



## HUSBAY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

### Opinion: We've coddled ignorance for years. Now we're all paying the price with COVID.

Knuckle-draggers do not deserve veto power over our safety.

BY SUSAN J. DEMAS – FLORIDA PHOENIX

Sane America has had enough.

After almost two years of a horrific pandemic that's killed almost 620,000 Americans and deadly, faster-spreading variants emerging because selfish and ignorant people refuse to get vaccinated — those of us who have tried to do everything right have no more f—ks left to give.

Anti-vaxxers, COVID conspiracy theorists, and right-wing politicians have made the pandemic far more hellacious than it ever needed to be. We have been lectured endlessly by pundits and attention seekers on social media that we mustn't ever make them feel bad about their awful choices — no matter how many public, violent scenes they cause over health rules, heavily armed protests they organize to intimidate us, and how much the death toll soars.

Their feelings have been deemed more important than the health and well-being of our families, because somehow if we kowtow to the worst people in our society, a few will supposedly be nice enough to get vaccinated or wear masks.

Nope.

If you refuse to get vaccinated — and this goes double if you are someone with enough of a platform to influence others — you are to blame for the fourth

wave. You are the reason why more children are being hospitalized, so spare me your family values bloviation. You are why good people who have done their part and gotten their shots are getting breakthrough cases.

I am tired of sugarcoating it. I am tired of the perennial hectoring to “both sides” the pandemic like we mindlessly do with political coverage.

The 40 percent who can't be bothered to get jabbed because they know more than doctors or they understand freedom better than the rest of us or just know that the magnetic 5G is gonna be injected in their veins are why people continue to needlessly die. And they are why life continues to be hell for the rest of us.

Yes, there is a political divide in vaccination rates — and Republicans are on the wrong side of it. Let's stop denying the obvious or making excuses for a party whose pandemic response has been a mix of crass pandering to their base and sociopathic stupidity.

For almost a year and a half, most of us have stayed home as much as we could, helped our neighbors, homeschooled our children, faithfully worn masks, and gotten our shots when it was our turn. Health care workers, in particular, have seen the most unfathomable human suffering, been forced to isolate from their families, and have desperately pleaded with people to follow simple health rules and get vaccinated so that we can put COVID-19 behind us.



Haiku Quintets: [dandana.us/fivepalms](http://dandana.us/fivepalms)

### Collective Nouns

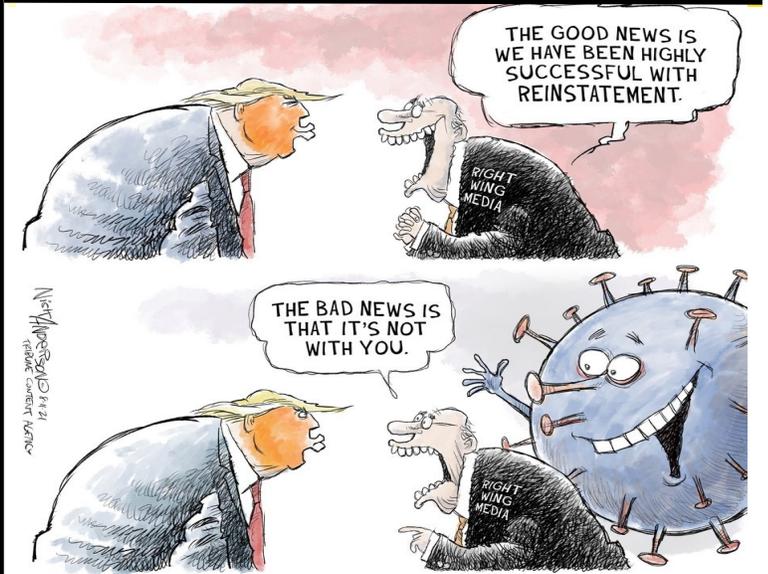
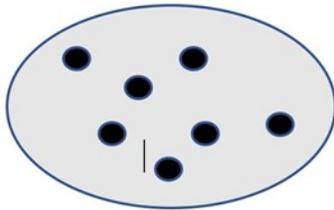
a herd of cattle  
a hutch of baby rabbits  
a school of goldfish

a bed of nurses  
an adjective of linguists  
a pill of druggists

a drove of truckers  
an absence of atheists  
a scope of doctors

a clef of singers  
a peace of mediators  
a clap of actors

a pen of writers  
a quintet of haikuists  
a verse of poets



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**Humanism** is a progressive philosophy of life that, *without theism or other supernatural beliefs*, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good. To learn more go [here](#).

## Journalist masterfully dissects the dishonesty and narcissism inherent in nearly all Christian theological work

From Alternet

No historical figure has been as manipulated, distorted and used for nefarious and self-serving ends as egregiously as Jesus Christ. Jesus has been trotted out over the past two millennia to justify a litany of evils including the Crusades, the Inquisition, the European conquest and genocide of the native peoples of the Americas, Puritan witch trials and the burning of heretics, slavery, the subjugation of women, the persecution of homosexuals, and, in the latest iteration, the endless wars in the Middle East. Since there is so little known historically about Jesus, he is infinitely malleable. Every generation, and every brand of Christianity, has, for this reason, produced a Jesus in its own image. When I was a student at Harvard Divinity School, we read the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann, who, heavily influenced by Martin Heidegger, was an existentialist, and who, of course, turned Jesus into an existentialist.

[This article originally appeared on ScheerPost.](#)

The liberal church is as infected with this disease as right-wing Christians who have twisted Jesus into a Rambo-like white, male messiah for American capitalism, American imperialism, white supremacy and patriarchy. And it is this dishonesty and narcissism, inherent in nearly all Christian theological work, that Ariel Sabar masterfully dissects in his book "[Veritas: A Harvard Professor, A Con Man and the Gospel of Jesus's Wife.](#)"

Karen King, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, made a startling announcement in September 2012 at a conference in Rome. She had obtained, she told the gathering, a second-century papyrus fragment with a text suggesting that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and

that she was considered one of the disciples. King called the fragment, the size of a business card, "The Gospel of Jesus's Wife," a clever marketing ploy, especially since it was impossible to know where the text, which turned out to be a crude forgery, came from. Even if it was real, it could have been nothing more than a tiny scrap of paper rolled up and worn in an amulet. But King, if nothing else, was media savvy, and "The Gospel of Jesus's Wife" catapulted her "discovery" to international fame.

She had already gotten a taste of popular acclaim, hitching herself to Dan Brown's 2003 novel "The Da Vinci Code," which was to Biblical scholarship what Raiders of the Lost Ark was to archeology. In the novel Brown makes Mary Magdalene the wife of Jesus, pregnant with Christ's child when he was crucified. "The Da Vinci Code" was only a few degrees separated from the claims made by scholars like King, who published her book "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle" the same year as Brown's novel. She instantly became a ubiquitous media presence, defending the novel despite its numerous Biblical and historical inaccuracies. "She appeared in cover stories about the book in *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report* and became a regular on *Code*-themed TV specials, on ABC's *Primetime*, NBC's *Dateline* and CNN *Presents*," Sabar writes in "Veritas." In some of these media appearances she was joined by Brown. In the movie version, starring Tom Hanks, King is listed as a "consultant." The novel transformed King from "a scholar whose intellectual passions had been confined to classrooms, academic tracts and the occasional church into a best-selling author with live audiences of hundreds and a television viewership of millions." "The Gospel of Jesus's Wife" returned her to the epicenter of popular culture and the mass media.

For the rest of the story, please click [HERE](#)

## Special Interest Groups

Here is a list of Special Interest Groups (If you have an idea for one, please let us know).

### **SIG Names**

**Current Affairs (CAF):**

**Life's Experiences (LEX):**

**Non-Fiction Review (NFR):**

**Creativity (CRE):**

**Roundtable (RT):**

**Science Technology & Medicine (STM):** What have you learned, and would like to share

**Open Forum (OF):**

### **Focus of the Group**

Events discussed during the current news cycle

Your memorable experiences to share with the group

Reviews of non-fiction books, magazine articles, films and TV  
Includes short stories, poetry, blogs; in other words fiction  
writing (including reviews) as opposed to non-fiction review.

A discussion of a topic selected by the SIG hosts

What have you learned, and would like to share

This SIG will happen on dates when no one has stepped up to  
do a presentation on any of our previously existing categories.

Check our website for specific information by clicking [HERE](#).

**We need members to step up and help** us develop programs for our SIG (Special Interest Group) meetings! Do you have a story to tell? A book to review? A rant? Do you have a career experience or hobby to share? A talk about a technology you like? A topic you would like covered? (We can find a speaker.) Have you written a book? Let us know ASAP!

Please respond to Dave Helgager at [dbhelgager@comcast.net](mailto:dbhelgager@comcast.net) or

Barry Zack at [barryzed@gmail.com](mailto:barryzed@gmail.com)

## Monthly Meetings

**ALL LECTURES, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, WILL BE AT THE CENTER FOR ARTS AND HUMANITY, 1226 N. TAMIAMI TRAIL, SARASOTA 34236** (Corner of 13th and Tamiami Trail) Suggest if coming west on Fruitville, you turn right at Coconut and proceed to 13th St., turning left. All lecture dates are on Mondays.

October 4--6pm Welcome back reception (Wine, soft drinks, snacks); 7pm Surprising Stories and Facts about Florida, Kate Holmes, Sarasota Historical Society

November 1--7 Words That Can Change the World--Joe Simonetta, author, speaker

December 6--Sarasota County Homeless Project for the Mentally Challenged, Megan Howell, Executive Director, Founder, Second Heart Homes

December 1--Renew your membership

December 20--Annual Meeting 7pm (Most likely on Zoom but not final.)

January 3--New Year's Party, 7pm-9pm (Drinks, Snacks, Music provided.)

January 17--Miracles of Science--Brian Dunning, Science Writer and producer of Skeptoid Podcast ([skeptoid.com](http://skeptoid.com))

February 12--Darwin Day Luncheon, Saturday, 11:30 at Marina Jacks, Scientist from Mote Marine (Speaker and subject yet to be determined.) This year we celebrate on Darwin's actual birthdate. Details for reservations, etc. in January.

March 7--Dr. Matthew Edlund, What Constitutes Good Sleep Health?

April 3--Annual Carl Sagan picnic--4-7pm at Turtle Beach Pavilion (Directions and what to bring will be provided at a later date.)

**“The aim of *Useful Delusions*, a very readable book, is to teach us to be more rational about our irrationality, to not make the latter our enemy, but to recognize how it may help as well as harm us.”**

**A book review by Karen Koenig**

*Useful Delusions* takes us on a fascinating, enlightening tour of the human mind and its evolution in order to help us come to terms with our ability to self-deceive. The authors are not out to disparage our delusions, but to expose them in a compassionate way that illustrates how we would not have evolved to be who we are today if we did not occasionally fudge facts and remain willfully ignorant.

The book’s well-researched and liberally illustrated premise is that self-deception is hard-wired into us because it serves the function of enabling “us to accomplish useful social, psychological, or biological goals.” Speaking as one, co-authors Shankar Vedantam, host of NPR’s *Hidden Brain* podcast and radio show, and Bill Mesler, journalist and author, teach us that “holding false beliefs is not always the mark of idiocy, pathology or villainy.”

To illustrate the power of delusions and deluders, the authors tell the story of Donald Lowry, an immensely successful scam artist and founder of the “Church of Love.” His profitable bamboozlement scheme, which takes advantage of lonely, lovelorn men, shows how ubiquitous is the “dance of complicity between deceivers and deceived,” and reminds us that pacts between the parties are more often implicit and unspoken than explicit.

Lowry’s story and that of others show us that we often don’t

want to know what we don’t know. Blissful ignorance enables us to create purposeful lives rather than dwell on how insignificant we are in the universe and to get out there and enjoy life instead of brooding about the infinite possibilities of how, when, and where we might die.

Fortunately, our multi-layered brains evolved to provide us with two views of the world—a short and long one. Our ancient circuits produce immediate fear while (relatively) newer mental faculties help us anticipate, imagine, and plan long-term even into a time when we may no longer be around. “Our minds are not designed to see the truth,” say the authors, “but to show us selective slices of reality, and to prompt us toward predetermined goals. Even worse, they are designed to do all this while giving us the *illusion* that we are seeing reality.”

Section one, *Everyday Life*, examines the lies of etiquette and social niceties which lubricate our relationships. These everyday lies are the ones we both tell and believe. Little white lies or omissions happen when waitstaff insist you’re their favorite customer, your doctor tells you pre-surgery that you’re going to be just fine, and a customer service rep treats you like a king even though she would like to wring your neck.

They happen when you leave out the part of an anecdote that makes you look foolish then draw out the part describing how you shined, allow others to assume that you think as they do when you actually think the opposite, or simply pivot to avoid a social blooper. “It’s not that we don’t value honesty, it’s that we value something else more . . . the other person’s feelings or your feelings of loyalty towards them.”

For the rest of the review, please click [HERE](#).



**Brian Dunning to present at the January 17 meeting  
The title of his lecture will be “Miracles of Science”**

Science writer Brian Dunning is the host and producer of the Skeptoid podcast ([skeptoid.com](http://skeptoid.com)) and the author of seven books on scientific skepticism. Skeptoid is one of the longest running and consistently most popular independent podcasts, having surpassed 100 million downloads in January 2017. He is the writer and presenter of the documentary films *Here Be Dragons* ([herebedragonsmovie.com](http://herebedragonsmovie.com)) and *Principles of Curiosity* ([principlesofcuriosity.com](http://principlesofcuriosity.com)). He has appeared on numerous radio shows and television documentaries, and also hosts the science video series *inFact with Brian Dunning* ([infactvideo.com](http://infactvideo.com)). A computer scientist by trade, Brian uses new media to showcase the rewards of science and critical thinking. He is a member of the National Association of Science Writers and lives in central Oregon.

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