercy. She was never found. Such a traumatic experience shaped Atlee's life from then on. Although a very smart girl, she suffered many upheavals in her young life. Eventually she straightened herself out and began rigorous training as a weightlifter for the Olympics. Unfortunately, she did not make the team, but such physical strength became one of her best assets once she became an FBI special agent.

The plot grows when a man by the name of Benjamin Priest goes missing after his descent into the Grand Canyon riding a trained mule to the canyon floor. Not only is there no trace of Priest, but also, someone brutally kills and dismembers the mule. Why? What possible threat could a trained mule be to anyone? Time will tell.

The "suits" in the FBI pull Atlee from the case—no reason given. She, however, persists and eventually has her credentials revoked. Undeterred, she pursues the truth relentlessly. The plot has her and her assistant, Carol Blum, going undercover and traveling as inconspicuously as possible from Utah all the way back across the country to Arlington, Virginia. As the case unfolds, the story leads back to the Grand Canyon. A dangerous ascent out of the Canyon by night, with the help of a few others, confirms an insidious plot by the United States government, in cahoots with a foreign country, to create worldwide havoc. Atlee is forthwith re-instated in the FBI. The book closes where it began—a federal prison in Colorado where Atlee believes her sister's killer is incarcerated for other, similar murders. Does she find out? Hmmmm.



The book came out in 2018, long enough for Baldacci to see what a maniac this country has in Donald Trump. Without ever mentioning our Pea-brained President's name, he makes clear that the plot in this thriller may not be as far-fetched as one might think. It is a worthy read, and I highly recommend it.