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LESSONS OF A SALACIOUS SENATOR ET AL

by Jonathan Wilson

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, August 3 at Hoyt Sherman Place.

Our guest speaker will be Dr. David Frankel, ISU Economist.

- ▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, July 31 to *Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com* or 288-2500 by phone.

What will distinguish the breeders next? On a trip to Australia, the official travel guide to Sydney had eight different, glossy, photo-enhanced print ads for prostitutes variously called escorts and courtesans. There were maps unabashedly pinpointing locations for lascivious delights. “Gentlemen” could enjoy an unforgettable “experience” with local models, as well as those heralding from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Quality and discretion were assured. And they all had web sites. You can check them out at: www.highsociety.com.au; and www.thaicity.com.au; and www.envyshowgirls.com.au.

One ad gave a range of prices from \$500 to \$4000 *per hour*. All things being relative, I was left wondering what kind of skank you’d get for a mere \$500. Surely not as memorable as the \$4000 model, and perhaps accompanied by a souvenir STD to take home with you.

More recently I’ve been prompted to wonder whether Republican US Senator David Vitter has ever made a taxpayer-funded visit to Sydney unaccompanied by his faithful wife. The “discretion assured” feature of the entertainments would appeal to him, no doubt, although it would matter little at this point. He hasn’t been trustworthy in Washington, D.C., or, from all indications, elsewhere, for quite some time. And he was only paying \$300 per hour. Apart from those bargain rates, he has distinguished himself by running on a family values platform to replace a philandering Republican predecessor.

At almost the same time, Republican North Carolina State Representative David Almond resigned from office in the face of allegations from a female assistant that he exposed himself to her at the office and demanded or pleaded that she perform fellatio. He had been the Vice Chair of the Committee on Children, Youth, and Families.

But maybe it isn’t just breeders. Just days ago Republican Florida state legislator Bob Allen, working in an entirely different price range, was arrested for offering to pay \$20 for the privilege of *giving* oral sex to an undercover police officer. He had previously distinguished himself by sponsoring legislation that would make such conduct a felony. Luckily for him the legislation died in committee.

(Continued on page 2)

That all came on the heels of a resignation by disgraced Republican Congressman Mark Foley because of his inappropriate exchanges with male pages. He'd been Chair of the U.S. House Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children. And, of course, there've been the exposed same-gender trysts of big-time Republican and quickly reformed Ted Haggard, known for his penetrating anti-gay preaching, augmented with field research. Rumors abound about Idaho Republican Senator Larry Craig, Republican Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell, and Republican South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham.

What conclusions are to be taken from all this promiscuity? First, the behavior itself is not news, although it may come as news to some that such behavior has nothing to do with gender orientation. Breeders have long contented themselves with the myth that gay people had a corner on such conduct. Not so. I know of no behavior that's unique to gay people, promiscuous or otherwise.

Second, the important common denominator among the perpetrators is their affiliation with the Republican Party, a party that has made a point of exploiting the public with holier-than-thou platform planks. These examples of human frailty are relevant to others than the immediate participants *only* because of the hypocrisy that the behavior betrays.

And what's to be learned? Perhaps one age-old lesson and a new operating assumption. The age-old lesson is a familiar one variously expressed as an admonition not to judge "lest ye be judged;" or alternatively, that those who live in glass houses should refrain from throwing stones. Those who do, deserve whatever they get.

The new operating assumption is also not really new; it was expressed aptly by Shakespeare, "[They] protest too much, methinks." *Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 2*. It means that we should be making the operating assumption that those preoccupied with denouncing promiscuity of whatever proclivity are themselves perpetrators. It's a diversionary tactic of historic proportions. The examples are indeed legion, ranging from secretive Jews who persecuted Jews in Nazi Ger-

many, to Roy Cohn, the chief and closeted henchman for Senator Joseph McCarthy. We need to be *assuming* that the rabid homophobes and moralists are themselves closeted homosexuals and immoral. Who else would say homosexuality is a choice if not someone who's projecting their own feelings and the ill-advised choices they've made? Who else would condemn the supposed immorality of others if not someone who has "researched" the purported problem? We'll be able to deal with them both more compassionately and more effectively.

—Jonathan Wilson

If con is the opposite of pro, what is the opposite of progress?

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the August 3 meeting no later than July 31 to Jonathan.Wilson@davisbrownlaw.com. He can also be reached by phone at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Dr. David Frankel, ISU Economist.



Thanks to Rick Davis for introducing Myke Selha.



FFBC Scholarship Committee meeting July 25, 2007 at Allen Vander Linden's, 7500 Benton Drive (just north and west of the ice skating rink).



Plan to meet presidential candidate Bill Richardson at the FFBC meeting on August 3.

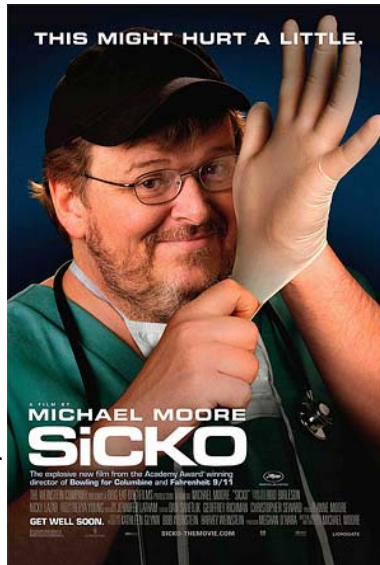


Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC Scholarship Fund. Send your check to Jonathan Wilson, 666 Walnut Street, Suite 2500, Des Moines, IA 50309. Make the check out to FFBC and write "Scholarship" on the memo line.

SICKO

Directed by
Michael Moore

2Hr 3 Min



My entire party of movie enthusiasts

were moved to tears of joy near the end of Michael Moore's latest feature documentary, **Sicko**, and the film ended so strongly that the audience applauded and cheered! Not every audience is that enthusiastic, but it is a movie that you come away from wondering why the United States is the **ONLY** modern industrialized western country that does not provide health care for its citizens!

Mr. Moore begins his point by showing victims of the U. S. health care system, starting with those who do not have health insurance. One person was told that to replace the two fingers he had just sawed off of his hand it would be \$12,000 for the ring finger and \$60,000 for the middle finger. So now he sits without a middle finger—an illustration of American citizens having to decide which body parts they can afford to keep. This is later contrasted with coverage of a patient in another country where all the fingers were sewed on for free, no decision necessary.

Michael then features people who are denied health insurance because of pre-existing conditions. The list of unacceptable diseases goes on and on and on with diseases most people have never heard of, yet having any of these diseases keeps them from ever being able to get health insurance. One young woman was denied cervical cancer treatment because she failed to disclose on her insurance application that she once had a yeast infection that was treated in a doctor's office.

However, the main thrust of this film is aimed at those who do have health insurance, or at least think they have health insurance before a catastrophic illness. At

that point many health insurance companies assemble a team to find anything that they can use to deny that person coverage.

Mr. Moore then contrasts this with citizen health coverage in other countries. Canada—seems like everything is free there. Great Britain—not only is everything free, but their doctors get paid incentives if their patients adopt positive lifestyle changes such as giving up smoking. In England the doctor's pay incentive is based on the patient getting healthier. In the United States the insurance company doctor's pay incentive is based on saving the company money by denying coverage. In England it seems the doctor decides the treatment, not the government. And whatever the doctor decides, the government pays for it. One pharmacy had a set fee of \$10 for any number of drugs bought in one visit. Whether the patient has one prescription or twenty for his illness, it does not matter. When Universal Health Care was established in England after World War II, the government stated it was for the good of all citizens; that no one would have to worry about health care expenses. The government stated this was not charity; but it was paid as a part of their taxes. People would not have to sell their homes to pay for health care as has happened in the U.S. No one has to decide whether to have treatment or to eat or which body parts to save. The English doctors live comfortably even though they are employed by the government. One doctor interviewed still had his expensive car and a million-dollar home, plus gets to know that his role is to help his patients. He said he would not like to work under any other system.

To his credit, there is very little of the grandstanding that is common in many Michael Moore films. There is the one incident where Michael takes American 9/11 volunteers, who contracted illnesses because of their work at the World Trade Center, to Cuba. On a boat outside Guantanamo, he shouts through a bullhorn that he just wants to take these 9/11 volunteers to the base so they can get the same level of care the detainees are purportedly receiving—"Just the same as the Evil Doers!" Eventually these people do get treatment but from Cuban doctors, where treatment is also free. Michael



Our July speaker was Myke Selha (pronounced SEE-la), a professional psychologist who's been executive director of Des Moines' Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center since 1996. (The Center is now located at 3839 Merle Hay Road, across from the Merle Hay Mall.)

The LGBT Community Center (www.lgbt-dsm.com) has been helping to build our community since 1984 through its support groups and volunteer services, which include, among other things, a speakers' bureau and a lending library of books, periodicals, and other media available for check-out. Noting that the LGBT Center takes very seriously its point-of-entry role ("receptionist," he remarked, "of the LGBT community in Central Iowa"), Myke spent some time outlining the Center's current programs:



Myke Selha

Generation Q, a support group for youth that meets weekly at the Center. Members of this group come from all over central Iowa. The meetings focus on the particular needs of the participants. Guest speakers may attend from time to time. Recent topics have included history of the LGBT movement, gender issues, coming out to family, and safety in schools. A licensed social worker is present for most meetings.

Out Professionals, a networking and social group for LGBT individuals in their twenties and thirties. This group has been meeting monthly and is doing some planning for upcoming activities. One exciting event they are discussing is a job fair for some time this fall.

Fuerza, a support and social group for LGBT Latinos, who meet the second Monday

of every month for discussion. Topics have included racism, discrimination, and lack of access to services. This group is currently discussing organizing on a statewide level.

Gay Friday, also known as FLU (Friends Like US). Gay Friday is a social group which meets almost every Friday for a potluck and a movie. The group meets at the Des Moines Friends House (42nd and Grand) and is open to anyone. This group is very laid back and welcoming of new participants.

Transformations, a support group for transgender individuals and their significant others. This group meets once a month and discusses such topics as employment issues, safety, transitioning, and health concerns.

Family Pride Coalition hosts several social events throughout the year. The focus of the Family Pride Coalition is to create family-centered activities such as the annual Family Pride Picnic, which is held the Saturday of Pride. Additional events have been a hayride, sledding party, and Valentines Night Out for parents.

Rainbow Bowling League bowls at Merle Hay Lanes (underneath the Mall) on Wednesday nights and is a sanctioned league—meaning that members can compete in tournaments. The league has several seasons throughout the year. This current season has over 50 bowlers, men and women, participating.

Stonewall Book Club meets every other month to discuss a particular book. Books are chosen at the previous meeting and include both fiction and non-fiction.

Myke also had some cogent things to say about how different the coming-out process is for the younger generation, about "territorial" issues among Iowa's Gay organizations, and about how eager he is to enlist volunteers for the Center—especially folks who can enlarge the "receptionist" function by answering telephones on a regularly scheduled basis.

In other words, visit the Center, or the web site, or telephone the Center at 515/277-7884.

—Bruce Carr



points out that even this poor country, Cuba, has free medical care for its citizens. Prescriptions that cost \$100 in the United States cost 5 cents in Cuba! If a poor country can do it, why can't the United States? If there is money for all the bombs necessary in Iraq, why is there no money for health care?

Michael points out that politicians are getting hundreds of thousands of dollars from insurance and pharmaceutical companies to keep things just as they are. But, as it happened in Canada, it just takes one politician who has the will to change things and the support of the people to create the force necessary to ensure that every citizen in the country has access to health care. Will the citizens of the United States ever wake up and insist that they also be guaranteed health coverage? The verdict is still out. But those in the audience of **Sicko** will surely question the wisdom of our current course.

—Gary Kaufman

Opposition to Bush is like a War on Error

may be able to buy them in jars over here, but to appreciate them fully, they must be eaten where they are prepared locally. Restaurants and open-air markets sell them in great quantities. They are a true delicacy. Unfortunately, calling them Spanish olives is somewhat of a sin in Barcelona because the people there consider themselves Catalonians, not Spaniards. Their desire is to become independent of Spain, a holdover wish after the centuries of land wars on the European continent.

I do like visiting other parts of the world, but there are some that I like more than others. Barcelona belongs to the category, "Been there. Done that."

—Steve Person

Hypocrisy Revisited

by Jonathan Wilson

On the subject of hypocrisy, consider the raw facts leading up to President Bush's decision to commute the prison sentence of Scooter Libby. He was convicted of perjury and obstruction of justice in a situation that compromised our national security; and he was sentenced by a Bush-appointed judge in keeping with federal sentencing guidelines that the President has argued should be made mandatory. In commuting the sentence, the President asserted that it was too severe. If that were truly the President's motivation, he would have commuted only the purportedly excessive portion of the prison term. As it is, Libby undeniably did the crime and is avoiding *any* of the time. The remaining "probation" is rendered meaningless because there's no consequence if it's violated, and the fine can be paid by Libby's supporters (and has been). The President's spokespersons were reduced to the defense that other Presidents have granted improvident pardons. That's like trying to avoid a speeding ticket because someone else sped but wasn't caught. But it is different in the sense that Libby knows too much, especially about the lead up to the Iraq war. The President wasn't protecting Libby with the commutation, he was protecting himself. And that's why the commutation was an abuse of power of a wholly different sort.

—Jonathan Wilson

Those who believe in an impending Armageddon should not be entrusted with policy-making that affects the future, like balancing federal budgets, conservation of the environment, making the Social Security System solvent, and stopping global warming. What would be the point?!

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

AUGUST 2007

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From the Editor

Hell on Earth

Last month I wrote about Amsterdam, the first leg of my latest European trip. The last half of the trip was spent in Barcelona.

Barcelona is a big, dirty, noisy, sprawling, and, for the most part, ugly city in northeastern Spain, sloping down from the mountains to the Mediterranean. Like any city, there are nice parts of it, but truth be told, it would not be a place I would return any time soon.

I had been told by the individual who arranged this trip that the five of us would be staying in his cousin's spare apartment in Barcelona. Before leaving Amsterdam, however, we were informed that this would not be possible. Arrangements were made for us to stay in a Japanese youth hostel that was closed for renovation and repair. Believe me when I say that the place certainly needed it! The proprietor was a little old Japanese man who would not allow us to take his picture because he said photographs take away from a person's life force. Go figure. The guy resembled none other than Ho Chi Minh. His hostel was located half way up a mountain on a street that I dubbed Satan's Hill. Climbing up there three or four times a day was enough to do in even the most stout-hearted traveler.

Barcelona was the home of the renowned architect and designer Antoni Gaudi (1852-1926). Gaudi certainly left his imprint on Barcelona. As a designer, he hated straight lines. The cathedral he designed for central Barcelona reflects this, and his other masterpiece was Park Guell, located at the top of the mountain earlier dubbed Satan's Hill. The views from the park are spectacular, and Gaudi's imagination went into overdrive with the fantastical mosaic creatures, temples, and fountains in the park. I appreciated his imagination and genius, but I just didn't care for his final products.

Our host did take us on a drive into the mountains in that part of Catalonia, and the small villages and the scenery were truly beautiful. The tiny village of Rupit is built into the rocks of a mountainside and is accessible by a swinging bridge. It is a storybook setting if ever there were one.

My best memory of Barcelona, however, was the olives. Spanish olives are like none other I have ever tasted. We

(See EDITOR, Page 5)