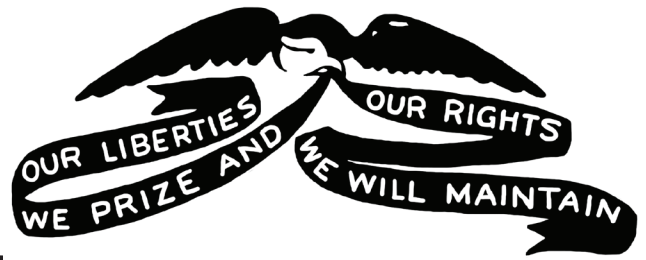


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



January 2014

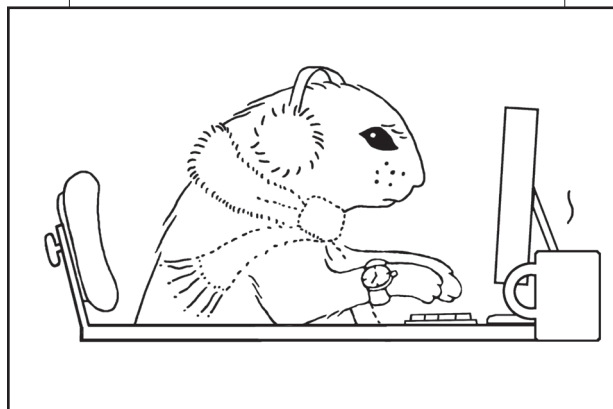
A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

The Haunting Falls to Us: Prairie Dog's Honor Roll for 2013

The slow-talking, quick-tweeting **Senator Charles Grassley** had a chance to make this year's Honor Roll, but his desire to stay on the good side of the Religious Right won out. Six years ago, Grassley and the Senate Finance Committee began a probe of high-profile TV ministries long suspected of abusing their tax-exempt status. In his role as guardian of our tax dollars, Grassley investigated Kenneth Copeland Ministries and others for extravagant spending, exorbitantly-paid leaders, and political endorsements -- simply to determine if these groups were bilking donors who mistakenly believed they were contributing to God's work.

Back here in Iowa, Republicans doing God's work punished Grassley's impertinence by rejecting his routine request to serve as a delegate to their 2008 state convention. Humiliated by conservative evangelicals, Grassley lost his zeal as Protector of the Tax Code. In 2010 the Senate Finance Committee issued a report devoid of any call for additional oversight of television ministries. This year, when asked about churches that

electioneer in clear violation of tax-free politicking from the pulpit, Grassley's office responded that he is "weighing next steps." Better luck next year, Chuck.



The Center for Worker Justice has shown that issue-based organizing is alive and well in eastern Iowa. A coalition of union members, immigrant reform advocates, low-income workers, and church activists has engineered a remarkable number of successes in a short time since gaining non-profit status and obtaining an office and event space in Iowa City. Led by executive director **Misty Rebik** and members of the Sudanese and Latino communities,

CWJ has recovered "lost" wages for hotel/construction/temp agency workers, persuaded the school board to reconsider an ID card requirement for parents visiting schools, pressured the same school board to reconsider its decision to hold classes on Martin Luther King Day, and picked up an award from the city's Human Rights Commission -- all in its first year of existence.

Soft-spoken, bicycle-riding **Officer David Schwindt** looks more like a graduate student on his way to class than a high-profile Iowa City cop patrolling the pedestrian mall. His appearance is appropriate, though, because Schwindt is as much an educator as a policeman. He takes the time to learn about the downtown denizens who are often down on their luck -- some homeless, some with mental illness, some loud and rude, and many, according to one local merchant, "unsightly." Schwindt knows their names and their stories, and he defends them publicly, citing their right to free speech and their desire to be treated like anyone else.

Honor Roll Continued on Page 6

Not Ready for Hillary

First let me say this: “I’m Ready for Hillary” is a terrible campaign slogan that the Hillary team should seriously reconsider. It not only implies that there is something bad on the way for which we need to brace ourselves, it invites a negative reaction, “No. I’m not ready for Hillary” from everyone who is not already a supporter. And it’s all about her - no hope/change or broader message. For this and other reasons, I will not be changing my Facebook profile photo to “I’m Ready for Hillary” any time soon.

I love Hillary Clinton. I admired her grit and toughness as First Lady. She had me at vast right-wing conspiracy. She is brainy and hard-working. I appreciate her edgy sarcasm, like when she made the “I’m not going to stay home and bake cookies” gaffe. She has had to stand by her man, propping up her lying and cavorting husband in public, and has managed to do it in such a manner that she doesn’t seem desperate or dysfunctional. That is character.

Hillary is also a policy wonk who cares deeply about her country. She has been a passionate, effective advocate for women and girls, not just in the United States but around the globe. She understands how badly men continue to botch everything with their wars and oil companies and testosterone (yes, I realize she voted for a war, but she wouldn’t have started one). By all accounts Hillary performed her job as Senator from New York effectively, working hard for her constituents, caring about the grassroots.

She admirably mended fences with Barack Obama after losing the primary. She gave an awesome

speech, convincingly persuading her band of bitter, disappointed, feminist supporters to throw their electoral weight behind the upstart male who grabbed her place in line for the presidency right out from under her. That must have been incredibly hard, but she did it.

“In the end, the Iowa caucuses are not really about or for Hillary’s kind of candidacy.”

Hillary has a progressive heart but a Democratic Leadership Council mind. And it’s the DLC part of her that makes me cringe. I hated her 2008 campaign. I was appalled when she said “shame on you, Barack Obama” purely for effect. Her stump speeches seemed phoned up and plastic, not inspirational. Other than just before New Hampshire, when she teared up as she talked about how much was at stake, I got little sense of the real Hillary beneath her campaign advisors’ sound bytes and talking points. This was disturbing because it lent the feeling that she was being controlled by ambitious politicians with their own agendas, that it wasn’t really Hillary who was running the show.

Fast forward to now, looking ahead to 2016. Some Iowa caucus-goers say that she should campaign in Iowa, kiss our rings, and allow us to put her through the drill. My view is that it is entirely up to her whether she

campaigns in Iowa, and I do not hold it against her if she does not. It seems perfectly understandable that this former First Lady, Secretary of State, heir-apparent to the presidency, etc., would not want to grovel around Iowa for months on end, eating corn dogs if she doesn’t have to. I have no problem with that. It’s not for everyone. And after all, we betrayed her in favor of the upstart kid the last time she tried.

Strategically, it could be risky for her to skip Iowa entirely because of the chance that she would leave space for another upstart candidate to move in and make a race of it. Like Brian Schweitzer, for example, the likable, red-state Democratic Governor from Montana who has been quite successful getting things done in his state, and who recently pledged to visit all of Iowa’s 99 counties.

In the end, the Iowa caucuses are not really about or for Hillary’s kind of candidacy, the big money, huge name recognition, established candidate. The Iowa caucuses are for the lesser-known, less well-funded candidate with an appealing message who, if they can do well here, can possibly make a race of it. As Joe Biden has said, the Iowa caucuses are the last bastion of retail, grassroots politics, where anyone who is willing to work hard can launch a campaign even without Wall St. backing and tons of cash. The Iowa caucuses are important to democracy for that reason. Our value to the process is not to help an established, well-bankrolled front-runner like Hillary. Our value lies in giving a long-shot candidate a chance. We provide the best chance at an even playing field in an otherwise corrupt and money-driven system that depends on ad buys.

*Not Ready for Hillary
Continued on Page 8*

The Flag and the Cross

“When fascism comes to America it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross.”

These words have often been attributed to Sinclair Lewis, but as the unsentimental veracity of the Internet points out, this phrase really has no clear origin. Yet it retains its power and reminds us of the dark purposes that patriotism and faith have been perverted to support in our country. Times of social change or economic hardship always birth ugly groups that offer simple answers and scapegoats to the people, while advancing the interests of the rich and powerful. The anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic Know Nothing Party of the 1850s is of a piece with the KKK-based Americanism of the 1920s, sibling to the McCarthyite witch-hunts of the Cold War, and clear forerunner of today’s “AstroTurf” Tea Party by which extremist billionaires mobilize angry white workers to push the Reaganite anti-tax, anti-union, and anti-minority policies that have fueled more than thirty years of stagnant wages, staggering income inequality, and economic free fall for everyone who works for a living.

Of late, I’ve had to sharpen my own arguments and thinking now that my son challenges me from the ideological idealism of youthful socialism. How does one describe the Tea Party movement that harnesses scared white workers to the wagon of corporate extremism? Are demagogues like Ted Cruz, Rand Paul, and our own Steve King simple-minded true believers in the drivel they peddle, or are they cunning scaremongers using economic fear to advance their plutocratic masters’ agenda?

Whatever you call them, it is clear that they are no longer just right-of-center politicians who believe in the principles of American constitutional democracy. Their extremism, se-

“Why do we allow these home-grown brown-shirts to frame the economic debate?”

cret sources of unlimited cash, and fundamental disdain for democratic ideals and institutions make them a threat to our republic. Safe in gerrymandered districts that make elections meaningless, these corporate nihilists are free to institutionalize gridlock in Congress, pass sweeping laws across the nation to disenfranchise millions of American voters, and hack away at the foundations of the American state.

The anti-democrats on the Supreme Court rule that corporations have the First Amendment right to spend countless millions to buy elections, while their brethren in GOP state legislatures work overtime to deny women their First Amendment rights to privacy and choice. The NRA-arms company shells in the Senate drone on as I write in defense of their right to completely block Senate legislation while the country observes the one-year anniversary of the terrorism in Newtown in the wake of another school shooting in Colorado.

Is it not time for progressives, liberals, leftists—anyone sane and unafraid to support policies that make our country a safer, fairer, and better society for all—to grow backbones and call these people out as the authoritarian corporatists that they are? Who on the left will label these fanatics as the anti-American, anti-democratic, and proto-despots that they really are? When will Democrats, the self-professed party of working

people, the middle class, the diversity of America, stand up and sound a warning against this threat. Who will offer a clear and positive alternative to the extremism of the right?

President Obama speaks loftily about the need to address income inequality in the US, but he is willing to negotiate cuts to Social Security and Medicare to reach a “compromise” with the far-right economic policies of the GOP. Democrats in Michigan and across the country rolled over when the GOP governor and legislature passed laws making it possible for the state to seize control of whole cities like Detroit, override local elected officials, negate union contracts, and vaporize pension benefits. Even in Iowa, the right-wing attack on the union-created middle class is glorified by Governor for Life Branstad when he blames overworked state employees for his administration’s willful failure to protect elderly Iowans or troubled youth in the care of the state.

Why do we allow these home-grown brown-shirts to frame the economic debate? They claim Social Security is going broke, but who responds that simply raising the cap on wages subject to social security tax would render this argument null? What Democrat tells us that the promises of economic prosperity based on austerity and tax cuts are lies, plain and simple? Factual studies show that in the US, economic growth is always higher under Democratic administrations, and in other western countries, those with the best social benefits and least income inequality all have standards of living higher than ours. Who among those touted as potential

The Flag and the Cross
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The Dr. Martin Luther King Federal Holiday: *This Is What Democracy Looks Like.*

The debate in Johnson County swirling around the celebration of the Martin Luther King Holiday in our schools is an important one. At press time, it is not clear whether the school district's decision to hold classes on this federal holiday will be sustained or not. What is important is the leadership that has been provided by the Coalition for Racial Justice. This newly formed organization has filled a void in the People's Republic of Johnson County. Traditional liberal organizations, including the Johnson County Democratic Central Committee, the League of Women Voters, and even the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, have had trouble coming to terms with issues of race as Johnson County's African-American population grows.

“Unlike many Iowa cities, Iowa City never had a teenage curfew until too many black teenagers turned up in town.”

Liberal Democrats run most institutions in Johnson County, including the city governments of Iowa City and Coralville, the Board of Supervisors, and the School District. On issue after issue, though, liberal Democrats have either mishandled or misunderstood issues of race, the Martin Luther King holiday being only the most recent. Mayor Matt Hayek's Administration, and

its predecessors in Iowa City, have not only tolerated but positively encouraged policing policies that have resulted in a growth in both arrests and incarceration that far exceed the growth in population. Thanks to the two recent referenda on the jail, in which the issue of disproportionate minority contact was documented for the public by John Neff among others, it is clear that one of the major results of Iowa City policing policy is the disproportionate arrest and incarceration of African Americans.

We can thank libertarians, and Republican Central Committee members, as well as a few aging civil libertarian Democrats, for the double defeat of the proposal to build an expanded new jail to house even more African Americans. Support for incarcerating even more African Americans was virtually unanimous on the Johnson County Democratic Central Committee, which actively supported the pro-jail campaign. In this they were joined by the League of Women Voters, which held public forums in support of the jail where opponents were excluded from speaking. Even the local ACLU chapter was divided on how to respond to this racist initiative, which was only one of several that we have seen recently.

Unlike many Iowa cities, Iowa City never had a teenage curfew until too many black teenagers turned up in town. Now they face the danger of arrest if they are out too late, just as they do when standing at the wrong place at an Iowa City bus stop. For decades white people have stood behind the glass doors in the Old Capitol Mall to wait for the bus. No one complained. When

black teenagers began exercising that right, the Hayek Administration posted obnoxious, apartheid-style signs instructing bus riders to stand ten feet back from the doors. When young black people began using the facilities at Iowa City recreation centers, the Iowa City Recreation Department instituted an entirely new ID form in order to help the police identify trouble makers.

Perhaps worst of all has been the indifference of local liberal Democratic elected officials, including our Sheriff and County Attorney, to the killing of John Deng by a sworn Deputy of the Johnson County Sheriff's Department. Unlike Trayvon Martin, John Deng was a homeless African immigrant, almost unbelievably intoxicated when he was killed, who had no family or community locally. His death has been almost entirely forgotten.

Thanks to the presence of the Coalition for Racial Justice, it is unlikely that liberal indifference to racism in Johnson County will go unchallenged in the future. The Martin Luther King Holiday is not the only issue that is being raised by the Coalition. The school board is now proposing that parents show ID cards in order to enter schools where their children are enrolled, another example of race and class discrimination. In this struggle, the Coalition for Racial Justice has an ally in the new Center for Worker Justice, another local organization that is challenging both racism and class injustice. Good for them! This is what democracy looks like. Watch the Prairie Progressive for more information. ✂

—Jeff Cox



- December 25
Federal Holiday
- January 1, 1959
Castro's rebel troops deposed
Batista in Havana
- January 9, 1859
Carrie Chapman Catt born
- January 15, 1929
Martin Luther King Jr. born
- January 31
Chinese New Year (Year of the
Horse)
- February 9, 1944
Alice Walker born
- February 12, 1909
NAACP founded
- Feb 25, 1964
Cassius Clay KO'd Sonny
Liston to become heavyweight
champion of the world
- Feb 27, 1939
US Supreme Court declared sit-
down strikes illegal
- March 8
International Women's Day
- March 18, 1969
US began unannounced bombing
of Cambodia
- March 18, 1994
Oprah Winfrey signed 6-year
TV contract for \$500 million

His Latest Caper

Yes, Virginia, there is a Grinch. Sometimes he resides in Washington, cutting food stamp programs and whining about Obamacare. Sometimes he travels around, stepping on people's rights and interfering with women's control over their own bodies.

Currently, the Grinch resides at the state capitol in Des Moines Iowa, where he maintains his winter residence. He's had a busy few years, cutting programs for the poor, trying to figure out the difference between people with mental illness and those with mental retardation, and keeping needy folks from having good health insurance. His latest caper is to close the only gender-specific treatment program for girls in the state, the Iowa Juvenile Home in Toledo.

In the past ten years, a coalition of Democrats and Republicans in the legislature has been upgrading the old campus with around \$26 million of taxpayers' dollars, including a new vocational building with a safe security/infirmity unit on the lower floor, a geothermal system for the whole campus, and a complete renovation of the school and one of the cottages. The Iowa Juvenile Home Foundation – supported by local grantors such as the Carver Trust, the R.J. McElroy Foundation, the Alliant Foundation, American Association of University Women, ACT, Boeing Corporation, Shopko/Pamida, the Gibson Guitar Co., Dollar General, Iowa Arts Council, Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa Women's Foundation, the Tama County Community Foundation, the Toledo State Bank, Variety of Iowa, service clubs, churches and people from all over the state who care about Iowa's

children— has invested over \$600,000 to renovate the school library, provide an arts program (especially important now that no arts programming is provided in the state budget), sponsor a traveling art show to highlight the students' considerable talents, fund an Angel Fund to pay for incidental expenses for students, give a holiday to look forward to every year by paying for staff support and training. This year's project was outdoor tennis/basketball courts, which the students have hardly used.

Meanwhile, the Grinch has been sitting in the Governor's office, licking his chops, waiting for his big move. Now he has struck. He is closing the juvenile home!

All the troubled boys have left. There are 20 girls still living there who do not know where they will be at Christmas, and 93 dedicated state staffers who will be unemployed in January. The Grinch no doubt revels in the thought of a facility that could have become an exemplary treatment program for generations of young women sitting empty, not to mention all those new applicants for unemployment compensation.

No doubt he is delighting in the thought of these young women going out into the world, friendless and unprepared, to become the mothers of children he can deny preschool and health care in the future. ✂

Send the Grinch a message:
governor.iowa.gov

--Carol Thompson
is a former Johnson County
Supervisor who lives in Coralville.

Honor Roll

Continued from Page 1

Kurt Friese is a restaurant owner who runs a kitchen skills training program for residents of The Shelter House. Like Schwindt, he knows them as real people, not simply “lazy bums” who need to be hidden, avoided, or punished. Long known for promoting the pleasures of upscale food and wine, Friese has become a vigorous advocate for focusing on the causes, not the symptoms, of homelessness, hunger, and people “taking over” the benches in a public space.

Jim Throgmorton was the lone vote against ordinances passed by the Iowa City Council to ban shopping carts, sleeping on benches, using electrical outlets without a city permit, and panhandling too close to the stores that are apparently the only reason for having a downtown. Throg is also the strongest council champion for more affordable and lower-income housing, an outrageously neglected need in a town as affluent as Iowa City. He was again the only dissenter when the Council, blaming the federal budget sequester, chose to lay off two Housing Authority employees.

Iowa City artist **Marcia Wegman** continues to depict Iowa in all its understated beauty. Her new book, *Iowa Pastel Landscapes*, brings out the subtleties of our landscape so often overlooked by most of us as we speed along the interstate. Wegman belongs on the Honor Roll for more than her art. She was a founding board member of ICARE (Iowa Center for AIDS/HIV Resources and Education) and continued to give time and money to it and related programs for nearly thirty years.

The Iowa Public Information Board opened for business in July. Already, the volunteer board has become an aggressive defender and enforcer of the state’s open meetings and records laws. Iowa Public Radio, Iowa State University, the Des Moines School Board, and the Board of Regents are just a few of the powerful entities that have fallen under IPIB’s scrutiny. The nonpartisan Better Government Association’s “Integrity Index” rated Iowa #19 based on open meetings, access to public records, whistleblower protection, transparency, and conflict of interest. Watch for this ranking to rise as IPIB strives to fulfill the mission of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council.

Alas, the glory days of the **Iowa Supreme Court** are fading into oblivion. Only a few years ago the Court soared to the top of Prairie Dog’s Honor Roll for its magnificent decision declaring that the state’s ban on same-sex marriage unconstitutionally deprived lesbian and gay Iowans of equal protection under the law. This year the now all-male Court returns to the Honor Roll for affirming that dentist James Knight was within his rights when he fired his assistant for being “irresistible” and a potential threat to his marriage. Thank you, Court, for reminding us that women in the workplace remain vulnerable in 2013, and that gender balance is crucially important on courts, commissions, and elected bodies.

And a true Honor Roll thank-you to **Melissa Nelson**, the dental assistant who had the courage and perseverance to bring her suit all the way to the top, eliciting this stunning, unanimous legal opinion: “Close personal relationships between

men and women can often produce personal emotions and conduct that are unfamiliar to the workplace relationship.”

Brian Terrell is a jailbird, a chronic convict, a regular inmate at facilities like the Federal Prison Camp in Yankton, South Dakota. His crime? Peacefully protesting American militarism, most recently against American drone warfare. His reason for willingly sacrificing his freedom? “We cannot know the hearts of the President and those in his inner circle, but it is not hard to wonder whether they are truly haunted by the deaths of those killed by drones at their commands. If they are not haunted by their own consciences, perhaps the responsibility for haunting them falls to us.” ✂

–Prairie Dog

**We have to own
the fears that we
have of each other,
and then, in some
practical way, some
daily way, figure out
how to see people
differently than
the way we were
brought up to.**

–Alice Walker

CHRISTMAS LIST



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Not Ready for Hillary
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So, Hillary, what this likely Iowa caucus attendee hopes to see from you as we approach 2016 is not that you pay homage to Iowa, but that you speak well of us anyway, that you recognize our part in the democratic process even if you don't participate, and that you run your very own authentic, progressive, feminist campaign that inspires us and shows us the amazing, wonderful, real you who would make an awesome president. ✨

—Trish Nelson
has been the editor of Blog for Iowa,
www.blogforiowa, since 2008.

The Flag and the Cross
Continued from Page 3

Democratic nominees in 2016 has taken the equivalent of RFK's 1968 Poverty Tour or made the right to unionize and earn a living wage a national issue?

How many Democrats counter GOP calls for transvaginal probing of women seeking abortions (state rape) with demands that every man must have a full rectal exam at every physical? It's time for those of us on the left to start fighting as fiercely and as tirelessly as our treasonous opponents on the right. It's time to recognize their determination to

turn our country back into the racist plutocracy they enjoyed not so long ago. It's time to tell the GOP to stick their banana republic despotism up their asses. ✨

—Duncan Stewart's
x-rays show a partial backbone.

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subscribers and
contributors for
your generous
support in 2013.