

June 2021





Making the Big Move

by Byron Huff, FFBC President

As I mentioned in my March newsletter article, Jim and I moved back to Des Moines in 2003 after spending five years in Chicago. At that time we were seeking a larger home that could accommodate our extended family for gatherings. Over the 16



years, we hosted many memorable events with up to 30 family members for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Mother's Day, Easter, birthdays, and more. We were also on a regular rotation to host Pros parties, a group of gay men who took turns hosting evening cocktail parties; some of those events could reach up to 100 people.

As the years have gone by, many of our extended family moved and/or started their own families which meant fewer were able to attend our regular events. Pros seemed to fade as hosts were dropping off due to many factors; we also decided to stop hosting as well. In 2018 a realtor asked if we would be interested in selling our home; the potential buyer ended up purchasing another home, but the experience made us think it may be time to downsize.

We had friends who lived in 111 CityLofts, and we liked the building; they connected us with someone who was interested in selling. We made a contingent offer on that unit and started the work to list our home. Sixteen years of living in our home meant we had accumulated a wealth of belongings to fill the 5,000 square foot home. We spent countless hours going through cabinets and closets donating so many clothes, books, games, movies, music CDs, and more.

In 2018 we started exploring other options in our move to downsize. The agreement with the seller in CityLofts had expired, but it was still available. We really wanted a unit with more windows so we started exploring other townhouses and condos in or near downtown. Our desire to stay near the city center focused on easy access to our favorite activities, including the many festivals (and of course, the mega farmer's market that dominates downtown from May through October).

The exploration struck gold when a realtor told us there was a corner unit she was listing in the near future; the next weekend she called and told us we could see the unit before it went on the market if we were willing to make a non-contingent offer. One look and we fell in love with the floor to ceiling windows that spanned every exterior wall with panoramic views of downtown. The purchase gave us a chance to slowly move in and think about how we would make the space our own as we ramped up our downsizing efforts.

["Making the Big Move" continued from page 1]

We finally accepted an offer on our home after being on the market for a year, and we had six weeks to move out. The panic started as we really had to consider how we were going to fit into a 1,700 square foot condo. We hired Pat's Tag Sale to help us sell the overwhelming amount of furniture, dishes, glasses, artwork, exercise equipment, books, and so much more. We spent every waking hour going through everything to make the difficult decisions of what would be sold or donated and what we would keep. I spent hours scanning photos and digitizing many other documents, and Jim sorted through hundreds of movies and books. The tag sale went very well, but you will always be disappointed how little value is assigned to belongings you have cherished that bring back memories of your lifetime.

We were finally out of our home and began the work of hiring a contractor to remodel our new condo; initially we thought we would only need to figure out how to create a bigger master closet, but we quickly decided the kitchen and bathrooms needed a makeover as well. Living through a remodel is not a pleasant experience; we moved all of our clothing into the dining room as the work began creating a master closet by making a den smaller. When that was finished, the work started gutting the kitchen. For approximately one month, we lived with no kitchen which meant a microwave and coffeemaker were sitting in the dining room and we only had a bathroom sink to wash dishes.

All of that pain over six months paid off as we were ready to show off our hard work and sacrifice in March 2020, just as a strange and frightening virus caused everything to shut down. The past year has been horrible for all of us to live through, but vaccinations have made it possible to finally see our family and friends in person! Our parents finally visited our remodeled home as we hosted a Mother's Day brunch. This was the first time for my parents were able to see our condo in person; Jim's parents had visited prior to our remodel. Life feels so much brighter as summer has arrived, and we can begin to return to some sense of normalcy.

> "There's nothing wrong with you. There's a lot wrong with the world you live in."

(Chris Colfer)



Thanks to Gary Moore for introducing Pete Montgomery, our May 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 **July newsletter** will be **June 21, 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 <u>contribution on-line</u> 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.

Words of Wilson

A Question For You

by Jonathan Wilson

There is, coincidentally, a fairly common question on the test for passing fourth grade civics class and the test for early onset dementia – "Who is the current president of the United States of America?" Other standard questions about what your name is, what state you live in, and what year it is, pale somewhat by comparison. In





assessing your fourth grade civics competency and your mental acuity, the "Who is the president?" question is the more meaningful indicator for both. By contrast, asking you for your name, the state where you live, and the year, the president question begins to examine your mastery of fourth grade civics skills and your touch with reality about other than yourself.

Note, the question is NOT who you would **prefer** to be the president; your answer to the latter question would be irrelevant for assessing your mastery of the fourth grade subject matter, and irrelevant for assessing your mental acuity. Fail the president test question, and you might not advance to fifth grade, unless the fourth grade teacher just doesn't want to deal with you for another year or dislikes the fifth grade teacher, or both. If you fail the president test question, it MAY not mean that you have early onset dementia, but it's not a good sign. If you're in that group, you probably should have it checked out.

The facts are that the last presidential election has been officially certified by the various states, including Republican governors and secretaries of state across the country *without exception*; the election results have been upheld by scores of courts and have been validated by the United States Supreme Court (the majority of whom were appointed by Republicans – three of them appointed by #45). If you lose when playing at home and to the hometown referees, you lost, unless there was a mechanical problem with the score board. No one truly rational, and nonpartisan, is questioning the scoreboard mechanisms used in the last election, especially after they have been reexamined by literally scores of objective, federal judges.

I was disappointed by the 2016 presidential election outcome that did not reflect the wishes of the majority of voters. It was the way our democracy was set up. The outcome tested virtually all our institutions – the military, the intelligence community, the courts, our_status in U.S. foreign relations, and our compassion for those legitimately – legally – seeking refugee status in the United States. My disappointment in the 2016 election outcome was shared by the majority of voters nationwide, but that was not the deciding factor, thanks to the Electoral College.

My approval of the 2020 presidential outcome was again shared by the majority of voters, but there were millions of my fellow citizens who were disappointed. I understand; I've been there and done that. Here's the difference: as I recall the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, I don't remember a single state legislature that sought to change the election rules for future voting because of that outcome. Had there been state legislative efforts to disenfranchise, disproportionately, white evangelical Christians, Iowa farmers, or others deemed likely to vote Republican, I can only imagine the outcry and it would have been of legitimate concern. This year, I'm concerned with the myriad state legislative efforts to adopt new rules that will, for sure, disproportionately impact racial minorities and others deemed likely to vote Democratic.



Is that really what democracy is all about? Is that how democracy is supposed to work? If the Electoral College isn't sufficient to thwart the will of the majority, is it okay to change the voting rules? If you're not sure of the answers to those questions, it may be time to revisit your fourth grade civics lessons.

So now, ask yourself, who is currently the president of the United States?

If we can agree on the correct answer to that question, it might be possible to find other things that are mutually agreeable. If there isn't agreement on the correct answer to that question, there really isn't anything more to talk about.







Capital City Pride has decided to move the 3-day Pride Fest Weekend Celebration to a "30 Days of Pride" celebration. They will be spreading the events of Pride Fest over 30 days in June across the entire city!

Tuesday, June 1
Wednesday, June 2
Thursday, June 3
Friday, June 4
Saturday, June 5
Sunday, June 6
Monday, June 7
Tuesday, June 8
Wednesday, June 9
Thursday, June 10
Friday, June 11
Saturday, June 12
Sunday, June 13
Monday, June 14
Tuesday, June 15

Opening Ceremony Pageant Comedy Night Scavenger Hunt Drag Brunch Love is Love Mindful Monday Cooking Class Drag Bingo Open Mic Iowa Cubs Game Silent Disco Health and Fitness Day Mindful Monday



Wednesday, June 16 Thursday, June 17 Friday, June 18 Saturday, June 19 Sunday, June 20 Monday, June 20 Monday, June 21 Tuesday, June 22 Wednesday, June 23 Thursday, June 24 Friday, June 25 Saturday, June 25 Saturday, June 26 Sunday, June 27 Monday, June 28 Tuesday, June 29 Drag Night Speaker Series Rainbow Safari Manifestival Progressive Worship Service Mindful Monday Cooking Class Broadway Sing Along Storytellers Ride in Movie Night Pet Parade COVID Remembrance Pride Parade Outdoor Concert



Check out <u>www.capitalcitypride.org</u> for more details!

June Speaker Rev. Jim Conrad

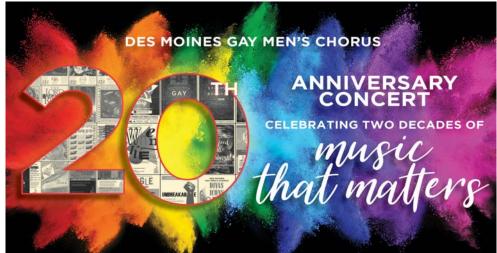


The guest speaker at the virtual meeting on Friday, June 4, will be **Reverend Jim Conrad.** Pastor Conrad's Georgia church, Towne View Baptist, was expelled from the Southern Baptist Convention for accepting a queer couple and their kids as members. "We decided that 'all means all,'" Conrad said. The Southern Baptist Convention's executive committee announced that it was kicking Towne View Baptist out of its network of churches for "affirming homosexuality." "We are guilty as charged," said Reverend Jim Conrad.

You won't want to miss this meeting, 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!

"I was not ladylike, nor was I manly. I was something else altogether. There were so many different ways to be beautiful."

(Michael Cunningham)



They're back -- singing live and in person! Join the 20th Anniversary party and celebrate with the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus. They've got two very special guests and can't wait to perform for you again!



Friday, July 30; 7:30 p.m. The Lauridsen Amphitheater Water Works Park, Des Moines

> Concert is complimentary. Donations are welcome.

R.S.V.P. at <u>www.dmgmc.org</u> for FREE tickets!

Wings of a Different Bird

by Gary Moore

The First Friday Breakfast Club continues to meet virtually by Zoom which allows us to enjoy exceptional speakers from around the country. Our May speaker afforded us that great opportunity. Peter Montgomery is a senior fellow at the **People for the American Way** where he contributes to the organization's Right Wing Watch Project. Normally Peter would have addressed us from his home in Washington, D.C., but he and his husband are in Texas where they were dealing with the difficult time of needing to make arrangements for his husband's mother to transition to an alternate living situation. He quickly turned to provide a quick background of the founding of the People for the American Way.

During the 1970s, Norman Lear had a number of hit television shows in which progressive issues were pitted against conservative characters. By the 1980s, the conservative right, with the support of the Christian right, started to flex their muscle with the election of Ronald Reagan. Norman Lear

decided he wanted to research this transition a little more, tinkering with the idea of a movie. As he researched more, he became concerned about the involvement of the Christian right and associated organizations that were claiming religion in support of certain conservative political ideology. Concerned about "a new and disturbing political movement in America" — the rise of the religious right, he gave up the idea of a movie and formed The People for the American Way in 1980, advocating a message of "respect for individual liberty, a celebration of diversity, love of country, and of the democratic institutions at its core."



Mr. Montgomery reviewed the rise of numerous organizations that used religious ideology to raise billions of dollars to create and influence legal, radio, TV, and political empires. In the 1990s under Ralph Reed, The Christian Coalition set a goal to take over the Republican Party, and by 2010 the Tea Party gained power in the Republican Party. This trend was continued with Donald Trump.

During the same time period, the LGBT community made significant strides through education and advocacy in the pro-equality movement resulting in the U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing gay marriage. There is now a backlash from the conservative religious right using the lack of knowledge about the transgender to gin up support. Attention by the right wing religious community has found support in various white nationalist movements as time has progressed. These white nationalist influences increased markedly with the election of Barack Obama which seems to have fueled the collaboration of white nationalism with white evangelicals intent on repealing gay marriage and using transgendered issues to stir their conservative base. These organizations view elections as religious warfare with the need to purge the Republican Party of any opposition.

Commenting on Iowa, Mr. Montgomery noted how Steve King used campaign funds to support the defeat of Iowa Supreme Court Justices that support the gay marriage decision in Iowa and the money from several extremes. It was indeed a bleak report on the direction and influence of white nationalists, extreme white evangelical religious groups, and the extreme right in America.

Mr. Montgomery ended on a positive note in stating that there is a group of young, progressive political leaders emerging in the country who are offering new

ideas for governing, including new ideas on policing policies, election procedures, and facing our problems in the 21st century. There is a group of 1300 such young leaders of city and county government within The People for the American Way. The Young Elected Officials Network (YEO) was founded in 2005 with the mission to unite and support elected officials ages 35 and under who share a passion for building communities that reflect values of freedom, fairness, and opportunity for all. Since then, the Network has grown to include more than 1,300 elected officials across the country, in offices ranging from local school boards to the United States Congress.





Feature Article

Fellow Travelers

Review by Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim (used by permission)

Des Moines Metro Opera will perform *Fellow Travelers* on **July 17, 2021**, at Hoyt Sherman Place at 8:00 p.m. Tickets go on sale to the general public on June 1. Contact DMMO's Box Office at 515-209-3257 or <u>boxoffice@dmmo.org</u>.

As the time drew near of the June 17, 2016, premiere of Greg Spears and Greg Pierce's opera *Fellow Travelers* about a gay love story in Washington, D.C., during the McCarthy era, the time must have seemed auspicious. After all, since the idea of an operatic adaptation of the eponymous novel by Thomas Mallon had first been floated, America seemed to be irreversibly set on its course toward equality and acceptance. Barely a year earlier, the Supreme Court had issued a landmark ruling on same-sex marriage.

Then, on June 12, a gunman claiming allegiance to the Islamic State entered the Pulse night club in Orlando and killed 49 revelers in what became the deadliest incident of anti-gay violence in U.S. history. Pierce recalls receiving the news as the cast and creative team were deep into tech rehearsals at the Cincinnati Opera House. His libretto has a character gossiping about a man who lost his job for having been caught in the "wrong" bar. Half a century of presumed progress later, dozens had lost their lives for much the same reason. "We started to hear everything differently," Pierce says. "Suddenly there were these parallels."

Fellow Travelers presents a slice of American history that is rarely examined. It is set during the "Lavender Scare" of the 1950s, when anti-Communist paranoia fueled the targeted persecution of gay and lesbian who government workers, were considered easy targets for blackmail by enemy agents. But the instant popular and critical success of the opera has a simpler explanation.

Fellow Travelers is a love story that is at once deeply romantic and unsentimental, set to music that manages to be beautiful without appearing glib; familiar, yet fresh. It follows the emotional maturing of Timothy Laughlin, a wideeyed Fordham graduate newly arrived in Washington, who falls under the spell of the suave and worldly Hawkins Fuller. Hawk, as he is known, works in the State Department and helps Tim get a job as a speech writer to a Senator close to McCarthy. He also initiates a love affair that is Tim's first taste of sexual fulfillment.

At work the atmosphere is poisoned by gossip and suspicion. Hawk successfully lies his way through an intimidating cross-examination of his sexuality. His secretary, Mary, is the only sympathetic character, casting а protective eve on the two men's relationship even as an unplanned pregnancy brings her up against the cold restrictions of her society. And the men's relationship itself unravels as Tim's yearning for monogamous security rubs up against Hawk's promiscuous restlessness. To wrench himself free, Tim enlists in the army. While Tim is stationed in Europe, Hawk marries the bubbly, oblivious Lucy. Tim returns to Washington, and the two men resume their love affair, but by now the layers of lies and dissimulation have grown stifling. In a stunning act of betraval, Hawk denounces Tim, ensuring that he is cast out of town and out of Hawk's life.

The opposition of political forces and private lives is reflected in music that juxtaposes the forward-pressing energy of Minimalism with the sensual arabesques and turns of troubadour music. That's a tradition that Spears says fascinates him, in part because it was developed to express private and forbidden love in a public and ritualized setting. A strong pulse runs through the score, often



tapped out on a piano, that conveys something of the mechanical impatience of a newsroom teleprinter of yore. The vocal writing, mirrored in the woodwinds, seems to revolt against that horizontal thrust with music that is extravagantly melismatic, virtuosic and willfully individual.

Spears's compositional style is studded with references to the past, including baroque dance forms that capture the courtly formality of the 1950s in social scenes like the office Christmas party. As Hawk sets up the love nest for his trysts with Tim in Act II, the music momentarily turns neo-classical with chirpy Stravinskian winds. At this point the men's relationship is in its second goaround, beset by comprise and disillusionment, and the neo-classical sound captures something of the artifice and rationed nostalgia of their situation.

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Feature Article

Fellow Travelers

[continued from page seven]

The transparency of the orchestral texture, created by a chambersized ensemble of strings, winds, brass and piano, allows the words of Pierce's smart dialogue to come through with stenciled clarity. Few composers are as adept as Spears in making conversational American English singable in a way that is both idiomatic and psychologically astute.

Tim's vocal lines are especially revealing of his inner state: music for someone prone to blushing. Take, for example, his job interview, where the words come out in a nervous jumble, one tripping over the next, his voice an unsteady wobble on some words, or shooting up in a pubescent squawk on others. Or listen to the emotion he is trying so hard to bottle up as he shops for a thank-you gift for Hawk in a bookstore. A melismatic tremor catches him offguard as he mentions the "great man" he is gift-shopping for; you can guess at the effort it takes for him to iron it out as he repeats the words more plainly.

One reason *Fellow Travelers* lends itself so well to opera is that the idea of the voice as a conveyor of multilayered meaning is so central to the story. A telling scene is the interrogation of Hawk, designed to test his sexual orientation. Not only is he subjected to a lie detector and ordered to walk the length of the room ("normally. Whatever *you* would consider normal"), but he is also asked to DES MOINES METRO OPERA



read out loud. Hawks is first given a news brief, then a passage from Somerset Maugham's "Of Human Bondage," in which the male protagonist burrows into a closet full of women's dresses.

The idea that a man's speech melody, rhythm or intonation can reveal carefully concealed truths that could undo his career is chilling, of course. But it's also wonderfully operatic. As it happens, Hawk reads the first text in dead monotone, but turns the literary extract into a flamboyantly expressive performance that just happens to be set to the same music we first hear when he flirted with Tim on a park bench. His interrogators are clearly none the wiser: he passes the test.

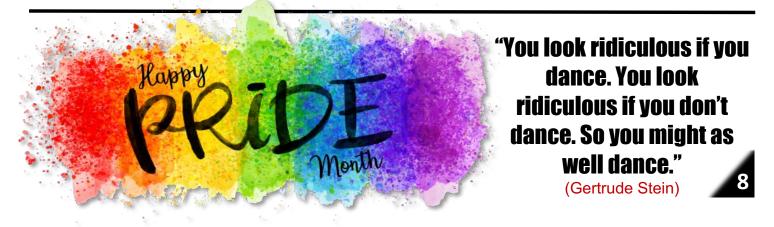
Spears often plays with recurrence of musical material, setting up pairs of scenes as mirror images of each other. Music from Tim's job interview reappears in a scene involving Senator McCarthy in Act II, reinforcing, as Spears says, "the feeling that Tim has learned a lot: The first time Tim thinking, 'here is my future.' And of course McCarthy is where it's all curdled."

For all the oppressive social and political forces weighing on the main characters, the opera's heart remains wide open – reflected also in the frequent use of guileless octaves and open fifths. Mallon's novel is a dark web of intrigue and blackmail. The opera feels intimate.

Pierce remembers being struck by the way Spears set the duet between Tim and Hawk as they dream of Bermuda, shortly before tumbling into bed together. While Hawk reminisces about his adventures there with "bronze boys on the beach – biceps you wouldn't believe," Tim is fantasizing about "sand as white as milk."

"Greg set it in a way that it overlaps," Pierce says, "so they're almost not listening to each other. And then suddenly they are singing together. It was remarkable to me. I thought they would be listening to each other and sharing ideas, but they are really in their own worlds. And that feels so true: When we fall in love, we are both seeing the other person but we are also creating that person, we want so badly for them to be "that" person that we aren't really listening to what they're saying."

Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim is a music critic whose work regularly appears in the New York Times, as well as the founder of Beginner's Ear, a series of deep listening experiences bringing together meditation and live music. www.beginnersear.com



Change is Here; We Should Welcome It

by Ryan Crane, FFBC Vice President

May 25 marks one year since George Floyd was killed by a white police officer. His death was a catalyst for what seems to be a real and lasting change in the way white Americans view their Black neighbors' struggles in society and in their interactions with police.



"Black Lives Matter" is no longer a purely political phrase -large corporations, small businesses, and young people have become increasingly vocal and explicit in their expectation that people of color need to be included. Anyone who works in a place with more than a handful of employees has learned phrases like "diversity, equity, and inclusion" and "BIPOC" in recent months.

Debate around the worthiness of Black people and other people of color to feel safe and included is no longer acceptable in polite society. Much like the gay marriage "debate" of a decade ago, there has been a quick and lasting sea change.

Much like the acceptance (by straight people) of the difficulties that LGBTQ people face, there has been an undeniable spike in empathy, allyship, and solidarity for the BIPOC community from white people.

What a wonderful development as we march toward a more perfect union!

New Pride Flag of Des Moines

Capital City Pride, Des Moines Black Liberation Movement (DSM BLM), Flag of Des Moines, and One Iowa are excited to introduce Des Moines' own pride flag – a flag containing 11 colors that acknowledge and celebrate LGBTQ, black and brown, and transgender individuals.

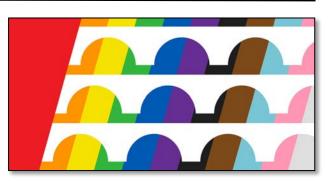
Mason Kessinger (he/him), a co-founder of Flag of Des Moines, designed the flag to celebrate the diverse community that is Des

Moines. The hope is that the city of Des Moines will recognize this as the city's flag during Pride Month (June) and beyond. The idea for the collaboration came about given Capital City Pride's support of our diverse community and culture; DSM BLM's focus on solidarity racial justice; One Iowa's mission to advance, empower, and improve the lives of LGBTQ Iowans statewide; and Flag of Des Moines' desire to connect with and dedicate proceeds to organizations focused on equity and change in our community.



"One lowa is proud to work with the Flag of Des Moines to create the first Des Moines Pride flag. One lowa's work is centered around intersectionality and this flag represents the core message that there is no pride for some without liberation for all. We hope people raise this flag with pride and joy to let their neighbors know their home or business is a safe and affirming place for LGBTQ and BIPOC lowans," says Courtney Reyes, Executive Director of One Iowa.

The new pride flag is available for pre-orders on the Flag of Des Moines website (flagofdesmoines.com). Stickers and mini flags are also available for purchase. Fifteen percent of proceeds from all Des Moines pride flags will be remitted annually and divided equally among Capital City Pride, DSM BLM, and One Iowa.





(Harry Winston)

Polk County's Rescue Plan by Supervisor Matt McCoy Polk County, 5th District

Polk County government stood up under pandemic stresses with accurate health information and strategies to help protect the most vulnerable in our communities. Additionally, Polk County protected individuals experiencing homelessness, working closely with shelters to assure there are roofs over their heads and to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Polk County maintained its commitment to low-income seniors who relied upon us for a daily hot meal by doing a drive-thru program. Finally, Polk County administered 100% of their weekly doses of vaccine they received from the State of Iowa until recent widespread availability. No other county had a consistent 100% throughput. Your local government was tested, and it performed.

Now, Polk County is moving into the recovery phase which involves distributing stimulus funds that were provided to us by the Biden Administration through the American Rescue Plan. Under this plan, state, city, and county governments receive funds based on population. Polk County government's share is \$94 million.

Polk County Government has already expended more than \$9 million on eviction prevention for individuals that were out of work and got behind on rent or mortgage during the COVID-19 pandemic. Polk County has worked collaboratively with Iowa Legal Aid and IMPACT to prevent costly evictions that end in homelessness. Our objective going forward is focused on stimulating the economy, human and social needs of the community like food bank





assistance, and making income-eligible relief assistance available through general assistance for families who've fallen behind on utilities during the pandemic. Essentially, these programs ensured roofs over heads, keeping the heat, lights, and water on, and food in bellies. As we recover from this pandemic, there will be lingering effects for a full recovery, evidenced in loss of jobs that Iowa is experiencing as businesses close and companies downsize.

Polk County is interested in soliciting ideas for how we can better use these funds going forward. We will be holding public hearings for individuals to bring their ideas and thoughts to us in a public forum. We're also available to meet one-on-one with individuals who have specific ideas on ways that we can spend the money assisting individuals and investing in transformational projects that strengthen the resiliency and economic health of our community. My particular focus will be on equity for marginalized communities that bore the brunt of COVID-19. We will be announcing some dates where public hearings will be held and urge you to join the conversations. Of course, if you need to reach me directly, you can email me at <u>matt.mccoy@polkcountyiowa.gov</u> and my assistant Taylor Van De Krol at taylor.vandekrol@polkcountyiowa.gov.





Oscar season is upon us, and even as recently as a year ago, the idea that a film under the banner of an independent streaming service-turned-film studio could have a director like Alfonso Cuarón (*Gravity, Y Tu Mama Tambien, Children of Men*) attached to write, produce, and direct, would have seemed radical. But "radical" is exactly what *Roma* is: a semi-autobiographical passion project that takes a slice-of-life portrait of 1970s Mexico City and distills it into an emotional, deeply immersive personal experience of motherhood.

Filmed in black-and-white with Spanish subtitles, **Roma** is tied with **Crouching Tiger**, **Hidden Dragon** (2000) for the most Oscar nominations received by a non-English language film, at ten—including Best Picture. It ticks the "boxes" that the Academy loves: exotic setting, period piece, and its lead actress, Yalitza Aparicio, had no acting experience prior to **Roma**. Yet it excels in bringing depth and dimension to her character Cleo, a stoic yet determined housemaid working for a middle-class family in Mexico City.

Cuarón's choice to establish Cleo's relationship to the family dynamic of the household for the first half of the film grounds and accentuates the emotional impact of the second half's character-defining moments; this provides beautiful opportunities for his majestic cinematography and establishes Mexico City and its surrounding landscape as a character. Cleo is loved and respected by the four young children of the household and their mother-in-law Theresa, but somewhat taken for granted by the family matriarch, Sofia, and her husband, Antonio. As it becomes clear what the family's routine is, it becomes apparent what isn't: the relationship between husband and wife is deteriorating, and between family trips to visit wealthy relatives and ask for advice, Sofia frequently vents her frustration on Cleo, only to quickly apologize. Cleo's home life is a mirror of her personal one—outside the home, on the bustling and noisy streets of Mexico City, her boyfriend Fermi professes his love for her and his hobby of martial arts, only to disappear when she tells him she's pregnant. When she confronts him, Fermi denies it and threatens both her and their unborn child with violence.

The male characters in **Roma** range between "not great" and "terrible"—their infidelities, betrayals, and womanizing constantly create hostile, painful, and uncomfortable situations for everyone around them. At best, their responses are uncaring; at worst, they threaten violence. The men in **Roma** aren't heroes or family men, but despite the contrast in response between Sofia and Cleo, the women in **Roma** band together to support one another and are stronger for it.

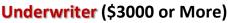
This connection proves to be a life-saving bond when an ordinary day becomes a terrifying mob uprising with an unexpected twist that forces Cleo's premature delivery, and Cuarón creates a harrowing riot/delivery scene that's a gut-wrenching cinematic tour-de-force. From here to the end of the film, the emotional connections that Cleo has forged reach full circle and help her come to terms with herself and who her true family is.



Roma is a film about women the fortitude they demonstrate in times of crisis, the bond of maternity and family, and a powerful story of what it means to be a mother. See it and experience a film that's definitely Oscar-worthy. NETFLIX

*** Roma is a 2019 Netflix release.

Thank You to the following Scholarship



- Aureon Network Services
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- Jane Ann Cotton
- David & Trudy Hurd Trust
- Cliff Paulsen Fund
- Polk County Iowa
- Dr. Randy Swarts
- Anonymous

Host (\$1000 to \$2999)

- James & Roxanne Conlin
- Tom Coppess & Mike Koch
- Rick Gubbels & Tracy Lewis
- Byron Huff & Jim Anderson
- Mark & Janet Rosenbury

Advocate (\$500 to \$999)

- Friedhelm Brinkhaus
- Bruce Carr & Bob Thelen
- Kevin Chorniak
- Scott Dean
- Neil Fagan & Mark Doherty
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- Jill June
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- Jim Sterba
- James Tatro & Dan Venker
- Michael Thompson & Allen Vander Linden
- David Wilfahrt
- Jonathan Wilson & Scott Kuknyo

Supporter (\$250 to \$499)

- Peg Armstrong-Gustafson
- John Chaplin
- Travis Correll
- Christopher Correy
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- Joseph & Susan Henry
- Matt Hiatt & Paul Pettinger
- Michael & Debbie Hubbell
- Bill Jackson & Larry Barnett
- Rob Langloss
- Joan Middleton
- Gary Moore
- Patti Pierce
- George & Mary Richardson
- Martha Smith
- Ryan Weidner

Honors (\$100 to \$249)

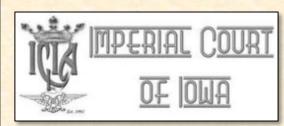
- Frank & Marilyn Carroll
- Thomas & Margaret Chase
- Mark Eikenberry
- Michael Egel
- Deborah Gitchell
- Raymond & Stacie Hansen
- Patricia Henson
- Richard Joens & Scott Smith
- Dr. James & Mary Ellen Kimball
- Randy Kramer
- Richard Latch
- Deb Madison-Levi
- John & Cyril Ann Mandelbaum
- Matt McCoy
- Jerry Vroegh
- Robert Warren

Other Donors (Up to \$100)

- John Brentnall
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- John & Terri Hale
- Harold Hinkhouse
- Mary Kacere
- Todd & Ashlea Lantz
- Steve Person
- Tim Redmon
- Kevin & Betty Ridout
- David & Denise Swartz

Total Donations (through April 30, 2021): \$50,652





Spotlight on Local Iowa LGBTQ+ Organizations: The Imperial Court of Iowa

The Imperial Court of Iowa's mission is to make a difference to the people of Iowa through fundraising and social consciousness, one dollar at a time. For more than 25 years, Imperial Court of Iowa has devoted its energy to passionately advocating for the LGBTQ+ Community. Most of its fundraising is done one dollar at a time, with the public tipping performers at shows of various types in venues throughout the state. Their shows feature female impersonators, male impersonators, live singers, and the occasional stand-up comic. Volunteers are always needed.

The Imperial Court of Iowa has scholarships available for graduating high school seniors and those post-secondary adult students looking to continue their education. The scholarship(s) will be awarded each year to those applicants who are enrolled or accepted into an accredited educational program. The amount and number of scholarships awarded will be determined based on funds available. The recipients of the scholarships will be chosen by a Scholarship Evaluation Committee chaired by a person who is, at the time of the evaluation process, not an Imperial Court of Iowa member, but who is an active member of the LGBTQ+

Community. Award recipient(s) will be invited to attend Coronation in September of the year they are awarded the scholarship as a guest of the Imperial Court of Iowa at no cost to the recipient. **Deadline for this year is June 30, 2021**.

Membership in the Imperial Court Of lowa is open to any resident of the State of Iowa. The Imperial Court of Iowa does not discriminate against any individuals based on sex, race, or sexual orientation. Membership entitles you to be recognized as a member in good standing. Membership dues are \$20 per reign year (a full reign year is from sunrise the morning following coronation to sunrise the morning after the following coronation). To become a member, complete the application available on their website: www.imperialcourtofiowa.org.

June 12: Birthday Celebration: Dynasty Edition July 17: USO Show July 31: Diamonds are Forever



Current Monarch: Ida Ho The Cigar Smoking, Bourbon Sipping, I Sip Because I'm a Lady Damn It, Absolute Empress for Reign XXVIII for All of Iowa



July 2:

Scholarship Awards

Our scholarship awards, normally held at the June meeting, will take place in July.

Speaker

Our July speaker will be Kevin Newbury, who was involved in the development, research, and scholarship surrounding the creation of the opera Fellow Travelers.

We are powerful because we have survived.

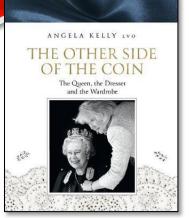
> Audre Lorde



The Other Side of the Coin: The Queen, The Dresser, and the Wardrobe by Angela Kelly

A Book Review by Steve Person

Some people seem to be destined for certain occupations in life. Such is the case of Angela Kelly. Born in Liverpool, England, Kelly's mother sewed clothing and other items to help with the family's finances. Her father was a merchant seaman. They lived in what is called in



England, a two-up two-down terraced house, on a quiet back street. At the age of eight, Kelly began assisting her mother with the sewing and became an expert at maintaining her mother's Singer sewing machine.

Fast forward to 1992. Kelly worked as a housekeeper in the Berlin residence of the British ambassador to Germany. The ambassador told her he was expecting some high-profile visitors, and since she had signed the Official Secrets Act, she could not disclose who they were. It turned out to be Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh. At the end of the five-day visit, the Queen presented Kelly with a gift of a photograph of herself and the Duke. The Duke inquired of her who the next high-profile guests would be. Kelly replied she could not disclose that information. The Duke persisted by saying, "Not even to the Queen?" Kelly returned the photograph to the Queen saying she could not disclose the information. The Queen understood and insisted she keep the photograph. Kelly did and then said, "I will remember this for the rest of my life." To which the Queen replied, "Angela, so will I."

A few months later Kelly found herself on her way to Buckingham Palace to be interviewed for the position of Assistant Dresser to the Queen, a position she accepted readily. When the Queen's Dresser retired, Kelly was promoted to that job. Being a self-assured person, Kelly began her program to update the Queen's wardrobe to a more modern look. It is amazing the preparation that goes into whatever the Queen will be wearing for any specific occasion. The elements of fabric, color, accessories, jewels, shoes, etc., come into play. Kelly's inspired suggestions to the Queen brought a whole new look to the Monarch. For example, the Queen's 2011 State Visit to The Republic of Ireland required careful and strategic planning for what the Queen would wear. For the formal dinner in Dublin Castle, Kelly designed a white gown that incorporated hundreds of white silk shamrocks (with one green one hidden in the design) for the top of the garment. Such subtlety did not go unnoticed.

Kelly is a woman who is not afraid to make suggestions to the Queen about what to wear and what colors to use. She consults with Her Majesty at every step of the process and keeps her informed. She also is a woman with a delightfully puckish sense of humor that the Queen finds refreshing. She keeps everything on a professional level and enjoys the times she gets to travel with the Royal Party to places all over the world. Perhaps the most touching thing she wrote is when she helps get the Queen ready for the State Opening of Parliament in November. It is a demanding job, but Kelly said she tears up every time she watches the Queen place the Imperial State Crown on her head as the final act preparation. She says it is her proudest moment of her position as dresser.

Obviously, this book is not for everyone, but it is beautifully written with hundreds of full color photographs of hundreds outfits the Queen wears. Kelly also writes about the Queen's luggage and the process of trimming down to a more practical way to pack and ready the Royals for any occasion. It's a good book.