
THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



a newsletter for Iowa's Democratic Left

Summer #2, 2020

Unapologetically racist

In 1924, the developers of University Heights, a subdivision in Johnson County just west of the 1924 limits of Iowa City, filed a dedication with the Johnson County Recorder of Deeds. In an era before modern land-use zoning and building codes, this document set out a series of conditions and restrictions designed to sustain property values and standards. It set guidelines on house and garage placement. It required each house to be valued at \$4000 (about \$60,000 in 2020 dollars) or greater. It prohibited factories and stores. And it declared that “said University Heights is hereby platted and dedicated for the sole use and benefit of the Caucasian race and no lot or parcel of ground shall be sold, owned, or used, or occupied by the people of any other race, except when in the capacity of a servant or helper.”

The logic of such restrictions, as developers and realtors understood them, was to prevent a “nuisance” use of property that might affect the value of neighboring lots. Today, “nuisance” law is used primarily against strip clubs or concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). In the 1920s, their reach was broader, and unapologetically racist. A 1927 restriction on Ridge Road offered a uniquely Iowa City list of nuisances, prohibiting “a store, oil station, fraternity or sorority house, or an

apartment house,” “any poultry,” and “any sale of property to Jews or colored people.”

Such race-restrictive deed covenants were common in northern cities as a response to the Great Migration of African-Americans north from the “Jim Crow” South in the first half of the last century. In cities like St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis, these restrictions established the boundaries of black and white occupancy, and created deep patterns of racial segregation that last to this day.

These restrictions became standard practice for private developers and realtors, and were used in new construction or attached to individual sales even when African-American occupancy posed no imminent threat. In Johnson County in 1920, the African-American population of Johnson County was 68 persons, barely one-quarter of one percent of the total. Nevertheless, between 1921 and 1947 (when the Supreme Court held the restrictions unenforceable), developers and realtors in Johnson County attached restrictions to ten new subdivisions and a number of private sales, eventually prohibiting African-American occupancy of over 550 residential parcels.

We have always known that such restrictions existed but, given the

way deeds are recorded—and the sheer volume of the records—it was hard to fully describe their use and scope in any given setting. But now that many counties are digitizing their records, those deeds are fully searchable. Following the lead of the “Mapping Prejudice” project in Minneapolis, we (myself and a class of history undergraduates) worked with the Johnson County Recorder to obtain a digital copy of all the deed records from 1900 to 1950 (about 80,000 pages). Using “optical character recognition,” we searched this entire corpus for words and word stems (“colored,” “restriction,” “Caucasian,” etc.) that might indicate the presence of a racial restriction.

Once we identified a restriction, we worked from its legal description to map all of the restricted properties. The map, as well as copies of all the restrictions, are available at our website, “Mapping Segregation in Iowa City.” This site also includes background material and resources on the history of racial segregation in Iowa City, and on the legal history and lasting importance of deed covenants.

That lasting importance, of course, is etched into our current urban landscape and our current politics.

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The USPS is fighting for its life—and ours

Our public Postal Service is on the brink of bankruptcy. It's not just COVID-19, although postal workers continue to risk their lives to make sure their neighbors receive their Social Security checks, medicine by mail, and other supplies.

The main cause of the financial crisis at the Postal Service is a law passed in 2006 by Congress that was approved by the powerful U.S. Senate committee then chaired by Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME). Contact her office and urge your friends in Maine to do the same: 207-780-3575.

She helped shepherd through a destructive bill dubbed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) pushed by a guy named James C. Miller, who was then the Chair of the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.

Miller is the longest serving member of the board of billionaire Charles Koch's political operation, Americans for Prosperity/Citizens for a Sound Economy. He's been helping Koch, one of the richest men in the world, for more than 30 years. Miller has been after the Postal Service since the mid-1980s. Koch started efforts to do so since 1971. They hate the idea of a public post office.

They want our public institutions "privatized"—sold off to the highest bidder. They think having a public institution do what a private company could profit from is "socialism," the curse word Koch buddies have cast at city fire departments, and public libraries, schools, and pools.

The PAEA did three destructive things.

First, it required the Postal Service to pre-fund 50 years of retiree health benefits—a burden no other

government agency or private company has. Most Americans oppose privatizing the Postal Service—other than special interest groups tied to Koch. Adding this crushing debt was designed to aid privatization, as documented in a new report by In the Public Interest, True North Research, and Bold Rethink, which is launching a series of outreach in August on how our democracy needs a system upgrade.

Before the PAEA, the Postal Service had annual net income of nearly \$1 billion, but after it passed, the bill has added nearly \$5 billion a year of debt. That debt has crushed the Postal Service, weighted down its balance sheet, and made it more difficult for it to secure lines of credit to survive and thrive.

Second, it barred the Postal Service from raising the price of postage at a rate greater than the Consumer Price Index—which basically amounts to only about a penny per year for a First Class stamp—no matter what the needs are for the Postal Service to modernize equipment, like its fleets of trucks. First class mail charges just 55 cents to deliver your letters anywhere in the country. The Postal Service should be able to make reasonable rate increases to ensure it can sustain its operations and modernize them. Even if first class postage were 75 cents that would still be a great deal—and a great deal lower than what FedEx or UPS would charge, undoubtedly.

Third, it barred the Postal Service from "competing" with the private sector by offering common sense services like banking—or even a coffee shop—at local post offices.

The Postal Service is seeking \$75 billion as part of COVID-19 relief in

funds and loans. The HEROES Act would provide \$25 billion to help prevent the Postal Service from going bankrupt in the coming months—with the election looming and the need for many Americans to vote by mail. However, Koch's Americans for Prosperity is attacking that provision and even running ads against 12 U.S. Senators to stop Congress from helping the Postal Service—even though most Postal Service revenue is not from taxes at all.

We need our Postal Service to continue to perform the essential tasks it does to help our lives. Letting it go bankrupt and be picked apart by vulture capitalists would decimate our economy, destroy the jobs of nearly 500,000 Americans, and dismantle a public service that works well for more than 300,000 Americans--from the tiniest towns to the biggest cities. Americans who live in our nation's beautiful rural areas, like many Prairie Progressive subscribers, depend on the public Postal Service, which delivers this vital newsletter to your P.O. boxes or roadside mailboxes come rain or come shine.

Call your representatives and urge them to support the HEROES Act, repeal the PAEA, and stand up to the destructive agenda of Charles Koch. Ask five friends to do the same. We need everyone's voice to drown out Koch's political pressure machine and Trump's unthinking obedience to it.

—Lisa Graves is the Executive Director of True North Research. She has served in all three branches of the federal government, is a frequent guest on MSNBC, and is featured in the documentary film, The 13th.

A shift in energy

Last month over 100 people gathered in Solon, Iowa's Mushroom Park for a Black Lives Matter protest.

After marching down Highway One, the handful of students who had organized the gathering spoke about their personal experiences as black and mixed-race residents of our town. A few days later, I and a few friends distributed fifty Black Lives Matters signs in the orange and black colors of our home team to our neighbors. Fifty seems insignificant in the big picture, but in a town of under 2,000, it makes a big impact. Signs of change are popping up all over the state, even in rural communities.

When we live in a state in which African American and mixed-race people make up less than 10% of the population--the vast majority concentrated in urban areas like Des Moines--it can be easy to assume that there is no BLM activism in small towns. Even more troubling is the assumption that there is no point in advocating on behalf of black people when none live in your town. Yet I spoke to more than a dozen people from towns of under 10,000--some as small as 400--who are openly and actively supporting the movement.

We must dispel the notion that there are no people of color living in small towns. There may be only two families, but they are there. When you typically only see white faces, it's easy to jump to the conclusion that black people are, by default, outsiders. I recall that in the week leading up to the protest in my town, some expressed fear of the outsiders coming to maraud Main Street. According to one protestor, when observers recognized faces in the crowd, and when the speakers on stage were the children of our own

community speaking about their experiences as black and mixed-race Solonites, there was a shift in energy, what felt like an awakening to the reality of the diversity, however small, within our community.

Stephen Mack describes his experience as a black man and activist in Sheldon, Iowa. He moved there from Chicago to create a better, safer life for his five children. "I experienced a lot of prejudices, from police to different stares from random people," which he attributes to his mixed-race family. After George Floyd's death, Stephen and his wife attended a small protest nearby. This inspired them to lead a larger protest in Spencer, drawing a history-making crowd of over 600. He described excitement and astonishment at the outpouring of support. Not only do these stories highlight the racial diversity even within tiny towns, they also illustrate that when white residents of small towns engage in visible support, we are making a meaningful difference for our neighbors of color.

Indeed, visibility is one of the most important and most challenging acts to engage in as a BLM advocate in a small town. When we organized the distribution of Black Lives Matters signs, there were some supporters of the cause who nevertheless felt uncomfortable displaying a sign. The culture of small towns can be so conflict-averse that the smallest act can feel radical. Those who took signs ranged from the proudly ready to step out to the trepidatious but newly compelled to make a statement. It's been said that a key part of white allyship is tolerating the discomfort of going public, which of course is a choice that no person of color can enjoy. We can recognize this willingness to go public as

progress in communities in which white allies are openly emerging.

White activists who did not cite personal connections as the impetus for their activism describe their advocacy as a way to use white privilege towards social justice ends. Bob Snedden-Fitler of New Vienna, Iowa, says that growing up in St. Louis taught him about the harsh realities of racism. Now, as a resident of a predominantly white, Catholic farm town, he draws on those personal experiences to teach others about systemic racism. "As a white male I can use my privilege for good," he says. "So that's what I'm going to do." Slaton Anthony of Mount Vernon is the descendant of slave owners. Early in life he made his living prosecuting low-level, mostly victimless crimes against predominantly people of color in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He cites George Floyd's killing and the Central Park jogger incident as galvanizing moments for him, through which he realized he needed to fight for "black lives to save all lives."

The effects of Black Lives Matter are being felt like the wind across the cornfields, reaching even the sleepiest and remotest of small Iowa towns. These are small but significant steps in the march toward a more just and inclusive Iowa.

—Lauren Whitehead is a member of the Solon City Council.

Just for a second

With the recent whirlwind of Black Lives Matter demonstrations sweeping across the globe, a memory of mine from fifty years ago in Iowa shook loose that I would like to share.

In 1970, there were great movements for social justice in Iowa: anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, organizing around welfare rights and women's health, and breakfast for children programs sponsored by the Black Panther Party in Des Moines.

As an activist in Ames, I met and worked with Charles Knox, a student from Des Moines and a charismatic and dedicated leader of the Black Panthers. When a black student was arrested for clobbering a white wrestling champion in a bar where the white wrestler was hassling the black student, using the N word and shoving him, telling him to get out of "their" bar, Knox brought some folks up from Des Moines to participate in demonstrations for justice for the black student, and to sell the BPP paper on campus. They usually sold the paper in the Iowa State Memorial Union hallway leading to the cafeteria, which wasn't a problem because Knox was a student.

One day when Knox wasn't present, the director of the Union asked the BPP students to leave. They refused, saying they had a right to sell their paper. The director called the police and had them arrested for trespassing, as I recall. When they were brought before the judge for pleas and bail setting, a 19-year old guy called Judge McKinney a fascist pig and was immediately sentenced to one year in the county jail for contempt of court. Knox and I discussed a response: a peaceful demonstration in Nevada, the Story County seat where the jail was located. We would

also submit a petition asking the court to reconsider.

We set a date and put out the word, but when four African-Americans including Knox, showed up on campus where we were supposed to meet, only a white student and myself were present. The director of the YMCA came over to tell us that people were armed in Nevada and it would be too dangerous for us to go there (about ten miles from Ames). I asked Knox and the men and women with him what they wanted to do. Knox said it was all the more important to go and make an appearance. There were six of us, as I remember, four from Des Moines and the white male student and me in the car.

Scared shitless, I suggested we drive back out of town.

As we drove into that sleepy Iowa town, I could see white guys sitting in second-story windows holding shotguns or rifles. When we got to the courthouse which also housed the jail, we saw that the building was surrounded by what seemed like hundreds of white men standing a few feet apart armed with rifles, shotguns, and pistols. Scared shitless, I suggested we drive back out of town and mail the petition. Knox insisted that we needed to walk up to the building and turn in the petition.

We got out of the car and slowly made our way up the sidewalk to the building, keeping our hands visible, through a gauntlet of guys who stared at us with hatred and fear. A woman

came out of the building and told us it was closed for the day. We asked her to please take our petition and give it to the appropriate authorities. She did take it and disappeared back into the building. As we turned around and walked slowly back to the car, I looked up and caught sight of several white guys sitting in upstairs windows of houses nearby, pointing guns at us. Just for a second, just a second, I knew what it felt like to be black in America.

There are other facets to the story, but those are the basics. I wonder what Nevada is like now? My hope would be that today, as we drove into town, a few would wave, and when we got to the courthouse, someone would invite us in to talk about reducing the sentence or other solutions, and remind us to get our mail-in ballots for the November elections.

—*Barb Yates (Summerhawk) is an old Iowan who is sheltering in place along the Yanase River of the Kanto plain in Japan.*

The World Health Organization has said it is safe to handle newspapers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the Prairie Progressive.

The view from my window: New York's presidential primary

New York is the fourth most populous state, yet our Presidential primary is strictly an afterthought. The contrast with Iowa couldn't be greater. My friends there get calls, not robocalls, from presidential candidates. They have senators and governors in their living rooms, soliciting their views on the questions of the day. They know how to pronounce and spell tricky names like Buttigieg long before anyone else. A couple of months ago they even knew, before I did, that New York's off-again, on-again primary was finally on. But they have acquired all this knowledge at a terrible price for our country. I love Iowa, but your caucus is an abomination. That's what everyone else thinks too—except, perhaps, your fellow-abominees in New Hampshire.

Originally, New York chose its presidential delegates in a caucus. It wasn't like the Iowa caucus, which is open to all adult citizens—or at least those who don't have to work that night and don't mind not being able to vote for the candidates they actually prefer if those candidates don't have enough support in the local caucus. I speak rather of the smoke-filled, whiskey-drenched caucuses of old. You can judge the political character of ours from the fact that in 1932 a majority supported the choice of Tammany Hall, former governor Al Smith, not Franklin Roosevelt, his successor, who had fallen afoul of it. We got our primary in 1976, when the Democratic National Committee informed the state party that we were going to have one. Its first winner was Henry ("Scoop") Jackson, Washington State's hawkish senator. Since then, the winner of the

primary has tended to be whoever seemed to be ahead when it was held, perhaps because only registered Democrats can participate.

The mystery of New York's Presidential primary is why we hold it so late—usually long after the nominee has pretty much been chosen. Last year, Governor Cuomo proposed to hold the primary in February 2020. State law actually prescribes the first Tuesday of February as the date but lets the legislature set another one, which it invariably does. Politicians rejected Cuomo's suggestion. The progressives complained that it wouldn't give them enough time to raise funds and organize. The moderates made similar objections, though in a more worldly, less aggrieved tone. Nobody seemed to care that a later primary would probably be irrelevant.

So the legislature decided that the contest would take place this April 28th. Then came the pandemic. The party first postponed and then canceled the vote, on the ground that every candidate but Joe Biden had withdrawn. When the progressives objected, a court rescheduled the primary for June 23rd. In previous years, the governor had opposed voting by mail, but he now supported it, so New Yorkers fearful of contracting COVID-19 could vote by absentee ballot. Not that this was easy. When I logged onto the website of the state Board of Elections, I thought I was applying for an absentee ballot. I was really just applying for an application. (Later, we could download a PDF of the application from the website.) In my case, the application and then the absentee ballot came reasonably

soon. Early voting was also possible—for the first time in New York—but I didn't know that until I started researching this column. Remember, I'm a native New Yorker and didn't take our Presidential primary seriously until I considered writing about it.

The ballot was confusing. On one page, we could choose candidates for President. However, there was a second page, where the voters in each congressional district were asked to select individual delegates, whose preferred candidates were indicated beside their names. A complicated system—not explained on the ballot, hard to find online, and still harder to understand—reconciles the vote for candidates with the vote for delegates, so a district cannot support one candidate but return another's delegates. (You don't want to know the details, and I wonder if party officials understand them.) I have no idea who benefits from this crazy system. Perhaps it was a mistake that was never corrected. If you have ever worked for a living, you know that such things happen.

On June 29th, when the AP called the winner, Biden had 67.7 percent of the vote, Sanders 18.9 percent. Believe it or not, the city's absentee ballots won't be counted until the week of July 6th, which is past my deadline. (If anyone cared about our primary, that would be as big a scandal as the problems of this year's Iowa caucus.) So far, progressive candidates for lesser federal offices, which were also on the ballot, seem to have won some of their races; the only generalization I can make is that it helps to run against a fool or a charlatan. That certainly bodes well for Biden in November.

—Roger Draper is a frequent visitor to Iowa but has never been to a caucus.

An immigrant in my own country

Once represented a blue-collar white woman in her fifties on an employment matter and a workers' compensation claim. After a couple of years of litigation, I managed to win one case and settle another. She received three different cash settlements or awards and was offered back her job. It seems whatever success I had in achieving justice for this client must have left me a little smug, or perhaps I felt empowered to pointedly suggest what she should do.

My client had moved on to a new job in Muscatine, a community which has seen significant growth in its Latino population. Within the course of conversation one day talking about her job and Muscatine, she commented, "Yeah, I really just go to work and go home. I don't like to stay around in Muscatine. You know, I just don't like to feel like an immigrant in my own country." I said nothing at the time to try to steer her back to issues which are directly impacting her life.

When my representation concluded, I said to my client, "Look, I need you to understand one thing clearly. The laws that we have been able to utilize to obtain these results for you only exist because of the Democratic Party. The Republican Party of Iowa is actively seeking to limit or take away your rights to compensation, your job and treatment for your work injury."

"Oh, okay." She nodded as she replied. And that was it. Do I believe she took her lawyer's parting words to heart and carries them with her as she contemplates how to vote this year or any year? Absolutely not.

The goal of the modern Republican Party of Iowa is to boil down the thirty seconds of political conventional wisdom white blue-collar Iowans keep with them

to this: "Well, I am not black. I am not brown. I am not gay. I am not a feminist. I am not an environmentalist. I guess I must be a Republican."

Having represented hundreds of white working-class individuals and thousands of white union members, I know their personal histories. I know life has not been easy for my clients. I see the tough jobs they work, the physical pain their bodies endure, the loss of income and, no matter what I can do to help, the very uncertain future which awaits. Whenever anyone comes to some attention for fighting the injustice in their life – be it a teacher or Black Lives Matter protestor – I can hear the internal reaction of clients thinking, "huh, my life is no picnic either."

Seat-of-the-pants comparative analysis of the injustices we face does not do much good for anyone. Thinking "they don't have it so bad" eventually leads to something significantly worse: "they're not like me."

What about the injustices that you think should truly motivate my client? Too often they are boring, complicated, or just unknown. Listening to Mitch McConnell is boring. Understanding how the shoulder is now a scheduled member injury instead of a whole body injury and how that negatively impacts the value of your workers' compensation claim is complicated. And if you work for a private employer, good luck on finding out how much money your bosses make. What's more – when injustices that I can see, understand, and care about do come to the surface, how long do they stay there?

If you thought this was all leading to some positive solution or reason

for optimism, I apologize. I do not have it. I can tell you that we must meet people where they are; we must translate the issue into the listener's reality. And as employers chew up their workers' bodies with the constant focus on today's output and nothing else, I think there is a good chance I'll get another opportunity to make my case that she has more in common with Latino workers in Muscatine than the insurance company adjustor... when she is back in my office after her next work injury.

—Nate Willems is a labor and workers' compensation lawyer who has three daughters. He is fearless.

“Not everything
that is faced can be
changed, but nothing
can be changed until
it is faced.”

—James Baldwin

Turning the other cheek

As more and more Americans appear to be tiring of Donald Trump's insults, lies, and interminable boasting, there are, nonetheless, two entities in the nation's capitol that seem to be remarkably oblivious to pretty much anything he says. They are, to be specific, the Republican majority in the Senate and the Democratic National Committee.

Republican Senators can be seen literally running from reporter's microphones when asked about any number of Trump vulgarities or actions. If cornered, they will profess ignorance of what the president said. They meekly endured a collective scolding when they failed to eviscerate the Affordable Care Act in 2017 and they silently tolerate (or suffer) his threats to campaign against them. Senators not up for re-election, Senators who are retiring, Senators who have 'safe' seats—they all personify The Silence of the Lambs.

A few blocks away from the Capitol, the Democratic National Chairman has practiced a monastic silence since he and Trump have been elected. Donald Trump has vilified the party (the nation's oldest and largest political party) from the outset, accusing Democrats of "treason," hating the flag, subscribing to mob rule, and being stewards of eight years of weakening our defenses and criminal incompetence. In other words, all things Obama.

Not a peep from the Democratic national chairman. I recall previous chairs Ed Rendell, Terry McAuliffe, Howard Dean, Debby Wasserman-Schultz. They would at least appear on the news or cable talk shows to crack back at attacks that were far less vituperative than Trump's. Perhaps this is a matter of less concern to Democrats in Iowa and New Mexico (my home), both of which have strong Party organizations and good leadership.

But in talking with friends around the country, I find a consensus of activists who are truly tired of turning the other cheek. We talk about three years of lost opportunities to challenge Trump's lies or even to poke fun at his senseless rambling. The two entities who have used humor and drama and facts to challenge Trump are Republican-led PACs, The Lincoln Group and Republican Voters Against Trump.

Why does this matter at this point? It is easily predictable that the Trump campaign will spend most of its time and money trying to disparage Biden and his family, in what will be the least factual and the most rancid attacks the country has ever seen. The Trump campaign has casually telegraphed this kind of attack. It should not be the full-time task of our Party's nominee to respond to every lie and slander. That's where a strong Party chair comes in.

We, as Democrats, want our nominee to articulate his policies and point to the future. We need to help him with an active and articulate Chair. The Party could effect a civil and positive transition either during or after the virtual convention. Suggestions (admittedly, the writer's alone) would include Rahm Emanuel or Senator Kamala Harris. Either could not only defend, they would be the lance's point against the incompetence and buffoonery of Trump. Either could take this as a temporary role, with the understanding (we would hope) that they could assuredly occupy a significant role in a Biden administration.

This election could be, without hyperbole, the critical fight of this nascent century. Major venues will include broadcast and social media. Try to imagine four more years of Trump, or, worse, thinking in mid-November that the Democratic Party had not fully engaged.

—*Tim Kraft was Jimmy Carter's Iowa Caucus campaign manager in 1975-76 and senior staff in the Carter White House.*

Unapologetically racist, cont'd from Page 1

While the enforcement of deed covenants was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1948, the segregation they created has been sustained by the practice of private realty, by exclusive land-use zoning, and by private and public mortgage and credit discrimination or "redlining." When the police stopped George Floyd at the intersection of 38th and Chicago in late May, they were patrolling a stark but unofficial boundary between white and black Minneapolis. Disproportionate contact between black youth and police in Iowa City or Des Moines or Waterloo follows the same logic.

Racial deed covenants, alongside other formal and informal restrictions, created the boundaries—and all the assumptions that accompanied them. Our laws and policies should be erasing those boundaries, but—more often than not—they harden them.

—*Colin Gordon lives in Iowa City and is the author of Citizen Brown: Race, Democracy, and Inequality in the St. Louis Suburbs (University of Chicago Press, 2019).*

Mourning Hayden Fry

In January I conducted a field survey of Capitol Park in Sacramento, CA. I work in historic preservation, and was documenting the historic features located in the 40-acre park that surrounds California's State Capitol.

As I often do during outdoor fieldwork, I was wearing a black baseball hat adorned with a yellow "I" for Iowa. Whenever I wear this hat I run into people from Iowa or who went to the University of Iowa. But it still took me by surprise when two men I encountered separately expressed their sympathy to me over the recent death of Hayden Fry. I was aware of his recent passing but it was not an event that had made an impact on my life, so I just nodded and said thank you in response. Later I texted my dad about these interactions. I knew that he would find the thought of me mourning Hayden Fry funny.

I've been to a handful of Iowa football games in my life. As a student at City High I played the viola and members of our school orchestra were required to sell pop at the games to raise money for our field trips. I had to carry a big tray that hung from my neck and walk up and down the stairs at Kinnick Stadium hawking plastic bottles of Coca-Cola. Much later, in 2016, when my dad was invited to the Rose Bowl because of his position on the Presidential Commission on Athletics, I traveled to Los Angeles and spent the weekend with my parents attending Rose Bowl events. Iowa fell hopelessly behind within the first few minutes of that game and never recovered. And those humiliating experiences are the full extent of my relationship with Iowa football.

In February, my dad died unexpectedly. I flew to Iowa City to plan and attend his memorial services. When talking to family friends during my visit, my interaction with the two men in Sacramento came up in conversation. My dad had indeed found the anecdote amusing and had relayed it to my mother and some friends before his death. My mother told me that my dad had always admired Hayden Fry because of his role in helping to integrate the Southwest Conference while he was a coach at Southern Methodist University in Texas. I hadn't been aware of this history, and it occurred to me then that both of the men who'd commented on my hat in Sacramento were Black. Perhaps their sadness over the death of Hayden Fry had been about civil rights as well as football. I considered my position and decided maybe I liked football after all.

Unfortunately, my tenure as a Hawkeye fan was short lived. I've since learned that the University of Iowa recently bought out the contract of an assistant coach after complaints went public about his mistreatment of black players. The University committed to pay the former coach more than \$1 million. Other coaches who were mentioned in the complaints, including Iowa's head coach (the highest paid public employee in the state), remain employed. These decisions were made amidst a pandemic-era budget crisis that has resulted in the termination and salary reductions of educators and staff across other departments at the University.

I've also learned that Duke Slater, an African American Iowa alum and college football hall of famer, was

originally included in the proposed renaming of Iowa's stadium in 1972. The then president of the University suggested the name "Kinnick-Slater Stadium" in honor of two former Hawkeyes. But Slater's name never made it beyond the proposal. A student dorm was named after him instead, which was a bizarre compromise considering that Slater was prohibited from living in the dorms during his time at the University of Iowa because they were reserved for white students.

And in June, after protestors spray painted "pay your players" and "BLM" on a statue of Nile Kinnick at Kinnick Stadium, the consensus on social media was critical of the acts and several opined that there were better ways to protest. I searched Twitter for statements by those same people about the NFL's treatment of Colin Kaepernick, who by all definitions protested peacefully, but found none. Community volunteers emerged the next day to clean the statue. I will be watching to see if they also show up when the football program finally admits it is time to repaint the pink locker room, a sexist and homophobic tradition that began under Fry's leadership. My feelings about Fry and about Iowa's football program in general went from dismissive, to optimistically supportive, to critically angry within six months. It is funny to think that two passing comments from strangers in Sacramento initiated such a journey.

—*Flossie Cox lives in San Francisco.*

CALENDAR

July 13

Democratic national convention begins

July 14, 2015

Iran Nuclear Agreement finalized

July 20, 2015

US and Cuba restored diplomatic relations

July 26, 1990

Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law

July 30, 1965

Medicare and Medicaid signed into law

August 6, 1965

Voting Rights Act signed into law

August 14, 1935

Social Security signed into law

August 26, 1920

19th Amendment adopted

August 28, 1955

Emmett Till murdered

September 17

US Constitution Day

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Do not stand idly by when your neighbor's life is threatened.

—Leviticus 19:16



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