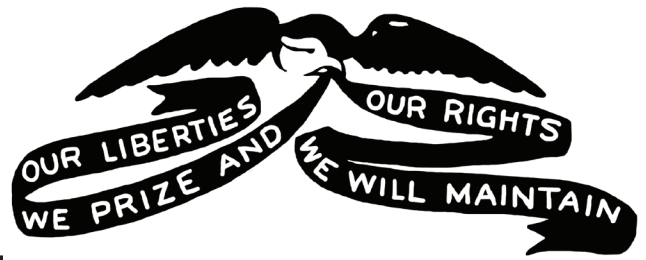


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Fall 2015

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Prairie Dog's Fall Reading List

Incarnadine by *Mary Szybist*
Sometimes spiritual, sometimes erotic, always brave and beautiful – these are poems that will haunt you deep into the autumn night. Szybist is deft and audacious, able to seamlessly weave words from a George W. Bush address to Congress into an Annunciation (both religious and political) about a young girl in a meadow, engrossed in a book.

The Laughing Monsters

by *Denis Johnson*

The most talented of all Iowa Writers' Workshop graduates creates a mysterious, bleakly entertaining world of NATO intrigue, military bungling, madness, and betrayal in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As the protagonist Nair says, "Never go back the way you came." As Prairie Dog says, never invite anyone from a Denis Johnson novel into your home.

Telex from Cuba by *Rachel Kushner*

During the idyllic Batista years, American sugar kings and their families drink, have sex, throw elaborate parties for their fellow expatriates, and look over their shoulders at the hills where Castro's rebels lurk. Kushner's debut novel, before *The Flame Throwers*, is a delicious melange of politics, passion, and psychology in a decadent world on the edge of disruption.

Cuba Straits by *Randy Wayne White*
Cut to contemporary Cuba, where White – a Davenport Central High grad – sets a hilarious saga of Santeria, smuggled baseball players, rare turtles, letters to a mysterious woman from Fidel and Raul, and a cast of Caribbean characters worthy of a Carl Hiaasen crime caper.

**Literature is news
that stays news.
– Ezra Pound**

The Things They Cannot Say

by *Kevin Sites*

A collection of eleven harrowing portraits of soldiers and marines that could easily be titled *The Things They Cannot Forget*. Sites deals in raw and ugly truths about killing and surviving in battle, and how combatants live with what they've done and seen. Most don't live with it very well, including embedded journalist Sites, who struggled for years to come to grips with his own complicity in allowing a man to die. For others, redemption comes only through efforts to help others heal from the horrors inflicted on those whose government has sent to fight its wars.

Just Mercy by *Bryan Stevenson*

Also about redemption, and the difficulty of finding it within America's criminal justice system. Stevenson, a Harvard-trained lawyer choosing to work with prisoners condemned to death in the South, is arguably America's most successful enemy of capitol punishment, as well as a gifted storyteller who will discuss his life and books at the Iowa City Book Fest this fall.

Human Voices by *Penelope Fitzgerald*

Paul "Prairie Mouse" Ingram of Prairie Lights Books calls Fitzgerald's recently re-printed novels "witty and politically astute," especially this one about workplace courage and cowardice in London's BBC offices during the blitz.

Everyday White People Confront Racial and Social Injustice edited by

Eddie Moore, Jr., Marguerite Penick-Parks, and Ali Michael. If you grew up in the USA, racism in one way or another has shaped your life. The challenge for Whites who want to confront racism is to confront their own – over and over and over. Moore, who founded the White Privilege Conference while teaching at Central College in Pella, Iowa, and his colleagues have gathered the stories of 15 white activists who continue to battle their own

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Bernie Sanders for City Council

For the last half-century, Iowa City has had a permanent right wing majority on the City Council on economic and criminal justice issues, one that provides knee-jerk support for both the Chamber of Commerce and the Police Department. The Progressive minority on successive councils has tended to be cautious and incrementalist, trying to get some improvements in the latest tax increment financing scheme or persuade the police to adopt more sensitivity training.

Bernie Sanders has up-ended conventional wisdom in the Democratic Party by running on a platform that most liberal Democrats would never touch, and demonstrating that his allegedly radical ideas (mostly recycled from FDR's New Deal) are popular with the voters.

What would a local Bernie Sanders for City Council platform look like? Well, let's try out a few ideas for future candidates. (PP readers: this means you, a mere two years from now).

1. Run our city buses like Cambus. We know that it is possible to run a bus service that is free to the rider. If you don't believe me, go on campus and take a ride on a Cambus. Or, notice the free yellow school buses traversing our city morning and evening during the school year. Yes, it would be expensive, but with a community commitment we can find the money (see below).

2. Eliminate the city's Department of Economic Development. It exists for one purpose only: to find new ways to provide tax subsidies to a local millionaire class of investors, or out of town shareholders in big corporations. Tax Increment Financing schemes are particularly

damaging to the community because they shred the budgets of our school districts and county government while we have to listen to bogus unscientific claims that they expand our tax base and create jobs, arguments that have been decisively disproved by economists. Get rid of these subsidies, and save money.

3. Cut the police Department Budget by 30%. After three failed jail referenda it has been demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that Iowa City is one of the most over-policed cities in America. Roughly 25% of UI undergraduate males leave here not only with a degree, but with a criminal record. Sports Illustrated named the University of Iowa Athletic Department the second most criminal one in the nation, and that is not because our athletes commit more crimes than athletes at comparable universities. Our police department has disgraced Johnson County by producing one of the worst records of racial disparity in marijuana arrests and prosecutions in the entire nation. Enough is enough. The only way to get a handle on this problem is to reduce the number of police officers, and concentrate on serious crimes that threaten public safety.

4. Sell the city-owned airport. Use the land to build affordable single-family homes and apartments, served by our free bus system. We have another good airport only twenty minutes away. Providing this land to developers for affordable housing would be a rare example of a useful city subsidy for economic development, as long as the city makes sure that the new development paid its fair share of property taxes.

5. Turn the water rates around. Water is a necessity of life, yet the first gallon of water you use is far and away the most expensive when

the flat rate monthly hook-up fee is taken into account. Charge a progressive graduated rate: more per gallon for more use. That would be fair, and also encourage water conservation. While we are at it, we could give a discount to homeowners and landlords who sign a (self-enforcing) statement promising not to pour nitrogen, Roundup, and other harmful chemicals on to their lawns.

6. Make LEED certification compulsory for new homes and commercial buildings. We are never going to reduce global warming by putting plaques on isolated homes and commercial property for being energy efficient. In Germany, homes and commercial property use 50% less energy per capita than comparable buildings in the U.S. How do they do it? Uniform government building codes, enforced without exception. We know this can be done without lowering our standard of living. How do we know? Germans have just as high a standard of living as do we.

What do you think? Bernie Sanders has changed the conversation about what is possible in the Democratic Party. Let's change the conversation in Iowa City City Council politics. ✂

– Jeff Cox



The Prairie Progressive endorses LaTasha DeLoach and Tom Yates for Iowa City Community School District.

Becoming a Just City

As you might already know, I currently represent District C on Iowa City's City Council. I have worked hard on behalf of Iowa Citians over the past 3½ years, and I ask you, my fellow progressives, to support my bid for election to an At-Large position on November 3.

We who live in Iowa City are very lucky to live in a special place. Our unemployment rate is low, our median household income is relatively high, and cultural opportunities abound.

But our city is changing fast. We're growing in population and becoming more diverse. We're facing competition from neighboring cities while also being pressured financially by State-mandated tax cuts. We're experiencing sharp conflicts over City-subsidized high-rise construction projects, while also facing a growing shortage of affordable housing. Many of us feel threatened by the police or by people who fear non-native immigrants. Many of us are dismayed by our collective inability to respond constructively to the threats associated with climate change. And much more.

These changes are not trivial. Collectively they challenge us to decide now what direction we want our city to go over the coming years.

Two conflicting visions might guide the way.

One vision might be called "Boomtown." Those who rely on this vision claim that cities like ours must compete with other cities, both near and far, to attract businesses and a "creative class" of Internet-savvy employees. Guided by a desire to expand the economy and increase the tax base, this Boomtown vision has been invigorating parts of our city in

ways that many of Iowa Citians like. And those who benefit most directly from this vision claim that all we need to do is stay the course. If it ain't broke, they say, don't fix it. Let's just keep moving forward.

But for far too many Iowa Citians, our city is broken. For far too many of us, the Boomtown vision accommodates the interests of the well connected while ignoring the rest of us. It's rapidly changing the city we love into a place that will soon be unrecognizable. And, by responding too cautiously to climate change and threats to our fellow species, it's undermining our children's prospects for a healthy future.

The second vision might be called the "Just City." Those who share this vision believe that Iowa City should be good on the ground for all, both now and in the future. This vision would lead to a city that is substantively democratic, economically healthy, affordable, and resilient.

The conflict between these visions has become increasingly acute over the past few years. Rather than keep replaying this conflict, as if we have learned nothing, we should turn more of the Boomtown wealth, energy and creativity toward building a more Just City.

This turn toward the Just City calls for a City Council that is willing to change course. Most important, I believe the City Council should:

- Modify its practices to be more open and responsive to all of the city's residents;
- Adopt a much more fair and trustworthy process for using Tax Increment Financing (TIF);

- Invest more City resources in ways that directly benefit regular working people, especially those in the lower half of the income bracket, and especially by increasing the supply of housing they can afford;
- Make greater progress toward improving racial equity and reducing racial disparities, especially with regard to law enforcement, income, and access to jobs and services;
- Invest in older core neighborhoods and strengthen our neighborhood in schools; and
- Facilitate a money-saving, job-creating transition away from carbon-based fossil fuels, and adopt a biodiversity management strategy that sustains all forms of life.

With your help, we can build on what's already great about Iowa City and lead it toward becoming a Just City, a place that's good on the ground for all, both now and in the future. The long-term health of our community depends upon it.

If you share this vision, I ask for your support this coming fall. And please support other candidates who, in your judgment, would favor moving Iowa City in a similar direction.

You can find more detailed information about my campaign on my Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/Throg4IC>.

Let's get started, together ! ❀

– Jim Throgmorton has lived in Iowa City for 29 years, six of them as a member of the City Council. He can be reached at jthrogmo@yahoo.com.

A Political Revolution

In "Not Ready for Hillary" (Prairie Progressive, Spring 2015), I wrote that Hillary Clinton has a progressive heart with a conservative mind, and that I hoped to see on the campaign trail the progressive-feminist Hillary, who I still believe, is the real, authentic Hillary. I felt we did not get the real Hillary in the campaign of 2008. It felt like we got a fake Hillary, one who her handlers thought she needed to be to win. I ended up caucusing for Barack Obama and do not regret having done so.

Recently, a Washington Post reporter was in Iowa on a mission to write a derisive hatchet piece about Hillary. As a female, I am in a category of people who have to wonder whether such attacks are gender-based. Probably, it was not. But something about this male reporter trying to belittle her had the effect of making me want to defend her. I found myself being more open to a Hillary Clinton presidency.

I consider myself a feminist. In grad school I took all of the women's studies courses I could. I read Emma Goldman's "Living My Life," both volumes, cover to cover. My first realization of how we are all brainwashed by media happened when I saw Jean Kilbourne's "Killing us Softly" documentary and presentation, a feminist and scholarly analysis

of images of women in advertising and how it affects our collective psychology -- in both men and women.

I abandoned active participation in the feminist movement some time after grad school because it just seemed so hopeless.

So now like others, I'm trying to decide who to support for president in 2016, and it is between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton. There is not much not to like about Bernie Sanders. He is out there hammering out the truth and saying it in a way that people can connect with. He is boldly calling for a political revolution. He has steadfastly refused to go negative on Hillary. He is an awesome candidate and I feel the Bern like anyone else who has a brain and a heart and is paying attention. And yet...

Hillary Clinton has probably done more for women and girls around the globe than any single person. She has dedicated her life to fighting the fight for equality. She has always fought for policies and programs that benefit women and children. As Secretary of State, she used her position to make women's rights a central part of U.S. policy. She reframed violence against women as a human rights violation, calling for women to be treated with dignity and respect in every nation. Her statements -- from "I'm not go-

ing to just sit around baking cookies," to "If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights, once and for all," as she said at the Beijing women's conference in 1995 -- tell me that she is my candidate.

Bernie Sanders is an awesome candidate as well and of course is supportive of women's issues. And President Obama signed the Lily Ledbetter Act, equal pay for equal work, as his first act as President.

But I want a female president. No, I want a feminist, female president who is smart and qualified and progressive. I want a feminist, female president who will truly represent me and my kind, 52% of the population. I want someone who will not put issues of importance to women on the back burner; someone who gets that global problems need solutions that involve women; someone who will not accept the inequality, misogyny, and violence against women that is the undercurrent of virtually every society, including ours.

That would be what I would call a political revolution. ✂

— Trish Nelson is the editor of www.blogforiowa.com.

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Building a democratic socialist voice

If we want to continue Bernie Sanders' agenda after the Presidential campaign, we have to build an organized democratic socialist presence in US politics.

Bernie Sanders is a democratic socialist, which means he believes that both the economy and society should be run democratically. Bernie has long championed public programs and democratic rights which empower working class people and lessen the power of Wall Street and the corporate elite.

At this time, most people in the United States do not classify themselves as "socialist" when asked to describe their politics. However, many of the things they value, particularly progressives – universal (single-payer) health care,

equal pay for equal work, greater democracy in the workplace, and providing access to college for all – are at the core of both Bernie's agenda and the goals of democratic socialism.

Sanders believes, as do democratic socialists, that empowering working people through unions and workers' cooperatives will overcome the obscene levels of wealth and income inequality in the United States.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) supports Bernie's agenda and thus his bid for the presidency, in order to help build a stronger progressive and multi-racial movement in this country, and to build the democratic socialist voice within that movement.

If you want to see Bernie's agenda come to fruition, only a stronger democratic socialist organization as a component within that movement will change US politics over the long run. Having a stronger democratic socialist presence in American politics will legitimize the word "socialism," and thus undermine the red-baiting of the Right, which has used that tactic to try to destroy even the most basic progressive reforms such as Social Security, Medicare, and the civil rights movement.

So if you like Bernie, check out Democratic Socialists of America, at www.dsaua.org. ✨

– Kim Jones, former co-chair of the Iowa City Local of Democratic Socialists of America, lives in the Twin Cities.



Prairie Dog's Fall Reading List
Continued from Page 1

prejudices and privileges even while working against them.

Body Counts by Sean Strub

Born and raised in Iowa City, Strub survived AIDS, politics in New York and Washington, and a Catholic upbringing to become a successful direct-mail fundraiser, organizer/agitator, and magazine publisher. His vivid autobiography chronicles the struggles of a young man on the verge of coming out, the protests and deaths that punctuated American life in the 80s and 90s, and the heroes and villains he met along the way (Tennessee Williams, Larry Kramer, and the closeted elected officials who voted for homophobic legislation during the day and hustled men in gay bars at night).

The Paying Guests by Sarah Waters

Another British recommendation from Prairie Mouse, in which a mother and daughter make a living after World War II in humiliating fashion (for them) by housing strangers in their home. Hijinks ensue when the daughter falls in lust with the wife of one of the paying guests.

West of Sunset by Stewart O'Nan

One of America's greatest novelists lands on Prairie Dog's Reading List for the third time. Having burrowed into the hearts and minds of cops, veterans, teen-agers, middle-aged married couples, elderly widows, and fast-food workers, O'Nan turns his keen attention to more glamorous figures, with equally astonishing results. The imagined lives of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in their post-Gatsby years are as rich in detail as any biography, and as emotional and deeply felt as Fitzgerald's finest fiction.

You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine
by Alexandra Kleeman

Dark and silly, much like most of our day-to-day lives. You might find yourself identifying uncomfortably with the main characters (named A, B, and C) as they navigate an American landscape strangely obsessed with bodies, especially those of women.

Between the World and Me

by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Paying homage to James Baldwin, to whom he's often compared, and describing the mind-blowing impact of Howard University on his view of black history and culture, Coates writes with beauty and artfulness. But the power of this book lies in its unsparing anger at the country where, as Malcolm X said, "If you're black, you're born in jail." ✨

– Prairie Dog

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Box 1945

Iowa City, IA 52244

