



# First Friday

## News & Views



Iowa's LGBTQ+ Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club

February 2024 | Volume 29 | Issue 2

**Next Meeting**  
**Friday,**  
**February 2**  
**7:00 a.m.**



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



**Speaker**  
**Ben Page**

**Director of DSM**  
**Parks & Rec**



**Website**  
**ffbc Iowa.org**



## How Many People Identify As LGBTQ+?

by Byron Huff, Board President



As a follow-up to my article last month regarding FFBC bylaws and our new open membership, I wanted to cover the demographic changes that are driving many LGBTQ+ organizations to evaluate their missions.

Kinsey published research in 1948 that created a scale between zero and six to identify sexual orientation, with zero being solely heterosexual and six being exclusively homosexual. Since then, countless surveys have been done attempting to determine the percentage of the general population that is "gay." Every such survey begins with a definition of what is considered to be "gay" for the purposes of that survey. Some might say that, for the purposes of the survey, "gay" would be anyone who as an adult has had consensual intimacy with someone of the same sex, ever. Others might define "gay" as anyone who has had consensual intimacy with someone of the same sex within the last year (for example). If you change the definition, the gay percentage in the general population will change.

If you define "gay" as someone incapable of having sexual intimacy with someone of the opposite sex, and "straight" as someone incapable of having sexual intimacy with someone of the same sex, about 4% of the population is "gay" and about 4% of the population is "straight;" that means that about 92% of the population is "bisexual," somewhere between zero and six on the Kinsey scale. This leads to the conclusion that "bisexuality" is actually the norm among human beings. When that is recognized, it can readily be seen why self-identifying as "gay," "straight," "bi," or whatever, has evolved and become more and more fluid over time. It is normal not to be strictly gay or straight. With that fluidity, comes societal acceptance of gay, straight, bi, and trans individuals across the board.

Our world is becoming more gender fluid as a younger generation does not want to be defined by the constraints of being either "straight" or "gay." U.S. adults who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or something other than heterosexual stood at 7.2% in a 2022 Gallup survey; this was double what it was when they first measured it a decade ago. It would seem that our younger generation is not following past societal norms prescribing a rigid definition of sexuality. **Good for them!**



[continued on page 2]

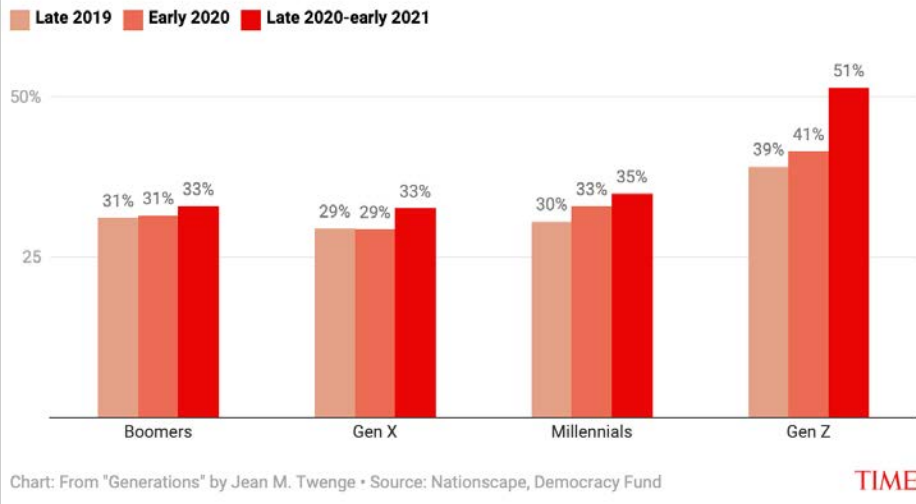


## ["How Many People Identify as LGBTQ+?" cont. from page 1]

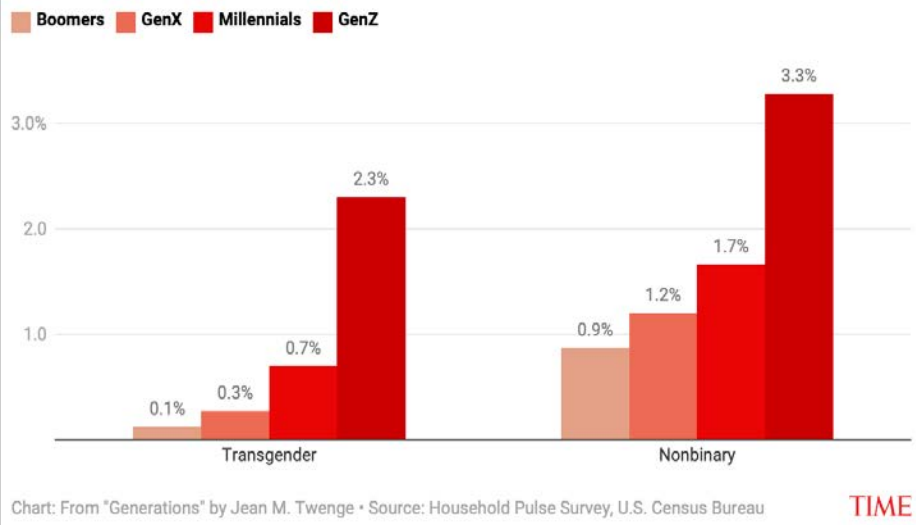
The FFBC bylaws membership change recognizes and embraces the fluidity in human sexual orientation and gender identity. The graphics in the charts below help depict how quickly, particularly among Gen Z, gender expression is changing.

*Thank you to Jonathan Wilson who contributed to this article.*

**Figure 1: Percentage of adults who believe there are more than two genders, by generation**



**Figure 2: Percentage of adults who identify as transgender or nonbinary, by generation**



## FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to all members of the LGBTQ+ community 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**

**No charge to attend via Zoom**

### Payment Options

Cash or check at the meeting

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

### Meeting Schedule

**6:30 a.m. - Doors open**

**6:45 a.m. - Breakfast service begins**

**7:00 a.m. - Meeting begins**







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HEALTHCARE • WORKPLACE • LEADERSHIP

February 5  
Iowa Capitol

oneiowa

Monday, February 5, 2024; 9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Join us for a day of empowerment, advocacy, and unity as we stand up for LGBTQ rights at the Iowa State Capitol.

Tentative Schedule 2024:

**9:30 - 11:30 A.M.: "Talking to Your Legislator" Training**

The location is to be announced in January. Equip yourself with the skills to effectively communicate with your legislators and make your voice heard.

**11:30 A.M.: Lunch**

Register at least two weeks in advance to guarantee a lunch.

**12:00 P.M.: March to Capitol**

We'll march to the Capitol, showcasing our collective strength and commitment to LGBTQ+ rights.

**12:30 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.: Rally in the Capitol Rotunda**

Gather in the heart of the Capitol for a rally. Hear from legislators and national advocates. Celebrate the progress we've made and acknowledge the work that lies ahead.

**2:00 P.M.: Meet with Legislators**

Directly engage with legislators to discuss the issues that matter most to LGBTQ+ Iowans.



Thanks to **Jim Flansburg** for introducing our January speaker, **Representative Jennifer Konfrst**. 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 newsletter contributors!*

The **deadline** for the 2024

**March newsletter** will

be **February 19**. 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 deadline.



**Fundraising efforts** are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have awarded over **\$450,000** for scholarships 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 those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the **Donor Direct** program of **United Way**. 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.



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



FEB

5



**DODGEBALL**

Dodgeball league Monday nights in February





# Politically Motivated Criminal Prosecution

by Jonathan Wilson

**ABUSE OF POWER**



Hunter Biden has been criminally indicted for felony tax evasion and, although he did pay \$1.5 million dollars (plus or minus) in taxes and penalties owed, paying the taxes and penalties does not exonerate him from the potential for criminal prosecution for committing what was a crime in the first place. If paying the taxes, interest, and penalties were exonerating from criminal prosecution, there'd be no meaningful incentive for paying our taxes timely and in full – people could simply “borrow money from the government” (i.e., delay the payment of owed taxes, plus penalties and interest) at an admittedly high rate for a customary loan, it would, essentially, be a “loan” nonetheless, without the need to make a loan application, and a loan that's payable only if the nonpayment is caught by the creditor (government).

Whether or not it is politically motivated *in a way that is an abuse of government power* depends on the answer to two questions, each of which *assumes* that the prosecution has been politically motivated (i.e. would not have been initiated except for political considerations): (1) have others been similarly prosecuted for similar behavior? and (2) is the prosecution initiated against someone without the resources to defend themselves? If similar conduct has been prosecuted against other “regular” citizens, it's not an abuse of power even if, in a particular case, it was politics that prompted the prosecution. If the prosecution, motivated by political considerations, was brought against someone lacking the resources to defend themselves, that's an abuse of power.

If similar conduct has been similarly prosecuted against “regular” citizens, and the prosecution is brought against someone financially able to defend themselves, it's not an abuse of governmental power to prosecute. The facts will speak for themselves when the case is tried in a court of law. The government can either prove the criminal allegations or it can't. Pure and simple.

I have used the Hunter Biden example to frame the issue and my perception of what is and what is not an abuse of power. I'm a Democrat and feel that should be the way the issue is framed before I apply it to others with whom I disagree politically or personally. Others have been charged similarly for similar conduct (some would argue that is not the case, but for the purpose of framing the issue, I concede the point). With that concession, Hunter Biden is certainly not without resources to defend himself. Those things said, the charges against him would not appear to me to be an abuse of power.

Turning to Donald Trump, we face his allegation that the criminal charges pending against him are a “political witch hunt” (more accurately, a warlock hunt – a male witch). First, others have clearly been charged with crimes with which the former president has been charged. That answers the first question. Second, the former president is clearly in a financial position to defend himself. So, have at it. Put the government to the test. Make the government prove the case – guilty or not guilty. It will not be charges that have not been made against others and there is no lack of resources to defend against the charges on the merits.

Neither the criminal charges against Hunter Biden nor Donald Trump are politically motivated in a way that should be a concern for anyone. Both should be decided on the merits. Screaming “political prosecution” is not a defense.







"Love is friendship that has caught fire. It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses."

■ Ann Landers



**80'S PROM**

**TICKET INFORMATION**

OCT. 30TH- JANUARY 5TH: TICKET PRESALE STARTS (\$20/1 TICKET, \$35/2 TICKETS!)

JANUARY 5TH- FEB 17TH: ALL TICKETS \$30

ALL NET PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT GAURDIAN ANGELS SCHOLARSHIP

**EVENT DATE: FEB. 17TH**  
**3PM-7PM @ THE GARDEN**  
**ALL AGES WELCOME**

CAPITAL CITY PRIDE  
**2024 PRIDE GALA**

MARCH 2, 2024 | THE RIVER CENTER

# Future Speakers

MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR!

**March 1:**

**Rob Sand**

Iowa State Auditor

**April 5:**

**Melissa O'Neil**

CEO, Central Iowa Shelter & Services

**May 3:**

**Keenan Crow**

Director of Policy & Advocacy, One Iowa

**June 7:**

**Sarah Brown-Wessling**

2010 National Teacher of the Year

**July:**

**Donor-Member  
Summer Party**

**August 2:**

**Daniel Zinnel**

CEO of Proteus

**September 6**  
**OneIowa**





# First Friday Breakfast Club 2023 Scholar Updates

## Dallas Olberding

College is going well, I am doing the thing out here on the east coast, and it is made possible because of the scholarship from ya'll that I am putting directly towards tuition. It is true when they say it takes a village, so thank you all again! I hope you have a great holiday season, and I wish you the best new year, thank you!



## Beau Kell

I've been enjoying my first semester at Iowa. I'm double majoring in English and Creative Writing and Journalism and I'm learning a lot in my classes. I have a campus job with TRIO Upward Bound as a tutor and mentor for high school students. I also joined a new literary magazine called *Catharsis*, which I am the typeset designer for. The FFBC scholarship took pressure off me, so I could avoid taking out any loans. I'm truly grateful for the scholarship, and for my life at the University of Iowa; I feel like I can genuinely be myself and pursue my interests here.



## Levi Cooper

College is amazing so far! I am a part of the men's choir and the West African drum ensemble. All my classes are going great as well. Learning about music therapy is such a rewarding part of my day. I would not be able to be on the progress I am now without this scholarship. It has helped me continue my education and have less worry in the future with possible debt. I am grateful for the scholarship.



## Kenzie Fick

I am adjusting very well at the University of Iowa, and I can tell that this was my best choice. I have felt more comfortable in my own skin and have displayed more confidence, and some of that is thanks to the FFBC scholarship. It gave me the confidence that I am capable of succeeding academically as well as forming better connections with queer people, which I have had a good experience with. Not only this, but I have also seen friendly faces on campus who also received this scholarship. I am eternally grateful for the FFBC scholarship and the community it brought me.



## Ava Rossow

I'm reaching out to let you know that I am THRIVING in college. I've developed a true family with my learning community, and I'm beginning to find my community with other LGBTQ+ students at ISU :)



**More scholar updates in next month's newsletter!**





## February Speaker

# Ben Page



Ben Page was named Director of the Des Moines Park and Recreation Department in November of 2012. He is responsible for: a \$15 million operating budget and six-year \$50+ million capital improvement program; 60 full-time and over 300 part-time employees; multiple contracts, leases and operating agreements to provide privatized service; 77 parks and open spaces; over 4000 acres of park and open space land; 69 miles of paved trails; three golf courses; aquatic centers and beach; marina; community recreation centers; sports complexes; performing arts amphitheaters; world-class artists sculpture park; riverwalk; AAA baseball stadium; zoological park; botanical center; city-wide streetscapes; cemeteries; skating plaza; and recreational programming. The department was recognized in 2023 with the National Recreation and Parks Association Gold Medal, an award given annually to only four cities that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource management and innovative approaches to delivering superb park and recreation services with fiscally sound business practices.



Prior to his appointment as Director, he served as the Assistant Director in Des Moines for six years and prior to that the Director of Park and Recreation in Manchester, Iowa for six years. He has been a member of the National Recreation and Park Association and Iowa Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) since 2001 and has served in many capacities for IPRA, including the President of the Association from 2009-2011. Ben received the highest honor from Iowa Park and Recreation Association, Slattery/Trueblood Professional Award in 2015. Ben was also recognized in 2013 by the *Business Record* of Des Moines as a "40 under 40" Award recipient for career achievements, community involvement, and civic activities.



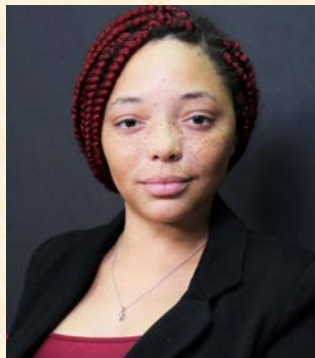
## Speaker Series

[Tickets are free, but you must register online]

February 15 / 6:00 P.M. / Temple Theater

### Brea Baker

Brea is a skilled communications strategist, influencer engagement professional, activist/organizer, and social impact advisor. She has contributed to dozens of electoral and advocacy campaigns including the 2017 Women's March (where she served as the youngest national organizer), the 2018 student walkouts against gun violence, Jumaane Williams' successful bid for NYC Public Advocate, and more.



# Happy Valentine's Day



# Iowa House Minority Leader Addresses FFBC

by Gary Moore

**Jennifer Konfrst** worked for Iowa PBS for twelve years. She is an associate professor of journalism and strategic political communication at Drake University. Konfrst was elected on June 14, 2021, as the new House Minority Leader. She is the first woman to hold this position in Iowa after being Assistant Minority Leader in 2018 and 2019. She addressed a receptive crowd of about 45 attendees this first Friday of 2024.

As one listened to her talk, it is easy to see why she so quickly rose to a leadership role. She is quick on her feet, and responses are sharp and to the point. Although her time for questions and answers was short due to another speaking engagement in Urbandale, she made the point of saying: "The LGBTQ+ community is heard in my office."

Last year was a difficult year for the LGBTQ+ community in the Iowa Legislature with the Republican Party running a culture war for what they see as political gains. Although six significant anti-LGBTQ+ bills were passed, over 30 were able to be kept from becoming law thanks to the hard work of a coalition of many organizations, including One Iowa and the Interfaith Alliance. "One of the bills that passed was a ban on gender-affirming care. You all know this. It was my hardest day in the legislature...."



January Speaker

Iowa House Minority Leader  
**Jennifer Konfrst**



Representative Konfrst noted that, the day the bill to ban gender-affirming care was on the floor, Governor Reynolds called down individual legislators to her office and told them to vote for the bill, some of whom had not been impressed with the legislation. Then, when the governor signed the bill with tears, saying that it was the hardest thing she had to do, it was such a disingenuous display that it brought a **"bullshit"** reaction from Representative Konfrst.

"It is difficult, but let me tell you about a message I got from a senior student (he's now a freshman in college), this trans kid saw our debate, and he said, 'We lost today, but I won because I saw people fight for me in public on the floor with passion. They saw me and I feel seen.' That is such a low bar for him. Everyone should feel seen. But he was able to take a moment that was devastating and turn it into a moment that had hope. And that's what we're trying to do every day up at the Capitol."

With little time left, Representative Konfrst took a few questions. John Schmacker asked about the Republicans' desire to eliminate the individual income tax in Iowa which accounts for 40-50 percent of the budget. "Has there been any thought as to what would replace this income?"

In her response, Rep. Konfrst noted that is part of the problem with the present Republican control of Iowa. Iowa is being governed by headlines. Too often the headline does not come with well-thought-out policy to implement the legislation. "This is politics, not policy. I mean, look at what happened with the school vouchers or the 'Don't Say Gay Bill,' that is, or the book ban bill that has now been paused in the courts because they didn't think about how to implement the bill. They wanted the headline. And that's not governing. We can do better than that."

Representative Konfrst covered so much more than what this writer has chosen to emphasize in this article, but I want to encourage you to attend FFBC so that you can get the full story and the great content that each of our speakers has to offer. You won't be disappointed.

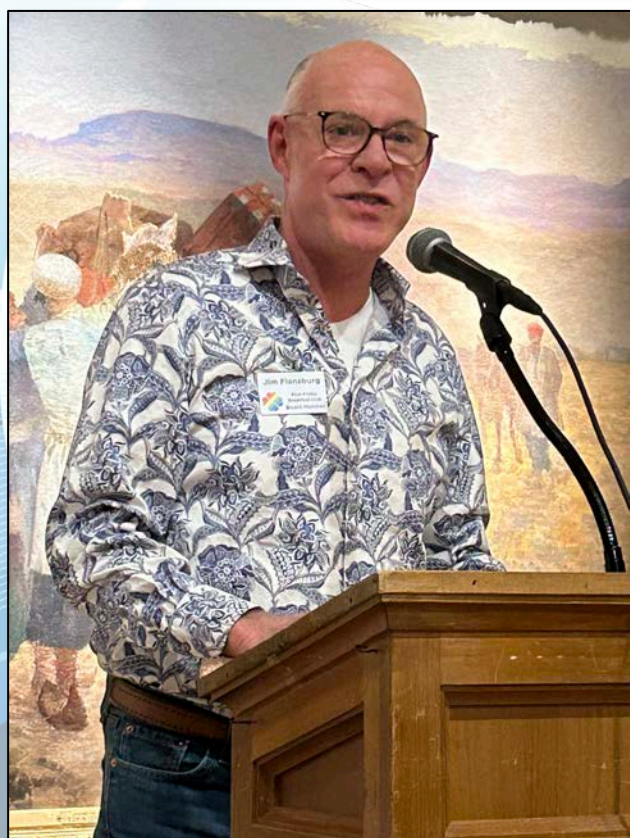




# January Meeting Photo Gallery



Photos By  
Gary Moore & Wade Petersen



Jim Flansburg Introduces Speaker

Max Mowitz, One Iowa  
Program Director,  
Updates Members on  
Advocacy Opportunities  
for the new Legislative  
Session



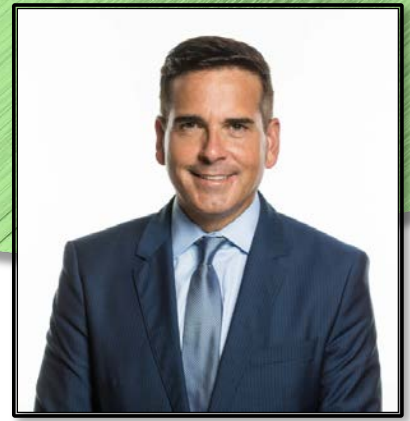
Iowa State Invites Members to Participate in a Study





# Sometimes the Dogs Just Hate the Dogfood Being Served

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



Ron DeSantis ran a hate-based campaign where he demonstrated his disgust with LGBTQ+ families, pregnant women seeking abortion care, woke media, Walt Disney, and Mickey Mouse. He fully embraced the concept that he would make America like Florida. The governor continued to repeat his mantra that Florida was where “woke” went to die.

Politicians who are successful understand the power of likeability. There was never a “folksy” moment that I observed in his campaign in Iowa. DeSantis understood the power of Iowa and predicted a complete win in our state. He fully embraced the evangelical base in Iowa crawling into bed with Bob Vander Plaats where he earned the coveted endorsement of The Family Leader. DeSantis dumped more than \$100 million on an Iowa-based campaign, betting everything on an early win that would demonstrate him as the clear alternative to Donald Trump.

Unlikable Governor Kim Reynolds moved her key staffers towards the DeSantis campaign early in the Iowa Caucus phase. This effort was followed Reynolds’s full embrace of DeSantis and her endorsement of his campaign.

Clearly, Governor Reynolds’ endorsement meant very little to the voters of Iowa who have grown tired of Reynolds and her hate-based campaigns on marginalized vulnerable LGBTQ+ children. Reynolds’ most recent attacks on Area Education Agencies and refusal to allow Iowa’s hungry children to participate in summer lunch programs offered freely by the federal government have Iowans in an uproar at the Statehouse. The biggest loser of Iowa’s caucus loss was Kim Reynolds who has become one of the most disliked governors in the nation.

The GOP and politics of hate are being rejected by voters. The Iowa Caucuses were a massive failure of participation by the GOP. About 15 percent of eligible GOP voters showed up on a cold night, handing Trump about 50 percent of that vote or roughly 8 percent of Iowa GOP voters. Hardly a ringing endorsement for the disgraced, twice impeached, four times indicted former President.





# Saltburn

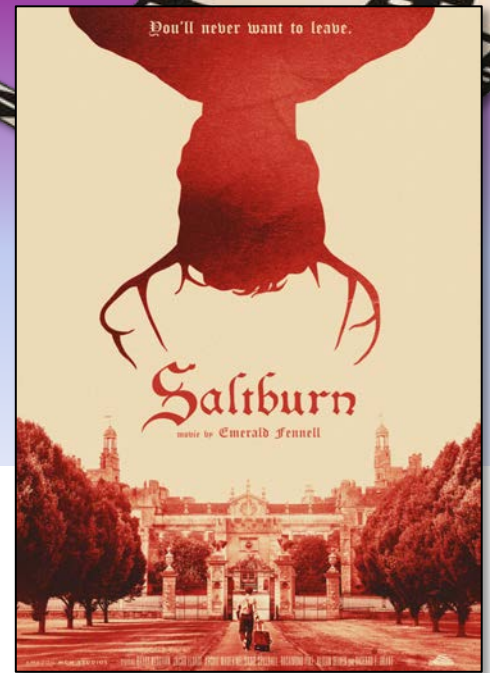
A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

Part of the entertainment value of great movies is shock value -- the genuine surprise an audience has in reaction to something completely unexpected that sticks with you well after the credits roll. A jump scare, plot twist, or memorable movie moment lands effectively based on the narrative groundwork of character development (and often unforgettable dialogue) laid beforehand. Director Emerald Fennell is no stranger to shock value or dark subject matter with her 2020 debut film, *Promising Young Woman*, a character-driven, scathing satire of toxic masculinity and rape culture. With her second feature film, *Saltburn*, she turns her satirical lens to the divide between old-money British elites and the middle class, framed by a tale of excess and obsession. But is this black comedy/psychological thriller as sensical as it is sensual?

Oxford University, 2006: Oliver Quick (Barry Keoghan), socially awkward but academically gifted, struggles to fit in at the elite campus, with students (and teachers) ridiculing him for his middle-class upbringing. He develops an obsession with a moderately nicer wealthy fellow college student, Felix Catton (Jacob Elordi, straight from a 2006 Abercrombie and Fitch shopping bag), who takes pity on Oliver after he's informed of a sudden family tragedy. Felix invites Oliver to spend his summer vacation at Saltburn, the Catton family's sprawling and grandiose estate. Less than thrilled is

Felix's best friend, the barb-tongued Farleigh (a deliciously cutthroat Archie Madekwe), who sees Oliver as a pathetic annoyance coming between him and Felix's friendship. Despite Oliver's ignorance to the upper-class social protocols of Saltburn, the Cattons' microaggressions towards Oliver's background, and Farleigh's vicious backhanded compliments, the Catton family warms to Oliver's company condescendingly, like a homeowner with a new pet. Meanwhile, Oliver revels in Saltburn's comforts and luxury, and his obsession for Felix grows.

Much of *Saltburn*'s shock value comes from Oliver acting upon his lust for Felix in feral, furtive, and indirect ways -- you may have already heard of *Saltburn* through its infamous bathtub scene going viral, but this is only one of several instances where the normally composed Oliver utterly abandons his self-control in spectacularly bizarre fashion. But before we get excited about homoerotic representation in film (there's plenty here), much of the sexuality that occurs in *Saltburn* has wildly creepy subtext, including sexual coercion. The second half of the movie hinges on Oliver's sexual aggression becoming unrestrained and destructive, seemingly as a response to indulging his feelings for Felix. *Saltburn* plays with the exploitation of vulnerability as a theme, but when no exchange of vulnerability can be trusted as authentic, with whom does the audience place their empathy?



As caustic as the Cattons can be, by the end of the film, Fennell is able to endear us to their brand of comedically savage insensitivity, which is a feat in itself -- Rosamund Pike's Lady Elspeth Catton has some of the most breathlessly unhinged hot takes of the whole film.

The cinematography of *Saltburn* is lush and opulent, and features well as its own character with its iconography of baroque halls and trash-strewn manicured lawns, and a curated soundtrack featuring the likes of MGMT and Tomcraft (a favorite of this reviewer from 2006). The film could absolutely be accused of trying to overload your senses and emotions so your logic is ignored: its over-the-top, camp thriller conclusion does set the right amount of shock and ridiculousness thanks in part to its soundtrack, even if the road map used to get there isn't entirely believable. While its character development could be better and its pacing isn't as strong as Fennell's previous work, *Saltburn*'s exploration of destructive desire, lust and loathing, and privilege and promiscuity are intriguingly bizarre and preposterously witty enough to be a fun watch. See it streaming on Amazon Prime.



## Board of Directors

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Contact Us At: [info@ffbcia.org](mailto:info@ffbcia.org)

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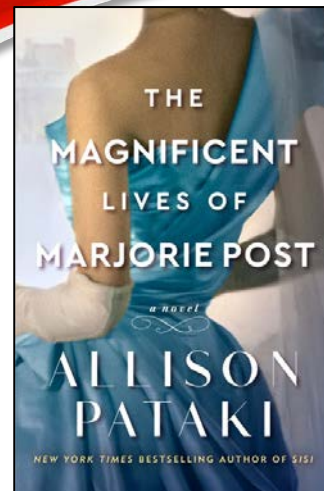
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**FFBC Board  
of Directors**

First Friday Breakfast Club  
P.O. Box 41611  
Des Moines, IA 50311  
(515) 954-2996

## The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post

By Allison Pataki

A  
Book  
Review by  
Steve Person



I'm not quite sure when I became aware of Marjorie Merriweather Post, but it was 1996 when I was in Washington, D.C., that I decided to take a taxi to visit her favorite residence -- and she had many -- Hillwood Estate. By that time, this phenomenal house was under the supervision of The Smithsonian Institution. Marjorie died there in 1973 at the age of 86.

Hillwood showcased the vast collection that Marjorie amassed of Pre-Revolutionary treasures of the czars of Russia over the centuries. In the mid 1930s, Marjorie's third husband, Joe Davies, became the American Ambassador to Josef Stalin's Soviet Union. While Marjorie didn't exactly enjoy life in the Russian capital, she made crucial connections with influential Russian government officials. One of them suggested she might like to visit a warehouse. Intrigued, she accepted the invitation, and to her astonishment, she came upon the imperial treasures of the Romanovs and Catherine the Great, to name a few. Furniture, paintings of royal persons, jewelry, Faberge boxes -- all up for sale in Stalin's need for cash. Even more astounding, these treasures were sold by weight! The Soviet Union's leaders wanted nothing that reminded them of the czars of the past centuries and welcomed their sale to this rich American heiress. The home also contains items of Marie Antoinette and Napoleon Bonaparte.

How Marjorie came to this station in life is an incredible American success story. Her father, C.W. Post, suffered ill health. He moved his wife and daughter in search of a cure for his illness to a small town in Michigan, Battle Creek. In residence there, Dr. John Kellogg treated hundreds of patients to a strict regimen of bland diet and exercise in his sprawling medical campus. His spartan methods, unfortunately, did nothing to revive Marjorie's father. It was the landlady where they were staying who introduced him to the philosophy of Christian Science, and that -- along with her hearty comfort food meals -- brought C.W. Post back to health.

Marjorie adored her father. He had the knack of finding fascination in even the most mundane circumstances -- teaching her how to fish, enjoying winter sports, and horseback riding to name a few. Marjorie's mother always seemed distant to both her husband and daughter, but she used what little money she had to bring them to Battle Creek and nursed little Marjorie through a bout with scarlet fever.

On an outing, C.W. brought Marjorie to a hardware store in Battle Creek. In a pile of rubbish that the proprietor was going to dump, C.W. spotted a broken toaster and asked if he could buy it. It was gifted to him, and he brought it home and fixed it. From that humble piece, he began experimenting with wheat and eventually invented Grape Nuts. That cereal changed the breakfast habits of America, and that, along with his invention of Postum, a substitute drink for coffee, made him a very rich man, indeed.

Thinking she was going to spend the rest of her life in Battle Creek, Marjorie found her father had other ideas for her. He reasoned that Washington, D.C., was the place that would have the greatest potential in early twentieth century America, and he had her enrolled in a Catholic boarding school there. That experience brought Marjorie into a different sphere of influence, and it was after her graduation that she married her first husband, a New York socialite. The marriage didn't last, but it did bring Marjorie her first daughter. A second marriage brought her second and third daughters (the third becoming the film and stage actress, Dina Merrill).

The wealthier he became, his wife distanced herself, and the couple divorced much to Marjorie's chagrin. C.W. then married his secretary, a woman Marjorie never could come to accept. At C.W.'s untimely death, the second wife tried to make the case that she should have the Post fortune. Marjorie fought that and eventually won.

This fascinating woman, who not only spent lavishly, but also gave much of her fortune to charity, is nowadays known as the person who had Mar-a-Lago built in 1927. Her wish was to have the property used by the U.S. Government as a Winter White House. While the government refused her offer, it was eventually purchased by Donald Trump and is now the scene of just one of his four criminal indictments. I suspect Marjorie would turn over in her grave if she knew.

Even though this book is a novel, the characters, events, and places are real. As a historical novelist, Allison Pataki's job was to bring conversations and insights into these people's lives.

