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POPULAR DEMAND IN A DEMOCRACY

By Jonathan Wilson

Hillary Clinton has made known her support for gay marriage. Her voice is added to that of President Obama at a time when he was seeking re-election.

A guy I know said, in a tone intended to be disparaging, that Obama's endorsement of gay marriage was not the culmination of an evolving view on the subject as Obama claimed but, rather, a crass political calculation in order to help him get re-elected. *Help* him get re-elected!!

On its face the comment was intended to insult Obama and impugn his motives. On its face the comment was intended to suggest that the president did not genuinely support gay marriage -- as if no one could possibly do such a thing on the merits, or as if no one could legitimately have their opinions evolve on the subject.

The comment, however, delivered a secondary message -- a concession of sorts. The comment conceded that public opinion is shifting on the subject and at an astonishing pace. Frankly, I hope it's true that Obama, and Clinton as well, made the political calculation that it would be more advantageous politically to favor gay marriage than to continue opposing it. I for one don't care all that much about the motivation that prompts someone to do the right thing. Oh, obviously, I don't want someone to be tortured into doing the right thing or to be led there by extortion. But making a political calculation in a democracy, where the will of the people within a constitutional framework is supposed to be what matters, that's a different story. That's what is supposed to happen.

I'm okay if, in reality, Obama doesn't personally like the idea of gay marriage, or would personally prefer that that level of citizen equality not be recognized. I don't think that's the reality; I think that Obama's previously expressed reticence was a political calculation that masked his personal belief in equal access to marriage -- in equal rights -- in equal meaning equal. I think he knew, as so many have come to do, that gay marriage was the logical extension of our constitutional principles of equality as more and more has been understood about law-abiding, hard-working, tax-paying, patriotic gay children of God.

The most recent polls indicate that it would not have been nuclear physics to make the political calculation that there are more votes to be had in supporting gay marriage than there are by opposing it. With three states approving gay marriage equality by popular referendum, and another attempt to write discrimination into a state constitution going down to defeat, The Obama-Clinton political calculation seems well-founded. The trend line, in part because of how rapidly the public mind is changing, is unmistakable and approaching two-thirds of the population in favor of gay marriage. The public has seen the truth as gay marriages have proliferated and none of the hyped adverse consequences have materialized.

Most recently, conservative Ohio Senator Portman has joined the ranks of gay marriage supporters. I've heard members of the gay community criticize him for coming to that conclusion only after (years after) his son disclosed to Portman that he is gay. So what if it's true? If he gets it right, it's still right. Skin in the game always makes folks more serious about it. I suspect that he was motivated by having a gay son and emboldened by a political calculation that mirrors

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

Agenda: Education by Bruce Carr	2
Fiscally Responsible Strategies Keeping Iowa Strong by Matt McCoy	2
42 Movie Review by Gary Kaufman	3
Briefs & Shorts	3
A Rose is a Rose and a Lie is a Lie by Jonathan Wilson	4
Momix Botanica Theater Review by Gary Kaufman	4
From the Pastor's Pen: God, Beyond Marriage: The Reformation Project by Rev. Jonathan Page	5
My M.O. by Steve Person	6

CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, May 3, 2013, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by May 1st to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

So what if it's true? If he gets it right, it's still right.

Popular Demand... (cont.)

the one made by Obama and Clinton.

In a democracy, the popular will is ultimately supposed to carry the day. As Churchill said, "Americans can always be counted on to do the right thing...after they have exhausted all other possibilities." Equal access to marriage is materializing before our eyes; all other possibilities have been exhausted. And in my lifetime.

Agenda: Education

By Bruce Carr

The featured speaker at the FFBC meeting on Friday, April 5, was Representative Daniel Lundby, who represents the 68th district (Ely, Bertram, and most of Marion, in Linn County) in the Iowa House of Representatives. A fifth generation Iowan, Lundby is the son of Mary Lundby, a Republican who represented Linn County in the Iowa House (1987-1995) and Senate (1995 to her death in 2009). Daniel Lundby was elected just last November, defeating his two-term-incumbent opponent by fewer than 100 votes. A win is a win.



Lundby talked to us about his campaign strategy and his plans as a freshman member of the House. "I grew up in politics, helped out with numerous campaigns," he said. "After I moved back home from New York to help mom in her last days, I wanted to get politically involved again. I changed my party affiliation from Republican to Democrat because the Republican Party and the people I had been supporting no longer placed the best interests of Iowa and its voters before their own party agenda." His strategy was simple: knock on hundreds of doors, as he'd grown up doing. His family name was an open-sesame, and his insistence on taking nothing and nobody for granted paid off.

The fact that he is openly gay was a non-issue, as is evident from the fact that he didn't even mention it in his talk. Asked afterward, he noted that he had always been supported in his orientation by his family, and was never in the closet -- so there was no "secret" for the opposition to threaten to disclose.

Lundby's major legislative agenda, in his campaign and in office, is education. "Our educational status in Iowa right now is not acceptable," he said. "We used to be tops in the nation in education, and we've lost that." Specifically, he takes issue with state lawmakers' decision not to increase schools' allowable growth last year. "Unfortunately, the needs of our young people now seem less important, with the Republicans insist-

ing on zero percent growth for local schools, and education cuts at state universities," Lundby said. This has caused additional harm to districts already struggling to make ends meet, and makes it harder for local districts to get the job of educating children done." Daniel Lundby is aiming to change that.

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Daniel Lundby attended St. Joseph's Catholic Elementary in Marion and Regis High School in Cedar Rapids. He then earned an associate's degree from Kirkwood Community College, a bachelor's degree from ISU in 2003, and a master's degree there in 2011. He can be reached at daniel.lundby@legis.iowa.gov.

Fiscally Responsible Strategies Keep Iowa Strong

By Sen. Matt McCoy

Much of this legislative session has focused on expanding access to affordable health care to more Iowans through Medicaid. As we work toward that goal, we're also working to lower costs.

Most Medicaid providers are honest, hardworking health care professionals, but preventing fraud and abuse is a critical part of every important program. That watchdog function will improve this year with the Legislature's approval of [Senate File 357](#). It provides more tools that the Department of Human Services can use to identify fraud and abuse, collect overpayments, and assess civil penalties.

This is a key part of making sure Iowans have access to quality, affordable healthcare at the lowest possible cost.

Another fiscally responsible thing we can do is ensure that local companies have the chance to do as much business as possible. So if it makes sense, we should put Iowa companies first when spending your state and local tax dollars on the goods and services that government needs to operate.

To that end, the Senate approved [Senate File 170](#). This bipartisan Iowa First legislation applies to state contracts for less than \$500,000. If an Iowa-based business is narrowly underbid on a state contract—within five percent or \$10,000, whichever is less—by an out-of-state company, the Iowa business will have the chance to match that out-of-state bid.

Iowa First is a win-win. If it becomes law, no Iowa business will "just miss out" to an out-of-state business on a state contract. At the same time, government will never be required to pay more than the lowest bid. This is a great way to support local business people who've built their companies here in Iowa.

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This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County.

To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.

Senator McCoy is an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Commerce Committee, and chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee. He also serves on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation, and Ways & Means committees.



Accurate define a problem and your 90% of the way to solving it; merely repeating the symptoms makes any solution a proverbial shot in the dark.

Review By Gary Kaufman

The movie 42 begins by noting that in 1945 there were 400 players in Major League Baseball; all were white. Branch Rickey in the spring of 1945 tells his staff that he is going to bring a black player to play for his Brooklyn Dodgers. When they ask him why, he notes that there are a lot of black fans of baseball in Brooklyn and having a black player will bring them in, and their money is just as green as the money brought in by white fans. His staff thinks he's nuts, but they search



for the right player to bring in, and in August of 1945, they hire Jackie Robinson who Mr. Rickey promises to pay \$600 a month and a \$3500 bonus when he signs on to the Dodgers. Mr. Rickey describes the hellstorm this is going to create and that Mr. Robinson will have to remain quiet when confronted with the negativity that will be thrown at him. "You mean you want someone to play that doesn't have the guts to fight back?" he asks. "No. I want a man who has the guts not to fight back. You will only win if you can show you are a fine human being and a great baseball player. Like our Savior, you have to have the guts to turn the other cheek. Can you do it?" Rickey responds. "Give me a uniform and a number on its back, and I will give you the guts!" Jackie retorts.

Thus, begins the journey of Jackie Robinson into the world of professional baseball. He and his wife lived in Pasadena, California, but soon they were subjected to the world of prejudice in the South where the Spring baseball camps were located. They get bumped off a plane in New Orleans when Jackie's wife uses a white only restroom in the airport under the pretense that they have to "lighten the plane" due to a storm. The film does an excellent job of showing how deeply the racial prejudice was among whites at that time. It is a society in which blacks were made to feel inferior. A young black boy prays to God to allow Jackie Robinson to show them "what we can do" as Jackie plays his first game as a member of the Montreal Royals, the minor league team for the Dodgers. Jackie demonstrates his ability to steal bases and bats .625 in the following season exhibition games against the Dodgers and in 1947 signs for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The film follows him throughout that first season. Racial prejudice is not only evident in the South. The manager of the Philadelphia Phillies keeps yelling, "Hey, Nigga, Nigga, Nigga, Nigga" while Jackie is at bat. The entire team is not allowed to stay at the Ben Franklin hotel in Pittsburgh. And when they have to play in Cincinnati, Pee Wee Reese tells the owner that he comes from Kentucky and has received a letter calling him a Nigger Lover and a Carpetbagger, and he is not used to receiving these kind of notes. Mr. Rickey responds by

pulling out three files full of hate letters that had been sent to Jackie Robinson telling him to get out of baseball or his baby boy will die, making threats to his wife and himself, and notes that the FBI are taking the threats from Cincinnati quite seriously. At the game a young boy asks his father how many runs Pee Wee is going to score that day. He is quite excited about seeing the game and Pee Wee. But when his father starts chanting, "Hey, Nigger Boy!" at Jackie, the young lad takes his father's lead and yells. Amid all the yelling, Pee Wee from his short stop position walks over to Jackie at first base and affectionately puts his arm around his neck and tells Jackie, "I got a lot of kin in the audience and I just want to show them what kind of a man I am." "Maybe the whole team should wear number 42 and then they couldn't tell us apart!"

Writer, director Brian Helgeland hits his own homerun with this movie. Harrison Ford does the best acting of his entire career in playing Branch Rickey, trailblazing owner of the club. The audience applauded at the end of the matinee movie I attended. It is a very emotional and well edited film. Come to it and appreciate how far society has progressed. You won't be disappointed

How many years do you have left? Make some realistic assumptions; then make a plan to make the most of those years.

All about . . . : "Enough about me; let's talk about you. What do you think about me?"

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the May 3 meeting no later than May 1. Email JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Sean Faircloth of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Science and Reason.

Thanks to Ryan Crane for his introduction of our April speaker, Daniel Lundby of the Iowa House of Representatives.

Consider a current tax deductible gift to FFBC or, at the point when you won't need it anymore, a Legacy Gift to FFBC. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details.

Mark your calendar for the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus Pride concert, THE BIG GAY SING, Saturday June 8 at 7:30pm at Drake University's Sheslow Auditorium, 2507 University Ave., Des Moines. Tickets and info at dmgmc.org.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Barry McGriff for coordinating the book exchange

A Rose is a Rose and a Lie is a Lie

By Jonathan Wilson

In the **Bystander**, a newspaper predominantly catering to the black community, a purchased ad has been repeatedly published on behalf of the Polk County Republican Party. The ad is titled, "Wisdom from a Respected Republican" and attributes to Abraham Lincoln the following quotation:

"You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than you earn. You cannot build character and courage by taking away man's initiative and independence. You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves."

The problem is that Abraham Lincoln -- certainly a respected Republican -- never said those words. To say that he did is a lie, pure and simple. And, if someone lies to you about one thing, it's reasonable to assume that they will lie to you about other things as well. It's like cockroaches; if you see one you *know* that the walls are full of them.

The repeatedly published ad goes on to say, "Your Voice -- Your Community -- Your Party." Readers of the publication should assume that's a lie as well, and it is. The Republican Party in recent years has espoused public policies decidedly contrary to the clear interests of people of color; the interests of the poor and disadvantaged; the interests of wage earners; the interests of the elderly; the interests of immigrants; the interests of tax-paying, law-abiding gay children of God; and the interests of those who fall victim to mass murders using high capacity assault weapons that have no purpose other than to kill people. The list is almost endless and the only good thing that can be said is that the Republican Party platform is mostly consistent. It is also said, and rightly, that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.

The Party opposes fairer taxes on those most able to pay. The Party favors cuts in spending on social programs. The Party favors elimination of inheritance taxes so that deadbeat offspring of the rich can stay that way more comfortably. The Party opposes affirmative action to rectify decades of government-sanctioned discrimination against people of color. The Party opposes adequate and equitable funding for *free* quality public education and supports vouchers for private schools at the expense of public schools. The Party espouses tax deductions that reward the export of American jobs. The Party opposes increases in the minimum wage. The Party favors deregulation of business and industry in order to enhance profits, but

at greater risk to consumers. The Party opposes any ban on high capacity assault weapons and universal background checks for all gun purchases. The Party consistently tries to make voting more, not less, difficult, to the disadvantage of minority voters. In short, the Party wants to continue its guerilla war on the lower and middle class while condemning class warfare. The resulting income disparities have become glaring to the point of unconscionability.

The tag line: "Your Voice -- Your Community -- Your Party" is a joke, and a bad one at that. It's made no less so by tying it to a misquotation of Abraham Lincoln.

Theater Review: Momix Botanica

By Gary Kaufman

This season I bought a single ticket to the Dance Series at the Civic Center as I was not sure I would like it. The performance of **Botanica** by the dance troop, Momix, was worth the price of the entire series. It was a spectacular psychedelic visual trip that far exceeds any dance performance I have ever seen. As their promotional material states, they "conjure a world of surrealist images using light, shadow, props, humor and the human body". A white sheet going across the stage with air blowing over it becomes a sea out of which human forms appear -- at one point three ladies emerge dancing under a tree of life reaching for its fruit and then disappear back into the sea of white. A dancer is lying on an enormous mirror on an inclined plane with the mirror duplicating whatever imagery the dancer is forming, creating a human kaleidoscope which disappears as the dancer rolls off the top of the mirror out of view at the end of the piece. We discover why a triceratops would make for a lousy pet even though they were herbivores. At another point the dancers come out forming a millipede but then break off into two's with the second person bending over and being the rear end of a centaur, half-human, half-horse mythological character, as they cavort across the stage. I, as someone who appreciates the human form, discovered an eroticism that I don't ordinarily associate with the backside of a horse. In a very spectacular piece, a man in white holds a 30 foot fan, opening and closing it above him, bringing it down and up, while imagery is projected on to the stage. At one point we are seeing the universe collapse in front of us, and it evolves into other breathtaking imagery as well. The artistic director of Momix is Moses Pendleton, one of the founding members of the Philobolus Dance Theater, but this went far beyond Philobolus. It was a 90 minute non-stop performance that left me in jaw-dropping awe.

There is still an opportunity for you to attend part of the dance series, as the last performance of the series is May 21. It is a performance by **Les Ballets, Trachadero de Monte Carlo**. The brochure states that it "was founded in 1974 by a group of ballet enthusiasts for the purpose of presenting a playful, entertaining view of traditional, classical ballet in parody form and *en travesti*" (i.e. men in drag). Should be interesting

From the Pastor's Pen

Beyond Marriage:

The Reformation Project

By Rev. Jonathan Page

The drums of inevitability are beating for marriage equality. In a remarkably short period of time we have seen public opinion shift and even traditional conservatives have come out in favor of marriage equality. We all now await the decision of the Supreme Court to see how rapid the change will come, but few doubt that it will come. At this point it behooves us to look toward the future. What is the next hurdle for gay rights and how can we bring it about?

One big effort will be the normalization of LGBT people in the curriculum of our schools. Transgender rights is another obvious area for advocacy. But where else should we focus? What will do the most good for the cause? Religion, and specifically conservative Christianity, remains an obstacle to full inclusion and acceptance. So long as large portions of the American people hear sermons week after week that denigrate gay people, prejudice and danger remain. Among the many areas of focus, we must continue to work within communities of faith to bring about true equality. One effort in particular has the potential to move the dial over the next five to ten years.

In the spring of 2009 I remember having a discussion with a Harvard College freshman named Matthew Vines. Matthew grew up in Kansas and was heavily involved in his conservative Christian church. Matthew is also gay. This circumstance is all too common, but Matthew chose to take an uncommon approach to his situation. He decided to stick with his local faith community despite their rejection of who he is, and he elected to drop out of Harvard the next year to wrestle with what this might mean for him. And so, back home in Kansas, Matthew started to read. He read every book he could find on homosexuality and Christianity, regardless of the book's conclusion or outlook. And in March 2012 Matthew gave an hour-long lecture at a church in Wichita that he taped and posted on YouTube. The video made an immediate impact. Dan Savage reposted it on his blog, and it went viral.

I chatted with Matthew last summer to congratulate him on his success and discovered quickly that he had big plans in store. Now, more than a year later, Matthew is hard at work on The Reformation Project, an organization designed to change the way conservative Christians see homosexuality. Those involved in The Reformation Project are committed to remaining in their faith communities. It is a fundamentally conservative movement that argues eloquently that you can be a "traditional" Christian and also be gay. This fall The Reformation Project will host its first conference at a church outside Kansas City. This conference is designed for fifty participants and will include intensive training in biblical interpretation and

suggestions for how to engage other Christians around homosexuality. The goal is simple: change must come from within conservative Christianity for the anti-gay prejudice to end.

The Reformation Project is merely one example of the change that is currently happening within evangelical circles. Prominent leaders like Rob Bell and Jim Wallis have both recently come out in favor of gay marriage. Justin Lee, the executive director of the Gay Christian Network, just published the book *Torn* about his own experiences being a gay evangelical and the torturous journey that led him to reject the paradigm of gay or evangelical. I firmly believe that efforts by people like Lee and Vines are crucial for the next stage of the gay rights movement. Once we can divorce gay prejudice from Christianity, we will have moved to a new era of acceptance and love. That change must come from within conservative churches. We are seeing the beginning of this. It can happen. In the meantime, Matthew Vines is looking for financial support for The Reformation Project. If you are looking for a way to further gay rights, consider making a donation. I just did. www.thereformationproject.org

FFBC member Jonathan Page is senior pastor of the Ames United Church of Christ, 217 6th Street, Ames, Iowa. Sunday service at 10:45. He can be reached at jon@Amesucc.org.



Insult Corner:

I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend.... if you have one. - George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... if there is one. - Winston Churchill, in response.

"I love California. I practically grew up in Phoenix." Dan Quayle

"The fortune you seek is in a different cookie." -Source Unknown

Sometimes we think we dislike flattery, but it is only the way it is done that we dislike. Francois, Duc de La Rochefoucauld



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My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

Through Someone Else's Eyes

By Steve Person

In the January edition of the newsletter, I wrote, among other things, about the newest film version of **Anna Karenina**. I said in that article that I was going to get Tolstoy's novel and give it a careful reading. As stunning as the latest film version was, the book is nothing short of marvelous! It reminded me of how film interpretations of great literature rarely—if ever—capture the true genius that a gifted writer can convey through Technicolor words and expressions.

The two versions of **Anna Karenina** that I have seen in motion picture form, while visually stunning, have no way of interpreting a line such as, "But while she looked like a butterfly clinging to a blade of grass, and just about to open its rainbow wings for fresh flight, her heart ached with horrible despair." Now, I know that Greta Garbo and Keira Knightley have no trouble registering despair with visual expression, but there is or never was an actor who could do justice to Tolstoy's words.

Even of more interest to me was that the book dealt with the love affair between Anna and Vronsky only about a third of the time. The other two-thirds were devoted to the love and marriage of Levin and Kitty, agricultural and political affairs in late nineteenth century Russia, and family relationships among both the aristocracy and the peasantry. None of that was ever dealt with any substance in either movie version. I guess that is why a mini-series of classic literature makes so much more sense than a cursory interpretation of pretty yet shallow characters. Yet even an extended photoplay is nothing more than a few people's vision of what goes on inside a reader's head to a greater extent than any film crew could ever capture.

I am reminded of films that of themselves are considered classic interpretations of literary endeavors. **Gone with the Wind** as a movie is a pale expression of Margaret Mitchell's extraordinary—if flawed—vision of the Old South. Her book soared while the film came crashing down to the red earth of Tara. Likewise, one of the most influential books of the psychedelic 1960s, **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**, degenerated into a sorry Jack Nicholson portrayal of Randall Patrick McMurphy. Of even bigger disappointment was the 1939 version of one of the most powerful novels ever written—**The Grapes of Wrath**. The film concentrated on Henry Fonda's interpretation of Tom Joad, but the nuance of the lesser characters was just as, if not more, important than that character. The gripping end to the novel was completely ignored in the film version.

I could go on and on about someone else's interpretation of what should be one's own private, in-the-brain screening of great pieces of literature, but I think the point is made. For those too lazy to pick up a book and begin the joyous journey into the road of imagination and words, I say, "Too bad. You're missing out on the best pictures every made—your own!"

"Traditionally, most of Australia's imports come from overseas."
Keppel Enderbery
