

First Friday News & Views

Monthly Newsletter of the *First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.*

November 2018

Volume 23

Issue 11

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, November 2,
2018
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:
Hoyt Sherman Place,
15th & Woodland,
Des Moines



R.S.V.P.

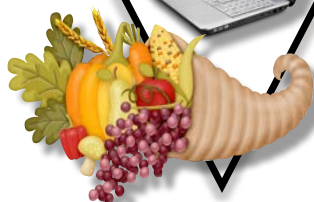
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com

or phone (515) 288-2500

or the website
by Wednesday,
October 31.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbc Iowa.org



Travels with Brinkhaus

by Jonathan Wilson

For two weeks at the end of September and the first part of October, my partner Scott and I made a trip to Germany in the company of FFBC member Friedhelm Brinkhaus. Friedhelm, who is now a U.S. citizen, was born in Germany and still has friends and family living there. Despite over 30 years in the United States, he still visits Germany with some regularity, remains familiar with its history and sites of interest, and preserves assiduously his German accent.

The trip was thoroughly enjoyable -- both interesting and educational. Friedhelm planned the whole thing from start to finish; Scott and I were mostly along for the ride. We started in Munich (the Germans call it München for no explicable reason). In addition to the fascinating sights and delicious food, we were able to attend an Oktoberfest event one evening that was like no party we'd ever before attended. The place was packed virtually shoulder-to-shoulder in a huge venue that is assembled and disassembled annually just for this event. There was live, characteristically Bavarian music, and lots of drinking songs that everyone but Scott and I knew and sang along to. We were able to join in the drinking part -- somethings are universal. To say that beer was flowing freely would be an understatement. And not just beer. At one point we were holding umbrellas to shield ourselves when some participants decided to shake and then open giant bottles of champagne close to where we were sitting and sometimes standing.

We went with the perception that the Autobahn was one major highway crossing the country sans speed limits. In fact, it is essentially synonymous with our term for interstate highway--any multi-lane, divided highway. We were occasionally passed by cars that had to be going at least 200 miles per hour. We hit 100 miles per hour or more; it didn't seem like it because the roads were smooth as silk.

Probably 85% or more of the truck trailers have soft (vinyl?) sides, which improves fuel efficiency and reduces weight that is hard on roads. And, get this, those trucks are prohibited from operating on the roads of Germany on weekends and holidays. That's right; wherever a truck is at midnight on Friday, it stays until midnight on Sunday. It makes driving on weekends a special delight.



[continued on page two]



Germany is about two and a half times the size of Iowa. Iowa has a population of about 3,000,000. Germany, by contrast, has a population of more than 27 times that -- yes, 82,000,000 people. At one point we drove by several tree-covered mountains and learned that they were created using debris from the clean-up after WWII, covered with vegetation.

Among our stops was Baden Baden, a city now of about 50,000. It was the home of my great grandfather Johan Friedrich Erhardt who emigrated to the United States sometime around the beginning of the 20th century. He begat my grandfather Carl, who begat my mother Miriam. I had had in mind that we'd visit a local cemetery or two in search of grave stones bearing that last name. A picture of those would have been fun to share with family here, especially one cousin who is into genealogy. It would have been a fool's errand; I learned that because of population density and the many hundreds of years they've been burying deceased citizens, graves are largely unmarked, and -- get this -- after thirty years another deceased person is buried in the same grave. Most cemeteries are associated with a church, and any records of the deceased that exist would be kept by that church. I understand that some of those church records may be available today online. I plan to check that out after I've recovered from the jet lag.

On a sobering note, we did visit the Dachau concentration camp, the first such camp established by the Nazis. Initially it was a re-education camp for political dissidents. It was expanded to accommodate a variety of minority groups like gypsies and homosexuals.



When expanded, it was designed to house 6-7,000 inmates. At its peak, it actually housed over 70,000. We saw the crematory ovens as well as an example of the fake showers where inmates were gassed to death and then piled outside like cordwood until cremation could be accomplished.

With several other stops along the way, we ended our trip in Cologne, that the Germans, for no explicable reason, call Köln (with an umlaut above the "o"). Located there is the second largest Roman Catholic cathedral in the world, second only to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. It is huge, ornate, and purportedly houses the ashes of the Three Wise Men. Yeah, right. But, if you believe that Jesus was virgin born and walked on water, I guess it's pretty easy to believe the ashes are genuine. Donations from pilgrims drawn to visit those ashes built the cathedral and restored it after damages sustained during WWII.

And the best part? Friedhelm, our trip planner, guide, educator, interpreter, and chauffeur, paid his own way!

**If you have
a "what" to live
for, you can
handle almost any
"how."**

**HAPPY
Thanksgiving**

Five LGBTQ Documentaries for Fall and Winter

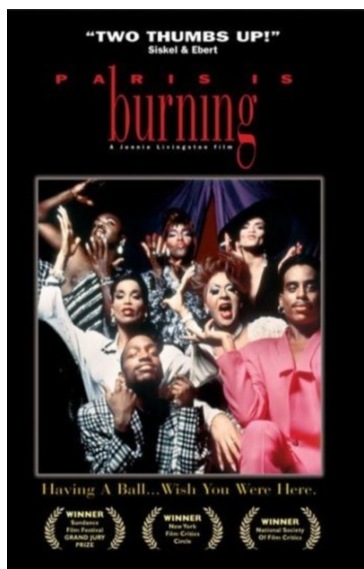
by Jordan Duesenberg

One of the few pleasures of living in Iowa in terms of weather is fall. Who doesn't love fall in Iowa? No humidity, changing leaves, pumpkin patches, and did I mention no humidity? But over the last couple of weeks, it looks like we're going straight from Hell (a.k.a. summer in Iowa) to Hoth (a.k.a. winter in Iowa, also sorry for the *Star Wars* reference) this year. So, to make the best out of a bad situation, here's a list of my top five favorite LGBTQ documentaries (in no particular order) to keep you busy when the weather isn't accommodating. If you can't find these on one of the regular streaming services (Netflix, Hulu, or HBO) you can rent them on Amazon.

LGBT

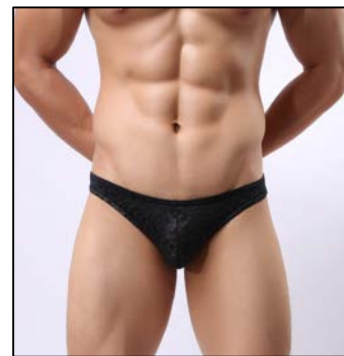
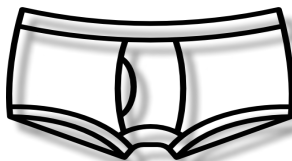
Paris Is Burning

If you watched Ryan Murphy's *Pose* or you have ever watched an episode of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, then I would say that this film is essential viewing. This documentary takes you into the NYC Ballroom scene of the late '80s. Here you see an extravagant world that underprivileged QPOC (queer people of color) created for themselves to compete against one another in a combination of runway fashion shows and dance battles (this is where voguing, which you may know best from Madonna's hit song, comes from). This is all contrasted over the harsh lives and realities that the individuals who took part in this documentary were living.



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Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Jeremy Morris** for introducing our October speaker, Sam Brinton, of the Trevor Project, and lobbyist for states outlawing so-called "conversion therapy." Thanks to **Jordan Duesenberg** for his work on the FFBC website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **November 11, 2018**. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and get it to me by the copy deadline. It'll be interesting, good therapy, or both. Caring is sharing.

Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. **Book donations are always welcome.** Thanks to **Scott Kuknyo** for helping coordinate the book exchange.

Consider a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We awarded eight scholarships this year. We've awarded more than **\$275,000** in scholarships to deserving Iowa high school students.

We're all going to die, and we can't take it with us. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details about legacy giving.

Tax Deductible
Donation Processing



The Importance of Voting This November

By State Senator Matt McCoy

Elections come and go, and each time candidates for office tell us that this is the most important election in a generation. I have always felt that this is a bad practice because every election is important and your single vote really matters. This year, however,

I have begun telling Iowans that this is the most important election in a generation. Here is why.

Donald Trump is not on the ballot November 6. However, hundreds of legislative and congressional seats will be up for grabs. With Trump's approval rating low, you might assume that it will be a good year for Democrats. That would be a major mistake. Historically, the President's party in control usually bears the brunt of a negative approval rating. Unfortunately, Democrats do a much better job voting in Presidential elections and a poor job in what is considered midterm elections. What is also challenging is that nobody is capable of determining the impact that a strong economy might have on these midterms.

What is at stake? Every decade a new census is conducted, and the party in control in most states does redistricting around that census data. In most states, the party that is in control of the legislature gets to gerrymander districts to favor the party in control. This means that some states can all but assure legislative control for another decade. Iowa has a non-partisan legislative process that creates legislative maps according to very specific rules, which then can be adopted by the legislature. Three maps are drawn and the legislature can only see one at a time. The process would mean a majority could reject the first plan, reject the second plan, and reject the third plan. In Iowa, if they reject the third plan, they then can draw their own maps. Imagine the kinds of districts that would be drawn in Iowa. Imagine what the Congressional districts might look like if legislators proceeded down this path.

Currently the Republican Party controls 31 state legislative chambers. Democrats control 13 and 6 are divided. The numbers are similar for governors. There are 33 Republican governors and 17 Democratic governors.

Understanding the impact a President and Congress can have on the Supreme Court was an eye opener for many. With a new conservative tilt on the Supreme Court, literally all of our hard-won fights are up for grabs. Because of the age of the existing Supreme Court Justices, Donald Trump could have an opportunity to appoint another two justices over the next two years. Control of the United States Senate is crucial if Democrats have any hope of stopping any of the President's nominees. When Republicans controlled the Senate, they were able to stop President Obama's nominee Merrick Garland from even having a hearing.

In the first two cases of the new session of the Supreme Court, Justice Kavanaugh presided over cases involving worker rights and immigrant rights. There are several cases related to so-called "religious liberty rights" and "abortion rights" that are available to be heard by the Court. In fact, I predict that within 24 months, if Democrats don't retake the United States Senate, abortion rights will be determined not by federal law, but rather by state law. Imagine the types of quilt work abortion rights we will have across America.

So, when someone tells you that their vote won't matter this election cycle, tell them about what is at stake. In Iowa, the GOP has devastated worker protections and rights. The GOP has privatized the Medicaid system with horrendous results. They have passed one of the most restrictive abortion bills in the country. Currently, they have pursued and are pursuing a "religious freedom" bill, which would allow blatant discrimination against gays, immigrants, non-Christians, and more. Do you really think that this same group of legislators won't try gerrymandering?

Whether a blue wave happens or not is very unclear. What is clear is that you have a voice and a vote. I encourage you to exercise both this November 6. As always, early voting is available at 120 Second Avenue, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and satellite locations are available throughout the community.





A Quiet Place

Movie Review by Mark Turnage

In this issue, I'd like to return the spotlight to one of the films I reviewed earlier, *A Quiet Place*.

It's fascinating to me how removing one of the senses entirely changes the experience of film. In John Krasinski's directing debut *A Quiet Place*, sound is the threat to one family's survival; any noise made instantly draws the wrath of vicious, unkillable monsters and certain death. For a horror movie, this experience ends up amplifying all other senses (including sound, since it's used so sparingly), and offers creative opportunities for tension-building, perilous situations, and powerful moments of nonverbal acting and expression. A waterfall becomes a confessional, a bathtub turns into a terrifying prison, Christmas tree lights herald a warning, and a newborn baby's cries create a threat to its own mother's survival. Of special note is an all-too-real sequence involving a grain silo that makes this lowan shudder.

A Quiet Place may not look it at first, but it's in the same vein of films as *The Road*, *The Mist*, and other tales of a family surviving a post-apocalyptic world. Krasinski uses a little to tell a lot; we don't see the apocalypse; we're already living in it. The world has ended, the monsters have won, and families like Krasinski's (who also stars in the film he directed) are the dwindling minority. The opening scene illustrates that these survivors are wary, smart, and have taken great pains to look out for and protect one another, yet any lapse of high alertness yields swift and terrible consequences. The world-building efficiency in those opening few minutes tells us everything we need to know about the rural, ruined world this family occupies, and when sound does enter the picture, the audience fears it just as much as this family does. Clever stuff.

The story follows father Lee (Krasinski), mother Evelyn (Emily Blunt), son Marcus (Noah Jupe), and their deaf daughter Regan (Millicent Simmonds in a breakout role), who blames herself for a family tragedy and sees her differently-abledness as a disadvantage to the family's survival. The scenes with Regan tie the story together in heartfelt ways, exploring themes such as family guilt, loss, and responsibility and, ultimately, finding strength and power in hopeless times. Her character also defines American Sign Language as the primary dialogue of the movie and is a plausible explanation as to how this family survived a sound apocalypse while others didn't.

It's downplayed until the first fourth of the movie, but Evelyn is also pregnant. You have to be observant to do the math, but conception occurred well after the worst happened to the rest of the world. This is a family hell-bent not just on surviving, but outliving, and the portrait Krasinski paints is of a loving family worth caring about because it's worthy of surviving the worst. Every nonverbal cue within the family's interactions carries that weight.

See it, and avoid crunchy food, noisy snacks or a loud cell phone during the show.

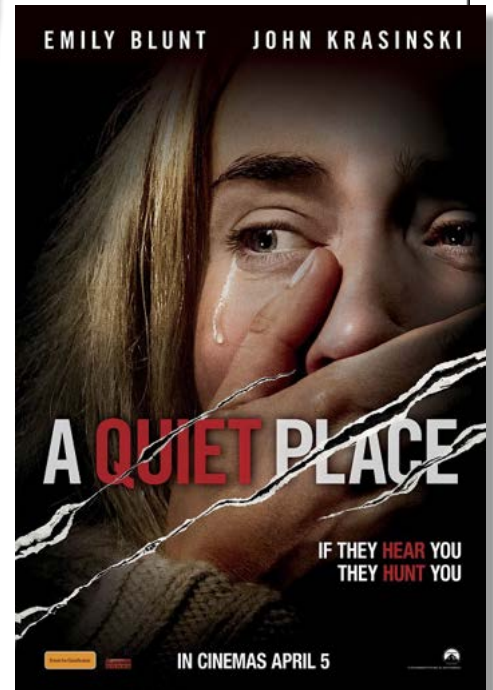




Photo by Gary Moore

Growing up in a Southern Baptist missionary family, effectively isolated ("protected") from any influences of popular culture, Sam Brinton was hustled off – willingly at first, since he knew he was an abomination and hated by God -- to a "religious therapist" the minute he admitted to having feelings for another boy. Eventually he learned to claim that he was cured, in order to avoid more beatings, and it was not until college that he met (and then only gradually trusted) another gay person.

A brilliant student, Sam graduated in 2011 from Kansas State University with a B.S. in mechanical and nuclear engineering and a B.A. in vocal music performance and a minor in Chinese language. (He had chosen these majors precisely to avoid being sent to a Christian college that didn't offer them.) His educational research interests were concentrated on nuclear fuel cycle system analysis with subtopics of interest, including fuel cycle economics and nuclear waste storage and disposal analysis. He has since had internships at Harvard Kennedy School, Argonne National Laboratory, Idaho National Laboratory, and Dow Chemical Company in various projects relating to nuclear engineering and systems analysis, and he recently completed a dual Master of Science degree program at MIT in nuclear engineering and the technology and policy program.

Already a gay activist by his junior year, when he graduated from KSU, he took a job as Secretary of the Board of Directors of Delta Lambda Phi, the largest fraternity for gay, bisexual, and transgender men in the world. The founder since then of numerous consulting and policy projects on both gay issues and nuclear, management, and global warming issues, Sam is now the Trevor Project's chief advocacy officer, where he ensures that the organization is advancing policies and positions that help LGBTQ youth in crisis. He leads Trevor's work on the federal, state, and local level and in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and his role focuses on all LGBTQ issues including both mental health and suicide prevention. Samuel Brinton is on Facebook and he tweets from <@sbrinton>. The Trevor Project's Washington phone number is (202) 391-0834.

Saving Lives: The Trevor Project

by Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker on Friday morning, October 5, 2018, was Samuel Brinton, Head of Advocacy and Government Affairs for the Trevor Project, which is focused on suicide prevention efforts among LGBTQ youth. Sam's wide-ranging talk focused largely on his work to outlaw the long-discredited practice of reparative therapy (conversion therapy) in those states – including Iowa – where it is still legal, through advocacy, and introducing legislation to ban the practice in the remaining 36 state houses.

Not (for the moment, anyway) sporting his trademark red mohawk, Sam was nevertheless outfitted stylishly in a black tunic with lacy bell-sleeves and covetable, glittery, black knee-length boots with amazing stiletto heels. But his couture was quickly overshadowed by the horrifying and even violent story of his own experience undergoing conversion therapy, and his constant, audacious advocacy since then for LGBTQ youth. He has spoken before the United Nations, Google Headquarters, and Congress, and has also been featured in interviews with *Time*, MSNBC, *Huffington Post*, *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *New York Daily News*, and many others.

Sam's racy delivery had me on the edge of my seat, following his White House consultancy stories ranging from comparing footwear with Michelle Obama to trying to tutor the current president on the fundamentals of nuclear fission. ***You can hear, or re-hear, a complete audio recording of his talk and the Q&A following, by going to our Website, <ffbc Iowa.org>, and clicking on the "Speakers" tab. Sam's appearance at FFBC was partially sponsored by Iowa Leather and the Blazing Saddle.***



Ryan Dennis, Samuel Brinton, Bob Eikleberry: Photo by Gary Moore



["Five LGBTQ Documentaries for Fall and Winter" / continued from page three]

Seed Money: The Chuck Holmes Story

Out of all my selections, this is probably the odd duck but, nevertheless, incredibly fascinating, informative, and entertaining. ***Seed Money*** is about Chuck Holmes, who started the pornographic film company, Falcon Studios. The first half shows us how Chuck started the company, but also gives us a good history lesson of life post-Stonewall, and how pornography and sex intersects with activism. The history of gay pornography is also extremely fascinating (especially comparing to what we have today). We learn about what happened to the industry once AIDS came into the picture, but also how Chuck Holmes became one of the largest donors to LGBTQ activist groups as a result.

We Were Here

This is hands down one of the saddest films I've ever watched, but necessary viewing for any LGBTQ individual. The documentary talks to a handful of subjects of their lives and experiences with HIV/AIDS in San Francisco in the '80s and '90s. As a millennial, we often hear statistics about this period of time, but when you can put a face and real emotions behind it, it becomes more and more important and relatable. The subjects are also all diverse and the stories really pull at your heartstrings.

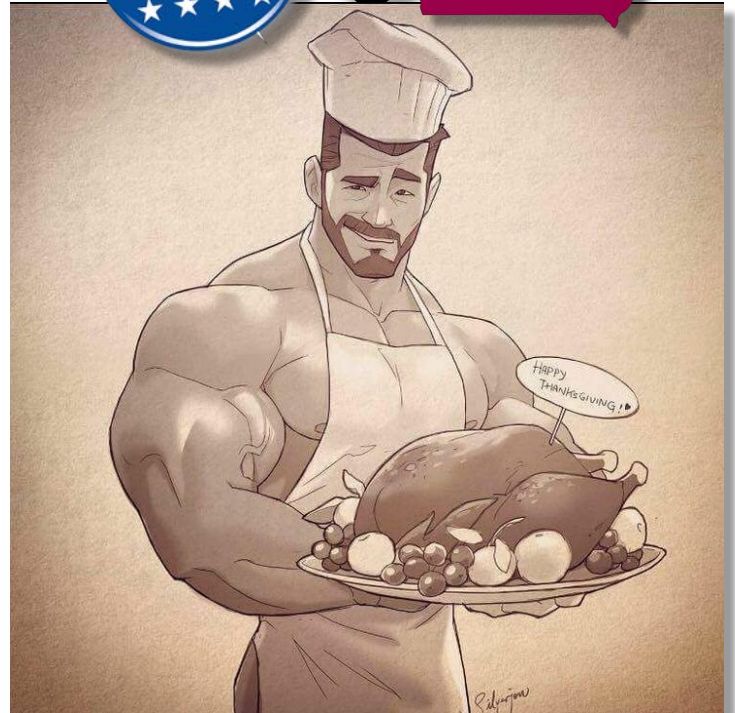
How to Survive a Plague

How to Survive a Plague is also a documentary about HIV/AIDS in the 80s and 90s. Whereas ***We Were Here*** brings to the forefront the emotional stories of the people who suffered from HIV/AIDS, ***How to Survive a Plague*** explores how the LGBTQ community rose up and fought for their lives. This film shows how the challenged politicians, pharmaceutical companies, religious leaders, or anyone else who stood in their way, all in the most badass (often times theatrical) ways to demand action so we could have the lifesaving medications that we now take for granted.

Vito

Vito is about the life of author and activist Vito Russo. Russo is most famous for writing ***The Celluloid Closet***, which is essential reading about the history of LGBTQ subjects in films. Russo also immersed himself in gay activism from the very beginning (soon after Stonewall). He was extremely sex-positive, often viewing this as activism in and of itself in the '70s and '80s, but it was the HIV/AIDS crisis that furthered his causes until his early death in 1990.

Voting in Iowa has already begun. You can vote until election Day on November 6 at the Polk County Auditor's office located just south of Court Avenue on Second Street in Des Moines. It's quick and it's easy. Be SURE to vote!!!



Bad Idea, Reynolds!



Privatizing Medicaid is a singularly bad idea. Private program administrators add a profit cost to the equation. Private companies aren't just profit "motivated;" they have a fiduciary duty to shareholders to maximize profit and must, therefore, deny claims or minimize payments on claims if there is any arguable way to do so. With Medicaid, that added burden falls upon those most vulnerable among us -- those least able to fight with the program administrator. Governor Reynolds needs to do a reality check. It's called arithmetic. Adding a profit cost component doesn't add up for program recipients. In two words, it's mean spirited. In one word, it's Republican. (Jonathan Wilson)

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Robert F. Kennedy: Ripples of Hope

Author: Kerry Kennedy

A Book Review by Steve Person

Kerry Kennedy, the seventh of Robert and Ethel Kennedy's eleven children, is president of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights. She set out, upon the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of her father, to interview people of national and international prominence who were influenced in some way by her father.

As she notes in the Preface, "Think of the headlines over the past few years, and it is easy to hear Robert Kennedy's voice speaking out in our country as he did fifty years ago on the madness of gun violence, the shame of police brutality, the need for compassion in welcoming immigrants and refugees, the defiance of the easy call to war and, where war has broken out, the moral necessity of seeking peace."

Among those who contributed their thoughts to her questions about her father were President Bill Clinton, President Barack Obama, Harry Belafonte, John Lewis, Gavin Newsom, and Shirley MacLaine—twenty-eight people altogether, each in his or her way describing how Robert Kennedy influenced their lives and philosophies of living. The important message of the book, it seems to me, is how the less celebrated in this world can make a difference in improving the lives of others. For myself, I make most of my contributions to organizations that help those that cannot speak for themselves—namely animals. The lone exception to these charitable entities is my support of the Saint Joseph Indian School in Chamberlain, South Dakota.

Those of you who know me understand that I have zero regard for any organized religion be it Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, or whatever. So why am I giving money to a Catholic school in South Dakota? If you travel to a reservation for American Indians in any state in this union, you will realize the incredible poverty and sense of despair that pervade the inhabitants. These proud people, from whom we stole their livelihoods and traditions, have been reduced to a shadow of what they once were. The Saint Joseph School, despite its inculcation of Catholicism into these Lakota Sioux children, also makes sure the students learn about their culture, history, language, and traditions. The school encourages them to be proud of their heritage. That alone is why I support this institution.

The title of Kerry Kennedy's book comes from a speech Robert Kennedy gave in South Africa in 1966: "Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that will sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

The final question Ms. Kennedy asked of Shirley MacLaine was, "Why does he matter, fifty years later?"

Answered MacLaine: "Good question. Especially asking me that today. Do you see what's going on? What the fuck is going on?"

