



*The Monthly Newsletter
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Breakfast Club, Inc.*

First Friday News & Views

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, December 6, 2013, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by December 4 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

It's a Choice; It's Not a Choice Does It Matter?

By Jonathan Wilson

There have been those who object to advances in the civil equality movement for gay and lesbian children of God, particularly to civil rights protections against discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation. Many insist that such protections aren't appropriate because sexual orientation is supposedly a choice, "not like race." The supposed logic of that rationale is that because people cannot choose their race, the fact that they are persons of color should not be held against them; they can't help it that they're black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, whatever. Interesting. It's rather like saying that, could they choose, they'd choose to be Caucasian; and since they can't make that obviously preferred racial choice, discrimination against them based on that "immutable" characteristic should be prohibited.

Correspondingly, there continues a debate of sorts over whether sexual orientation is similarly an immutable characteristic. So the argument goes with folks who think it's a choice, it's okay to discriminate against gay people because they can avoid the discrimination by simply choosing to be straight. Rather like it being okay to discriminate against felons because they have it within themselves to avoid such discrimination simply by conforming to lawful behavior.

Now get this. According to the 2010 US Census there are now 4,800,000 mixed-race marriages in the United States. If we project they'll each have a couple of kids on average, we're talking about 9,600,000 immediate off-spring of mixed-race marriage. No matter whom they marry and procreate with, their off-spring will be of mixed-race. In two generations, we'll be at about 20,000,000 or more mixed-race citizens, and that number will continue to grow exponentially as America continues to "brown."

To the point: what is the race of those children of mixed-race couples? Put another way, is our President Black or White? The day was when the courts defined as Negro anyone that had "one drop" of Negro blood, while some courts magnanimously limited the definition to one thirty-second or one-sixteenth or one-eighth Black ancestry. Those days of contrivance are long over.

I made friends years ago with a college president who served on a national board with me. At some point he mentioned that he was a minority representative on the board. I asked him what minority he represented and he said he was Black. By pigmentation, I noted that he was as white as I

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Jonathan Wilson ...

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am. He smiled, gently, and taught me that “Black” has little to do with skin color and more to do with who your parents and grandparents were, and what your life experience and identification have been.

More than ever before, and more and more with each generation and regeneration of mixed-race couples, racial identification is a *choice*. No definitional box can be applied to everyone. If it matters, inquiry must be made of individuals to determine what race they have *chosen*? They may choose mixed-race or bi-racial, but it’s a choice none the less.

Does that fact of choice regarding race impact the entitlement to protection against discrimination based on race? Of course not. Any protected characteristic not being a choice isn’t a legitimate pre-condition to legal protection, and never has been.

That pretext for opposing civil rights protections for gay citizens has always been a red herring. The proof of that lies not in demonstrating that race has increasingly become a choice without compromising the right to civil rights protection. The proof lies in the fact that religion, something that is undeniably a choice, has enjoyed civil rights protection ever since such protection was born.

The bottom line is that folks are welcome to debate all they want whether or not being gay is a choice. Giving expression to being gay clearly is a choice and there remain those who choose to stay in the closet. No matter. Choice has nothing to do with entitlement to civil rights protection. The entitlement to civil rights protections has nothing to do with minority status either. Everyone is among those in virtually every protected category.

Civil rights protection has everything to do -- and only has to do -- with characteristics that are irrelevant to one’s worth or ability and that have a history of discrimination, often government sanctioned discrimination.

My M.O. by Steve Person, Cont’d. mode of dress in his later years. In this usage, “lawn” means, “A light cotton or linen fabric of very fine weave.” Who would have guessed? The word “dad” is the formal Welsh word for “father.” The word “Afon” is the Celtic word for “river.” Thus, Shakespeare became the Bard of Avon, a corruption of the earlier word.

Ackroyd’s intense research gives the reader what it must have been like to live in rural England at that time and, likewise, the enhanced city life of a

growing and often tumultuous London. Plays were becoming the popular mode of entertainment during this time, and many of what others might assume NOT to be Shakespeare’s work, Ackroyd credits to him. Frequently playwrights collaborated on a work, and the author was able to pick passages from plays not credited to Shakespeare and insist that he wrote certain speeches for given actors.

It is a rare and rich treat to become involved with such a well-written book!

Briefs & Shorts

- Be sure to RSVP for the December 6 meeting no later than December 4. Either call Jonathan at 288-2500, or e-mail him at JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com. Our speaker will be Rabbi Edelman-blank of Tifereth Israel Synagogue in Des Moines.
- Thanks to Brad Holland for his introduction of our November speaker, Jody Jenner, of Broadlawns Medical Center
- Consider an end-of-year tax-deductible contribution to First Friday Breakfast Club’s Scholarship Fund.

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Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Barry McGriff for coordinating the book exchange.



From the Pastor's Pen

By Jonathan Page

Ayn Rand and the Emergence of Gay Rights

I have a number of gay friends who are big fans of the novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand. It is easy to see why. Rand promotes the resilience of the human spirit, individual agency, the productive capacity of humanity, and, perhaps most importantly for gay rights, a libertarian form of government. For a pure Objectivist, the name Rand gave for her philosophy, each individual should be allowed to live his or her life as he or she sees fit. According to Objectivists, religion and societal morality, two things that have kept gays oppressed, are merely tools for individual slavery and excuses for taking from the producers of goods. Given this perspective, it might be surprising to discover that Ayn Rand was no supporter of gays and lesbians.

Rand, who died in 1982, saw the gay rights movement of the 1970s as a despicable attempt to gain "special privileges." Of homosexuality, Rand said, "It involves psychological flaws, corruptions, errors, or unfortunate premises Therefore I regard it as immoral ... And more than that, if you want my really sincere opinion. It's disgusting." She believed that companies and private institutions could, and perhaps should, discriminate against gays and lesbians but, true to her libertarian beliefs, did not think that the government should regulate sexual practices and therefore supported the repeal of sodomy laws. Rand's views on homosexuality have been so disturbing to many of her followers that they have worked to minimize their effect. However, these apologetics miss that her views on gays stem from the same source as her Objectivist philosophy.

In her essay, "The Objectivist Ethics," found in her collection **The Virtue of Selfishness**, Rand shows her appreciation for the philosophy of Aristotle. Like Aristotle, Rand attempts to ground her philosophical perspective scientifically in nature. Since survival is the one true ground of value for all

living creatures, it should also be the governing factor in ethical living. That which promotes your survival is good. That which detracts from it is bad. Rationality is essential for discerning what truly promotes self-preservation. Since society will often promote values for its communal health, many of which might detract from individual thriving, an ethical human should reject communal values like altruism.

While this appeal to nature as a basis for ethics might seem appealing, it also explains Rand's disgust with homosexuality. Like Aristotle, Rand relied too heavily on her capacity to discern the true ends of human existence. Since heterosexuality seems to be the natural way of life, homosexuality is an abhorrent distortion of nature and ethics. I would imagine that she, like most of her contemporaries, blamed homosexuality on social causes, i.e. the distortion of gender roles when young, or sexual abuse. This distorted perspective should lead gays to question the very grounds of her philosophy. Her views on nature were wrong with regards to homosexuality as they were wrong in a number of other ways.

In light of Rand's opinions, it is particularly intriguing to consider what has actually led to greater acceptance of gays and lesbians in our society. Gay Objectivists are strong libertarians and might believe, falsely, that libertarianism has propelled gay rights. It has not. Equality before the law does not translate into acceptance. Laws have to be enforced, and when bigotry is involved, justice is rarely done. Moreover, our society is not, and never has been, libertarian. In fact, I am unaware of any society at any time that has been truly libertarian. Today our society is both more and less libertarian than in the past. The fact is that Rand's utopian vision for society has not been instrumental for gay rights.

Instead, what has always propelled gay rights, against religion, societal morals, and bad science, is

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Jody Jenner, Broadlawns Medical Center

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on November 1, was Jody Jenner, President and CEO of Broadlawns Medical Center. Mr. Jenner, who came to Des Moines to assume this post in April of 2006, outlined for us some of the changes he has brought to the old County Hospital during the past seven years, and his and the medical center Board's and Foundation's visions for the future. Broadlawns first opened its doors as a hospital to the residents of Polk County in April 1924. Its mission now is to be an acute-care, community hospital, supported by several specialty clinics that serve the medical, surgical, mental health, and primary health care needs of the residents of

Polk County.

Broadlawns has ended the past four fiscal years in the black, Jenner noted, after experiencing multimillion-dollar losses between 2001 and 2006. "Our solid operating results over the last several years allowed us to go in and borrow some money for our facilities," Jenner said. In 2010, Broadlawns issued its third \$10 million round of revenue bonds; the \$30 million borrowed has financed the bulk of its construction. Iowa Health - Des Moines committed \$1 million to the project and has pledged to match \$1 for every \$2 in private contributions Broadlawns raises, or up to \$1.4 million more. Other significant contributors include Variety - The Children's Charity, which donated \$865,000 for the pediatrics clinic to be built in the new medical office building, and \$350,000 from Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino. The center is now seeking additional private funds through a capital campaign to complete the project's third phase.

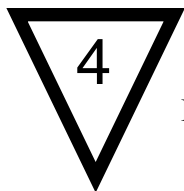
"We've got about two-thirds of the funding that we need," Jenner said. "We still need another \$15 million to complete the renovations, and we want to get the community involved and embrace Broadlawns Medical Center. We really do feel that we're a sort of a gem for the community. The quality of our patient care is exceeding national averages; we've got patient satisfaction that has improved significantly," he said. "We've got an engaged work force, lower employee turnover than the typical hospital. Our financials are coming nicely in line. We really feel the community can be proud of Broadlawns."

New construction included a \$15 million addition which now provides a space four times larger than the old emergency department. Approximately 15 percent of all emergency-room visits in Polk County come through Broadlawns' doors, Jenner noted. "Between our urgent care and emergency departments, we'll have about 65,000 patients annually; those numbers are up about 13 percent," he said.

Today, Jenner said that Broadlawns Medical Center comprises the following:

- Excellent general medical, surgical, mental health, and primary health care services
- Specialty clinics in family health, pediatrics, podiatry, internal medicine, dentistry, mental health, and women's health care
- Advanced medical procedures in ankle-replacement surgery, amputation prevention, and pain management
- Comprehensive inpatient and outpatient mental health care programs
- A 60-member physician practice with more than 300 physicians on staff and 26 nurse practitioners and physician assistants
- Respected residency programs in family medicine, transition year, and podiatry affiliated with the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine and Des Moines University. More than 300 students are in various stages of professional development

• Residency program graduates are serving in 22 Iowa counties and in communities across the nation



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From the Pastor's Pen

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being's compassion for another. It is, seeing and caring for the other, that leads to greater acceptance and change. As people have come out of the closet and had the courage to be themselves, their straight friends and family have come to accept them as such. It has been a long, and at times agonizing, process, but mutual concern is what has made the difference. When you no longer see gays as "the other" and instead see them as fellow humans, you begin the journey towards full acceptance. Love, compassion, and courage, and not Objectivist libertarianism, have been the path to liberation.

This is where true religion, as opposed to Ayn Rand, comes into play. Every religion is a product of its culture and historical context and that reality has,

and continues, to cause problems. Yet, I would argue, at the heart of all true religion is compassion and love because, as the author of 1 John says, "God is love." Even the Apostle Paul, for all of his difficult statements on same sex attraction and women, can write, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:8-10) I hope that my gay Objectivist friends can appreciate the importance of compassion, not only for gay rights but for their own lives, and in so doing can temper some of the harsher edges of Ayn Rand's philosophy. It would make their lives, and the lives of those around them, better.

Jody Jenner, continued from Page 4

A particularly interesting part of the modernization plan is Broadlawns' commitment to be the Iowa leader in electronic medical records implementation, Jenner said. The center is now using palm scanners to register and check-in patients. The new system, called PatientSecure, includes 35 palm scanners, an investment of \$90,000.

"Our long-term goal, and we've talked about this at the board level, is really to be the best small public hospital in America -- and I think we're well on our way to doing that," Jenner concluded.

Jody Jenner graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (Economics) and a Master of Business Administration degree, both from the University of South Dakota. He also graduated *magna cum laude* with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Creighton University in Omaha. He is a registered nurse and a licensed nursing home administrator. Before his arrival at Broadlawns, he was the Chief Executive Officer and Administrator of the Pipestone County (Minnesota) Medical Center, an affiliate of Avera Health System. Before that, he was with the Banner Health System and held hospital chief operating officer positions in Wyoming and South Dakota. Preceding his career in healthcare, he held various management and leadership positions in finance and administration with the IBM Corporation. Jody Jenner can be contacted at the Medical Center at 282-2200 and through www.broadlawns.org.



Special Thanks to Samantha (FFBC Member Bill Brown), pictured with Saddle Mixologist (and FFBC member) Gary Moore. Samantha raised over \$100 for the FFBC Scholarship Fund at the Saddle on October 20. Thank you, Samantha!

FFBC

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MADE ON A  MAC

MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

by Steve Person

Peter Ackroyd Strikes Again!

Two issues ago of the newsletter, I wrote about Peter Ackroyd's **Foundation: The History of England from Its Earliest Beginnings to the Tudors**. Since I was so impressed with that book, I hurried back to The Book Store in the Equitable Building and picked up Ackroyd's **Shakespeare: The Biography**. While myriad authors have written biographies of Shakespeare, Ackroyd rightly claims his as THE biography of the immortal bard.

The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were a time of great change in Europe and England in particular. The great upheaval of The Reformation was still in its early stages, and it was a risky time to practice a religion that was not sanctioned by the state. Catholicism continued to exist in England during Elizabeth I's reign, but its practice was highly discouraged and often its practitioners found themselves at the wrong end of the law. Ackroyd asserts that if Shakespeare were not an openly practicing Catholic, he certainly identified himself with leading Catholic families and nobles of the period. The man knew how to get what he wanted without causing too much of a ruckus. Shakespeare's later association with The Lord Chamberlain's Men meant he and his plays were frequently performed before the Protestant monarch. Indeed, Elizabeth I specifically asked Shakespeare to write a play that would include her favorite character of his, Falstaff, from the **Henry IV** plays. She wished to have the rotund character fall in love—the result was **The Merry Wives of Windsor**, purportedly written in a mere fourteen days.

Shakespeare is credited with coining some 1,700 words and phrases and introducing them into the English Language. That's quite an accomplishment when one takes into account that the vocabulary in his plays amounts to the usage of a little over 17,000 words. Ackroyd may not be coining words in this comprehensive biography, but his vocabulary had this reader reaching for the dictionary on many occasions. Emily Dickinson observed that a poet can choose but few words, the "chiefest" words, as she called them. Among Ackroyd's diction such words as "salubrious," "eschatology," "brachygraphy," "solipsism," and "tergiversations" stand out. There are many others, but the idea is plain. He intends to improve the reader's mind.

In addition to the words previously mentioned, words that we commonly use in one sense become used with entirely different definitions in this work. For example, the word "lawn" is used to indicate Shakespeare's

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