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BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.

# First Friday News & Views

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## BLASPHEMY IS NEVER OUT OF FASHION

by Jonathan Wilson

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### CALENDAR

▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, January 2, 2009 at Hoyt Sherman Place.

Our guest speaker will be Susan Voss, Iowa Insurance Commissioner.

▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, December 30 to [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or 288-2500 by phone.

In a twisted but real way we can be thankful that Proposition 8 managed to eek out passage in California. On its face, of course, that passage was a huge disappointment, especially in a year when, on an incredibly hopeful and inclusive note, Barack Obama became our first black president-elect. The margin of his victory in California, where he and the Republican governor both publically opposed Prop 8, made the setback all the more distressing.

But the outcome of that ballot initiative, apart from the real possibility that the California Supreme Court will declare it invalid, has spawned protests across the United States, motivated those who may have been growing complacent, and prompted a high-profile public debate on the principles of equality when applied to law-abiding gay and lesbian citizens. That debate can only aid the cause of equality because the facts are on our side. Bigotry is just prideful ignorance. Education is the enemy of ignorance and, therefore, attacks bigotry at its core. The elevated public debate on this topic will bring with it public education on a broader and more accelerated scale than would likely have occurred if Prop 8 had failed.

Opponents of same-gender marriage recognition will more and more be driven to rely, doggedly, upon notoriously unreliable passages from the Bible. Cloaking the Bible with faith-based inerrancy, and clinging to a superficial reading of selected passages, provide the last refuge of theocrats. It explains their zeal. It also betrays their theocratic dogmatism and, in a nation that still espouses separation of church and state, assures the ultimate outcome in our favor. Since we know these folks are being forced into a Biblical “last stand,” we need to be better prepared to meet them there. The Bible, in fact, is not a safe harbor for them.

It’s actually a shade blasphemous for a “Christian” to claim that every word of the scriptures is literally true, which is a fundamental belief of so-called Fundamentalist Christians. Only the schizophrenic should be comfortable making such claims. Jesus repeatedly said, “You have heard it said of old, but I say to you . . .” In each instance he was quoting the “Old Testament.” That there is a “New Testament” bespeaks the Truth that some supposed truths in the Old Testament were apparently not immutable after all and, as the old hymn says, “Time makes ancient good uncouth.” Even Jesus acknowledged as much, and people of faith do his ministry a disservice to claim otherwise.

The Biblical writers undeniably believed that the earth is flat and is the center of all creation. We know factually, scientifically, that they were mistaken (despite the supposed Divine inspiration that underlies their writing). Recognizing their factual errors on these two topics does not dictate that we lose sight of the greater Truth they sought to convey about our relationship to our Creator that is to find reflection in our relationships with one another. Likewise, the Biblical writers believed that all God’s children are straight (same-gender orientation was not recognized until well into the Twentieth Century). If that First Century view of sexuality were accurate, the Biblical admonitions of the Old Testament regarding same-gender intimacy would be right on the mark.

Those who want to cling to those admonitions, therefore, must cling to a First Century understanding of human sexuality that is demonstrably erroneous. They must, implicitly, argue

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that gay children of God don't exist in order to argue in favor of those First Century admonitions. I, for one, have been able to forgive the Biblical writers' factual errors about the earth being flat and the center of the universe—and can also forgive them their unscientific assumptions about human sexuality. Gay people do, undeniably, exist. Each of us is a walking, talking, living proof that those admonitions in the Bible have been wrongly understood. Ours is *not* a mere “lifestyle” chosen by sinful straight people. We should no longer tolerate the blasphemy of those who deny we exist. Our detractors are being driven to the Bible for solace; we can be there waiting to greet them for who and what they are, blasphemers. Unapologetically, we need to be better prepared to go to the Bible with them and set them straight. ▼

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*If you lack ability to be kind, at least have the grace to be vague.*

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## Board of Regents President Addresses December Meeting

by Bruce Carr

**O**ur guest speaker in December was David W. Miles, president of the Iowa State Board of Regents <http://www2.state.ia.us/regents>.

David Miles is Managing Director of The Miles Group, a family investment business. He served as CEO of Country-side Renewable Energy, Inc., a company organized for the purpose of consolidating independent (largely producer-owned) ethanol plants into a larger, more sustainable organization. From January 2005 to September 2006, he was Executive Vice President of the Principal Mutual Funds, with responsibilities for asset management, marketing, business development, and corporate governance for the nation's 60th largest mutual fund family.



David Miles

Prior to joining Principal, Miles spent five years with AMCORE Financial, Inc., a Northern Illinois-based financial services holding company with banking assets of \$4.9 billion and investment assets of \$4.4 billion. He served as Executive Vice President of AMCORE Financial, Inc., President & CEO of AMCORE Investment Group, EVP & COO of AMCORE Bank, and President & Director of the Vintage Mutual Funds. He joined AMCORE through the acquisition of Investors Management Group (IMG), a Des Moines-based investment advisory firm. Until IMG was acquired by AMCORE in 1998, it was Iowa's largest independent investment adviser, and Miles was its president and principal owner; during his tenure, IMG's assets under management grew from \$765 million to \$1.84 billion.

Miles received his Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School and his Masters of Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government in 1983, and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Administration from Drake University in 1979.

In 2007 he concluded eleven years on the Drake University Board of Trustees, where he served for three years as chair. He is past-chair of the Arthritis Foundation Iowa Chapter, Leadership Iowa, and the Drake National Alumni Association, as well as past-vice chair of Rockford Health Systems. In December 2007, Miles was elected President of the Iowa Board of Regents to fill an unexpired term, and the following March he was re-elected to serve until April 30, 2010. His term on the board expires in April 2013.

Miles briefly discussed the establishment of the Board of Regents when the state reorganized its Regent institutions in 1909. (Prior to that time, each of Iowa's public institutions of higher learning was governed locally by an autonomous board, independent of other institutions.) Establishment of the Iowa State Board of Education in 1909—re-named the Iowa State Board of Regents in 1954—brought a coordinated, state level of authority to the institutions at Iowa City, Ames, and Cedar Falls. Miles emphasized that the Regents are a true governing board (not honorary, as in some other states) of citizen volunteers. They also oversee two special K-12 schools—the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs and the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School in Vinton—providing policymaking, coordination, and oversight of the institutions and affiliated centers including the University of Iowa Hospitals. The regents comprise nine members serving staggered six-year terms. In economic terms, the board has responsibility for an enterprise of some \$4 billion annually.

Miles outlined the major issues in higher education today, including the fact that tuition costs nation-wide have doubled since 1999, and the average student now graduates with a debt-level exceeding \$23,000. He discussed the issues around what can be done to keep Iowa graduates in the state as workers: finding Iowa employment worthy of their Iowa training (the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ranks Iowa second only to Massachusetts in overall quality) is a well-known problem. In response to questions, he praised Iowa's “feeder system” of community colleges and noted successful efforts to streamline interface and the transfer of credits from them to the Regent institutions. ▼

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*Jimmy Swaggert has apparently written a new book. It's called “Ministers Do More Than Lay People.”*

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**Save the date! February 6, 2009**

*An evening of fun, music and wine in the spirit of Valentine's Day!*  
Benefitting the First Friday Breakfast Club scholarship fund.

**Guest Speaker:**

Alice Hoagland, mother of 911 hero Mark Bingham

Also, participate in a silent auction and “Best Dressed in Red” contest.

Hoyt Sherman Place

6 PM to 9 PM

A \$25 Minimum Donation Will Be Requested at the door for all donors not responding earlier.

# MILK

Review by Gary Kaufman



**Milk** chronicles the evolution of the gay rights movement through the eyes of Harvey Milk. The film opens with footage and clippings of police raids on gay bars. A sad time when you could be arrested and outed and your employer who could pretty much fire you at will. It occurred in Des Moines, in New York City, and in San Francisco. I have never quite understood how these raids could have been considered legal at the time. But they are historical fact, and one of those in fear of such reprisals was Harvey Milk, a New York City insurance man who celebrated his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday by seducing a very cute stranger he found on the street. Harvey admitted, "I am forty years old and I have not done one thing for which I can be proud." He disclosed his fear of the police, of being outed, and his need to hide his personal life from others. Scott, the street waif, commented, "I think you need to find a new scene. You need new friends." Harvey agreed, "I need a change."

Harvey and Scott became lovers and did the hippie dropout thing. In 1972 they moved into the Castro district in San Francisco. Harvey opened a shop, Castro Camera, and immediately met hostility from the straight business owner of the liquor store across the street. He was lectured about "Man's Law and God's Law." But Harvey immediately began to network with his customers; got their addresses; found out what they needed. It was his conception to start making the Castro gay-friendly, beginning with his block. His vision was that they would eventually be able to take on the entire neighborhood. Soon the Castro became a gay Mecca with hundreds of gays moving in every month. Harvey made a list of shops that were gay-friendly. Those that were, thrived. Those that weren't, withered and died. His camera shop became a gay activist hangout and soon Harvey was convinced that what they needed was someone in the government to speak for the gay community. So the proclaimed "Mayor of Castro Street" announced, "My fellow degenerates—I would like to announce my candidacy for being a member of the Board of County Supervisors." His usual rally opening was, "I am Harvey Milk, and I am here to recruit you!"

Although he initially failed to win a seat, he continued campaigning again and again, gaining more votes each time. Finally, the county government changed from one in which the board was elected county-wide to a board that was elected from board districts. District 5 included the Haight and the Castro. "If all we have to do is to convince the hippies and the gays, we win!" said an enthusiastic supporter. And on November 7, 1977, America elected for the first time to a major political office an openly gay man, Harvey Milk. The gays in San Francisco finally had a voice in the government.

The joy of the election, however, was short-lived be-

cause it was the era when singer Anita Bryant was campaigning around America against local ordinances protecting gays from discrimination by supporting their repeal through voter initiatives. The first was in Dade County, Florida. Soon this anti-gay movement grew to almost epidemic proportions as protective ordinances in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Eugene, Oregon, and then Wichita, Kansas, were overturned. Harvey wanted somehow to lure Anita to California, and he all too soon got his wish as "Proposition 6" was placed on the California ballot. Proposition 6 sought to make it legal for schools in California to fire all gay teachers, as well as people in the school district who were not gay but supported gay teachers. It was a galvanizing moment for the gay movement. Harvey was convinced that the only way the gays could keep their protections and defeat Proposition 6 was for every gay man and woman to come out to their parents, their friends, and their fellow workers. That would be how they could get the 90% to care about the 10%. "They vote for us 2 to 1 if they know someone who is one of us! It is time to break down the myth and come out!"

Amazingly, politicians from former California Governor Ronald Reagan, to Governor Jerry Brown, to President Carter, were publicly opposed to the passage of Proposition 6. To everyone's surprise, the proposition failed by a large margin. Its defeat pretty much ended the Anita Bryant-led blood-letting of gays throughout America, at least until the current gay marriage debate.

Of course there is the dark ending. A disgruntled ultra-right-wing member of the Board of Supervisors, Dan White, shot and murdered Harvey Milk and Mayor Moscone. But the assassination did not kill the gay movement. Harvey Milk believed it would all be worth it if he were just able to give hope to those gay children growing up in small towns throughout the United States. A hope that there is a place for them in America. A hope that there will be a better tomorrow. A hope we all share.

The movie was beautifully pieced together by director Gus Van Sant, and two performances are likely to be nominated for Oscars. Sean Penn does a masterful job of portraying Harvey Milk, a character full of emotion, love, and determination. And fresh from portraying George W. Bush in Oliver Stone's *W*, is Josh Brolin as Dan White. He does a great job of portraying someone you can easily hate. But the entire cast

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## BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the January 2 meeting no later than December 30. E-mail [JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com](mailto:JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com) or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Susan Voss, Iowa Insurance Commissioner.

Thanks to Michael Thompson for his introduction of our December speaker, David Miles, Chair of the Iowa Board of Regents.

# FFBC

*First Friday  
News & Views*

*Des Moines, Iowa*

**JANUARY 2009**

First ▼ Friday  
Breakfast Club

Board of  
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## From the Editor

### A Matter of Money

**H**mmm. The governor of Illinois wants to sell President-elect Obama's U.S. Senate seat for a million dollars. The governor of Iowa offers to take a salary cut to help balance the state's budget. In which state would you rather live?

Regardless of the answer to that question, it all comes down to a matter of money. The 2008 presidential election cost an embarrassing billion plus dollars, tickets to the inauguration are for sale upwards of \$10,000 apiece, American consumers are cutting back as employers lay off workers who, in turn, file for unemployment benefits and food stamps. A matter of money all the way around.

Governor Culver announced state budget cuts amounting to \$40 million, followed a few days later by further cuts of another \$60 million. While I bemoan most of these cuts, I understand their necessity. I do, however, have a few suggestions to the Iowa legislature to raise some needed cash.

For one thing, the legislature should put a moratorium on the sales tax moratorium declared every summer before school starts. Times are tough, and people would understand the necessity of dispensing with this tax-free weekend for awhile. Next, bring back the Touch Play machines, but limit them to bars and establishments that cater to an adult clientele. Third, the State of Iowa should hold a yard sale! That's right—a yard sale.

The State of Iowa already sells off older and impounded vehicles, but just a few feet above the heads of the legislators in the Capitol is a treasure trove of unused, state-owned items that sit gathering dust.

The Capitol attics are located on the seldom visited fourth floor of the building. The attics are not open to the public and are accessible by elevator with a special key. I would venture to say that most legislators have never set foot up there. If they did they would make some amazing discoveries.

As the elevator door opens, a sign with big red letters greets people: "No Storage. All items will be removed by order of the Director of General Services." I hate to tell the director, but absolutely no one pays any attention whatsoever to that sign. The attics are chock full of equipment—desks, file cabinets, office chairs, commercial kitchen utensils—you name it. Furthermore, there are antique chairs, lighting fixtures, floor lamps, carved woodwork, and window frames that are not now used and likely never will be.

While some of these items have historical significance and should be saved, most do not. Why not sell that stuff to the highest bidders? Nowhere in the state is there a yard with more character than that of our State Capitol. It would be an innovative way to raise money with a minimum of investment and would draw big crowds. Furthermore, I think such a sale would attract nation-wide attention and perhaps start a trend for other states to follow. Since it is all about money, why not do something that hasn't been done before in order to help balance the books?

—Steve Person

(Continued from page 3)

deserves praise as they capture the period, the open love, the passions, the hates, and the evolution of gay rights. It is another movie that reminds us that we have, indeed, come a long way. ▼