
THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



a newsletter for Iowa's Democratic Left

Spring 2019

Prairie Dog's Spring and Summer Reading List

Thanks to Prairie Progressive readers for recommending their favorite books to guide us through the changing seasons and the approaching caucuses.

It's all in the amygdalae, the little almond-shaped bunches of neurons in our brains, where we store instinctual responses that can give rise to anxiety as well as physical symptoms of pain. This according to *Anxious* by Joseph LeDoux, the author also of *The Emotional Brain*. The amygdalae are found deep within the interior of the brain, distinct from the cerebral cortex that we so proudly display as reasoning, reasonable homo sapiens of the highest order. The amygdalae can be associated with the Freudian id, the part of us that is instinctive, retentive, and persistent throughout our lives. *Anxious* is not exactly beach reading, but with a cool lemonade in hand under a tree in your backyard, it will show you where the lemon is lodged.

—Shirley Soffer is the author of *The Astrology Sourcebook: Your Guide to Understanding the Symbolic Language of the Stars*

The Catcher was a Spy by Nicholas Dawidoff. How does a Jewish boy from Newark end up catching for the Boston Red Sox, by way of Princeton, Columbia Law, and the Sorbonne? How does he then turn up working undercover for the OSS tasked with killing Werner Heisenberg? Find out in Dawidoff's biography of Moe Berg.

—Lois Cox is a retired law professor and an active baseball fan.

Other than authors of country music, few write about the pine forests of South Georgia. Janisse Ray's memoir, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, is important for the sense of place it creates. She grew up in a junkyard with ever-present extreme poverty, mental illness, and fundamentalist Christianity. Her story is one of growing self-awareness and hope in a land where both were in short supply.

—Paul Deaton is Solon Senior Correspondent for the Prairie Progressive

Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* and Sarah Schulman's *Conflict Is Not Abuse* are must-reads for think-we-woke white folks. They're both smart, generous, readable, and practical, and they make no bones about the complexity of their subject matter or about their own mistakes. These books won't make you think you've "mastered" any of the difficulties they address, nor should they. What they seek instead is a heightened awareness of unintentional bias—how we see and don't see each other—bringing fresh attention and insight to some of the most pressing issues of our time.

—Elizabeth Willis is the author of *Alive: New and Selected Poems*

The Prairie Progressive's Honor Roll for 1995 featured the Cullen brothers – Jim, John, and Art – for their progressive journalism in Storm Lake, Iowa. Twenty-two years later, the Pulitzer Prize Committee finally caught on and awarded its Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Writing to Art Cullen. No journalist better understands – and has the guts to challenge – the "state capture" of Iowa by the Farm Bureau-led ag lobby, chemical corporations like Monsanto, secret funders like the



Koch brothers, and politicians who whip up xenophobia and racism every chance they get. Every Prairie Progressive reader should subscribe to Art's newspaper, *The Storm Lake Times* (circulation 3,000 in a town of 10,000). And every elected official and candidate in Iowa should be required to read his book, *Storm Lake: A Chronicle of Change, Resilience, and Hope from a Heartland Newspaper*.

—Prairie Dog

Somebody's crazy

I used to have a crazy friend who often said, *"What do you think I'll be doing while you're trying to punch me in the face?"* I never tried to punch him in the face. He was speaking rhetorically (I think). His point was that he'd fight back if attacked. That's not what made him crazy. One time he drove for several hours to literally pee on someone's grave. When I say he's crazy—I mean that type of crazy.

Anyway, he was right and kind of brilliant in his own crazy way. I've referenced him in almost every fight I've been in for the past 20 years. Most of these fights involved large corporations bullying workers and working families. Giant companies who prey on individuals and count on people not fighting back. But when people do organize and fight back—they sometimes win. And not fighting back guarantees a loss.

Speaking of crazy—Havenpark Capital is crazy. They're the group out of Utah buying up mobile home parks in Iowa and jacking up lot rents to the point of forcing people out of their own homes. Havenpark has purchased mobile home parks in Waukee, North Liberty, Iowa City, and West Branch. They practice a predatory business model that relies on targeting people in far-away states that are at a disadvantage in a David and Goliath situation. In this case, the far-away state is right here at home. That's not the crazy part though.

What's crazy is in the short time Havenpark reared its ugly vulture head in Iowa, people in several mobile home parks have organized resident associations, state legislators are talking about legislation to protect residents

from bad business models, and research showed Havenpark owners are vulnerable on their own turf back home.

What's also crazy is that a horrible business plan hatched in Utah will undoubtedly be a catalyst for crazy changes in affordable housing in Iowa. And not just reactionary legislation (which is needed). It's time to look at different business models to slay the giants and level the playing field. We need to create a business model where mobile home parks are purchased and operated by non-profit entities that provide more permanent rent stabilization, more local control of management, and more peace of mind for residents.

These new models of ownership could come in different forms. They could be newly formed co-ops where the residents are actual owners. Or it could be an existing non-profit that purchases mobile home parks for the sole purpose of providing a fair and equitable community. Under this model, the non-profit could own more than one park, similarly to the way Havenpark gobbles up communities like a mobile home eating Pac Man – but with a different purpose and outcome.

Here's the craziest part—both of these examples of "new" models have already been done in other states. In 2004, in a mobile home park in California where residents were fighting for 4 years against predatory rent hikes, a non-profit stepped in and bought the entire park for 27 million dollars. Turns out you don't have to be the Goliath of Greed for real estate to be a good investment. And not all owners are bad. With the right tax incentives and some public-private partnerships, this is not only doable but gets a

good response from people involved in state economic departments that can bring bi-partisan support to the coalition.

Speaking of Goliaths of Greed, what are we going to do about Havenpark while we figure out our new mobile home park model in Iowa? If they think they can come into our communities and drive people out of their homes without a fight they're, well...crazy. And we'd be crazy to let them. We need to load up our sling shots and aim some rocks (metaphorically) at these giants.

Soon we will be asking people who care, which hopefully includes Prairie Progressive readers, to call a number in Utah and ask the owners to sit down with the newly formed Golfview Residents Association in North Liberty to discuss a path forward. And we want you to keep calling until we drive them crazy. Or until they agree to sit down and bring some sanity to this crazy idea that it's acceptable to drive people out of their homes in order to make a buck. If that doesn't work, we'll take the fight directly to their homes and businesses in Utah. They think they can prey on our neighbors. They don't know us very well. We need to organize, push back, and fight against this bully behavior. And we can win.

What do they think we're going to be doing while they're punching us in the face? Load your sling shot. Let's get crazy.

—Jesse Case is a Storm Lake native who lives in Iowa City

Cheer us on: We all play a part

Iowa's three regent schools may be rivals on the football field, but in the rotunda of the Iowa State Capitol, their cooperation is required. Too often this partnership goes unnoticed, and its impact may last much longer than a home turf victory. This is not at all a jab at college athletics, but it is meant to highlight the incredible work of student governments at Iowa, Iowa State, and UNI.

Of the many initiatives pursued by student governments, a major purpose of the organization is to advocate for students. Not only does this occur internally and with university administration, but at nearly every level of government. For the past academic year, I have had the honor of serving as Director of Governmental Relations for the University of Iowa Student Government (UISG). In my role, I have watched up close the kind of impact students can have in policy conversations at the Capitol and on campus. We carry with us a unique perspective on the present state of education, and a passion for what it could be. The purpose of our governmental relations team isn't to simply provide a perspective. We, along with our Cyclone and Panther counterparts, are proposing real policy changes that will better the lives off all Iowans.

After listening to students across our campuses, we have recognized their concerns about safety and affordability. And rightfully so! The failure of state government to sufficiently invest in higher education has led to rising costs of tuition for all three state institutions. As a student government, we urged the Iowa Legislature to fulfill the

Board of Regent's reasonable request for \$18 million. The affordability conversation does not stop there. We understand that economic barriers go well beyond the sticker price of a university. According to a campus survey executed by UISG, 23% of students report receiving "none" of their security deposit back at the end of the year. Even more revealing, nearly 40% of students believed they should have received more. Though a one-time payment, this amount of money can often reach up to \$700. Gone – simply at the discretion of the landlord. To reduce this issue, the University of Iowa Student Government has proposed a 'move-in checklist policy.' Already

Economic barriers go well beyond the sticker price of a university.

existing in 14 states, this law would require landlords to provide tenants a document upon move-in that will take note of the unit's quality. Hopefully, by starting off with shared knowledge of the rental, there will be less conflict at the end of the year. After several conversations with members of the Iowa House, we hope to see some legislation introduced in the coming year.

The other policy ask we have made at the Iowa State Capitol has been on the legislative agenda for several years now and is a priority we share with the two other regent schools. Commonly referred to as "medical amnesty," this law would grant limited legal immunity to minors seeking medical assistance

in an alcohol-related emergency. The policy currently exists in 39 other states and has made a significant impact. According to a Cornell Study in 2006, after the policy was implemented, there was a 22% increase in calls for medical assistance over two years. Additionally, there was a 61% decrease in the number of respondents who cited, "I didn't want to get the person in trouble," as a reason for not calling emergency services. Simply put, this law would save lives. After hearing from Hawkeyes, Cyclones, and Panthers on this issue, a medical amnesty bill has passed its respective committees and has been placed on unfinished business. We are thankful to all who have supported this legislation, and we look forward to a vote in the coming year.

Why is this important to readers who may not be in college? The answer is simple: we all play a part in moving our state forward. Our students and universities are some of the greatest resources this state has to offer, and we must ensure their success. For some, a college degree is their ticket to the middle class, to the American dream. We can't let unfair housing costs and unintentional injuries hinder their education.

Please join us as in advocating for increased appropriations, a move-in checklist, and a statewide medical amnesty law. Write or call your legislators and urge them to support these common-sense policies. We owe it to our Hawkeyes, Cyclones, and Panthers to cheer them on in the legislature too.

—Connor Wooff is a Political Science major at the University of Iowa

When did ‘boycott’ and ‘divestment’ become dirty words?

One year ago, my son participated in a five-day fast with Immokalee farmworkers, protesting Wendy’s refusal to pay one cent more per pound of tomatoes picked by field workers in Florida. All other major fast-food companies had agreed to the increase except Wendy’s, and a national boycott was launched. When I attempted to publicize this boycott in my local paper -- the Waterloo Courier -- the editor told me bluntly, “we don’t publish boycott letters.”

Similar US boycotts have been honorable and successful. The 1955 Montgomery bus boycott sparked a 13-month mass protest that ended with the US Supreme Court ruling that segregation on public buses is unconstitutional. The national campaign to boycott table grapes, led by the United Farm Workers union from 1965-1970, resulted in collective bargaining agreements which included higher wages and better working conditions for field workers.

Divestment – the act of removing money and investments from a company or country in an attempt to motivate that institution to better behavior – is also a proven, successful tool for progressives. Iowa was one of the first states to withdraw investments from companies doing business in South Africa, and the Divest from South Africa movement helped bring about the end of white rule in that country.

How do I know divestment strategies work? Because the South African government told me so. In the late ‘80s, while Director of the Iowa Senate Democratic Caucus staff, the South African consulate in Chicago called. They wanted to set up a meeting with Rep. Jean Lloyd-Jones, who was the State Government Committee chairperson.

Jean and I later met over lunch with two South African consulate reps, who made it clear they were speaking on behalf of the South African government. They pleaded with us, explaining much progress had been made in South Africa in recent years, and please, PLEASE would Iowa ease its divestment policy? Jean and I listened politely, then firmly informed them, “that’s just not going to happen.”

Now, the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions movement (BDS) is suddenly front page news, even though it began back in 2005. The BDS campaign seeks to put economic pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied territories and guarantee full equality for Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel. It encourages divestment from Israel and a boycott of products produced by companies that do business with Israel.

The government of Israel compares BDS to the Nazi practice of boycotting Jewish businesses. Progressives point to similarities between South African apartheid and Israel’s approach toward Palestinians.

Republicans have successfully labeled the BDS movement as ‘anti-Semitic.’ They’ve also convinced more than half of state legislatures to pass laws requiring businesses which have a state government contract to sign a pledge stating they do not support the BDS movement. In Iowa, this legislation was introduced by former Sen. Jeff Danielson (D-Cedar Falls), and was passed and signed into law by Gov. Branstad in 2016.

Republicans are now trying to pass federal legislation which supports state anti-BDS laws. Do state anti-BDS laws violate the free-speech rights of US citizens? Of course they do. Which is why the ACLU is fighting this legislation.

All six US Senators running for the Democratic presidential nomination voted on anti-BDS legislation in February 2019. Five of the six voted against the bill, with Sen. Klobuchar the lone supporter. When the Jerusalem Post asked each Senator to explain the reasoning behind their vote, the responses were somewhat surprising.

Most of those who voted ‘No’ said they did so because they had ‘free speech’ concerns. But Elizabeth Warren added, “I oppose the boycott.” Bernie Sanders said, “I do not support the BDS movement.” Cory Booker stated, “I strongly oppose efforts to boycott Israel.” Kamala Harris did not mention the BDS movement and Gillibrand didn’t respond. When in Waterloo recently, Julian Castro said he does not support BDS, but added “I’m beginning to believe the development of a Jewish state may be incompatible with a democratic nation.”

I’m no Middle East expert. But I know a young man who recently returned from working with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in the Israel-Palestinian territories. The experiences he shared upon his return are shocking. Israeli control of Palestinians in certain areas of that country are indeed similar in some aspects of South Africa’s control of blacks during apartheid. CPT is a non-violent organization which seeks peaceful resolution between both sides, yet when my friend recently returned to Israel he was handed a document banning him from entering the country for 15 years. All because he simply observed the situation, then returned and shared with US citizens what he had observed.

That’s not being an anti-Semite. That’s just being a responsible human being.

Please encourage Democratic presidential candidates to become aware of the human rights situation in Israel.

—Dennis Harbaugh lives in Waterloo



May 10, 1994

Nelson Mandela became President of South Africa

May 11

Johnson County Dems Hall of Fame reception in Coralville

May 17, 1954

Supreme Court banned school segregation

June 2, 1924

Congress gave Native Americans citizenship

June 12

CommUnity Crisis Center Hunger Banquet in Coralville

June 21, 1989

Supreme Court overruled anti-flag-burning law

June 28, 1969

Stonewall riot in New York City

July 20, 1969

First moonwalk

Aug 2, 1924

James Baldwin born

Aug 4, 1964

Bodies of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman found near Philadelphia, MS

Aug 9, 1974

President Nixon resigned

Senators Grassley and Ernst have blood on their hands

Senator Bernie Sanders deserves credit for persuading both houses of Congress to pass the Authorization of Military Force Act (AUMF) to end the joint U.S.-Saudi military operation in Yemen. This is the first time that Congress has used the AUMF to call a halt to a war initiated by a President. President Trump vetoed the bill, and the war goes on, but bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress are now on record as opposing this disastrous and inhumane American military operation.

Senator Sanders's co-sponsor was Senator Mike Lee of Utah, a right-wing Mormon Republican who holds the eccentric view that the best way to combat global warming is for young people to get married and have as many children as possible. Presumably Senator Lee recognizes that Yemenis who follow his advice are likely to see their children killed by the American military. Iowans should know that both Senators Charles Grassley and Joni Ernst voted against Senators Sanders and Lee, and with the minority in the Senate who support the continued U.S. military intervention in Yemen, which has produced one of the greatest humanitarian crises in recent history.

The facts are not in dispute. The U.S.-Saudi bombing campaigns are burning little girls alive, mutilating little boys, and crushing elderly couples to death as they lie sleeping in their beds. They have blown up school buses, weddings and funerals, and they bomb first responders trying to help survivors. Those who do survive, including innumerable children, are starving to death. Senators Grassley and Ernst have blood on their hands, the blood of innocent children. —*Jeff Cox*

Paper lends credibility to the news report. Anybody can tweet. Not everyone can sustain a print operation.

—*Art Cullen, editor of The Storm Lake Times*

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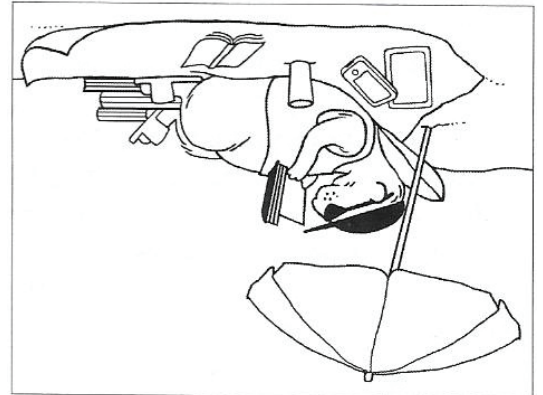
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