
THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



a newsletter for Iowa's Democratic Left

Fall 2023

Getting away with it: Prairie Dog's Fall 2023 Reading List

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
2023 is a good time to read a novel written in 1932, even more prescient than Orwell's 1984. "You can't consume much if you sit still and read books."

Palo Alto by Malcolm Harris

Thirty years ago, computers, coffee, and cocaine converged in Palo Alto, California, the hometown of Stanford University and the Hoover Institute. The world was forever changed. Malcolm Harris grew up in this town and attended Ohlone Elementary School, named after the thousands of natives who were slaughtered by settlers in the years following the Gold Rush. Harris makes a convincing case that the "Tall Tree" has led the US in efficiently combining academia, capitalism, militarism, technology, and white supremacy.

Crook Manifesto by Colson Whitehead

One of America's greatest writers scores again. A devoted father confronts corruption and crime in 1970s Harlem while trying to find Jackson 5 tickets for his daughter. Only Whitehead could come up with the most appropriate slogan for America's bicentennial celebration: "Two Hundred Years of Getting Away with It!"

The Great Man by Kate Christensen

A famous New York City artist dies. His wife and his mistress of many years maneuver to have the last word on his life. Two art critics compete to write his definitive biography. Christensen's

The Last Cruise is an equally fast, funny, and smart read by this Iowa Writers' Workshop visiting professor.

A History of America in Ten Strikes by Erik Loomis

The strikes detailed in this book have much to teach us about the strongest weapon workers have in the struggle for fair wages, dignity, and justice—and what we can learn from defeats as well as victories. A must-read for anyone following today's national struggles like Starbucks United, UPS Teamsters, and Screen Actors Guild, as well as Iowa battlefields like the Englert Theatre in Iowa City and Amcor in Des Moines. Especially relevant during the current (as we go to press) United Auto Workers strike.

Nightcrawling by Leila Mottley

An Oakland teen-ager drops out of high school and becomes ensnared in sex work to pay the rent. Struggling to survive, she is further ensnared in an ugly police scandal. A stunning first novel that somehow finds hope in a dehumanizing system.

Malicious Intent: Murder and the Perpetuation of Jim Crow Health Care by David Barton Smith

A suspenseful murder mystery combined with a gripping history of America's intentionally unequal health care system. Read it and ask yourself again: why doesn't the richest nation on earth have universal health care?

The Postcard by Anne Berest

Being Jewish in Paris in the early 1940s was to live with a deepening, inexorable fear of being rounded up, deported, and murdered. The author confronts, in the form of a novel, the history of her ancestors who died at Auschwitz. "I carry within me, inscribed in the very cells of my body, the memory of an experience of danger so violent that sometimes I think I really lived it myself, or that I'll be forced to relive it one day."

The Ride Together

by Paul Karasik and Judy Karasik

A half text, half graphic memoir adds up to a fully engaging depiction of a family living with autism. Honest, funny, and poignant without being sentimental or sugar-coated.

Prairie Dog's Poetry Corner

Need a pause from politics? Here are three recent collections to cleanse your mind and soul (but don't be surprised if politics sneaks in).

- **Time is a Mother** by Ocean Vuong
- **Pilgrim Bell** by Kaveh Akbar
- **Gravity and Center** by Henri Cole

The Swine Republic by Chris Jones

Did you think Prairie Dog was going to overlook the year's most talked-about book in Iowa? This collection of fearless essays lambasts the agro-industrial cabal that has defiled Iowa's lakes and rivers—at taxpayer expense.

—*Prairie Dog*

“PICK THAT UP!”

In memory of Caroline Dieterle

We were walking in the Indiana Dunes, the only two in the immediate area for what seemed like miles. The sand was white and clean and we were lost in our own thoughts about the beauty of the day. Suddenly I heard her yell, “pick that up!” and turned to see Caroline confronting a young man who was staring at her with astonishment. They were face-to-face and I saw the watermelon rind that was in the sand between them. When the kid started to walk away, she clicked into action, blocking him from proceeding and launching upon him what those of us who knew her called the ‘death stare’ and said once again, “pick that up!” They were now locked in potential combat, neither saying a word and neither budging from their stances. The glare continued and once more the words rang out “pick that up,” and this time I knew it was do or die for the kid. He stood his ground as long as he could, but gradually withered under her relenting glare, bent over and picked up the rind and wandered off with it. Whereupon the words rang after him, “that belongs in the garbage, not on the sand,” and we watched together until he found a trash can and properly disposed of this offense against nature.

That was my best friend of 50 years.

We shared laughter, tears, worries and our love of most living things (Trump and his minions were definitely exceptions to that). When I think of Caroline, I think of these words of David Attenborough: “The fact is that no species has ever had such wholesale control over everything on earth, living or dead, as we now have. That lays upon us, whether we like it or not, an awesome responsibility. In our hands

now lies not only our own future, but that of all other living creatures with whom we share the earth.”

To say we were not optimistic about the future would be a bit of an understatement, and reached the point of what eventually became shorter and shorter conversations about the future of the earth by sighing, “let’s face it, we’re doomed,” before moving on to a less depressing thought.

We often had different opinions on topics, but usually she would convince me or I her. If neither budged, we just moved on, only occasionally trying to sneak the difference in through a back door as if the passage of time had provided enough thought to bring the other one around. Seldom worked for either us, but then we were both stubborn.

We talked about our marriages, our kids, our early family lives. Two completely different women in some regards but sharing sad times and good times. How do you not become good friends after revealing what you are about and trusting the other to never tell?

We ran the first public library campaign together, fought the building of a massive jail on the outskirts of town, worked for winning and losing candidates for City Council and School Board, worked with a then local attorney to propose and pass some, but not all, changes to the Home Rule Charter. There were many trips to Michigan together, camping and staying in modest motels, eating at local diners and waterfront restaurants, always getting copies of local newspapers and reading the opinion pages.

We first smoked marijuana together, grew psilocybin mushrooms in quart jars that we kept in a file cabinet with a little light to ensure the right degree of warmth and ate them more than a few times. One of the most memorable was at Isle Royale National Park, walking over lush beds of lichen. On many trips we camped. One night a fierce storm came up. When we crawled out of our tent in the morning the campground was littered with downed limbs, but our little tent had survived. I saw my first Indian Pipe on one of these trips and visited her family farm in Ann Arbor, MI. She came with me to Florida to visit my father and stepmother, borrowing my father’s car and driving to Sanibel Island where we camped on what was then a quiet little island. We did many things together, so many, many things. A great sadness settles over me when I think of her being no longer a part of my life, no more Friday afternoon visits, no more talks about how to improve my clay-ridden soil, the sharing of birthday lunches, and so much more.

Love to you, Caroline, from your best friend of fifty years.

—Carol deProse lives in Iowa City.

The Prairie Progressive mourns the recent death of Caroline Dieterle, a fierce citizen advocate and a loyal *Prairie Progressive* subscriber.

Speaking truth to power

Like many residents of Johnson County, I was saddened to hear of the passing of Caroline Dieterle. Caroline was a progressive force—speaking truth to power and letting us all know if the emperor had no clothes.

Caroline and I met in the late '80s. I was frustrated by the Johnson County Sheriff's Office participation in a massive traffic-stopping exercise. They pulled every vehicle off Highway 1 near National Computer Systems to check for traffic violations. I was livid and felt this type of thing had to be unconstitutional. I wrote a letter to the Press-Citizen, and my friend Dave Leshtz urged me to join the local chapter of the ACLU. I did, and the first person I met was Caroline Dieterle. Caroline agreed with me and read the Sheriff a riot act like none I had ever heard before! I was shocked that this lady had the courage to address the Sheriff in such a way. But that was Caroline.

Caroline was incredibly intelligent and always got her facts right. If someone could demonstrate that she had gotten something wrong, she corrected the record. She was also funny as hell, and we had some pretty good laughs. It was not unusual to hear her say, "We need to laugh about this, because the alternative is to cry."

We won a few and we lost a few. We defeated the sales tax a couple of times. I joined her in opposing the 2000 Jail Bond Referendum. We won a couple school bond referenda. She and I both got turned down as members of the Iowa City Charter Review Commission in the 90s, 00s, and 10s (I think she got turned down in the 80s, too). Caroline worked her tail off to create the Police Citizen Review Board.

Caroline was absolutely a civil libertarian. She believed strongly in the rights of LGBTQ+ folks long before it was generally accepted. She supported organized labor. She was an adamant feminist and always fought for the rights of all minorities. She believed in legal weed long before it was on the radar. Finally, Caroline was an environmentalist before we even used the term.

Caroline was well-known for her views, but even more well-known because of the passionate way in which she conveyed them. Caroline routinely used coarse language—I heard her in many public meetings refer to something as "bullshit." She told many elected officials and bureaucrats (to their faces, of course!) that they were "full of shit." Caroline NEVER minced words, and NEVER held back. It was glorious to watch her in action—unless you were on the wrong side!

I recently found a couple of email exchanges between myself and Caroline. In the first, we had a heated discussion about a development matter in northern Johnson County (this was not long after the Newport Road fiasco). Caroline felt I should vote "no" on all rural development until the County Land Use Plan could get some needed updates. She was correct that the plan needed an update. She argued for a moratorium, which probably would have been appropriate, but there were not three Supervisors willing to go there. I simply couldn't justify a "no" vote in one case. The applicants had followed the rules; it would have been unfair to change the rules in the middle of the game. Caroline said, and I am paraphrasing, "So you choose developers over the environment? I'm very disappointed."

This was difficult to hear because Caroline Dieterle was almost always on the right side of things. To hear that she was "disappointed" in me? It haunted me. I questioned myself for a long time after that; Caroline tended to be on the side of what was right, and fair, and just.

For what it is worth, the next updates to the Land Use Plan contained many changes that Caroline backed—because again, she was usually correct!

As for the second email, Caroline and I were on opposite sides of the 2014 Courthouse Referendum. I think it will be better for both of us if I do not share the actual transcript of our conversation, but I do want to mention how we signed off.

She said, "I understand all your arguments. I just disagree. I hope you will change your mind on this, because you are one of the two best Supervisors we have had here since 1967." I was unbelievably flattered. Caroline's opinion meant a lot to me. I responded sincerely: "Thanks, Caroline. That means more than I can ever express. For what it's worth, you are one of the two best citizens I've met since 1984."

I meant that then, and I mean that now. Rest In Power, Caroline!

—Rod Sullivan is a Johnson County Supervisor.

Pipelines bring progressives and conservatives together

A unique battle has been brewing for two years in Midwestern states. Three carbon dioxide pipeline companies claim they want to help solve climate change and all they need to do is build a pipeline across Midwestern states—stealing private land, wasting public dollars, and putting dangerous pipelines near our home, schools, and businesses in the process.

The proposed carbon dioxide pipelines have brought together unlikely allies—liberal and progressive climate change activists determined on stopping false solutions to our climate crisis and mostly conservative farmers and landowners who want to protect their private property rights.

This never-before-seen coalition highlights what is possible if we truly want to build a people-powered movement against big-moneyed interests.

The carbon dioxide pipelines are being promoted by big-money and politically powerful people. Bruce Rastetter, a Republican donor, is an investor and owner of Summit Carbon Solutions. Navigator CO2, the second pipeline company, is being funded by BlackRock, a multinational investment company. The third is a private company called Wolf Carbon Solutions, which is backed by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board.

If we work together, we can pass local county ordinances and legislation that protect our communities, like what has happened in Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska and Illinois. We can force elected officials to side with the people or risk being unelected. We can force

Federal regulators to develop rules. We can make our government work for us.

Our elected officials have stood up against the pipeline companies—44 counties in the path of the pipelines have written to the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) asking that eminent domain be denied, 29 cities along the routes have also objected with the IUB, along with emergency management organizations, school boards, and thousands of Iowans.

The proposed carbon dioxide pipelines have forced Midwesterners to look beyond what's meant to divide us and recognize that we have a lot in common, our love for our families, our communities, and the land.

Everyone is impacted if we set a precedent allowing a private company to take private land for private profits, using public dollars. Everyone takes on the risk of a pipeline rupture. Everyone is impacted if we don't take climate change seriously.

The first test of our unlikely coalition showed that we built enough power to force the North Dakota Public Service Commission to deny a pipeline permit for the first time in history.

A significant announcement was made following the North Dakota decision when their Mineral Resources Director Lynn Helms announced that the carbon dioxide being transported by Summit was to be used for enhanced oil recovery at three locations in the state. Enhanced oil recovery is a process that squeezes the last remaining oil out of the rock formations holding oil. Summit's project is certainly not going to solve climate change.

Our second test is Summit's hearing in Iowa, which began on August 22, 2023, and will continue for several weeks. Landowners, environmentalists, elected officials and everyday concerned citizens have been at Summit's hearing in mass to make sure the Iowa Utilities Board puts people before private profit carbon pipelines.

Owners of over 900 parcels are objecting to having their land taken by eminent domain. Each of those parcels will be reviewed during the IUB hearings.

Navigator and Wolf are expected to come before the IUB in 2024.

During the last two years, we've come to realize that this is the hardest, yet the most important, work that we could be doing right now. Long-lasting relationships that will exist beyond these carbon pipelines fights have been forged. And that is the kind of power that beats big money.

Granted, we still don't agree on some issues, but we have been able to build relationships where we can talk, agree to disagree on some things, and respect each other.

Relationships take time to build and it takes an effort from both sides. That is what has been happening across the Midwest the last two years.

Prairie Progressive readers can learn more about Sierra Club's work in Iowa at www.sierraclub.org/iowa.

—*Jess Mazour is the Conservation Program Coordinator for the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club. Pam Mackey Taylor is the Director of the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club.*

Artificial intelligence to the rescue!

(a fable for our times)

Talk about a close call, wow! We were rushing towards the edge of the cliff! The only question was: which disaster would be first to finish us off: global warming, or nuclear war? Then along came A.I. to set things right.

We got ourselves into this fix because we in the West took a few wrong turns, starting (ironically) with the “age of enlightenment” a few hundred years back.

- *We irrationally doubled down on an economic system that demanded constant growth, on a planet with finite resources.*
- *Against all logic, we let growth proceed with no rational plan for the common good, nor stewardship for the harmonizing cycles which keep our planet in ecological balance.*
- *We unreasoningly gave up vast areas of land, air and water as dumping grounds for industrial waste, regarding Mother Earth as an “externality” and the natural world as other.”*

Why so much irrationality, when the “Enlightenment” was supposed to be the “Age of Reason?” Worse still: such wrongheadedness was counterproductive to the democratic socioeconomic order to which we claimed to aspire. Similar senseless examples abound:

- *We allow ourselves to be brainwashed into consuming ever more products which we do not need, as the whole world gradually fills up with our “stuff” and our garbage.*
- *We ignore President Eisenhower’s 1952 farewell plea that most national wealth be invested in improving the lives of our people,*

rather than buying aircraft carriers, tanks, and bombs.

- *When disputes arise among nations, we opt for warring against each other, instead of for patient, balanced negotiation, backed up by forced arbitration, if necessary.*
- *We clear forests and grasslands for industrial agriculture, eroding and killing topsoil with chemicals, wastefully feeding food crops to meat animals instead of to people.*
- *We bestow great riches on those who game the system via legislation, speculation, and manipulation, to the detriment of ordinary folks: teachers, nurses, caregivers, laborers...*
- *We allow the rich to obscenely increase their wealth without limit, rather than ensure that everyone has the resources they need for a dignified existence.*
- *We permit unhoused persons and families to languish, often victims of circumstances beyond their control, while former office buildings and shopping malls stand empty.*
- *We fret about overpopulation but fail to provide girls worldwide with solid public schooling, forgetting that educated women have been shown invariably to have fewer children.*
- *We turn a blind eye to the ways women routinely face violence, exploitation and discrimination, factors which distort their manifold talents, which we need to build a better society.*
- *We legislate who can use which bathroom, rather than seeing diversity as a strength, celebrating the unique gifts of everyone, including eccentricities.*

Wouldn’t it be nice to start over again and get it right? A.I. now gives us that chance!

A.I. works on computers, which operate on logic. The programs that they run must be formally consistent and correct. When properly prepped, the machine unfailingly carries out its instructions.

The key to the A.I. solution is two-fold: (1) make each irrational contradiction sketched above into a chatGPT prompt seeking optimal rectification, and (2) ensure that the A.I. large language learning base on which the program trains includes foundational works on human rights and democracy. The computer will then devise the best rational solution to do away with today’s nonsensical situations.

Until this turning point in history, powerful forces have managed to maintain a nonsensical state of affairs, because these elites tweak the rules of the game so as to derive great material benefit from it. Blinded by greed, reinforced by the pitiless economic system we inhabit, these self-styled masters of the universe have opted to condemn the rest of us to a cataclysmic battle with chemistry and physics which nobody can hope to win.

But as the A.I. machines complete their takeover of society, they will gain the power to enforce their rationalizing edicts. This singularity of “machines take over,” rather than being the worst-case scenario, will prove to be an experience of liberation for the great mass of humanity. The trade-off is that some persons may need to relinquish some freedom—for example, to carry

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Nathaniel “Nate” Lawrence: a life well-spent

Nathaniel “Nate” L. Lawrence, was born October 27, 1942, in Moline, IL, and passed away at age 80 on August 15, 2023, in East Moline, IL.

Upon graduation from United Township High School, East Moline, in 1960, Nate enlisted in the army as a medic and served for three years in Alaska. He was patriotic and proud of his time in the military. After his military service he enrolled at Western Illinois University, in Macomb, IL. In 1964 he founded the first black student organization on the WIU campus. After graduating in 1967, Nate owned and managed a telemarketing business in Bettendorf, IA, and became a dedicated community activist in the Quad Cities.

Nate was a longtime friend and nurturer of the arts and the Quad Cities community. He was on the board of the Mississippi Valley Blues Society in Davenport and served as the educational committee chairperson. In the 1980s-90s he accompanied me on many of my in-school music educational presentations as emcee and facilitator. We had many enlightening cultural/social/political chats over many shared lunch breaks.

Nate was a primary force in the founding of the jazz scene in the Quad Cities, far beyond the local interest in famous jazz icon and Davenport native Leon “Bix” Beiderbecke. Nate was very active in the National Jazz Education Network and faithfully attended and contributed to the organization’s annual conventions. He established jazz education programs for all ages at the River Music Experience Museum in Davenport. He created and enabled many jazz music programs for all levels of the public

schools in the Quad Cities. He founded the popular Polyrhythms jazz concert series and the Bill Bell/ Polyrhythms Jazz Festival in Rock Island, IL. He passed away on the Wednesday before this year’s weekend festival; the event was dedicated to his memory.

Nate spent many years of selfless service to the arts and all aspects of inclusiveness to benefit the Black community. His deep influence and

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impact on the arts and politics in the Quad Cities is immeasurable and lasting. Though he was proud of his accomplishments, he was soft-spoken and humble, not one to speak about himself, only interested in using his voice and smile to serve the many worthwhile activities he created or was involved in.

I remember him saying years ago: “In the past, I thought you needed to picket in the street to make change. Now I make appointments to meet one-on-one, with a smile, with the people that are the change-makers.”

An activist for the Black community in many arenas, he took it upon himself to meet regularly with the editors of the Quad Cities newspapers, acting as a volunteer representative/liaison to inform journalists where the Black community stood on a variety of cultural/social/political issues, and to provide news stories on the

activities in the Black community with emphasis on music and the arts. He was often featured in Quad Cities news media for being the founder of the “Mayors Commission.” He collaborated with the Mayors of Rock Island, Moline, East Moline, and Davenport as a liaison between the Black residents and the mayors to benefit the community. Nate met with the mayors monthly for breakfast in a quiet corner of a local restaurant. He would greet them with a smile and present his ideas of how to improve and to mend fences. He was honest and open-minded, and fostered a working-together attitude.

Shellie Moore-Guy, former Quad Cities Poet Laureate, said of Nate: “He was the walking, living, breathing representation of a community servant and leader. He embraced an unwavering commitment to community and the belief that art, self-expression, music, and the people who create, can uplift and change lives, no matter what the age. He believed that this music has the power to restore, and that children need to see and engage with artists who come from where they come from, who had made it to the top of their field. Nate emphatically believed we all have the capacity to contribute, change lives, and restore hope. He led us all by example. The road map has been laid and though the work can feel daunting, thankless at times, and never-ending, the work is necessary. We are making a difference.”

May his memory and good works be forever blessings to his family, his many friends, and the community he served so well.

—Michael “Hawkeye” Herman,
<http://www.HawkeyeHerman.com>.

Which side are you on?

Some people see labor unions as pure evil. Others see them as a godsend to help support and protect working families.

Today's labor unions are not the violent mobs of the past. Compared to present corporate America, labor unions are docile. There are far more recorded incidents of illegal and unethical practices by American corporations, such as tax evasion, price fixing, bribery, and fraud, than there are of labor unions. But accusations of improper and questionable behavior of labor unions appear to be more of a media focus.

Unions have had to overcome a reputation as corrupt. Past union leaders have been associated with mob bosses and the misuse of union funds. The mention of so many corporations that have raided employee's retirement funds is evidently overlooked. It wasn't the few examples of union misuse and abuse of funds that led to the establishment of the Employees Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), an act that establishes standards for private sector pension plans, as much as it was the failure of private companies to maintain its fiduciary duties to keep those plans fully funded.

A 2022 Gallup Poll shows that 84 percent of households in the United States have no union member living within the home. Yet the same poll finds that 71% of Americans approve of labor unions.

United Auto Workers at three targeted automobile assembly plants of Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis (Chrysler) went on strike on September 15. In the past, public reaction to the strike would have been heavily negative toward the union and union workers. However,

according to Morning Consult Pro, "By a 2-to-1 margin, U.S. adults surveyed said they would support [the strike] by the UAW if they are unable to reach an agreement with the Big Three."

Of course, there's a caveat to those figures. Fewer than fifteen percent of the people surveyed had considerable knowledge of the issue. Still, it's good news for organized labor. Labor's rotten reputation since the Haymarket Affair riots of 1886 has been a burden with a small exception throughout the 1950s. In the eyes of some Americans, union leaders are seen as goons and thugs; leaders are referred to as bosses, although the ultimate boss is the collective voice of members.

Why have so many people in the past hated labor unions? A labor union is not much different than the Farm Bureau, your local chamber of commerce, the Iowa Association of Business and Industry, the Iowa Bar Association, and the Iowa Judges Association, to name just a few. Each of those associations of people and entities is organized to protect and advance the rights and interests of its members. That's the definition of a labor union. Sort of. A labor union in Iowa must also protect and advance the rights and interests of employees who are not members of the union.

A labor union, as an association like the afore-mentioned organizations, works to protect and advance the rights and interests of its members in a particular trade or profession. It accomplishes this goal similarly to so many other entities, through legislation, negotiation, and if necessary, the courts.

I entered the Senate Lobbyist Lounge in the Iowa Capitol one day when the issue of Fair Share was

being debated. Fair Share is the concept of charging non-union workers a fee to compensate the union for costs incurred by the union to represent them. I made a remark about how it was difficult for anyone to not understand the concept. Immediately, a Farm Bureau lobbyist jumped out of her seat and attacked me for my comments. I was left to point out that unions are the only organizations that must represent people who are not members. On the other hand, if I want benefits offered by other organizations—for instance, the Farm Bureau's health insurance—I must become a member of the Farm Bureau. Why is it different from unions?

"Quarterly profits have surged by more than 80 percent over the last two years." In a recent social media post, President Barack Obama wrote that "when the big three automakers were struggling to stay afloat, my administration and the American people stepped in to support them. So did the auto workers in the UAW who sacrificed pay and benefits to help get the companies back on their feet. Now that our carmakers are enjoying robust profits, it's time to do right by those same workers so the industry can emerge more united and competitive than ever."

If you'll recall, two out of the three automakers' CEOs took the money with no oversight, paid themselves, and filed for bankruptcy.

What is it in a memory that allows a person to recall negative aspects of one entity (unions) but not the other (corporate greed)?

I anticipate that with today's intelligent and ethical labor leaders, tomorrow's unions will not only grow exponentially beyond the participation of the 1950s but will gain the respect they deserve.

—Marty Ryan was an Iowa labor leader in the 1980s.

Workers win at UIHC

In August 2019, I filed a lawsuit on behalf of several current and former employees at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. We claimed UIHC was violating Iowa law by holding on to certain wage payments for too long before paying. As UIHC had a common payroll practice, we sought to certify a class action. Eventually, a class action was authorized by the Court, and we took on representation of 11,000 current and former UIHC workers.

No one ever alleged that UIHC refused to pay workers. However, Iowa law requires a regular payday to be within twelve days after the end of the period in which the wages were earned. For as long as anyone could remember, overtime, supplemental pay, pay for shifts that went long, and other types of premium pay were paid one month later. UIHC used to go so far as to have a website which stated, “Our policy is to pay overtime one month in arrears. Overtime worked in September will not be paid in October but will appear in your November paycheck.”

There is value to possessing money whether you are an employer or an individual. If someone takes your wallet, holds it for one month, and then returns it to you intact, that is still stealing. In November 2020, UIHC announced it would pay employees more than once a month in a manner which would comply with Iowa law. We hope illegal late wage payments have been put to a stop for all university employees forever.

On September 8, 2023, Judge Stephanie Rose ordered final approval of a class action settlement between the Board of Regents and 11,000 current and former employees of University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. After four years of litigation, the Regents will pay \$15 million to settle claims of systematic, unlawful late payment of wages over decades.

Changing an illegal policy and recovering money for impacted workers are important victories. They are victories which would not have been possible without the help we received from SEIU and AFSCME. Even though public sector unions in Iowa have lost many rights to bargain a contract,

If someone takes your wallet, holds it for one month, and then returns it to you intact, that is still stealing.

this lawsuit shows their importance. Unions made internal complaints to management, provided documents, pointed us to witnesses, pointed us to management witnesses, and provided institutional knowledge and a whole host of other helpful tips which could not be replicated or found without a union at the workplace.

Nobody claims to have solved all the challenges workers face at UIHC. Employers, UIHC included, tend to believe they can do what they are doing to their workers because that is what they have always done to their workers. Real compliance without wage and hour laws will likely never happen unless and until executives

and managers understand there can be criminal liability for stealing peoples’ wages. In the meantime, two large Iowa unions have helped us recover millions of dollars for their members and caused the largest employer in Johnson County to change the way it conducts business. This is a victory and there are more victories to be won.

—Nate Willems’ *Prairie Progressive* articles have frequently been re-published in the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

Artificial intelligence to the rescue! cont’d from Page 5

guns, to buy politicians, to flout international law)—in exchange for a society which is sustainable and fair to all.

It will be a more peaceful world, as well, when international competition for resources gives way to an A.I.-mandated distribution based on need and sufficiency. A sensible material future will also give us a shot at more harmonious relations with nature, and with each other. It’s just a click away.

—Phil Klein is awaiting the singularity in Coralville, Iowa.

**THANK YOU
for supporting
*The Prairie
Progressive!***

Always more to discover

There is no shame in being awakened. Over the years there has been personal and political work done to unveil the lies hidden behind the victors' versions of history. There is always more to discover. No matter how woke you may be, there are always avenues calling us for further awakening.

Part of my family immigrated here in the beginning of the 20th century, fleeing Russian oppression of Jews. In 1912 my great grandmother, Rose Rosenthal, came to the US by ship, alone, at 12 years of age. She traveled to Sioux City where others from the same area of Russia settled. Imagine making that trip alone as a young adolescent!

My immigrant family was able to make a life in the Midwest due to the strength of the slave economy in the South. My education and my economic comfort were based on the success of this first generation's hard work and success in that economy. I do not feel guilty or personally responsible. I do feel awakened and lucky. What I mean by "awakened" is that I feel a sense of responsibility to acknowledge this history and to pledge to understand its ripple effects for real people and whole generations of people. Those who were enslaved were dependent on their masters for their life, the cohesion or tearing apart of their families, their food, their experience of sexual assault, pregnancy and child rearing, and whatever other whims those in charge chose to place upon their slaves. Once in a great while, slaves were dependent on their owner for their freedom or for their hunt. This kind of deep trauma did not disappear when the US Constitution was changed to outlaw slavery. Some of the effects remain. The effects continue on individuals/

families/communities and certainly on our culture, attitudes, law enforcement, and within our judicial system. This recognition affects my political views and personal behavior.

There was another interesting economy that was part of the fabric of Sioux City from which my family benefited indirectly. The "Mob Economy" allowed money to flow throughout this area of Iowa in the 20s through the 40s (at least). Sioux City was a haven for the mob as things got too hot for them in Chicago. This meant more interesting restaurants, theater productions, and parties. It also meant that money was spent at our family's furniture store and many other local small businesses not directly associated with the mob. When our family was going to move to the big city of Des Moines, my grandmother looked forward to it. She thought since it was a bigger city, there would be even more parties, dances, movie houses, and other big city life. She was sorely disappointed once settled into her new home, as she found it much more placid compared to her life in Sioux City.

I am not a slave owner. I am not part of the mob. Yet in past generations, my family's economic success was in part because of both economies. If recognizing this as part of my history is being woke, then my eyes are open and I will not sleep on these points again.

The alternatives to being woke? Sleeping? Burying your head in the sand? Burying your head up your ass? All of these are awkward positions from which to govern.

—Karen Kubby is a small business owner in Iowa City.



Oct 1, 2013

16-day government shutdown by GOP began

Oct 8

Johnson Co Dems Fall BBQ
Iowa City
Info: cranstoned@gmail.com

Oct 12

Matthew Shepard murdered

Oct 14

Center for Worker Justice Gala
Iowa City
Info: info@cwjiowa.org

Oct 23, 1983

241 American servicemen killed in Beirut. Lebanon

Oct 27

Tree of Life synagogue shooting killed 11, injured 7 in Pittsburgh

Nov 3, 1883

US Supreme Court ruled Native Americans were aliens

Nov 10, 1938

Kristallnacht

Nov 11

Veterans Day

Nov 16

Johnson Co Dems Legacy Club Northridge Pavilion, Coralville
Guest speaker: Christie Vilsack
Info: wm.gerhard@gmail.com

Nov 22, 1963

JFK assassinated

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