



# First Friday **PRIDE** Edition News & Views

Monthly Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.

June 2023 / Volume 28 / Issue 6

## Next Meeting

**June 2**  
**7:00 a.m.**

\* See special  
schedule notes  
on page 10.



## Location

**Hoyt Sherman**  
**15<sup>th</sup> & Woodland**  
**Des Moines**



**June**  
**Speaker**



**Iowa Senator**  
**Zach Wahls**

## Website

**ffbc Iowa.org**



## Happy Pride Month!

by Byron Huff, Board President

Capital City Pride (CCP) has spearheaded a number of amazing events this past year; the primary celebration for Des Moines is June 9-11 with an amazing parade and so many booths representing organizations that want to connect with the LGBTQ+ community. I recall driving in the parade last year where I saw so many families with children waving or wearing rainbow colors; it really made me proud of our city.

I have tried to promote other LGBTQ organizations with the mindset that we can do more if we all work together. CCP reached out to me for an interview where they were seeking to understand how to make their organization stronger as they develop their strategic plan. The key point I communicated was better collaboration with FFBC and other LGBTQ groups.

We received **35 scholarship applications** this year which was just slightly below the 37 we received last year; this trend tells us there continues to be a great need for our scholarships.

Selecting the top candidates is always a difficult task; the Scholarship Committee scores each student based on a combination of the depth of their work countering homophobia, grade point averages, and extracurricular activities. We will award a record **14 \$3,000 scholarships** this Friday, June 2. I hope you can join us in-person or via Zoom as we celebrate these brave students who, no doubt, will go on to make a difference and make our world a better place in which to live.

This month's newsletter contains a list of **donors** (page 11) who made our 2023 scholarships possible. I want to thank every one of you who made the decision that First Friday Breakfast Club scholarships were worth your contribution. Next month, you will see the scholarship winners along with a summary of why they were chosen to receive a scholarship.

Donations now through April 30, 2024, will go toward the scholarship awards in June 2024. Please consider a contribution. **Our scholarships make a difference!**



**Don't Miss the Annual Scholarship Awards Breakfast this Month!**



# Visibility Counts!

As we prepare for this month's Scholarship Awards Breakfast, it is important to remember that the Scholarship Committee members make efforts to attend/present at the **senior awards ceremony** at the high schools of each of our scholars during the month of May. Imagine, delivering a brief message of hope and appreciation in front of community members and other students about these young adults who have made efforts to reduce homophobia and to educate others about LGBTQ+ issues in their schools and communities!



**ABOVE:** Scholarship Committee Chair, Ken Hanson, presented a scholarship to **Kenzie Fick** at Roland-Story High School.

**LEFT:** Board Member, Gene Larson, presented an FFBC scholarship to **Olivia Moody** at North Polk High School (also pictured is Don Moody, Olivia's father).

## Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Byron Huff** for introducing **Kathie Obradovich**, our May speaker. Thanks to **David Cotton** for managing our website, to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our Microsoft IT infrastructure, and to **David Wilfahrt** for managing FFBC's finances. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to all our contributors to the FFBC newsletter!*

The **deadline** for the **July 2023** newsletter will be **June 26**. If you have something on your mind to share, type it up and email it to Wade ([wadecpetersen@gmail.com](mailto:wadecpetersen@gmail.com)) by the copy deadline.

**Fundraising efforts** are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$475,000** 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** online or by sending a check.

A special thank-you to the 2023 FFBC Scholarship Committee for your excellent work to choose 14 scholar awards from 35 applications!

**Ken Hanson (chair)**  
**David Cotton**  
**Jim Flansburg**  
**Chris Russell**  
**Tim Schreck**  
**Phil Williams**







For Pride Month updates, go to:

[www.capitalcitypride.com/events](http://www.capitalcitypride.com/events)

*Events and dates have been updated as of the time of the newsletter publication. Please check website for further updates.*

## 2023 Event Calendar

- Thursday, June 1: **Pride Walk**  
(6:30 - 8:30 PM | Pappajohn Sculpture Park)
- Friday, June 2: **I-Cubs Pride Night**  
(5:30 - 9:30 PM | Principal Park)
- Saturday, June 3: **Pride Mr. Mrs. Mx. Pageant**  
(5:00 - 9:00 PM | The Garden)
- Sunday, June 4: **Drag Brunch**  
(10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Tonic Bar Court Avenue)
- Friday, June 9 - Sunday, June 11:  
**PrideFest Weekend**
- Friday, June 9: **Silent Disco**  
(7:30 - 11:59 PM | PrideFest Community Stage)
- Saturday, June 10: **Capital City Pride Stride 5K**  
(8:00 - 10:00 AM | 350 E Locust Start)
- Saturday, June 10: **Capital City Pride Pet Parade**  
(10:00 - 11:30 AM | PrideFest Comm. Stage)
- Saturday, June 10: **Teen Silent Disco**  
(5:00 - 9:00 PM | PrideFest Teen Zone)
- Sunday, June 11: **Pride Yoga**  
(9:00 - 10:00 AM | PrideFest Main Stage)
- Sunday, June 11: **Pride Parade**  
(12:00 - 2:00 PM route from Capitol down Grand Avenue)
- Monday, June 12: **Pride Day at Adventureland**  
(11:00 AM - 6:00 PM | Discounted Tickets: \$37.99)
- Saturday, June 17: **Menace Pride Night**  
(5:00 - 10:00 PM)

# Future Speakers



**July 15:**

## FFBC Donor Recognition & Member Party

John Schmacker's House & Gardens

**August 4:**

## Kendra Weston

Executive Director  
Lavender Legal Center

**September 1:**

## C.J. Petersen

Executive Assistant to  
State Auditor Rob Sand



# 2023

# Iowa Pride

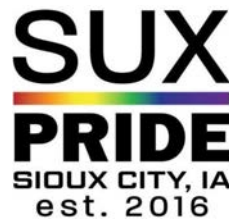


## Celebrations across the state



**Capital City Pride**  
[capitalcitypride.org](http://capitalcitypride.org)

**PrideFest:**  
Friday - Sunday,  
June 9-11



**Sioux City Pride Festival**  
Friday, June 2 (Parade)  
Saturday, June 3 (Festival)  
11:00 at S.C. Convention Ctr.  
Facebook: [Siouxland Pride Alliance](#)



**Iowa City Pride**  
Saturday, June 17  
Noon - 10:00 p.m.  
[www.iowacitypride.org](http://www.iowacitypride.org)



**Ames Pride**  
September 30  
[www.amespride.org](http://www.amespride.org)



**Cedar Valley Pridefest**  
Friday, August 25  
5:30 p.m. - midnight  
Saturday, August 26  
Noon - midnight  
[www.cedarvalleypride.com](http://www.cedarvalleypride.com)



**Mason City Pride**  
Saturday, July 15  
[www.facebook.com/Mason CityPride](http://www.facebook.com/MasonCityPride)



**Quad Cities Pride**  
Pride Festival: June 2-3  
Parade: Saturday, June 17  
[qcunitypride.org](http://qcunitypride.org)



**Orange City Pride**  
October 21  
[prideorangecity.org](http://prideorangecity.org)



**CR Pride (Cedar Rapids)**  
Saturday, June 10: 1:00 (Parade)  
Saturday, July 8: 12:00 - 6:00 (Festival) @ NewBo City Market  
[crprideia.com](http://crprideia.com)

- **Coralville:** Pride Festival (September 8)
- **Burlington:** Pride in the Park (June 24)
- **Omaha:** Heartland Pride Festival (July 14-15)
- **Ottumwa:** Pride Festival Block Party (June 3)
- **Vinton:** First Annual Pride! (July 1)





## The Missing Asterisk

by Jonathan Wilson

Chiseled in stone above the front entrance to the U.S. Supreme Court building are four words, “EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW.” A profound concept efficiently expressed. The other side of the same coin is the often-heard expression, “No one is above the law.” Both sides of that coin express the same fundamental premise that ours is a constitutional democracy and a nation of laws, where the law applies to everyone equally. Flip that coin as often as you want, and the result is the same.

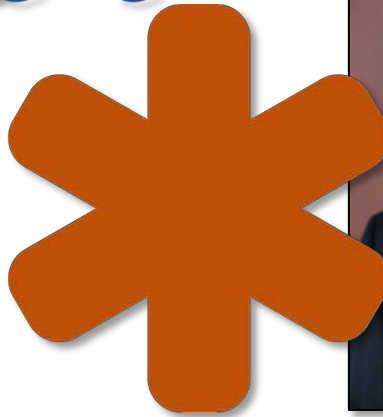
### **That premise is demonstrably not true in real life.**

Start with the wealth gap that exists across the country. The wealthy, charged with an offense, have the capacity to hire the very best defense attorneys out there. Those of more limited means (disproportionately people of color), have the well-known right to legal counsel, and a court will appoint a licensed attorney to represent the poor. If there were no difference, everyone would opt for court-appointed representation. There is a difference, with no intended disparagement of those attorneys who accept court appointments and do the best they can for the sake of indigent clients. That difference alone, however, demonstrates likely **UNE**qual justice under law.

It gets worse. Presidents have the power to grant complete pardons to anyone charged with any kind of violation of federal law, as well as commutation of the sentences of those already convicted of violating federal law. Virtually every president has exercised that power. President Trump granted 70 or more pardons, many of those in the waning days of his presidency, and a similar number of commutations. One notable pardon went to Steve Bannon, a long-time political ally of Trump. People charged with conspiring with Bannon to defraud investors in a contemplated wall to be built along our southern border (that was supposed to be paid for by Mexico), were convicted, and sentenced to prison. Bannon dodged that outcome thanks to the presidential pardon, and he got the benefit of unequal justice.

Moreover, if people in his inner circle are to be believed, Rudy Giuliani was marketing presidential pardons for \$2,000,000 apiece, to be split between him and Trump – the ultimate intersection of wealth and political connection to achieve decidedly unequal application of the law.

But it gets still worse. Consider the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, particularly (most recently) Associate Justice Clarence Thomas. He has for *decades* accepted lavish, annual vacation travel from a politically conservative billionaire. Imagine having that kind of regular, annual access to a beholden justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, reinforced by the sweetheart purchase of Thomas’ mother’s home and its renovation, and further reinforced by paying the private college tuition of a dependent of Thomas who was being raised as his own son (according to Thomas). The latter sounds very similar to what put Allen Weisselberg (the chief financial officer of the Trump



organization) in New York’s Rikers Island prison. There is no accountability to the full Supreme Court and the impeachment remedy, that requires a 2/3 vote of a Senate almost evenly divided along partisan lines, is impossible as a practical matter. Essentially, no accountability. The same lack of accountability is true of all members of the Court. It has been accurately said that anyone without any accountability should not be trusted. It’s true. I recall, as a law clerk for the U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, the judge I worked for commented with some regularity that his was a life-time appointment. And, it was. We clerks would quickly, and somewhat naively, add that his comment was true only “during good behavior.” Our qualifier never seemed to soak in. In real life, as a practical matter, the judge was not accountable to anyone. As it happened, he was a good judge with a high level of intellect and integrity, but that would not be the case with every federal judge. He was able to be **UNE**qual under the law, much like the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court. Unaccountability is a synonym for **UNE**qual justice under law.

We’re all familiar with the **asterisk** (the little star symbol on the keyboard); we see them at the end of warranties and other claims, calling our attention to the “fine print” at the bottom of the page that limits the warranty or otherwise qualifies what appears to have been said in the text. What we appear to be missing when it comes to “EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW” and “No one is above the law,” is an asterisk similarly engraved in stone, citing the foregoing exceptions. Those premises are aspirational – not real.

Perhaps the most important test currently is the pending and impending indictments of the twice-impeached, former president of the United States, who has openly flouted the criminal and civil law for pretty much all of his entire adult life, to see if there is any truth whatsoever to that aspirational goal of equality under the law. Time, and the slow moving justice system, will tell.





2011 FFBC Scholar!

## June Speaker

# Senator Zach Wahls



Iowa Senate Democratic Leader, **Zach Wahls**, represents Senate District 43 (Coralville, North Liberty, Solon, part of western Iowa City, and rural northeast Johnson County). He was first elected in 2018 and then reelected in 2022; he has served as the Democratic Leader since November 2020.

Zach ran for the Iowa Senate to give all Iowans a voice. Growing up in a non-traditional family, he learned early in life what it felt like to be left out, and he remembers how hard families like his had to fight to get a seat at the table. Prior to his election, Zach worked primarily as an advocate in the LGBTQ civil rights movement following his 2011 testimony before the Iowa House Judiciary Committee in defense of marriage equality and his “two mom” family.

Outside of the Legislature, Zach serves as the Vice President for Community Investment and Development at GreenState Credit Union, Iowa’s largest financial cooperative. He also owns and operates a small business with his sister, selling custom-made playing cards, and he is a co-owner of his family tree farm in northeast Iowa.

Zach completed his Masters in Public Affairs from Princeton University’s School of Public and International Affairs in 2018 and his Bachelors from the University of Iowa in 2014. He married his wife, Dr. Chloe Angyal, in 2021, and they live with their dog, Zelda, in Coralville.

DES MOINES GAY MEN'S CHORUS PRESENTS

JUN 8-9-10 2023

TEMPLE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

ANNUAL PRIDE CABARET

# CAGES OR WINGS

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

DES MOINES GAY MEN'S CHORUS

VISIT [DMGMC.ORG](http://DMGMC.ORG) FOR TICKETS

# 14th Annual GALA 2023

BENEFITING: **oneiowa**

**Friday, June 30 / 7:00 – 10:00 PM**

While the attack on LGBTQ rights has been unprecedented this year, we have also seen a united force for change - Iowans across the state have joined the fight for LGBTQ equality. We are excited to celebrate that collective spirit at the **14th Annual One Iowa Gala** on Friday, June 30th, at The River Center!

At the Gala, we will honor the advocates and allies making a difference, discuss the battle to preserve LGBTQ equality, and raise money to fuel our mission.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

Get your tickets or sponsor the event at:  
[one.bidpal.net/oneiowagala2023](http://one.bidpal.net/oneiowagala2023)



# The 18th Annual Governor's Conference

ON LGBTQ YOUTH

First Friday Breakfast Club was proud to be an exhibitor at this year's April 28 conference at Prairie Meadows!



New  
FFBC Stickers to  
Distribute to  
Students!



[www.ffbcIowa.org](http://www.ffbcIowa.org)



## First Friday Breakfast Club

LGBTQ+ Scholarships for Iowa  
High School Seniors

## Gene Larson & David Phelps at the FFBC Booth

On April 28th, 2023, Gene Larson and David Phelps attended the Governor's Conference on LGBTQ Youth. The event was held in the Event Center at Prairie Meadows, Altoona. There were over 800 participants at the event. The participants consisted of students, parents, and educators representing all of Iowa and Lincoln, Nebraska. Between the meetings, the participants visited a variety of booths set up by several organizations.

FFBC hosted an exhibit focusing on who and what FFBC is and does. Gene and David met a lot of people who had not heard of FFBC. When they visited with the participants, Gene and David focused mostly on the scholarships that FFBC offers. The students, parents, and teachers expressed surprise and appreciation that FFBC assisted the LGBTQ+ community.

Gene and David felt there was a very positive vibe to the conference. Everyone enjoyed the day, the environment, and the camaraderie. Previous scholarship winners, parents, and present scholarship winners thanked First Friday Breakfast Club for what FFBC has done for them. Gene and David were proud to represent FFBC at the 2023 Governor's Conference.

## I-CUBS PRIDE NIGHT

JUNE 2 | \$15

5:30 PM - 8:00 PM | TICKETS

PRINCIPAL PARK DES MOINES, IA

[CAPITALCITYPRIDE.ORG/EVENTS](http://CAPITALCITYPRIDE.ORG/EVENTS)





# Kathie Obradovich

## Addresses FFBC

by Gary Moore

President of FFBC, Byron Huff, welcomed the approximately 40 members and guests attending the May 5th gathering of the First Friday Breakfast Club. Announcements included Polk County Supervisor Matt McCoy inviting all to attend a story hour reading by a drag queen at the Des Moines Public Library on May 21. It is being co-sponsored by Iowa Safe Schools, and free will offerings will be collected benefiting Iowa Safe Schools.

Guests had the opportunity to listen to and ask questions of one of Iowa's best-known and foremost reporters on governmental affairs in Iowa. Kathie Obradovich has been covering Iowa government and politics for more than 30 years, most recently as a political columnist and opinion editor for the *Des Moines Register*. She previously

covered the Iowa Statehouse for 10 years for newspapers in Davenport, Waterloo, Sioux City, Mason City, and Muscatine. She is a leading voice in Iowa politics and makes regular appearances on state, national, and international news programs. She has led national-award-winning coverage of the Iowa caucuses and the *Register's* Iowa Poll. She is now managing editor and report for the Capitol Dispatch.

Kathie started out her remarks by noting that the just-ended legislative session was a very long one, not just in length but in the very trying, emotionally charged matters the legislature decided to discuss. She also thanked Jim Flansburg, FFBC Board Member, for inviting her to speak, noting she and Jim knew each other from the late 80s when both worked for the *Quad City Times*.

Kathie noted she has never seen a legislative session like the one that just ended -- one that was more concerned with culture war legislation framed under the cover of parental rights. Much of the legislature's time was spent on LGBTQ+ and trans students issues which brought up the political interest of groups such as Moms for Liberty. The legislature basically bans any mention of sex in schools. Eight Republicans also introduced legislation to turn back the legalization of gay marriage.

Kathie also spoke of the reduction in print media and the negative effects on small communities. Studies have shown the cost of government goes up where there is less local news. Kathie is now managing editor and reporter for the *Daily Dispatch*. Iowa Capital Dispatch, a nonprofit, independent source for quality journalism, works every day to keep the public informed about what government officials are doing. News is not free, and as everyone has seen, news agencies are cutting back their print news investment. Lee Enterprise is considering cutting back print media to three days a week. Undoubtedly news will be distributed more and more by electronic media. The Capitol Dispatch has three reporters as of now and will be adding another shortly to cover higher education issues. They make use of freelance reporters and interns.

Kathie noted that during her last visit to FFBC, she found the question and answer period most interesting and opened the floor for questions. John Schmacker raised a funding question noting that half of the Iowa annual budget of nine billion is acquired through income taxes, and now \$350 million will go to private schools. Since the legislature is interested in cutting taxes and doing away with the income tax, how will the state fund its responsibilities? The use of sales tax was discussed. Most sales taxes today go to fund local governments. If that source is expanded to fund state government, the regressive tax would affect the state's poorest and raise the issue of funding revenue streams for local government. Republicans seem to believe economic growth because of the reduction in taxes will fill the funding gap.

Another question dealt with disagreement on what was a fact and reporting of factual information. Joe Raetz asked about legislative action on Iowa having the worst bridges in the nation, along with terrible roads and water quality. The legislature only plans to use the federal infrastructure funds that are available for roads and bridges. The legislature in fact went the wrong way with water quality by eliminating a water quality control program at the University of Iowa. Kathie noted it appears the state policy is not to provide information on whether the present policy is working. It is not and they don't want any information that contradicts present policy.



May Speaker

**Kathie Obradovich**



# May Meeting Photo Gallery



Photos  
by  
Gary  
Moore  
&  
David  
Cotton







# Scholarship Awards Breakfast

Friday, June 2  
7:00 a.m.

Hoyt Sherman Place

Des Moines

This year we'll be awarding **\$3,000** scholarships to **14** Iowa high school seniors, underwritten by you, our members, and allies!

## Doors Open Early!

We encourage you to arrive early to Hoyt Sherman Place, with breakfast available beginning at 6:30 a.m. Come acquaint yourself with these 14 accomplished young adults!

## Scholarship Awards Breakfast Schedule

- 6:30 a.m. - Doors open
- 6:45 a.m. - Hot breakfast service begins
- 7:00 a.m. - Speaker & Awards Program
- 8:15 a.m. - Program concludes - This meeting will run longer than our normal breakfast gathering.

## FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to men who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender, and their allies. We welcome all guests, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. Meetings are held the first Friday of every month from 7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. at Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines. The following membership and guest rates help us cover our food and facility costs.

### In-Person Meeting Rates (Members & Guests)

Annual Rate: \$180  
(12 consecutive meetings)

Quarterly Rate: \$48  
(3 consecutive meetings)

Month-by-Month: \$18

First Time or One-Time Attendee: \$15

Full-time Student: \$8

There is no charge to attend via Zoom.

### Payment Options

Cash or check at the meeting

Credit card prior to the meeting at [www.ffbciowa.org](http://www.ffbciowa.org); visit the Membership tab

### Regular Meeting Schedule

6:30 a.m. - Doors open  
6:45 a.m. - Breakfast service begins  
7:00 a.m. - Meeting begins



# Thank You to our Scholarship

## Donors



**Fundraising Period:  
May 2022 - April 2023**

### Underwriter (\$3000 or More)

- Phil Brawner & Ted Johnson
- Bruce Carr & Robert Thelen
- John Charles & David Nelson
- Brig. Gen. David A. Cotton, USAF (Ret)
- Jane Ann Cotton
- G. David Hurd & Trudy Holman Hurd Fund
- Cliff Paulsen Fund
- Community Betterment Grant through the Polk County Board of Supervisors

### Host (\$1000 to \$2999)

- Jim Anderson & Byron Huff
- Charles Carnes Fund
- Tom Coppess & Mike Koch
- Rick Gubbels & Tracy Lewis
- Ken Hanson & Wade Petersen
- Matt Hiatt & Paul Pettinger

### Advocate (\$500 to \$999)

- Mark Bienhoff & Troy Zwart
- Margo & Don Blumenthal
- Kevin Chorniak
- Scott Dean
- Jim Flansburg
- Sharon & Larry Huff
- Scott Kuknyo & Jonathan Wilson
- Gene Larson & David Phelps
- Gary Moore
- Martha Smith
- Jim Sterba
- James Tatro & Dan Venker
- Charlene & Mark Vukovich
- David Wilfahrt



### Supporter (\$250 to \$499)

- Peg Armstrong-Gustafson
- Larry Barnett & Bill Jackson
- Roger Bishop
- Christopher Correy
- Kurtis Denison & Robert Warren
- Deborah Gitchell
- Debbie & Michael Hubbell
- Patti Pierce
- Mary & George Richardson
- Janet & William Mark Rosenbury
- Chris Russell
- Michael Simonson
- Denise & David Swartz
- Susan & Carl Voss
- Jerry Vroegh

### Honors (\$100 to \$249)

- Rich Banyard
- Margaret & Tom Chase
- Alicia & David Claypool
- Travis Correll
- Bryan Crowder
- David Feinberg
- Harold Hinkhouse
- Richard Joens & Scott Smith
- Mary Ellen & James Kimball
- Fred Lewis
- Donna MacNeir
- Deb Madison-Levi
- Cyril Ann & John Mandelbaum
- Matt McCoy
- Joan Middleton
- Susan & Brian Moorhead
- Tim Schreck
- Toni & Tim Urban
- Ann & Ivan Webber
- Craig Weltha
- Phil Williams
- Cean Wilson

### Other Donors (Up to \$100)

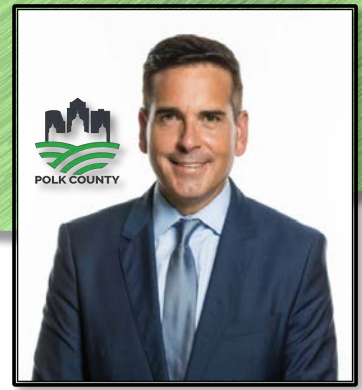
- Grace & Larry Anderson
- Heather A. Bartz
- John Brentnall
- Barbara & John Buck
- Marilyn & Frank Carroll
- Tom Chase & Daniel Palmer
- Nathan Coombes & Keith Wirtz
- Paul E. Dark
- Michael Egel
- Terri & John Hale
- Chuck Jordan
- Mary & Mark Kacere
- Robin Kline & William Summers
- Randall Kramer
- Paulina Ann Massey
- Steve Person

### In-Kind Services

- Anthologic
- Ascendant Wealth Management
- Brig. Gen. David A. Cotton, USAF (Ret)
- Brad Holland & Joe Raetz
- PC Print Center
- John Schmacker
- Nicholas Williams



# Overflowing Support for Des Moines' First Drag Story Hour



by Supervisor Matt McCoy  
Polk County, 1<sup>st</sup> District

For everyone who had felt the disappointment of a legislative session which vilified LGBTQ+ kids and attacked the institutions for learning, education, and libraries, the overwhelming response for the first **Drag Story Hour** was overflowing with support. Families were seated first. Families packed an overflowing library conference room, and we had to turn away more than 100 individuals from the general public. Each child who attended was able to select one of the three books that were read that day and are also on the so-called banned book list. Families enjoyed a fun-filled day that included dancing to the Hokey Pokey, book readings by two fabulous drag performers **Vana B** and **Robin Graves**, and an opportunity to mix with the queens and Andrew Fuller, A.K.A. **Sugar Freakshow** who won the hit Netflix Series *Is It Cake* competition. While I've received a few negative comments from people who never had a fun day in their whole life, the overwhelming response has been positive, supportive, and affirming. I'm proud of the community for standing up, showing up, and was heartened when we told the 100+ crowd waiting to get in that we were sold out and received loud cheers to that news. The affirming, positive message of support for these families and children was very evident that day.

This was a great kickoff to lead into Pride Month. It is my hope that this year, Pride will put the protest back into our movement. We must all stand up and speak out and be present in ways like we did for this Drag Story Hour. We need to push back, because 2024 will be an even tougher year, especially with Trump and DeSantis at the bully pulpit.



WE SUPPORT

PRIDE





## Superheroes: The Supervillains of Cinema?

An Essay on Modern Film by Mark Turnage



*“If what criticism is is having an argument with or about a movie, the attempt to create argument-proof movies that no one will argue about, that no one will argue with, I think that’s very troubling to me.”*

-- A.O. Scott, former chief film critic of *The New York Times*

In the March 23<sup>rd</sup> *New York Times* interview, “Our Film Critic on Why He’s Done With the Movies,” outgoing *New York Times* film critic of 23 years, A.O. Scott, unpacks his decision to step down from his job, citing the rise of the superhero film industrial complex (not just Marvel or DC) stealing the creative thunder from both his field and his craft, and the rise of streaming movies eclipsing theatrical new releases. Scott argues that variety and pushing our cinematic comfort zones have the highest promise for discovering our next favorite movie, but cinematic ingenuity (and watching something new!) requires risk, and risk isn’t studio-bankable for anything but a blockbuster, or a remake of something that was once a blockbuster. Scott paints most superhero films as wish-fulfillment power fantasies, and in some cases, I agree—it’s a tired and simplistic narrative choice. My argument is that superhero films need more failure, pathos, and consequences—the things superpowers and money can’t quite solve, the circumstances that force the protagonist to question their mission, and a world order that isn’t returned to the status quo by the film’s end, but \*different\* than the world the film opened with.

The superheroes I grew up with were daring and mature—1992’s *Batman Returns* and 1994’s *Batman: The Animated Series* were significant departures in tone from the colorful and madcap world of Adam West and *Super-Friends*. These 90s depictions of Batman featured a superhero who didn’t always save the day, or if he did, the consequences weren’t always picture-perfect. I became a fan of 90s and 00s Spider-Man with the introduction of a sentient black costume that gave him more power at the cost of his empathy, forcing him to question his mission, his mind under the suit’s influence, and his own relationships. But including pathos doesn’t have to always have to mean doom and gloom—it can manifest narratively as significant enough risk or long-term obstacle for the protagonist, like coming out, finding chosen family, or even choosing to move on from a city, mission, or person. Scott’s other problem with superhero movies is that they “flash-freeze” their cast to safeguard demand for more adventures. Could you imagine a superhero grappling with something like aging, growing apart from their allies, or living with a body that doesn’t always cooperate, or match who they are inside? The potential for queer stories in superhero films is limitless.

But Scott also discusses the effects of “fandom” in the superhero industrial complex: “And I do feel that there is, embedded in the superhero universe, a very strong and visible anti-democratic or authoritarian tendency. That is what fandom is to me. And people will be mad, but I’m going to say it. Fandom is about obedience and about conformity.”

Fandom, or as Scott depicts it, the collective online voice of a subculture of fans, vaunts one widely held viewpoint or interpretation while often shouting down others, where film criticism functions by arguing multiple viewpoints, including the possibility of misinterpretation. Scott laments this indefensibility between fandom and criticism, combined with the high ratio of superhero movies to other releases, as his primary reasons for stepping down. If franchise fandom is the high-profile, indestructible “superhero,” film criticism is the vulnerable but more interesting everyday secret identity. Making superheroes unbreakable cheapens the humanity that makes them most complex, and so does limiting lore to one interpretation. But it also requires more creative risk in superhero storytelling—and more studio support for stories that challenge us, that we can see ourselves in, and help shape how we see the world differently.

Source: “Our Film Critic on Why He’s Done With the Movies,” *The New York Times*, March 23, 2023.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/23/podcasts/the-daily/ao-scott-film-critic-american-cinema-movies.html>

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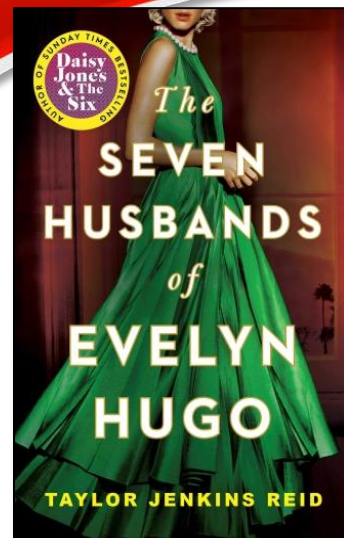
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## The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo

by Taylor Jenkins Reid

Book  
Review by  
Steve Person



Evelyn Hugo knew what she wanted from an early age, and she was willing to do whatever it took to achieve her goals. Evelyn, whose real last name was Herrera, came to Hell's Kitchen in New York as a child with her Cuban parents. Her mother, a beautiful chorus girl, died when Evelyn was just eleven. Trapped in a dingy apartment with her alcoholic and brutish father, Evelyn, by the age of thirteen, soon blossomed into a young and desirable girl. Her more than ample breasts—along with her statuesque physique and remarkable eyes and eyebrows, soon learned that her ticket to Hollywood was to marry Husband Number One—Ernie Diaz. Aged fifteen, she traded her virginity for a ride in a 1949 Plymouth with husband Ernie who landed a job as a grip in the Movie Capital of the World.

It didn't take long for Evelyn to figure out where she needed to hang out in order to meet movie industry people. Using her job as a waitress in a café where movie moguls lunched, she secured a part in a film where she had only one line—but it was enough for producers to realize how the camera adores the features of certain people, and Evelyn was one of those people. So, it was good-bye to Ernie and hello to her new name, Evelyn Hugo.

Evelyn secured a featured role in a highly successful comedy that starred the most desirable leading man in Hollywood—Don Adler. The two had an idyllic relationship both on and off screen and made other box office hits. They married in an over-the-top Hollywood wedding on March 4, 1957. For a while, they basked in their love for each other until a darker side of Don's personality emerged. They divorced in 1959.

Evelyn starred in Sunset Studios' production of *Little Women* earning the coveted role of Jo March. An up-and-coming actress named Celia St. James played the lesser part of Amy March—the one who dies. Evelyn's fortunes from that film changed the trajectory of her life. She distrusted Celia initially, but eventually they became fast friends. Celia won her first Oscar for playing Amy while the Academy ignored Evelyn.

In December 1961, Evelyn ensnares popular singer Mick Riva to join her in a whirlwind weekend in Las Vegas. The two win a lot of money gambling and drink themselves into oblivion and end up in a Vegas wedding chapel in the wee hours. In a motel room the following day, they realize the mistake they've made and have the marriage annulled.

Husband Number Four, the matinee idol, Rex North, is married in 1962. It is a marriage of convenience, but it lasts for two-and-a-half years. Both partners see other people during this time, but the marriage ends when Rex actually meets an actress whom he truly loves.

Evelyn's fifth husband, Harry Cameron, stays with her longer than any of her husbands. They wed in August 1967. They have a daughter, Connor. Harry, like many in Hollywood—including Celia St. James—carries a secret that could end his work as a top motion picture producer. He befriends Evelyn from the beginning of her career, and the two remained friends—even after their divorce—until his death. During this time, Celia St. James weds football star John Braverman. The two couples live close to each other and are seen at events around New York and other European watering holes.

Evelyn's sixth husband is one of two she actually loved, the other being Don Adler. Director Max Girard uses Evelyn's fame as a passport to glamorous events, sporting her as a trophy wife. Needless to say, the marriage ends in divorce.

Husband Number Seven, Robert Jamison, is the older brother of Celia St. James. He is extremely wealthy. He, Evelyn, Connor, and Celia move to a small town in Spain and spend many years together. Although he cannot take the role of Harry as father, he and Connor respect each other get along nicely. Celia passes away and Evelyn and Robert move to Manhattan. Eleven years later, he dies and leaves Evelyn even wealthier from his estate and those of Harry and Celia.

At the age of 41, Connor dies from breast cancer, and that is where the amazing tale of Evelyn's seven husbands begins. At the age of 79, Evelyn plans to hold an auction of a dozen of her most famous gowns from her life as a Hollywood queen. And yes, she earned a Best Actress Oscar late in her career playing opposite her second husband, Don Adler, who also gained a gold statuette. She hires reporter Monique Grant to write her memoir. Grant questions why she is chosen to write this biography and is told by Evelyn it cannot be published until after her death. The story comes full circle when Grant learns of the reason for Evelyn's divorce from Connor's father.

At the story's end, author Reid says, "When you dig just the tiniest bit beneath the surface, everyone's love life is original and interesting and nuanced and defies any easy definition."