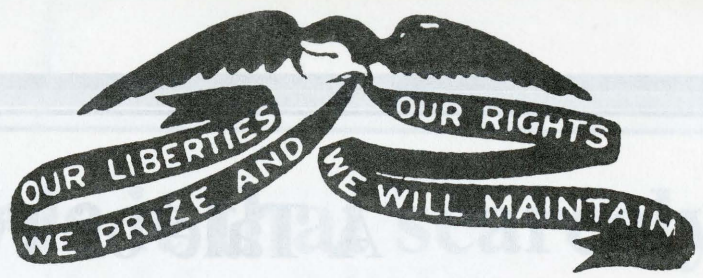


# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



22

Winter 1992

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

## That's Living in America: Prairie Dog's Honor Roll for 1992

The Iowa Trust ethics scandal was the state's hottest story in 1992, still unfolding as the New Year rings in. The crimes and misdemeanors of various legislators and lawyers furnished enough greed, ambition, deceit and drama for a decade. Nationally, the secrecy and lies of Iran/Contra cast a dark net of deception over the land.

The two scandals lacked only for sex, which was abundant in the next most-talked-about story, the saga of the two-way mirror in a Coralville motel.

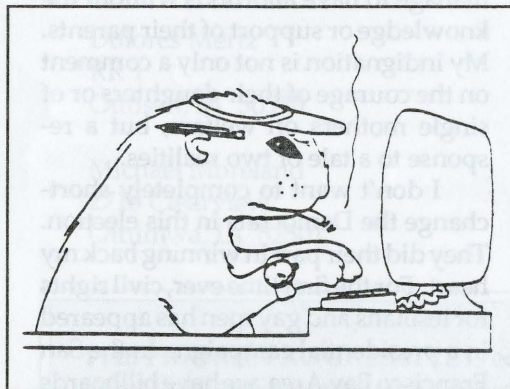
Truth grows ever more elusive in American public life. This year's honor roll applauds, above all, those words and deeds which illuminated the shadows of duplicity around us.

**Carl Youngquist** — The Department of Natural Resources engineer refused to write a permit to allow increased chemical emissions for Archer Midland. To do so, he said, would "not only be compromising my principles & engineering ethic, but would be breaking the law." Governor Branstad approved the draft of the permit.

**PrairieFire & University of Iowa Labor Center** — These two groups co-sponsored a "Race & Economics" workshop for representatives from meatpacking, poultry & egg processing communities across the Midwest. Both organizations provide education

and leadership against anti-immigrant and hate group activities.

**Jim Murphy** — The Iowa City merchant became a one-man Truth Squad. At his own expense he videotaped meetings of county supervisors, the conservation board, and the State Financial Disclosure Commission. Murphy then ran them on local cable TV, giving thou-



sands of citizens their first glimpse of meetings which are often "public" in name only.

**Becki Russell & Jennifer Campbell** — It took a year and a half, but these two teen-agers won their challenge to Maquoketa's curfew law when the State Supreme Court ruled that the right to freedom of assembly is not for adults only. Said the winners, "We fought for what we thought was right and we won."

**Lynette Wright** — When Iowa was hit by crossburnings, she helped promote multiracial dialogue by founding the Anti-Racist Mobilization at the U of I. In addition to organizing on campus, Wright stood up in person to Klan members at face-offs in Dubuque and Janesville, WI.

**Francis Giunta** — The President of the Dubuque Federation of Labor inspired many unionists in northeast Iowa to join in protest against the Klan infestation.

**Kesho Scott** — This sociology professor at Grinnell conducts workshops on race for Iowa corporations. After the LA uprising she was quoted in the New York Times: "A lot of things we experience as people of color we grin and bear; then we explode and white ethnics ask, 'Why are you so angry?'"

**Louise Noun** — The matron saint of the ICLU co-curated the Des Moines Art Center's exhibit, "Degenerate Art: Censorship in Nazi Germany." She also found time to write More Strong-Minded Women: Iowa Feminists Tell Their Stories, and finance the creation of the women's history archives at the U of I Main Library.

**Mark Henderson** — In his fourth try for the legislature, the Democrat from Princeton was elected on a plat-

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# A Tale of Two Realities

In 1956, my friend Patricia's parents quietly slipped into her room late one November night, looked at their sleeping young daughter and whispered, "It's going to be all right, Eisenhower won."

Patricia and I did not meet until 1969 in Iowa City. We were entrenched in anti-Vietnam War teach-ins and demonstrations, underground referrals to illegal abortionists, and the drama of watching our male friends maneuver to stay out of the military. We shunned electoral politics. When Patricia told the story of her parents' relief at Eisenhower's election, we rolled our eyes and laughed at what we believed was their naive and misguided sense of security. Not only did it seem absurd to delight in the election of a Republican military hero, but we could not fathom having such faith in the electoral process. When we came of age to vote, we didn't want to.

Now, in November of 1992, I'm trying to recall how I moved from my cynicism of the sixties to my enthusiasm of the nineties. Clinton and Gore were never my candidates of choice, though I supported them because they were a step in the right direction. But the content of the election campaign drew me in as none before. The issues at the top of the agenda were my issues. They were the issues Patricia and I helped to define in the sixties and seventies: reproductive rights, peace, and civil rights.

The Republicans, through their narrow and mean-spirited vision, kindled my passion to vote. I began to feel more and more personally threatened as the Republican party moved further and further to the right. As a lesbian and a mother, the conservative interpretation of family values was offensive and frightening. One fiscally conservative but socially moderate Republican close

to the Reagan and Bush administrations admitted that the term "cultural elite" was a code reference to Jews with too much power. It all started to feel much too much like Germany of the late 1930s.

The Republican Party's devastation of programs for the poor was inexcusable in both the Reagan and Bush administrations. But when Dan Quayle began to lob attacks on the personal integrity of single mothers on welfare, I was back into the game with both feet. Now these two wealthy white men were meddling where they had no business. And the discussions of Bush and Quayle about their hypothetical daughters in need of abortions was absurd. After having worked in a reproductive health clinic for eight years, I know first hand about the experience of daughters of wealthy conservative parents who manage to have abortions without the knowledge or support of their parents. My indignation is not only a comment on the courage of their daughters or of single mothers on welfare, but a response to a tale of two realities.

I don't want to completely short-change the Democrats in this election. They did their part in winning back my heart. For the first time ever, civil rights for lesbians and gay men has appeared in a presidential campaign. In the San Francisco Bay Area, we have billboards featuring two prominent San Francisco lesbians and their infant child, proclaiming, "Another Traditional Family." And in his victory speech, first on the list of issues Clinton promised to address was support for AIDS research.

Clinton's questionable draft history was also a hopeful sign to me, as my two sons approach the age when they will face the decision about registration for the military. I only wish Clinton had been able to be more clear and honest about his position on the draft,

rather than sidestepping the issue for political expediency. Even if he would have expressed his ambivalence about the draft, it would be a model for our sons who will struggle with their own issues about war and peace. But for the first time in recent history, we have a President who does not glorify the military.

I have a clear sense of reality alongside my happiness at Clinton's victory. My friend Jim said, good-naturedly, as he waited in line to vote for Clinton, "C'mon, you know that in three months we'll all be mad as hell at this guy." And it's probably true.

But I've been meaning to call Patricia and tell her that Tuesday night in November of 1992, I came pretty close to telling my children, "It's going to be all right, Clinton won." ☺

— **Francie Hornstein** is a former Iowan who lives and works in Oakland, CA.

"The stark political challenge in the decades ahead will be to reaffirm that, even though America is no longer a separate and distinct economy, it is still a society whose members have abiding obligations to one another."

— **Future Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, Jan. 20, 1991**

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# WAF T Cancels 1992 Award

Women Against Free-floating Testosterone has agreed to cancel its "Golden Testes" award for 1992 in appreciation of Hayden Fry's losing football season. Scientific studies have shown that when men win, their testosterone levels rise significantly, creating a dangerous environment for those around them. With the Hawks losing season, WAF T headquarters in Iowa City reports a significant decrease in victory-related accidents, such as being thumped on the back by a drunk in black and gold bib overalls who says "How 'bout them Hawks!" or slipping

on a puddle of frozen vomit in the pedestrian mall. Our thanks to Coach Fry for making Iowa City a kinder and gentler place this fall.

Other male losses in Iowa this year have contributed to atmospheric changes. Joseph Welsh's disaster with the Iowa Trust has been better than a dose of estrogen for members of the male dominated legislature, making them, ethics-wise, as skittish as kittens. The presence of Tiny Tim in Des Moines may also be part of taming hormones in

Iowa. WAF T salutes him for his contribution and is considering an early endorsement of Mr. Tim for Governor.

Despite the failure of the ERA in Iowa, and the incomplete "Year of the Woman" in the national elections, WAF T is predicting that enough male losses occurred to make a significant difference in national testosterone levels. WAF T will be asking Hillary Clinton to serve as honorary chairperson for 1993. ☺

— Sundy Smith covers the hormone beat for the *Prairie Progressive*.

## String 'Em Up!

### A letter to the editor

Dear Friends:

It was with no little interest that I read your editorial on drug war sentencing in Federal District Court. The real nexus of the drug war hysteria in Iowa goes back to Tom Harkin's senatorial campaign strategy against Tom Tauke. Early in 1989 he made the decision to co-opt Tauke by taking this issue up hard.

I attempted, without success, to get Harkin to answer the question of whether he had ever used marijuana. He never had the guts to answer. What about "Drug-Free By '93?" I doubt you'll ever hear a peep about this again from our opportunistic Senator.

But all witch-hunts have a way of returning to haunt the witch-hunters — and that's what's now going on in Cedar Rapids. I remember an earlier drug witch-hunt in New York. Pushers would get the chair!! That lasted until

the first rich white kid was convicted and the law was quickly and quietly scrapped.

And now we find that all those nasty "druggers" of Senator Harkin's lurid rhetoric aren't nameless young black men (such convenient and available scapegoats). They are our neighbors, co-workers, friends and relatives — some not so honorable, some perhaps too greedy, some misguided, some seeking some sense of self-esteem — but many of them not too different from the rest of us and most of them not much different from the neighborhood bartender. String 'em up!

It is interesting to note that the doctors at University Hospitals who steal their patients' cocaine (thereby violating all manner of federal and state laws, not to mention their medical oaths) get probation and treatment. Maybe if we're really lucky the kid of some governor, senator or other *importante* will get hauled in so we can mercifully end this latest "war."

Sincerely,

Jim Walters  
Iowa City

## THANK YOU!

for your generous contributions and comments. The best and the brightest replies to our questionnaire will appear in the Spring issue.

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# Give Spike and Denzel a “V” for Malcolm this X-mas

*“Spike loves that man, and you know it could be argued that he is that man, in his own way.”* – Denzel Washington

*“No way I wanted to be killed—Malcolm is a martyr in the world of Islam. I’m in it to win.”* – Spike Lee

Tilt the cross on its side, there’s a new god in town. X is here. And there’s no denying that this time the savior is Black, with a messianic charisma that celebrities and politicians can only dream of.

The one most responsible for this phenomenon (not counting men like Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Daryl Gates) is Spike Lee. Yes, Spike has done it. He has marketed his man and made his movie, his grand epic about his great hero.

He paid a price, though. Lee has been attacked from all quarters. Black nationalist Amiri Baraka (the former LeRoi Jones) charged that the “petit bourgeois” Lee wasn’t fit for the task; Black moderate Carl Rowan claimed Malcolm wasn’t a worthy subject; educators groused about Lee asking kids to skip school to see his movie; film and social critics alike called him a “world-class hustler,” and “logo maker of genius” (it’s no mere logo for a friend who put on his X-cap for the first time and wore it to work the morning after the Rodney King verdict); and, finally, Lee’s emulating Malcolm’s wish to be interviewed only by Black reporters (his way of getting publications to hire African-Americans) resulted in one major magazine titling its interview: “Spike Lee Hates Your Cracker Ass.”

With advance publicity like that, Spike Lee had to be a marketing genius.

Which he is, and proud of it. (He boasts that he is second only to Madonna.) Lee has said something that would make him a fitting epitaph: “From day one everything I’ve done has been for Black people.” Those who feel Lee is too pushy with his product or too preachy with his movies need to realize that he is a man on a mission. Film is his weapon in the cultural war raging in this country, and no profit means no weapon. Marketing, Message, Mission = three in one. Lee is the original 3M man.

It’s about time we accept the fact that Spike Lee has become an icon, a Black hero, in his own right. Who, after Jesse Jackson, ruffles white feathers so consistently as Spike Lee? We resist seeing a revolutionary in one who wraps himself in such a comical package. Who more than Lee has earned the right to make this movie? He unlocked the door to Black cinema (with a spillover into television) and put many African-Americans to work both on and behind the screen.

There is much greatness in Malcolm X, beginning with its star, Denzel Washington, who just won the prized New York Film Critics award for best actor of the year. He masterfully navigates the many stages of this mythic hero’s rise from street hustler to a man at the height of his powers and insight, yet not able to “turn the corner.” Washington’s face captures key moments with great force: the gawky look of youth when we first see him; the incredible look of rage when he breaks a bottle over the head of a man who has maligned his mother; the total subjugation and humility when he first meets Elijah Muhammad; the greatest don’t-fuck-with-me-white-boy look you’ll ever see in the Harlem police station; the look of desperate anguish when his wife confronts him with the paternity suits against Elijah Muhammad; and,

finally, the hollow, helpless look of a man resigned to his fate.

The movie is too overwhelming for just one viewing. It should be seen again, the second time giving yourself over to Terence Blanchard’s haunting music, Ernest Dickerson’s camera magic (many scenes simply could not look any better), and the changing moods. Near the end, the camera becomes prime mover, making a full circle around Malcolm’s face, then moving the scenery while he stands still, bringing his fateful hour to him. Malcolm has lost control of his destiny. There is a quiet solemnity in Malcolm backstage before his final speech, a scene like the eye of the hurricane of the brilliantly orchestrated assassination scene that follows. In his final moment we see Malcolm filled with premonition, his image reflected in a mirror.

What is it about this image that, admittedly, obsesses so? Why are ultra-hip youth so attracted to this man in a dark suit and tie, with the glasses of a scholar?

One great appeal of Malcolm X was his ability to do what the world must do real quick: change. The slender ray of hope entering the White House as those with no soul and less heart exit, will only quicken the need, and hopefully the impulse, for change. Will the movie, framed in the 90’s racism of L.A. and South Africa, move people to change? Will the self-educated, ever-evolving Malcolm himself be role model enough? Or will all the energy raging behind the X find its own course?

It’s problem-facing time, time to tend to that precious root that was ripped from rich African soil and left to fend for itself on American asphalt. Time to right an ancient wrong. Sooner or later this will be done by—to paraphrase Malcolm—whatever it takes.☛

— Jae Retz



# “Why is it that scarcely any are executed but the poor?”

—Thomas Paine, 1792

Iowa will soon join the list of states whose citizens officially kill their own unless we act quickly.

The best way to stop the death penalty is to stop it in committee. Here are the undecided members of the House Judiciary Committee. Seven are already calling for state-sponsored executions. If four more members join them, the death bill will make it to the floor. Contact them now and make a difference.

### House Judiciary Committee Undecideds:

Mona Martin (R)  
1504 W. 29th Street  
Davenport, IA 52804  
319-391-7350

Bob Rafferty (R)  
2245 E. 32nd Street  
Davenport, IA 52807  
319-355-2921

Dick Weidman (R)  
P.O. Box 483  
Griswold, IA 51535  
712-778-2653

Iowans Against the Death Penalty is the statewide group coordinating opposition to capital punishment. Call them at (515) 284-5047 to get the latest. The next general meeting will be Thursday, January 7, at 7:00 pm at 510 E. Locust Street, Des Moines. All are welcome.

IADP reports that the following are **Undecided Democratic Legislators**.

Dolores Mertz  
RR 1  
Ottosen, IA 50570

Michael Moreland  
2716 Clearview  
Ottumwa, IA 52501

Dennis Renaud  
600 Adventureland Drive  
Altoona, IA 50009

Phil Wise  
503 Grand Avenue  
Keokuk, IA 52632

Tony Bisignano  
3423 SE 8th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50315

Berl Priebe  
2106 100th Avenue  
Algona, IA 50511

Tell them you don't want to live in a death penalty state.☞

**THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE** is edited by members of the Iowa City Local of The Democratic Socialists of America.

Yes, I want to subscribe:

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- 1993 sustaining fund contribution (Thanks!)

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*Honor Roll, continued from page 1*  
form of conservation and energy independence. His surprise victory terrorized the Scott County Republican Party Chair, who called Henderson "an ultra, ultra environmentalist."

**Roseanne Arnold** — The one-woman Department of Economic Development is in the process of creating more jobs in Iowa than the Chamber of Commerce ever dreamed of. Roseanne vs. Fred Grandy for governor in '96?

The year shouldn't end without recalling some magical moments of truth-twisting:

- Opposing a bill in the House which would have made it harder for businesses to fire workers for off-the-job activities, Rep. Hurley (R-Fayette) said, "We only shoot ourselves in the foot when we tie employers' hands."
- In a front-page story the Des Moines Register praised Sam Walton's en-

trepreneurial spirit while bashing his anti-worker policies in an editorial the same day.

- Crispus Nix, warden of the State Penitentiary at Ft. Madison, explained his get-tough measures for belligerent inmates: "When you try to be nice to them, they don't know how to behave."

Finally, the winners of the Inadvertent Moment of Truth Awards:

**RUNNER-UP** — State Comptroller Marvin Selden acknowledged that Iowa's revenue growth was far less than needed to balance the current budget: "In the last few years we've tended to get a little over-optimistic."

**GRANDPRIZE** — Karl Luther, administrator of a Sioux City nursing home, dropped out of Medicaid and forced some of the poorer residents to move. "That's living in America," he observed. ☹

## THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

Box 1945  
Iowa City, IA 52244

"Dissent, rebellion,  
and all-around hell-  
raising remain the  
true duty of  
patriots."

—Barbara  
Ehrenreich

