
THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



a newsletter for Iowa's Democratic Left

Fall 2022

The cat's out of the bag

As the leaves turned orange and scarlet in Iowa, I spent a weekend in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a city I had never seen. I was drawn by the Bob Dylan Center and the Woody Guthrie Center.

Dylan has provided much of the soundtrack of my life. Put simply, visiting the site of his archives and exhibits about his work did not disappoint; even a casual fan can spend hours watching and listening to rare interviews and performances from the early sixties to the present. Next door to the Dylan Center are similarly-housed archives and exhibits about Oklahoma-born Guthrie, who was Dylan's spiritual and artistic father and thus, by extension, the spiritual and artistic influence of nearly every great American singer, songwriter, and poet of the past sixty years. The two centers side-by-side in the Tulsa arts district are worthwhile for any observer of popular culture, music, literature, and politics. I learned, for example, that Woody campaigned vigorously for Iowa native and former Vice-President Henry Wallace when he ran for President in 1948.

It was at a third Tulsa site, however, that I learned the most. Just a few blocks from Dylan and Woody lies Greenwood Rising, in the heart of

what was once known as Black Wall Street. This center depicts a vital neighborhood and its prosperous citizens, contrasted with photos and artifacts of smoking ruins and the distraught survivors of racist mayhem. Thanks to HBO dramas like *Watchmen*, *Lovecraft Country*, and several recent documentaries, more of us know something about the Tulsa Massacre of 1921. Even Black residents were unaware that

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35 blocks of homes and thriving businesses were burned to the ground and at least 300 people were killed when white residents—supported by the government—went on a two-day rampage of unpunished hatred, resentment, and bloodlust.

Some older black residents knew about the massacre but kept quiet, mostly because it was too frightening to talk about. Angel, a docent at Greenwood Rising, told me her grandmother still avoids the subject

for fear that *it could happen again*. Only in the last twenty years, with the discovery of mass graves and evidence of official cover-ups, has the horror been acknowledged. Sam, another docent, repeatedly told visitors, “The cat's out of the bag.”

In the spring of 1921, a Black man was arrested for assaulting a white woman. Unfounded rumors rippled through the white population. A mob gathered outside the jail. A shot rang out and the mob erupted, burning the entire Greenwood district while the National Guard stood by. In addition to the deaths and thousands of injuries, 9,000 people became homeless. Thousands were interned through the winter. City and state officials, the newspapers, and a grand jury blamed the Black residents. No one in the mob was held accountable. The only white person charged was the Chief of Police, convicted for dereliction of duty. Redlining and racist law enforcement became more firmly entrenched in Tulsa.

What can we learn from Greenwood Rising? One glance at the day's news suggests that smaller versions of the Tulsa Massacre happen every day in America: a Black man murdered for jogging in a white neighborhood, white policemen exonerated for shooting unarmed Black people,

cont'd on Page 8

Turn your ballot over and vote No

Five years ago, I became involved with the gun violence prevention movement because I was tired of the dialogue defining what a veteran looked like. I'm not a white male who idolizes guns. Everything I know about gun safety comes from my military training and service in the Persian Gulf War. I've spent the past two years preparing for this November's battle.

Gun safety is on the ballot in Iowa this year as voters consider a constitutional amendment. Iowans of course have the right to own a gun and we have the U.S. Constitution that guarantees this. But this amendment doesn't do what it says it does. It's funded by out of state special interests who put profits over people. And instead of protecting our rights, this confusing amendment will weaken our current laws, make us less safe and even put law enforcement in danger. This ballot measure will make it even harder for police and other law enforcement officers to enforce the law and do their job.

The language in the ballot is intentionally confusing. The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects our right to own a gun. But the "strict scrutiny" called for in this amendment actually means that the Iowa government has limited power to create or enforce common-sense laws that would reduce gun violence, like background checks on all gun sales, and keep guns out of the hands of violent criminals.

The ballot will read "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. The sovereign state of Iowa affirms and recognizes this right to be a

fundamental individual right. Any and all restrictions of this right shall be subject to strict scrutiny."

Strict scrutiny is what makes this proposed amendment very different and very extreme. The gun lobby claims that strict scrutiny amendments "restore" the right to keep and bear arms, when what they really do is threaten public safety laws forcing judges to apply the highest judicial standard when analyzing firearm-related laws. This standard is not required by the Supreme Court's recent decision.

Only three other states have a similar version of this proposed amendment: Alabama, Louisiana, & Missouri. All three of these states rank in the top five for the highest rates of gun deaths in the US.

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After strict scrutiny amendments passed in Louisiana and Missouri, convicted felons challenged state laws that prohibit felons from possessing firearms. At least one lower court found that Louisiana's law prohibiting felons from having guns was unconstitutional. Fortunately, the Louisiana Supreme Court reversed this ruling.

This extreme approach would invite frivolous litigation, undermine decades of case law in the state

courts, and put in jeopardy many moderate, common sense gun laws. Iowa's current laws keep felons from having firearms, keep perpetrators of domestic violence from having firearms, keep guns out of schools, and keep restrictions on machine guns and other "offensive weapons." These are the types of laws, if challenged under this extreme version of the second amendment, might be declared unconstitutional.

This proposed amendment, if passed, would also restrict future legislatures from passing future gun safety legislation, such as reinstating our permitting laws or introducing a red flag law. And that's the point. Republican Sen. Jason Schultz, who supports the ballot measure, said "the point of this is to restrict future gun control bills." Republican Rep. Steven Holt stated on the Iowa House floor, "Thank you to the United States Marine Corps and John Wayne for teaching me that... the most effective gun control is a firm grip and a steady hand."

Make no mistake, the campaign for this amendment is funded by out-of-state special interests, who want to flood our streets with weapons of war rather than support laws that protect our communities and save lives. The special interest groups behind this ballot measure only care about profits over people and are promoting their guns everywhere agenda, in schools, in grocery stores, and places of worship, just to increase their revenue.

This proposed amendment won't make Iowa safer. Turn the ballot over and vote NO.

—*Temple Hiatt lives in Iowa City.*

What makes a good judge?

The importance of this November's back side of the ballot is equal to its front page. Besides a controversial constitutional amendment, several judicial positions are up for retention. Two Iowa Supreme Court Justices and two Iowa Court of Appeals Judges will be listed on your ballot. Also, depending upon where you live, one or several district court judges will be up for retention (including associate judges).

Retention is part of the merit system Iowa uses to determine whether judges and justices will be retained for another six years or vacate the judicial seat at the end of the term—usually on December 31.

Iowa's process of selecting judges and supreme court justices is called the Missouri Plan, which was adopted into the Missouri Constitution by voters in 1940. Presented with a similar constitutional amendment in 1962, Iowa voters adopted the Missouri Plan. Currently, only eight states (AK, CO, IA, MO, NE, NM, UT, WY) use this process for selecting and retaining judges and justices.

A majority of states have various methods for selecting and retaining judges. Voters in some states elect their judges, either in partisan or nonpartisan races, which include campaigning. The argument for electing judges (and or justices) is voter accountability.

Electing judges, however, presents several questionable problems that are not evident in the Missouri Plan. If someone contributes to a judge's campaign, the most obvious reflection of that contribution is the *quid pro quo*. Also, candidates for the judiciary in Iowa and

other Missouri Plan states are vetted through a nonpartisan nominating committee. It ensures that candidates are, indeed, professionally qualified. Elected judges tend to learn as they go.

In 2010, Iowa voters failed to retain Supreme Court Justices Marsha Ternus (Chief Justice), and associate justices Michael Streit, and David Baker. All three failed to receive fifty percent of the support necessary to continue with their service. The Iowa Family Leader claimed success in ousting the three because those justices were part of a unanimous decision in the nationally popular Iowa Supreme Court decision: [Varnum v. Brien](#). But there will always be between 20 and 30 percent of voters who will vote against retention without reason or with their own personal reason. So, the IFL was only able to recruit fewer than 30 percent "no" votes. It was the first time in Iowa history that justices were removed from office, either by impeachment or by voters.

It's time to recognize the Family Leader's damaging campaign of 2010 that potentially opens the door to partisan posturing of the courts, and the *quid pro quo* system that Iowa has wisely avoided to maintain an unbiased judiciary.

The two associate justices up for retention have not been in their positions very long. Justices Dana Oxley and Matthew McDermott are up for retention for the first time. Both Oxley and McDermott are on the retention list because each has completed their first full year on the high bench. Neither has written enough decisions to be considered controversial.

The Iowa Bar Association provides valuable information on what to know before voting for or against a judge who is up for retention. The 2022 Judicial Performance Review lists a few Frequently Asked Questions: "What makes a good judge?" "What about a judge's personal views on certain issues?" "What about decisions a higher court reverses?" "What about an unpopular court decision?" The information provided in the FAQ will give you a solid foundation on which to base your decisions.

The best source of information on current judges up for a retention vote can be found at the Iowa Bar Association's [website](#). Following each judge/justice's biography is a section on rating each judge/justice up for retention by attorneys who face these decision-makers on a regular basis.

The attorneys rate the arbiters on:

- Knowledge and application of the law
- Perception of factual issues
- Attentiveness to evidence and arguments
- Attentiveness to arguments and testimony
- Management and control of the courtroom
- Temperament and demeanor
- Clarity and quality of written opinions
- Promptness of rulings and decisions
- Whether the judge/justice demonstrates appropriate innovation in using technology to improve the administration of justice.

These are the attributes that should be considered when voting to retain judges and justices. Nothing more, nothing less.

—Marty Ryan covers the justice beat for the *Prairie Progressive*.

The moral test of government

Immediately following Kim Reynolds' oath of office on January 17th, 2019, she stated, "I am grateful for the faith you have placed in me, humbled by the generosity you've shown me, and eager to continue to serve the great people of Iowa." A review of her first years in office indicates she is not worthy of the faith she proclaimed, has had very few, if any, humble moments, and served the "great people of Iowa" with prejudice, selective truths, and mismanagement of a widespread and lethal pandemic.

Managing the public health and well-being of Iowans should be the top priority of a Governor. Reynolds' first COVID priority might have been swift and honest communication based on the guidance of the CDC. She did not provide this information. The Des Moines Register opined, "In a pandemic, Reynolds' lack of transparency further erodes trust in government when it's needed most. Gov. Kim Reynolds should schedule a lengthy, in-person press conference outdoors and provide detailed answers to all media questions about COVID-19."

Hubert Humphrey wrote, "It was once said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped."

Reynolds has failed to meet the moral test of government. She failed those in the dawn of life by not closing schools and signing a law forbidding school districts

from mandating the wearing of masks even though it was the clear recommendation of the CDC that mask-wearing can prevent infection. Children got COVID. Some of them died. Reynolds failed those in the twilight of life by not protecting the elderly from community acquired infection because she did not mandate protective behaviors within communities. Bars, casinos, and restaurants opened, without protective limitations just weeks before the first vaccines went into the fragile deltoids of our most frail elderly. Either she was ignorant of the science, somehow unaware of the upcoming vaccination dates, or—worst of all—yielded to pressure from the business sector to open for the holiday season. Containing community spread protects the entire community.

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The elderly and those who cared for them got Covid and many of the elderly died. Reynolds failed those in the shadows of life. The families of disabled students are suing her for banning mask mandates. The immuno-compromised, whether due to chronic disease or cancer treatment, were especially vulnerable. These people got COVID and many died.

Reynolds not only failed in moral leadership, but bent the rules to better serve "her partners" and her

political aspirations. How else can one explain flying to Washington for a maskless fireside photo op with Donald Trump? She ignored the health needs of meatpackers, doing everything she could to force them back into unsafe plants, including a vow to deny unemployment compensation. One third of these workers got COVID. Some of them died.

The federal government sent 95 million dollars to be used for COVID testing in schools. Reynolds sent it back—but she kept 21 million dollars in CARES Act funds to overhaul the state's human resources IT system. She also used \$450,000 to pay her staff and never responded to the state auditor's repeated requests for documentation regarding these expenditures.

If we as voters fail to learn from a state government's history, we are doomed to repeat it. More than 10,000 Iowans have died due to governmental acts of omission and commission. COVID is still with us and there will be other crises in our future. How can we prosper as Iowans when our government lacks moral and practical leadership? We must hold Reynolds accountable to avoid her use of the methods and behaviors she continues to defend.

For two and a half years Iowans have grieved and have suffered from survivor's guilt, but we have hope. Our hope is birthed in the ballot box. Vote for Deidre DeJear for Governor and send Democrats to our legislative chambers.

—Sarah Swisher is a retired registered nurse and Johns Hopkins Certified COVID contact tracer.

A movement much larger than ourselves

The Iowa City Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is a democratic, member-run community Organization. We are working together for economic, racial, social, and environmental justice locally and nationally. We have over 200 local members organizing every day without compromising on the core values that well-meaning activists so often feel forced to do.

With nearly 100,000 members, DSA is the largest socialist organization in the country. Our members are organized into “working groups” that each focus around specific issues and engage in campaigns to build public support and bring pressure to those in Power. Our Public Transportation Working Group advocates for equitable, accessible transportation in Iowa City and across Johnson County. The Labor Working Group is fighting for workers’ rights, supporting organizing campaigns, and educating the public on labor organizing. Our Public Utilities Working Group is currently developing a campaign around ensuring internet access for all in Iowa City. The Electoral Working Group is engaging our members and the public to elect candidates that work for the people and not big business, like our only endorsed candidate, Jon Green for the Johnson County Board of Supervisors. The Socialist Feminist Working Group is fighting for abortion as a human right, recently taking on 40 Days of Reproductive Freedom events all across the area that included bake sales, protests and marches, truth-telling sessions, and a benefit concert.

Because ICDSA is a democratic, member-run organization, these

working groups are open to all. Members can join our working groups in addition to the general chapter and organize on the areas that are the most important to them. When there is work that needs done, members can come together and form a working-group to advocate for that cause. Our newest working group, the Labor Working Group, was only formed this summer, and has already provided support to local workers seeking to organize, provided resources on unfair workplace conditions, supported our fellow workers in BCTGM 100G at Ingredion in Cedar Rapids on the picket line and by protesting a local union buster at his home, and by traveling down to support our UAW 807 siblings in Burlington that have been on strike at Case New Holland for over 20 weeks.

Being a local chapter of our national organization allows us to be a part of a movement much larger than ourselves. DSA’s national growth has exploded since 2015, from the rise of the movement around Bernie Sanders, in opposition to the rise of fascism and Donald Trump, and from the massive upsurge in radically new politics nationwide. Our 100,000 members nationally have won amazing fights, such as electing several members to Congress such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, as well as dozens of state legislators and hundreds of other offices. Our International Committee has begun to connect our organization internationally as a part of the worldwide socialist movement, progressive movement, and workers’ movement, by building domestic solidarity for international causes, and providing election observation to numerous international elections such as the 2 October 2022 Brazil elections.

Other national campaigns include our campaigns for the Green New Deal and Medicare for All, our national Political Education Committee which has provided numerous free trainings on a wide range of topics in a time when education becomes more and more inaccessible. Our national Labor Committee and DSA’s partnership with the United Electrical union, the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee, has been front and center in the militant labor uprising taking place across the country at shops like Amazon, Starbucks, and many others, and is now preparing to provide critical solidarity to our Teamster siblings at UPS in what could be the largest labor action in decades. Overall, DSA nationally has been at the forefront of many causes that other groups and centrist politicians refuse to address. It is the largest, most active, and most effective organization for radical, progressive change in our country at this moment in history. We are building support locally, nationally, and internationally every day, for a movement that will demand change by the people in power or will take power for the people ourselves.

The only way that we can build a better, more equitable society where working-class people have power is by organizing together. If you know that the system is broken and want to make a difference, now is the time to get involved. We need to work together in a mass, big-tent organization to build power for working people. I believe that all progressives should become dues-paying members of the Democratic Socialists of America and take action in their communities as a part of our movement. We cannot afford to sit by the sidelines, or to continue trying the same old tactics, while democracy is threatened by the rise of fascism

—Ash Ayers is a motorcycle cowboy from Ottumwa, Iowa.

The demise of conservative thought

Today's topic is difficult. Many of us have long had friends who hold opposing political beliefs. But we were always able to josh about our respective parties, quote Will Rogers, and spar in a gentle manner over a dinner roasting on the grill. We always parted as friends.

The entire country, in fact, had a long-standing cultural experience of watching the giants of political philosophy converse in our living rooms. William F. Buckley's show *Firing Line*, for example. This was no cable news gab fest for the self-promoting. Titans of culture like James Baldwin, Buckley himself, William Friedman, Norman Mailer, and Noam Chomsky spent a full hour in conversational debate. ABC news even ran a series of face-to-face debates between Buckley and Gore Vidal. Imagine! [Note: it was a damn slow process in the 50's and 60's getting women of similar intellectual stature included. Alas.]

In the wake of the January 6 attempted insurrection and coup, we find ourselves in far more inhospitable terrain. The national landscape is perilous and troubling everywhere we turn. An increasing number of countrymen and women believe fiercely in things that are without any underlying architecture of fact. They have come to believe these things wholeheartedly. It is a type of belief that often leads to immense anger, even violence. A chunk of our population appears to have disposed of the old American truism that "your freedoms end where my face begins" without giving it a second thought. A second thought is much deserved.

In this season of politics, it pays to examine the thought leaders of the GOP. They are all of a piece, but for two noteworthy exceptions. In other

words, the pool of conservative thinkers holding political office has evaporated. There are none. We are left with Representatives Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger, two Republicans doing an admirable job upholding key constitutional principles that allowed our country to grow into its promise. But they are both out of an elected job, one by choice and one having lost to a Trump-backed opponent. There is ample proof the GOP has abandoned all thinking for the visceral, atavistic power focus of Donald J. Trump. High crimes and misdemeanors be damned.

What of our courts, then? Surely our careful judiciary, always buffered from the hurly-burly of politics, is churning out opinions to make us all proud to be American. Oh, wait. They are circling the drain as well. We had Justice Samuel Alito penning a positively medieval opinion that was leaked in the run-up to the overturning *Roe v. Wade*. He literally cited a 13th century judge, Henry DeBracton, who wrote the cited summary in 1250. So much for jurisprudence.

Back in the world of television, a dangerous fad has taken hold: The requirement to air "both sides" of every issue. Reasonable at first glance, it is dangerous in context. In a world where one side, if you will, of our political discourse has taken leave of its senses and accepts sedition and violent coups to retain power, there is no longer a working "both sides" concept. There is a side for the Constitution, letting all votes be counted and accepting the results, and there is a side that says, 'only we may win.' No one else may gain power through a legitimate vote.

Their position is born of bad faith and a willingness to commit electoral crimes. We cannot accept this as a viable 'side' in any debate on our politics. It is seditious, and sedition is not just a crime in America. It is a capital crime.

So here we are. The term 'conservative' seems so quaint in today's setting one almost manages a smile. Almost. But the fact that the party of conservatives has now abandoned the great bulwark of Western thought and all rhetorical standards to which they once held leaves the rest of us in peril. They have descended, truly, into nihilists who are vigorously executing its precepts in every office they attain.

Now that the GOP has jumped the fence and fled from all morals and meaning, we have Trump, Herschel Walker, Kari Lake, Eric Greitens, and Mehmet Oz. The answer to this maelstrom of political chaos is not to give equal time to those who would demolish our nation. We mustn't allow ourselves to be imprisoned within precepts in play in the Year of Our Lord 1250. We are instead called to refute and disempower them at every opportunity, with great numbers.

None of us, it could be said, wants to fall short in our historical moment. We mustn't fail in our own by giving credence to those who are enacting a cynical grab to retain power.

—*Kim Painter, the Johnson County Recorder since 1999, was the first openly gay person to win election to public office in the state of Iowa.*

The deficit myth

Over the course of a 42-year teaching career, I had the opportunity to review many books, but none so far-reaching, so potentially impactful, as *The Deficit Myth: Modern Monetary Theory and the Birth of the People's Economy* by Stephanie Kelton. In his review of the book, David Cay Johnston confessed that it was “the most important book I’ve ever read.” I agree. I have been a student of the assumptions underlying America’s political, economic, and educational theory for a long time, and that effort afforded me first-hand experience with some of the world’s greatest economic treatises—but in my mind, this book exceeds them all.

Stephanie Kelton has been an economics professor at the University of Missouri Kansas City, the chief economic advisor to Democrats on the Senate Budget Committee, and now an economics professor at SUNY Stony Brook. As well, she is the nation’s foremost authority on what is known as modern monetary theory (MMT). *The Deficit Myth* describes and explains MMT for a lay audience in a highly readable and very compelling manner.

The biggest challenge for Kelton in writing this book was to get the reader past one huge cultural obstacle, namely, the idea that the federal government must function like a household and therefore can only responsibly spend what it takes in as income. This, it turns out, is a myth. Unlike a household, or a business, or a state, the federal government issues money. It could wipe out the deficit tomorrow if it chose to do so. The prevalent talking point from pundits about China owning the United States due to astronomical loans is also a myth.

Kelton points out that there are reasons to tax and take out loans and she goes into detail about why that is the case.

But as it happens, both political parties believe there is real utility in promoting the idea that a government must function like a household, although in practice both sides have initiated policy that directly contradicts that idea and, indeed, legitimates MMT. The Bush administration printed billions to bail out banks “too big to fail.” The Trump administration gave more than a trillion to the nation’s wealthiest. The Biden administration is giving billions to Ukraine and to cancel student debt. Americans have not been taxed for any of this.

Lest the reader conclude that we should simply stop taxing people, Kelton delineates the many reasons why taxation is still necessary, not the least of which is doing away with historic rates of income inequality, but also as one of the tools that can serve as a hedge against inflation. I think it is important to note that the book was written before the current wave of pandemic-induced inflation, for inflation is the real boogeyman, according to Kelton, not the deficit. Kelton argues that “at its core MMT is about replacing an artificial constraint (revenue) with a real constraint (inflation).” She believes that with a proactive policy agenda, MMT can control the threat of inflation.

The Federal Reserve is raising interest rates to curb business growth to produce a level of unemployment that will suppress demand and thus inflated prices. Kelton finds the deliberate sacrifice of workers abhorrent and decidedly unnecessary. She proposes a guaranteed federal

jobs program that would be available to all individuals involuntarily unemployed. The critical governmental task for Kelton is not balancing taxing and spending, but balancing inflation and employment. Revenue is not the issue, and “how do we pay for it” is not the question.

What this means, of course, is that a “people’s economy” is a very real possibility. Programs such as Medicare for All, the Green New Deal, free college and trade school tuition, rural community revitalization, Kelton’s federal job guarantee, etc., could all be accomplished with sufficient political will. But that’s a tall order, particularly when one major political party cares only about further enriching the wealthiest. You can well imagine that MMT scares the super-wealthy to death, and they have instructed their “think tanks” to viciously attack it.

As long as the United States remains a democracy (sadly, a debatable proposition today), the promise MMT holds for a people’s economy is merely an educational question. Can people get past the idea that “there is no magic money tree,” as Theresa May recently put it? Kelton’s very accessible book is a good first step in the process. There is considerable evidence that millennials are open to new ideas like MMT. If democracy survives, and if the public arrives at an understanding of MMT, a “people’s economy” is inevitable. Big “ifs,” certainly, but genuine reason to hope and to work to elect Democrats.

—Paul Theobald is the former Dean of the School of Education at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa. In 2018 he was a candidate for the 3rd District Congressional seat in Nebraska.

Local elections need to matter

After serving on the Iowa City Council for several years—four as Mayor—I’ve identified several steps we could take to enhance our ability in Iowa City to govern ourselves better.

First, we need a long-game effort to construct and strengthen a durable “justice coalition” based on well-informed and inclusive democratic engagement outside city government. One step in this direction would be to organize a continuing public forum which would enable members of the public to discuss key city issues, to explore the interconnections among them, and to consider possible action pertaining to them.

Second, for democratic governance to thrive in Iowa City, local elections need to matter. To have local elections that matter, the City Charter should be amended to increase the authority of the mayor, have the mayor be elected to a full-time position directly by the people, extend the mayor’s term to four years (with term limits), and increase the mayor’s salary substantially from its current %15,000 or so per year. The revised Charter should also require the mayor to make her or his annual State of the City speech at a public venue away from City Hall and to include sufficient time for questioning by the public. Being elected directly by the people would give the mayor much greater credibility and legitimacy, would enable voters to choose between competing vision for the city’s future, would reveal the depth of public support for a particular vision, and would enhance that kind of engagement.

Why does this matter? The story told in my book, *Co-Crafting the*

Just City: Tales from the Field by a Planning Scholar Turned Mayor, reveals that three visions of Iowa City’s future are contending for control of our city. Ask yourself, what would Iowa City look like two or more decades from now if city policies and action were set by white nationalists, libertarians, and fundamentalist Christians? Or if neo-liberal free market advocates ruled the place and did nothing but try to out-compete other cities by cutting property taxes, increasing subsidies for favored developments, privatizing more public service, and selling public property? How would those imagined cities differ from one that was co-crafted by the people of the city using democratic processes of governance?

Third, we should imagine a better structure for regional governance in the Iowa City area. We need to bring greater coherence and problem-solving capacity to the “multi-sectoral networks” of public and private entities that co-produce regional governance and the regional economy, and we need to ensure that policies and decisions reflect the will of the people and are established through processes of democratic governance.

Fourth, for Iowa’s cities to thrive, the state of Iowa needs a thoughtfully crafted urban agenda. Working in concert, members of the Metro Coalition (the ten largest cities in the state), urban and legal scholars, and amenable state legislators could co-draft such an agenda. And candidates for the state legislature could draw upon that agenda when campaigning for office.

—*Jim Throgmorton served on the Iowa City Council from 1993 to 1995 and from 2012 to 2019; he was Mayor from 2016 to 2019.*

The cat’s out of the bag, cont’d from Page 1

church and synagogue-goers slaughtered by self-proclaimed white supremacists, Proud Boys and Oath Keepers carrying torches (shades of Tulsa) to terrorize Blacks and Jews. A perfect example on a larger scale is the January 6 insurrection, a white rampage that the Republican Party—including Iowa’s US Senator Grassley—is doing its hypocritical best to blame on Black Lives Matter and Antifa. And Iowa’s Governor is running the most shamelessly racist television ad in the state’s history; despite being far ahead in campaign money and polling numbers, she feels a need to fan the flames that can burn down a neighborhood.

The cat’s out of the bag, and it’s as mean and ugly and as dangerous as ever. If there’s any hope against ongoing repetitions of Tulsa massacres, insurrection attempts, and the fascist cult that has taken over the Republican Party, it’s at the ballot box. Electing Democrats on November 8—and by margins large enough to overcome voter suppression—will not kill the cat but will at least hold accountable the party that encourages mobs like the one that destroyed an entire neighborhood a hundred years ago. *It could happen again.*

—*Dave Leshtz*

Thank you!

To the 109 Prairie Progressive readers across the US, Canada, England, and Japan who have contributed \$2908 in 2022 (an average of \$26.68 per contribution). This includes a record 29 gift subscriptions. We appreciate your support.

The question is why one should be so inwardly preoccupied? Why not reach out to others in love and solidarity, or peer into the natural world for some glimmer of understanding? Why retreat into anxious introspection when there is a vast world outside to explore? Why spend so much time working on oneself when there is so much real work to be done?

—Barbara Ehrenreich, 1941-2022



Oct 24

Absentee ballot request deadline

Nov 7

Last day to vote early

Nov 17

Johnson Co. Dems Legacy Club
The Ashton House, Iowa City
Guest speaker: Art Cullen,
Editor, Storm Lake Times Pilot
Reservations: 319-621-0894 or
Wm.gerhard@gmail.com

Dec 10

UN Human Rights Day

Dec 15

Bill of Rights Day

Dec 25

Federal holiday

Jan 1, 1863

Pres. Lincoln signed the
Emancipation Proclamation

Jan 3, 1793

Lucretia Mott born

Jan 4, 1933

Frances Perkins became first
woman appointed to cabinet

Jan 17, 1893

US overthrew Hawaii

“Love your newsletter! That kind of hyper-local, unadorned publication is the most influential thing around.”

—Karen Nussbaum, co-founder of *9to5*
and founding director of *Working America*

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