



First Friday News & Views

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



April 2021

Volume 26

Issue 4

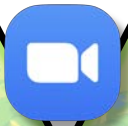
Next Meeting:

**Friday,
April 2
7:00 a.m.**



April Meeting
Location:

zoom



April Speaker:

**Chris
Godfrey**



FFBC Website:

ffbc Iowa.org



Planning a Successful Succession

by Byron Huff



I wanted my first newsletter article to cover some of the five-year journey of succession planning that culminated in Jonathan Wilson becoming an emeritus board member and my appointment as President in January 2021.

At the January 16, 2016, board meeting, Ryan Crane (now FFBC Vice President) presented a handout containing a preliminary discussion regarding responsible succession planning for FFBC. It was decided to continue that discussion as a regular feature of future board agendas. The early discussion involved Brenda Pringle, Jonathan's longtime assistant, along with a subgroup of the board, in understanding all the FFBC duties and responsibilities that had never been formally documented. Over the course of several months/years, we gathered the responsibilities of other members of the board including the President, Vice President, Fundraising Chair, Treasurer, Outreach, Newsletter Production Editor, Web Manager, and Scholarship Committee Chair.



One of the largest challenges was to organize our database of contacts into a more manageable system. Brenda had handled this in a series of Word documents that had duplicates between them. She would spend a huge amount of personal time pulling together one list eliminating duplicates which we used to manually mail scholarship donation letters and invitations to the original fund raising parties known as the Red Party which debuted in 2008.

We made the decision to begin manually entering all of the addresses into QuickBooks as well as other documents; a significant portion of this was handled by Brenda Pringle from her Minnesota home where she had relocated with her ailing husband. FFBC owes a huge amount of gratitude to Brenda for her many years of dedication. Another benefit of QuickBooks was the ability to send emails. Jonathan had been maintaining a separate email list for the communications which included meeting announcements. That list was separate from the lists maintained by Brenda being entered into QuickBooks. Additional work had to be done to sync and validate the lists.

Jonathan had an archive of boxes in his office that board members sorted through to save important documents that would eventually be digitized (scanned) into an online archive; that work is still in progress with the help of Nicholas Williams. Our website had become outdated and was missing newsletters, speakers, and other content. David Cotton stepped up, with the help of Wade Petersen and others, to do amazing work making our website useful for anyone visiting FFBCIOWA.ORG. Brad Holland, Joe Raetz, and

[continued on page two]

["Planning a Successful Succession" continued from page one]

Ascendant Wealth Management generously provided the funding to make online donations possible on our website. If you have not donated, I encourage you to make a one-time or recurring [donation](#). A huge amount of work has been done by our treasurer, David Wilfahrt (and Kent Donaldson before him), getting QuickBooks in order and keeping all financial matters organized. COVID accelerated some of our succession moves as we were forced to quickly move to virtual meetings. David Cotton has generously provided the Zoom license for our use during breakfast and board meetings.

Newsletters have always been physically produced and mailed; this process involved multiple people to create, print, fold, stuff, seal, and apply address labels. Wade Petersen, our newsletter editor, has done amazing work on our newsletter. With the help of multiple board members, we sent our first digital newsletter via email on March 1, 2021. This new digital format cuts the cost and production time and allows our newsletter to reach a much wider audience.

The past year has tested all of us in new ways and forced us to reinvent how we live. The five-year succession journey went by quickly, and I am so proud of everyone who contributed to the process that will ensure FFBC continues to provide resources for our members and for scholarships to courageous Iowa students regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other protected status.



Thanks to **David Cotton** for introducing **Dr. Ginger Campbell**, our March speaker. Thanks to **David Cotton** as our technology guru and to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thanks to all our contributors to the newsletter!*

The next copy **deadline** for the FFBC newsletter will be **April 19, 2021**. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and email it to Wade by the copy deadline (wadecpetersen@gmail.com).

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**



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 tax-deductible [contribution on-line](#) or by sending a check.

Please consider a **tax-exempt testamentary gift**. 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 **Byron Huff** for details or with any questions.





Yeah, But...

by Jonathan Wilson

In the context of the Nuremberg trials after World War II, it has been said (by Lawrence O'Donnell) that to say, "I was just following an order," is the last line of defense for doing the indefensible. In that case, the indefensible was the Holocaust, the slaughter of more than 6,000,000 Jews and others deemed lesser than a supposedly superior race of people. Being lesser justified their extermination "if so ordered," as a "final solution." That's nonsense as a defense, of course, but it is not the last line of defense for the indefensible.

We witnessed an insurrectionist assault -- felonious, treasonous assault -- upon the Capitol building in Washington D.C. Some of those involved unabashedly sought to assassinate the Speaker of the House of Representatives (third in line to the presidency), the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, and the Vice President of the United States (second in line to the presidency), and his family. The presiding officer in the Senate Chamber at the time was none other than our own Iowa Senator Charles Grassley (third in line to the presidency), who had to be escorted from the Senate Chamber by security in order to escape the insurrectionists.

It was, genuinely, a credible attempt to overthrow the government of the United States of America and, in the process, end our 200+ year experiment in democracy. The images are indelibly imprinted upon the minds of all who witnessed it, in real time. It cannot be unremembered. In that sense, it is no different from the real-time images of the attack on 9/11, 2001, that was orchestrated by foreign terrorists. This, however, was *domestic terrorists*.

Sadly, it was not accidental; it was foreseeable, organized, intentional, and precipitated by none other than the lame duck President of the United States, who lost a bid for re-election in a landslide -- an election where other members of his adopted-party affiliation actually gained ground.

Such a happening is not just indefensible; in my lifetime, it is unimaginable. And yet, it happened. And, predictably, some supporters of #45 have already alleged that the insurrection was "fake" and "staged" by ANTIFA and other opponents of #45. To believe that poppycock would be a testimony, at least, to a dismal failure of our public education system.

People need to be educated in critical thinking skills. When lacking in critical thinking skills, people are, by nature, trapped in survival thinking skills, which makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation using fear. Unmitigated by critical thinking skills, fear touches upon our need to survive. It can prompt us to fear and distrust the



"other," things unfamiliar to us, people different from "us," or anything or anyone identified as some level of threat to us. It doesn't take a trained political scientist or professional psychologist to understand that observation.

But, even understanding this intellectually, doesn't keep us from our own, visceral vulnerability (that is, vulnerability on a "gut level") as a defense against fear -- false fear -- mongering. The fallback position is less than critical thinking and more than survival thinking. It is common sense.

When an offense is alleged, and denied, and the defense posed is "Yeah, but...", common sense tells us, in every instance, we should recognize two things. First, it should be recognized as a matter of common sense that the "yeah" part of that defense is an admission of wrongdoing. To get to the remainder of the defense, there is first an admission of wrongdoing. It acknowledges that wrongdoing occurred on the part of the accused.



Then, common sense tells us that the defense is asserting the untenable position that because someone else allegedly did something similar without consequence, there should be no accountability for the *admitted wrongdoing*. Think about that.

Every parent of more than one child has heard that defense asserted about some wrongdoing. Every such parent knows two things: the alleged wrongdoing did occur, and the alleged fact that a sibling did something allegedly similar without punishment, means that there should be no consequence for the current transgression. You don't even have to be a parent to recognize those two things. If someone is challenging a speeding ticket by saying, "Yeah, but someone else I know sped and wasn't caught, or charged, or otherwise avoided consequences," it is of no consequence as a defense against accountability, thanks to mere common sense.

The truly last line of defense against an indefensible -- unimaginable -- act, is the defense of "Yeah, but...." If you remain a supporter of #45 following that asserted defense, you will be, and should be, judged by the company that you keep.

Over the Graying Rainbow

by Wade Petersen

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, March 5, 2021, was **Dr. Ginger Campbell**, an experienced physician with a long-standing interest in mind-body medicine, the brain, and consciousness.

Campbell grew up as a tomboy, loving sports at a time where there was a stigma against girls playing sports. This provided her first exposure to homosexuality when she once heard others commenting about “the coach and players on that team are **queer**.” After getting married to a man, her best friend, at age 21, she didn’t think of herself as queer. Yet, a brief affair with a woman when she was 24 made her consider, “Maybe there are other possibilities.” When her husband died and Campbell turned 60, she decided she didn’t want to spend the rest of her life alone, and she also knew, “I don’t think I want another man.”

She began **podcasting** in 2006 and discovered that it is a great way to share ideas with people from around the world. Her **Graying Rainbows** is a podcast community devoted to those who are coming out LGBTQ+ later in life. It was launched in November 2018. Coming out is a life-long process, but coming out later in life presents its own unique challenges. Since few books and resources are devoted to this topic, a goal of *Graying Rainbows* is to provide useful information and a place where people from diverse backgrounds can share their stories. The impact of hearing these stories can make people feel less alone.

Campbell discussed coming out as a “whole other level” when there are adult children involved. Much depends upon the age of the children; older adult children may be dealing with internalized homophobia while younger adult children seem to be more accepting as our culture has evolved and changed. Campbell states that most children suffer more from the divorce process than from a parent coming out. Of course, issues of faith and religion often enter the picture, and many adults fear the loss of community with the church. If a denomination layers too much guilt around the issue, Campbell says that some people have to face leaving their non-supportive church community.

For many, coming out when older forces the issue of self identity. They may feel that they are supposed to have figured out “who they are” by a certain age. It’s not necessarily true that a person has always known they are gay (it could be that they truly didn’t know). We should not assume someone who comes out late has been in denial. On the other hand, coming out later in life is not all bad if a person has a sense of identity and is established in a career and in a community. Dr. Campbell shared that coming out for lesbians (she prefers “gay”) is still a challenge. With many still in the closet, it makes meeting others very difficult.

Campbell encouraged us all to become **mentors**. She emphasized that even younger adults can become great mentors to older people as they make their way out of the closet.

If you click on the Past Speakers tab at our website, ffbciova.org/speakers/ you can listen to the complete audio of Ginger Campbell’s remarks.



March Speaker:
Virginia “Ginger” Campbell, M.D.

Introduction of Speaker:

David Cotton



Dr. Ginger Campbell is best known for her popular podcast *Brain Science*, which explores how recent discoveries in neuroscience are unraveling the mystery of how our brain makes us human. *Brain Science* launched in 2006 and enjoys a world-wide audience. It consistently ranks as one of the most highly regarded science podcasts with over 11 million downloads.

She also hosts *Graying Rainbows: Coming Out LGBTQ+ Later in Life*, which she launched in 2018. Her personal coming out journey began at age 60 after the unexpected death of her husband of 38 years.

Campbell’s journey has been adventurous. She spent over 20 years working as an emergency physician, mostly in rural Alabama, before embarking on a fellowship in Palliative Medicine. She now practices Palliative Medicine at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, where she is also an Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama-Birmingham School of Medicine.

Ginger Campbell lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with her Golden Retriever Rusty.

<https://viriniacampbellmd.com>
<https://brainsciencepodcast.com>
<https://grayingrainbows.com>

Feature Article

BE YOU. The World Will Adjust

by Tyler McCubbin

If I could go back 17 years and say those words to myself growing up in my small hometown of Gowrie, Iowa, I wonder how different my life would be. I wonder about the people I would have in my life who would support me for who I am. I wonder about the opportunities I missed for others like myself to have had the courage to be who they are now back then. I wonder about the conversations that would have existed, the struggles I would have encountered (apart from those I did growing up in small-town Iowa), and the relationships that I could have forged with others. Most importantly, though, I wonder how easier my life would have been if I dared to just be me. I often wonder, "How much more successful would I be if I had been able to be myself?", "Who would I be today if I was able to be my true self while growing up?", and "Why did I allow the people around me, friends and family, to be happy and comfortable for so long while I was suffering in silence, with no one to talk to?" This last question is one that I've spent a great deal thinking about for this article.

Out of all the possible explanations that I could use to answer the last question, what stands out to me the most is that I'm a people pleaser. I want to help people feel comfortable and safe when they're around me because I get nervous being in awkward and insecure situations or environments. Growing up in a small town of roughly 1,000 people, one never wanted to be the social pariah for many reasons, some including public ridicule and shame, bullying, and unwanted attention calling out something that you knew was your truth but were too ashamed to admit because of further issues it would bring. It's as if my silence brought forward the attention I was avoiding, yet it seemed to be that those around me wanted to make something of it when I wasn't ready to.

What they didn't know is that they created an environment where I didn't feel welcomed or supported to be who I am. By speaking my truth for myself, it scared them, even though they knew. I often wonder, "What if I was straight, just like them, and was putting on a facade to later fake them out?" Of course, I wasn't and they knew it, but I was too afraid to just be me.

Within the past decade, many men and women have come out identifying as members of the LGBTQ+ community. When I look at the number of stories that are shared, the question that comes to mind for those who have experienced more of life than myself is "Why did it take this long?" To which I answer, "Think about the society they lived in and how it didn't create the kind of environment around coming out that exists today." Even though we see it being more mainstream, coming out still is not the case for many people around the world. When I came out to myself a decade ago, I was surrounded by people who genuinely cared for me and my well-being. Like the people with whom I went to high school, they knew something about me that I was afraid to share, out of fear that I would make them feel uncomfortable. However, what was different about this group of people is that I was living with them abroad and we would interact with each other daily for nine months. Considering that I had been in the closet to myself, they created a space where I felt comfortable coming out, and it was the first time that I embraced who I was. **"Be You. The world will adjust."**

When I moved to Mexico in 2016, I feared that I was going to have to put some of myself back into the closet so that people would feel comfortable around me. Moving to a new country and being surrounded by people who I did not know or have any kind of relationship with



(except for my principal), I shuttered and got emotional thinking about the possibility of hanging up parts of who I am so that others would want to be around me. For the majority of my day, I would be surrounded by 16 and 17-year-old boys and girls who maybe never had met someone who identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community. In the days leading up to meeting my students for the first time, I often asked myself, "What if I become another pariah?" when I should have been asking myself, "How can I be myself so that students who may be struggling with their identity have someone to talk to when they need to?" By being my authentic self, I realized that I permitted myself to flourish in an environment where I was once silenced. I thought about my former self, sitting at a desk in English, American government, or calculus class, desperate to be who I am but cautious of what others would think of me. I decided then that what others thought about me was not my dilemma to deal with because their perception about thoughts about me and who I am was nothing of my concern.

[continued on page six]





April Speaker

Chris Godfrey

The guest speaker at the virtual meeting on Friday, April 2, will be **Christopher Godfrey**, joining us from Washington, D.C.

Chris Godfrey, former Workers' Compensation Commissioner, was asked to resign with his pay cut to the legal minimum by Terry Branstad; he sued for discrimination.

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 Zoom participation instructions!



["BE YOU. The World Will Adjust" continued from page five]

What I've realized since coming out is that who I am has no bearing on my abilities or responsibilities as a professional, nor does it impact my ability to be available for others. The only people who have decided that my authenticity, my identity, is a problem are those who choose to focus on it rather than what I have to offer. [Author Lisa Nichols](#) once said, "Other people's perception of you ain't none of your business. Everything you've been through . . . is a set up for your next best season" (2018). What others construct about us in their minds is nothing for us to care about because we know who we are. We know the battlefields we've fought on and the enemies we've struck down. We know that who we are is not a threat to others but rather a victory for uniqueness, diversity, and authenticity.

"After today, you don't dare dim your light. As your light gets brighter, you're gonna disrupt some people and they're gonna tell you 'Your light's too bright.' Then you just tell them, 'Well, I'm not dimming my light, I'm just gonna hand you some shades'" (Lisa Nichols, 2018). We have a personal responsibility to live our best life because we only get one of them. We have an obligation to ourselves to be who we are. We must stand up for what and who we believe in, but to believe in others, we have to first believe in ourselves and embrace who we are. When we believe in who we are as individuals, we can help our communities be stronger. You don't have to change for others to feel comfortable; they need to change themselves so that you feel comfortable being who you are so that you can live the life you want and deserve to live.

Tyler has taught for the last five years at Colegio Americano de Torreon in Mexico. He has accepted a position for the 2021-22 school year in Webster City, Iowa.

**"I'm still
Christian. I was not
raised in a Christian
church to hate people.
I was taught to love
people and accept
people. I know what I
believe.**

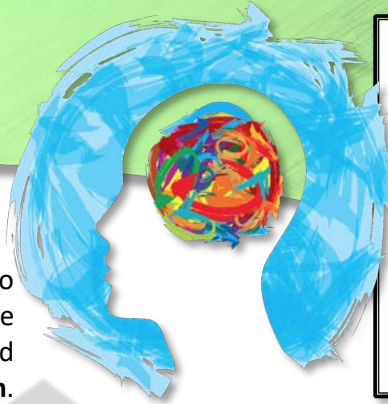
-- Lance Bass

***NSYNC**



The Eye of the Hurricane

by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 5th District



As our community, state, and nation continue to make strides in overcoming the pandemic, we need to be vigilant about the challenges that have been created and exacerbated by COVID-19. I'm talking about **mental health**. More than 70% of Iowans with mental health conditions never seek treatment for their condition. As a society, we have chosen to incarcerate folks with substance abuse problems and mental health conditions versus treating those conditions. Estimates range in the billions of dollars of lost productivity and wasted resources related to untreated, undiagnosed mental illness.

Recent data indicates that, since the start of the pandemic over one year ago, alcohol consumption has increased by 25% in our state (and we were already in the upper quadrant for consumption). I believe, and the data will prove, that individuals are self-medicating through use of alcohol and non-prescribed drugs to treat anxiety and depression. It's worth sharing that calls to our suicide prevention lines have increased by more than 30%. This is a good sign that people are reaching out for help. What is troubling is obviously the increase in use indicates deeper problems with depression. There has always been stigma attached to treatment to mental health. This stigma leads to individuals not getting the help they need out of fear of being judged by others for their conditions.

Many people in our community were very isolated during the pandemic. Individuals who had very little interaction with others often were single and mostly alone. Elderly, who were advised to avoid social gatherings and practice social distancing, found that their once busy lives were dull, mundane, and very lonely without this interaction.

Every family is touched by mental illness. It is imperative that, as a local government who provides governance and oversight of our mental health system, we do all we can to help people find the resources they need to cope with their mental health challenges. We cannot do it alone and ask for everyone's help to recognize that many people have experienced trauma and difficulty during the pandemic and that mental healthcare needs are at an all-time high. We encourage everyone to make a deliberate effort to talk about mental health with their friends and family in hopes that this effort will serve to destigmatize the taboo around this discussion. Some things that we encourage everyone to do to take care of their mental health: eat well, get plenty of rest, and reach out to others (even through daily phone contacts or Zoom calls with grandchildren and loved ones). We want to ensure that some sense of community continues until we achieve herd immunity.

This isn't a cozy subject to talk about but one that's desperately needed to be addressed. I've included the numbers for the suicide hotline and crisis observation center. For more COVID-19 resources please call 211.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8225)

Broadlawns Medical Center

Crisis Observation Center: 515-282-5742



AmazonSmile is a simple, automatic way to support FFBC every time you shop the site at no cost to you.

Smile.amazon.com gives you the exact same shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to FFBC if you've selected us as your charitable organization!



April Virtual Meeting

There will be a virtual meeting using ZOOM in **April**. 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 help figuring out how to participate if you need any personal assistance.

zoom



Judas and the Black Messiah

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

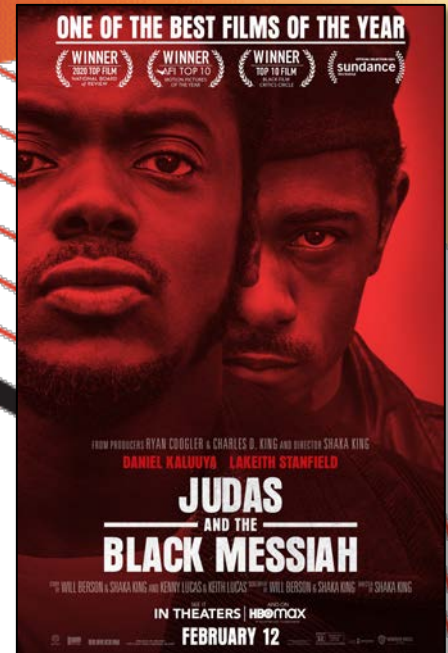
Constructing a successful historical drama is dependent on having one foot in the past and one foot in the present by convincingly echoing familiar cultural anxieties and making them relevant to events that the film's characters experience. Director Shaka King's *Judas and the Black Messiah* is the story of the FBI's 1969 assassination of Fred Hampton, Chairman of the Chicago Black Panther Party, with the help of their inside man: Hampton's own security chief, William/Bill O'Neal. *Judas and the Black Messiah* is not only a gripping political tragedy of a war between a racist police force and an increasingly radicalized Black Panther Party, but also a moving human tragedy whose strong cast, both main and ensemble, gives its characters relatability and complexity.

Lakeith Stanfield plays Bill O'Neal, a car thief whose impersonation of an FBI agent to "repossess" vehicles lands him in jail and under the eyes of real FBI agent Roy Mitchell (Jesse Plemons). Stanfield depicts O'Neal as quick-witted, but selfish and pragmatic, untethered to anyone outside of his own problems. Agent Mitchell makes O'Neal a deal: become an FBI informant and infiltrate the Black Panther Party of Chicago to get close to its chairman, Fred Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya). His insertion into the BPP succeeds but is not without hiccups: he gets frustrated with the party's regimented culture, makes failed passes at female members, and struggles to play the part of true believer.

You might be tempted to believe that O'Neal is the real villain of this story—but you clearly see his internal torment as he is caught up and invested in the culture war between the Black Panthers and the FBI. No, the real antagonists in this film are the authorities. The FBI, led by a racist, paranoid J. Edgar Hoover (played with almost Trump-like aplomb by Martin Sheen), declares in an organization-wide meeting with his agents that the biggest threat to national security is a "Black Messiah" figure uniting marginalized groups across the U.S.—which he believes Hampton to be. Eventually, Hoover puts out a mob-style hit on Hampton, his logic being that "jailtime makes criminals authors and heroes." The white supremacist fervor he has would almost be cartoonish if it weren't in the context of a prominent government official touting racist rhetoric, and it poisons every law-enforcement character in the film who answers to him, including Mitchell. Wisely, the film chooses to give much more screen time to those in Hampton's inner circle, who struggle between fighting for their own lives and building more meaningful communities for those around them. Make no mistake, though—when the BPP does suspect something is off about O'Neal, we share his fear of being found. Of course, this entrapment also extends to the FBI, who in one spooky scene demonstrates that they can have eyes on O'Neal anywhere, in the people and places he least expects.

Daniel Kaluuya portrays Hampton with a compelling Zen-like ability to ground the charged emotions of his surroundings. Hampton himself is a complex figure: he alludes to taking out cops in his speeches, but out of rage after they've murdered his friends and colleagues (in one instance, killing a nearly comatose Black Panther in cold blood between hospital transfers). He becomes upset and disappointed when O'Neal tries to bait him into buying and using explosives to further his cause, insisting that taking lives won't help. His community plans are to build clinics and shelters, but also to recruit followers into his own armed revolutionary movement. His oration skills are powerful enough to walk into a room full of whites gathered in front of a Confederate flag and convince them to join forces based on their shared experiences of poverty and negative police encounters. Kaluuya manages to balance the "messiah" with the family man at his core, and it gives his character some of the most moving moments in the film. Dominique Fishback, who plays Deborah Johnson, Hampton's girlfriend, is the spiritual mouthpiece of the film, challenging Hampton on the importance of enriching Black lives, not just saving them.

Ultimately, *Judas and the Black Messiah* asks us uncomfortable questions: Is ambivalence worse than choosing the wrong side? Who are you when you can't act of your own free will? How does one approach systemic reform when the systems themselves are so mired in racist ideology? The film isn't meant to answer those questions. But for those willing to see how a turbulent social period isn't so far off from today, *Judas and the Black Messiah* is exactly the eye-opening and thought-provoking film needed to ask them.



Judas and the Black Messiah is currently streaming on HBO Max.

CENTRAL IOWA LGBTQ HEALTH & WELLNESS CONFERENCE

SATURDAY APRIL 10TH & SUNDAY APRIL 11TH 2021
VIRTUAL EVENT - ONEIOWA.ORG/CENTRALIOWA2021



Promoting Mental, Physical, Spiritual, & **one10wa** Social Health in the LGBTQ Community

Join us **Saturday and Sunday, April 10-11**, for our annual **LGBTQ Health & Wellness Conference** with Des Moines University to bring healthcare providers and the LGBTQ community together. This two-day **virtual** conference allows healthcare providers to gain valuable knowledge about best practices for serving LGBTQ folks. LGBTQ community members have the chance to learn more about LGBTQ-inclusive healthcare resources in their area, gain system navigation knowledge, and develop relationships with healthcare providers. The community ticket is **pay what you can**, with donations encouraged. For healthcare professionals, the fee is \$75.

Register at:

<https://oneiowa.org/event/centraliowa2021/>



**Easter
Reminds Us
of the
Infinite
Colors of Love**

Mark Your Calendars!

Future FFBC Speakers Announced

May 7: **Pete Montgomery**

(spokesperson with the People for the American Way that tracks white supremacy groups and other hate groups)

June 4: **Rev. Jim Conrad**

(Towne View Baptist Church in Georgia that is an open and welcoming congregation – and expelled by the Southern Baptist Convention)

July 2: **Scholarship Awards**

(*note that our scholarship awards are normally held at the June meeting, but this year will take place in July)



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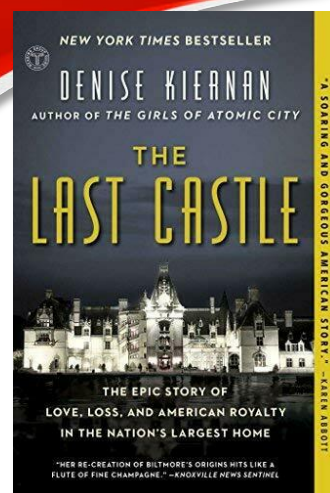
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FFBC Board of Directors

First Friday Breakfast Club
P.O. Box 41611
Des Moines, IA 50311

The Last Castle

The Epic Story of Love, Loss, and American Royalty in the Nation's Largest Home
by Denise Kiernan

A Book Review by
Steve Person



George Washington Vanderbilt first beheld the entrancing vision of Mount Pisgah in the Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina in 1888, three years after his father William's death. George's grandfather, Cornelius Vanderbilt, a.k.a. The Commodore, built a vast empire of wealth in the ever-expanding railroads of the nineteenth century. The Commodore turned his business interests over to his son, William, who then proceeded to double the vast fortune and became the world's richest man. Upon his death, George inherited, "\$5,000,000 in cash and the interest from a separate \$5,000,000 trust. (He could not access the capital)." This left him with an annual income of \$520,000. Remember, this was before the advent of income tax, and George found a way to spend his enormous wealth.

He began secretly to purchase parcels of land in the Asheville, North Carolina, area with the intent to establish an estate that would later encompass hundreds of thousands of acres of forest and mountainside property. He hired architect Richard Morris Hunt and landscape artist Frederick Law Olmstead, the man who created Central Park in New York City, to design a home of incomparable grandeur. The result became Biltmore House and Gardens. To this day, it is the largest private residence in the United States with a whopping 250 rooms.

Construction on Biltmore House began in 1889 with George's instructions to have it completed in time for Christmas, 1895. Even though much more work was needed, the grand Christmas gathering that year disappointed no one. George originally shared this 175,000 square foot home with only his mother. On one of his many Atlantic crossings, he met and fell in love with Edith Stuyvesant Dresser. Although patrician, Edith felt equally at home in the drawing rooms of Newport and the occupants of the homes of workers who lived on the Biltmore estate and who looked after this huge house and various outbuildings and grounds.

George and Edith married June 2, 1898, in Paris. They returned to Biltmore in October where Edith planned extravagant dinners and parties but also began organizing projects for what soon became the town of Biltmore—once named the village of Best. Edith organized schools, hospitals and clinics, and craft businesses in the village giving the local population education and employment. The couple became extremely popular, but running such a large house and grounds put a strain on George's finances.

In 1900, Edith gave birth to a daughter, Cornelia, the only child the couple would have. Cornelia grew up in Biltmore House but eventually moved to Washington, D.C., with her mother after the untimely death of George from a coronary embolism after an appendix operation. He was only 51 years old. With the advice of a trusted friend, Edith began to divest herself of many of Biltmore's businesses and land to help with expenses. When she grew up, Cornelia married an English diplomat, John Francis Amherst Cecil. When their ten-year marriage ended in divorce, Cecil continued to live at and manage Biltmore. Upon his death, his two sons moved back and managed the estate. To this day, Biltmore remains in private hands and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the United States. The book is a fascinating glimpse to a world that no longer exists.