



First Friday News & Views

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



November 2020

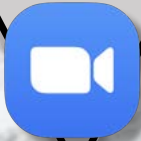
Volume 25

Issue 11

The next meeting
is Friday,
November 6,
7:00 a.m.



November Meeting
Location:
ZOOM!



November Speaker:
Jane Clementi



FFBC Website
ffbciova.org



Who Exactly is a Christian?

by Jonathan Wilson

When I recently read about the Pope saying Trump's build-a-wall rhetoric is not "Christian," it reminded me of an exchange I had a few years ago. I had this contractor acquaintance who belonged to an evangelical church in central Iowa. He informed me that he'd just returned from a church-sponsored mission trip to South America.

Skeptical, but feigning innocent curiosity, I asked him what was the mission of this mission. He said that the mission was to build a new church in a city of around 46,000 population. He then volunteered that in that entire city of 46,000, there were only about a dozen "Christians." He went on, "All the rest were Roman Catholics." That, I thought, should come as startling news to the Pope. The only response I could muster, however, was, "Oh, really? How about that?"

"Now, about that work I'm needing done...."

Touting their unmatched uber-Christianity, we heard religious rhetoric from virtually all of the 2016 Republican presidential candidates. It's ruining the "Christian" brand for me -- me, the son and brother of United Methodist clergy. I find myself cringing every time I see that fish symbol stuck on the back of a passing car or truck. Rather like a rainbow flag sticker probably causes some rekindled angst about the nefarious, so-called gay agenda.

I find myself wondering how this evangelical stuff works when brought into the public political arena and, as is legitimate there, gets subjected to some level of rational scrutiny.

Let's just say, for the sake of argument, that you genuinely believe in the near-term End Times, that we are in them, and that Armageddon and the Second Coming are imminent. Then let's further suppose that you are asked in the political arena about the burgeoning national debt, the bankrupting of social security, the degradation of the planet, pollution, erosion, clear-cutting forests, global warming, infrastructure repair, or fracking-caused earthquakes. Why, pray tell, isn't the rational response a cavalier, "So what? No problem. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. There's no need to do anything about those phenomena. See ya in Heaven (if you happen to be my brand of Christian), and to hell with the rest -- especially you unconverted Muslims, Christ-killing Jews, ...and Roman Catholics.



[continued on page 2]

I can somewhat forgive my theologically ignorant contractor acquaintance. But disparaging the Pope? Really? The Pope is something of an authority on Christian theology I would suppose. Trump, predictably, pooh-poohed the Pope's input on what is and isn't Christian. Republican members of Congress did much the same in response to the Pope's remarks to a joint session of the Congress.

It seems to me not just a touch hypocritical to denounce the input of such a recognized authority when all of the Republican field of candidates in 2016, including Trump, unabashedly embraced their "Christian" bona fides in the quest to become President of the United States. I say, "A pox on all of your houses." I believe your God is too small, and your definition of "Christian" is too rigidly narrow. For my money, it's downright un-Christian.

But the attitude of my uber-Christian, evangelical contractor acquaintance, who doesn't recognize Roman Catholics as "Christian," presumably including the Pope, tells me that some supposed adherents to Christianity define that term very differently and Trump's popularity among evangelicals -- the base of the current Republican Party -- may actually be enhanced by the Pope's condemnation. It also may explain why the undisputed fact that Joe Biden is a devout Roman Catholic who believes that he has been a lifelong Christian, may still keep him from reaching evangelicals in that Republican Party base.



Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for introducing our October speaker, **Rob Sand**. Thanks to **David Cotton** and **Ryan Weidner** for their work as our technology gurus. Thanks to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our website. Thanks to **Joe Raetz** for keeping up-to-date the FFBC Resources page on the website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thanks to all our contributors to the 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 **\$400,000** 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 **November 12, 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.

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

Consider a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax-exempt testamentary gift, or both. Our first legacy gift to the FFBC scholarship program came from **Cliff Paulsen** who passed away last year, to the tune of over **\$67,000!** Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.

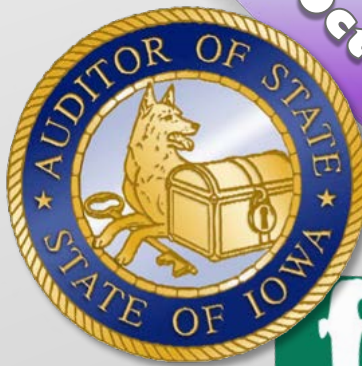
Iowa State Auditor Serves PIE

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, October 2, 2020, was Rob Sand, Auditor of the State of Iowa, who spoke to us from his home in Des Moines via ZOOM. Rob was elected in 2018, and he gave us an intelligent and compassionate account of his hopes and accomplishments in revising the department since he took office in January 2019.

One of the first things Rob saw was a need to change the culture and focus of the Auditor's Office from a centralized office of accountants to a more diversified office that addressed all the responsibilities that the Iowa Code gives it. Morale was low and turnover high, and he undertook to make a better, more transparent workplace so as to get better work. Noting that accounting-fraud prosecutions were better prosecuted by lawyers than by accountants, he began to hire more new lawyers than accountants. He reasoned that the office operates all across the state and thus shouldn't need to require all workers to live in Des Moines. (This "Statewide Work, Statewide Jobs" policy promotes both the health of the workers and of the small towns that many of them prefer.) Rob also paid attention to the fact that the Iowa Auditor has Iowa Code-assigned responsibility to review and encourage efficiency and innovation – a task that had largely been ignored in the recent past. He has put up on the Auditor's Website a "PIE (Public Innovations and Efficiencies) Chart," which encourages and shares best-practices information found at all levels of government, and acknowledges those programs and individuals who demonstrate them. (This innovation does not endear him – as a Democrat – to the state's overwhelmingly Republican administration.) But, as he told us, his emphasis is always on government doing a good job at what it has to do, what it needs to do, and not on one-upping partisanship.

If you click on the Speakers tab at our Web site, <ffbcioowa.org>, you can listen to a complete audio recording of Rob Sand's remarks, and of the Q&A which followed.



October Speaker



Rob Sand was born and raised in Decorah, Iowa, where his first job, he says, was catching chickens. He's an ardent fan of small-town life, and his favorite childhood memories are of fishing, biking, and camping around a tiny shack on an island in the Mississippi near Lansing, Iowa. He found his passion for public service in high school, when he worked for two years to build a public skatepark. He graduated from Decorah High School in 2001.

After high school, Rob attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where he built a reputation for his ability to work productively with individuals of all political persuasions. While at Brown, he was named a Harry S. Truman Scholar. After graduating from college, Rob chose to return to Iowa to attend the University of Iowa College of Law on a full merit scholarship. There, he became the first student ever to be both President of the Student Bar Association and an Editor-in-Chief of a law journal. He also led a student volunteer effort to commit over 1,000 hours of volunteer labor to cleaning and rebuilding Cedar Rapids after the 2008 floods. Before graduating, he was awarded the Hancher-Finkbine Medallion, the University of Iowa's highest award.

After law school, Rob was named an Assistant Attorney General in September 2010, by Attorney General Tom J. Miller, and he spent much of his first 18 months investigating and prosecuting tax credit fraud related to Iowa's filmmaking tax credit program. Then he was recruited to Area Prosecutions, where he became the youngest prosecutor in the Division as well as Iowa's first-ever Assistant Attorney General focused on prosecuting financial crime. Most recently, Rob led the nationwide "Hot Lotto" lottery-fixing investigation that led to a resolution between six states and two defendants: all told, three criminals entered guilty pleas to six different counts, and agreed to repay every dollar they stole. Rob has prosecuted elected and appointed public officials and employees, both Republicans and Democrats. He successfully prosecuted attorneys, investment advisors, embezzlers, and those who exploit the elderly. He has also prosecuted a wide range of other crimes, including sexual abuse, robbery, murder, attempted murder, and perjury. After seven successful years in the AG's office, Rob wanted to expand his legal and financial work to include more than predominantly felonious criminals, and hoped he could bring more lawyerly expertise into the auditorial end of state government – so in 2018 he ran for Auditor of State against the incumbent, and won. The changes he has brought to that office were most of what he talked about to us on Friday morning.

Outside of work, Rob Sand rides a bicycle regularly, and he likes to fish and hunt. In fact, the Iowa Bowhunters' Association has certified him as an "Expert Bowhunter." He lives in Des Moines with his wife – also a small-town native – and two young sons, and he can be reached at the Auditor's office at 515/281-5983 and rob.sand@aos.iowa.gov.

Another Month, Another Scandal

By Jordan Duesenberg

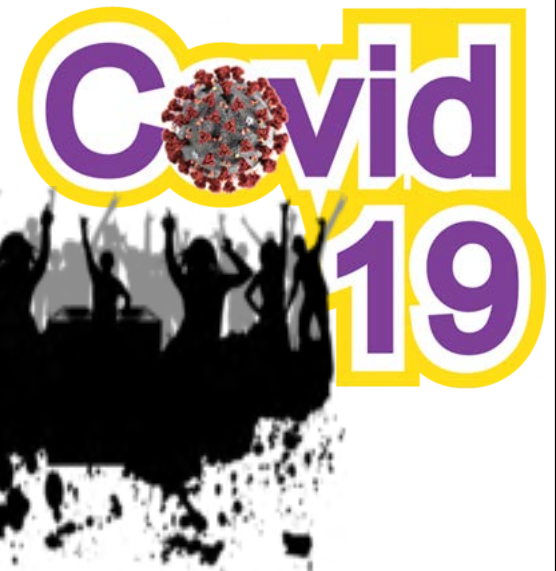
Although I haven't been perfect with social distancing, I have still tried to do my best to keep hangouts with friends at open-air, outdoor venues. I stopped going to the bars at night on the weekends because I no longer find them entertaining as sitting indoors with a mask for the sole purpose of drinking just isn't fun anymore. I miss dancing; I miss clubbing; I miss cruising, I miss all of it. I would seriously do unspeakable things to experience just one more night of dancing at a warehouse party or dancing in a dark basement until the sun comes up. Clearly, I'm not alone.

I've already written about the Fire Island gays over the 4th of July weekend. There was of course the infamous Rona Rave a.k.a. the Meth Gala that happened in New York City earlier in the year, and now we have the scandals of Atlanta Pride that occurred this October with images of a circuit party attended by hundreds of circuit queens, not following COVID-19 preventative guidelines, including not wearing masks. A man reportedly died due to a drug overdose because there were no EMTs at the event, which to me tells me that the people who threw the event knew they were going to get flack for this and still proceeded; still, circuit queens went and even posted videos of it all over social media.



At this point, I know nobody is perfect, and we've all made mistakes, but you have to be an idiot to not only attend a circuit party right now, but an even bigger idiot to post about it. Seriously, how have we not learned this by now? Earlier scandals throughout this year could possibly be defended because either the virus was still new enough and/or we didn't know enough. Now we've been dealing with this almost the entire year. We're all sick of it. There is no more defending the men who go to these big events and who don't follow COVID-19 guidelines. At this point, they are no better than the anti-mask Trumpers.

The LGBTQ+ community is an amazing and inspiring group capable of so many great things. It's unfortunate that because of a handful of irresponsible gays, news outlets and social media will potentially run with the story that we're all about partying and sex ahead of everything else during a global pandemic.



National Coming Out Day 2020

A Facebook Post by Dave Cotton

On this day, National Coming Out Day, I stand in solidarity with others taking this bold and important step in their lives. For some this is their first time to publicly embrace who they are, for others a reaffirmation in support of those that may follow their example in the future. For me, it is the former.

During the past two years I have experienced the power of vulnerability and the love that may result, and some pain. Vulnerability requires honesty and integrity, two attributes of human character I hold in high esteem. I always felt I was in integrity with myself, when in fact, for the majority of my life, I was out of integrity, not being fully honest nor true with myself. I never acted to deceive. I eventually reached a point where I could no longer live with this disconnect in my character. Society, culture, my chosen profession, all the excuse for keeping the authentic me repressed.

In February of 2019, I finally admitted to myself that I am a gay man. In the long run, for me to best serve myself and others, I had to accept who I am and not how I thought society expected me to be. This did not come without consequences. However, I am continually surprised by the love and support that has also been the result. I no longer suffer from the depression that I also hid.

My journey is still at its beginning with each day being a new crossroads. The family I still deeply love remains strong and has been described as all being from the same root ball, each growing in the direction it needs to blossom and flourish.

At my core I am the same man I have always been; I have the same love for my family in my many roles in life...father, brother, friend...now I no longer live with fear, doubt, and pain. My vulnerability has already been an example for others to address challenges in their lives. While not my intention, I'm honored if expressing my truth can be an inspiration to others working through issues in their lives.

I am not seeking validation nor praise. I am asking for your awareness of the differences and prejudices that still exist in our society and how we need to create an environment where everyone can be free to live without fear of ridicule or prejudice.





**November
Speaker**



Jane Clementi

Jane Clementi is the mother of Tyler Clementi and co-founder and CEO of the Tyler Clementi Foundation.

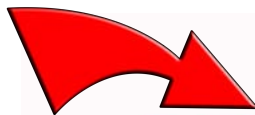
You won't want to miss and, since the meeting is virtual, there's no reason why you should not be able to participate.

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

oneiowa

The LGBTQ Workplace Culture Summit provides resources for employers, LGBTQ employees, and allies to help create safe and affirming work environments to ensure everyone can show up to work as their true selves. We hope you can join us this year!

The virtual format of this annual event consists of four sessions that can be purchased as a whole or individually to fit the needs of your organization. We will touch on essential issues from COVID-19 best practices, building a diversity and inclusion working group, and how an organization can amplify the voices of those who are the most impacted by systems of oppression in our communities.



oneiowa LGBTQ Workplace Culture Summit 2020

LGBTQ 101 AND WORKPLACE BEST PRACTICES

Do you want to be an inclusive workplace, but not sure where to start? Join us for our LGBTQ 101 and Workplace Best Practices webinar.

We will cover the basics: sexual orientation, gender identity, and LGBTQ identities, in addition to content related to discrimination and best practices for being LGBTQ inclusive in the workplace.

November 5th, 2-4 p.m.

A 2020 VISION: IT'S TIME TO SEE US

Hosted by Dominique Morgan, executive director, Black and Pink
In this presentation, participants will assess the practices in which employers uplift system impacted people to leadership in their work; Develop a fruitful relationship with individuals and communities and define the ways an organization can amplify the voices of those who are the most impacted by systems of oppression in our communities.

November 12th, 2-4 p.m.

COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES: A PANEL DISCUSSION

In this session, panelists will discuss best practices for COVID-19 risk management and harm reduction for their LGBTQ employees.

Panelists come from a variety of backgrounds and risk levels, including the nonprofit, corporate, and service industries. Join us for a conversation on how to support your staff during uncertain times.

December 3rd, 2-4 p.m.

BUILDING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES WITH INTENTION

Want to build an effective Diversity and Inclusion committee or Employee Resource Group, but not sure where to start?

Join us for a discussion on how to approach Diversity and Inclusion work to ensure its longevity and efficacy in your organization, and how to center Diversity and Inclusion in your organization's strategic priorities.

December 10th, 2-4 p.m.

**You can register for the event at:
oneiowa.org/event/wpcs2020**

Broadlawns Mental Health Endorsements

by Supervisor Matt McCoy, Polk County, 5th District



We're in full election season, and while the candidates for President, U.S. Senate, and U.S. House dominate the airwaves, I want to share with you an important office that is often overlooked but does the critical work of providing mental health services in Polk County through the extension of Broadlawns. I recently endorsed Emily Webb and Dave Miglin for the **Broadlawns Board of Trustees**.

Emily Webb is an attorney who has a passion for caring for vulnerable individuals. Emily has experienced helping a friend through substance abuse and understands the complexities of a system that is stretched beyond its capacity. Emily is also engaged in providing oversight on the DMARC board for critical food pantries throughout the metro. DMARC has performed at the highest levels through the pandemic, and her contributions from this board have shown how profoundly valuable she would be on the Broadlawns Board of Trustees.

My other endorsement for the Broadlawns Board is **Dave Miglin**. Dave also shares a passion for caring for vulnerable citizens. I was impressed to learn that Dave has attended every Board of Directors' meeting and finance meeting for Broadlawns since he launched his candidacy for the board. His life work has been in communications and messaging, and he is an executive with Strategic America with more than 30 years of experience. One of his objectives is to improve communication and messaging on behalf of Broadlawns and allow taxpayers the ability to better and more easily understand how Broadlawns plays a role in our community.

I hope that you will consider these two up-and-coming candidates for this unpaid but important role on the Broadlawns Board of Trustees. I know they'll work very hard for us.



November Virtual Meeting



There will be a virtual meeting using ZOOM in November. 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 (Davidcotton@me.com) for assistance figuring out how to participate if you need that personal assistance.

zoom



"Thanksgiving is an emotional time. People travel thousands of miles to be with people they see only once a year. And then discover once a year is way too often."

Johnny Carson



Event Horizon (1997)

A "Retro" Movie Review by Mark Turnage

It's spooky season! With the pandemic effectively halting big-budget horror movies, I thought I'd review one of my favorite 90's cult horror classics: director Paul W.S. Anderson's 1997 sci-fi/horror feature *Event Horizon*. Though the film's first and second acts parallel *The Shining* set in space, an atonal action-movie finale blunts the iconic (and original) psychological horror imagery the movie is most infamous for.

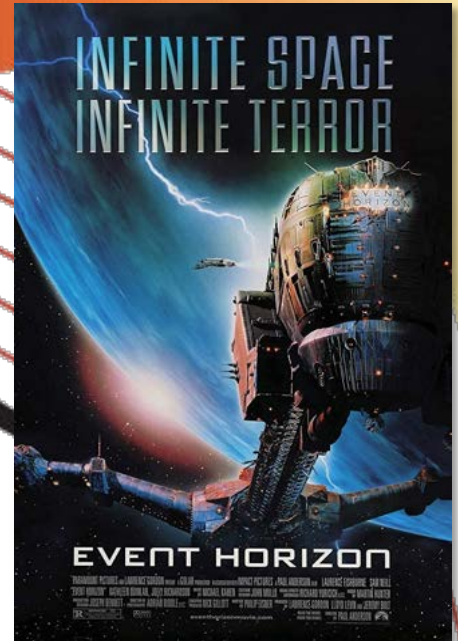
The film begins with a timeline: In 2015, the first moon colony was established (bold choice, 1997). In 2040, the spaceship Event Horizon is launched, then abruptly disappears after its lightspeed "gravity drive" is activated. Seven years later, the ship suddenly reappears and a disturbing transmission from the Event Horizon is received consisting of screams, howls, and the Latin phrase "Liberate me." Naturally, the government is fascinated, so they dispatch a crack rescue team aboard a separate vessel to investigate, including Capt. Miller (Laurence Fishburne), Lt. Starck (Joely Richardson), and obsessive Event Horizon architect Dr. William Weir (Sam Neill). Upon boarding the creepily deserted ship, the team begins to experience horrifying visions related to their personal traumas, leading one to attempt suicide by airlock decompression. When they discover a recording of the Event Horizon crew fornicating and mutilating each other after turning on the gravity drive, they realize the ship opened a hellish dimensional portal, transforming it into the Overlook Hotel in space. Dr. Weir begins to get a little--well, *weird*--being back aboard his ship from hell, and ta-da, we have our Jack Torrance.

But that's where the similarities between *Event Horizon* and *The Shining* end. *Horizon* is considerably gorier, more in the vein of Clive Barker than Stanley Kubrick. But the way Anderson strikes a balance between those two directors for the first two acts is marvelous. You get Barker's neo-Gothic architecture and body horror, and Kubrick's exploration of psychological trauma and ambiguous "unspeakable horror" moments. Anderson is relentless on space machinery jump scares, but they're effective enough to surprise the viewer when the real scares arrive. Yet when the third act shifts from horror into action, that successful tone is lost. To understand why, it's helpful to look at Anderson's filmography and the troubled production of *Event Horizon* itself.

Anderson's first smash, 1995's *Mortal Kombat*, established him as a director of 90's videogame screenplay adaptations with an action-movie flair. He would eventually go on to direct most of the 2000's action/horror *Resident Evil* movie series, the highest-grossing film franchise based on a videogame—quite an accomplishment when most videogame-based films are notorious B-movie box-office bombs (see also: *Alone in the Dark*, *Bloodrayne*). Anderson is first and foremost an action movie director, and while this approach was successful for *Mortal Kombat* and to some degree *Resident Evil*, it makes the intriguing concept of *Event Horizon* a bit more pedestrian when the big guns come out and things start blowing up. The studio also had a hand in forcing the third-act tonal shift: under pressure to release a lucrative blockbuster before the release of 1997's *Titanic*, Paramount had Anderson tone down the gore (which made pre-screening audience members faint), make extensive cuts, and amp up the action and special effects. As a result, reels of footage went unused and eventually went missing, and there's even enough in-your-face 90's CGI that makes you wonder if this was going to be a 3D movie at some point. Missing footage? Extended 3D cut? Super creepy.

But the studio intervention and Anderson's experience as an action film director can't explain the main issue with the film's plot: Dr. Weir's descent (more like drop) into insanity. At the beginning of the film, Weir is a troubled, nerdy, but gifted scientist with no predilections towards psychotic behavior. Sam Neill is one of my favorite actors, and is wonderful at portraying his character's awkwardness: he's so steeped in his career (and trauma of losing his wife to suicide) he can barely relate to any of the crew members. His classic example of using a magazine pin-up to explain folding space-time for lightspeed travel both demonstrates his intelligence and his humanity. Over an hour into the film, this demeanor still holds up. When he has a vision of his eyeless wife demanding he "join her," his composure shatters into a shell-shocked, psychotic mad scientist trope less than ten minutes later. The movie pivots hard from an intangible evil into a tangible one at the same time the tone shifts from a horror film to an action movie, and the film suffers from both as a result. However, the bright side is that this choice helped cement Laurence Fishburne as an action movie star, paving the way for his appearances in *The Matrix* trilogy.

Despite its flaws, for those who love sci-fi horror, *Event Horizon* is a must-watch, and belongs among other films in its genre such as *Aliens* and *The Thing*. See it if you have a strong stomach and don't mind your horror having some bombast.



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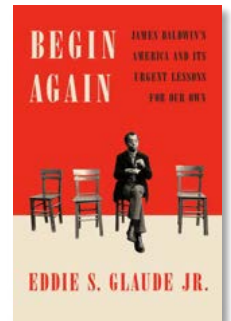
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**First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.**

Race Relations In America: Two Book Reviews

by Steve
Person

It's been over a month since I finished reading these two books regarding racial attitudes in this country. One book is nonfiction based upon works of fiction and nonfiction by an African-American writer, and the other is fiction based upon perceived possibilities by certain African Americans.

Professor Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., Professor of African American Studies and Religion at Princeton University, wrote without a doubt one of the most disturbing and yet all-important books I have ever read. I cannot stop thinking about its implications. Professor Glaude's book, *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own*, has the author analyzing James Baldwin's writings, both fiction and nonfiction, in terms of the lie that is America. Glaude asserts that this country, even before its founding in 1776, was and is based on lies — White lies. With the importation of slaves to North America over 400 years ago, white people have made convenient "truths" regarding African Americans. The Bible conveniently condoned slavery with excerpts from the Old Testament regarding the slaves' indebtedness to their masters. The Declaration of Independence of 1776, written by the slave-holding master, Thomas Jefferson, conveniently advanced the lie that, "All men are created equal." The United States Constitution of 1787 conveniently posited that slaves were to be considered three-fifths of a person for the count of Congressional representation. After the Civil War, with amendments to the Constitution making slavery illegal and guaranteeing the right to vote to all eligible males, the Jim Crow Laws passed in the southern states conveniently made it all but impossible for African Americans in those states to vote at all. Professor Glaude analyzed Baldwin's writings that rang true regarding the "Negro" in America since its founding all those centuries ago. By book's end, Glaude states that the only way to put all these lies to rest is to begin again with a country with no racial or ethnic distinctions in the way. While the author doesn't say Trump is to blame for these lies, he does insist that he is responsible for countenancing them. I must agree.



The Vanishing Half by African American novelist Brit Bennett, traces the lives of African American twin sisters Stella and Desiree Vignes from Mallard, Louisiana. Mallard is a town with a strange history. Some say it didn't even exist on any maps of the state. For untold decades, inhabitants of the town prided themselves on the fact that each generation's skin color became whiter and whiter. Stella and Desiree vanished from Mallard on August 14, 1954. They had just finished their tenth grade in school and never were to graduate from Mallard High School. The girls migrated to New Orleans where each integrated into White society because of their fair complexions. Eventually, they split, with Desiree moving to Washington, D.C., and Stella ending up in Boston. Desiree completed her education, married a black man, and successfully worked for the F.B.I. as a fingerprint analyst. Desiree's unhappy marriage and birth of her daughter brought her back to Mallard for the remainder of her life. Stella married her boss in Boston, and the pair eventually ended up in Los Angeles. Stella's husband had no idea she was African American, and Stella grapples with her past and present up into the 1990s. When she tries to return home again, it becomes impossible to fit in since she has spent all of her life living as something she was not. The book jumps back and forth in time, and is slated to become a television miniseries. Both books, different as they are, make for compelling reading.