



**Humanists of Sarasota Bay, Inc.**  
Sarasota, Florida

## **HUSBAY NEWSLETTER**

**MARCH 2022**

### **Supreme Court Round-Up** **BY NICOLE CARR • 13 JANUARY 2022**

Last Fall, the AHA signed on to three Supreme Court amicus briefs in cases that involve issues central to humanist values.

The first friend of the court brief was submitted in the reproductive rights case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which challenges the constitutionality of a Mississippi law that bans abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy. The brief argues that the justices should affirm the Fifth Circuit's ruling to protect abortion and reproductive rights for all. "The separation of church and state forbids the government from imposing fundamentalist Christian doctrine on citizens," noted AHA Legal Director and Senior Counsel Monica Miller.

Mississippi passed the legal restrictions at the heart of the *Dobbs* case in 2018. The law was challenged by Jackson Women's Health Organization, the only licensed abortion provider in the state. This will be the first time, since the landmark abortion decision in *Roe v. Wade*, in which the Court will rule on the constitutionality of a pre-viability abortion ban.

The brief, authored by counsel for Americans United for Separation of Church and State and joined by the AHA, along with the Interfaith Alliance Foundation and Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice, argues that U.S. religious pluralism makes government involvement in questions of theology problematic.

A few days later, the AHA also signed on to an amicus brief in another Supreme Court case—this one about capital punishment—joining with other secular organizations to weigh in on *Ramirez v. Collier*. This case deals with the constitutionality of the death penalty and the religious free exercise rights of incarcerated persons.

"If the Supreme Court truly cares about religious freedom, it will end the anachronistic practice of capital punishment, which is sustained by fundamentalist Christian doctrine, as it is completely at odds with our country's promise of civil liberty," said Miller.

The brief argues that the Court should avoid the issue of whether Texas's policy of disallowing spoken prayer and physical contact inside the execution

chamber is permissible and rule that the death penalty is unconstitutional altogether.

*Ramirez*, convicted on murder charges in 2008, is currently serving a death sentence. He requested that his Baptist pastor be allowed to put his hands on *Ramirez's* body and pray out loud while the lethal injection occurs. However, the state of Texas refused to grant his request. Presently, the law requires that a government entity demonstrate a compelling interest when burdening the right to freely exercise one's religion, which Texas has not demonstrated. This case has broad implications for the Court's treatment of the religious free exercise clause.

The *Ramirez* amicus brief, submitted by the Freedom From Religion Foundation and co-signed by the AHA and American Atheists, argues that the Court should hold that capital punishment, as a practice, is unconstitutional and Biblically-based. It also argues that state-sponsored executions violate one's ability to freely exercise their religion and, if executions are allowed to take place, end-of-life accommodations must be made available to all.

"In the western world, the death penalty is a barbaric relic that often has been justified by religious scripture, and it has no place in modern society," the brief states, continuing later, "While the root source of capital punishment may not be solely biblical, in the western world that has been the sourcebook for the death penalty."

The AHA has long voiced its opposition to capital punishment, believing that the practice reflects a disregard for fundamental human rights, and strongly denounces it under all circumstances.

Lastly, the AHA joined a third amicus brief filed in the Supreme Court in the case *Carson v. Makin*, regarding whether Maine's tuition-assistance program supported by public funds must support religious schools under the First Amendment.

This amicus brief was also authored by Americans United for Separation of Church and State and co-signed by the AHA and a number of other prominent religious and civil rights organizations.

differs from the program upheld last year promotes religion or teaches through a faith-based lens, rather than just the schools religious "status."

*Continued on page 3*

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

### Watching War Begin

we stand on the bank  
of Ukraine's river of blood  
awaiting Putin

his fragile ego  
breeds deranged lust to rebuild  
Soviet empire

at what human cost?  
unthinkable suffering  
toxic hubris' toll

did the sweet scent of  
the Orange Revolution  
merely stay this stench?

shall evil prevail?  
today we know fate's answer  
watching war begin



# FREETHOUGHT FLORIDA

## HOPE WE SEE YOU THERE Marriot Orlando Airport Lakeside

**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](#).

*From page 1*

The brief makes the argument that it is unconstitutional for public funds to support religious instruction. Since religious instruction in schools is a core means of supporting a ministry, states should not be required to fund religious instruction on an equal basis with nonreligious instruction, in accordance with the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. The brief calls upon the Supreme Court to affirm the ruling by the First Circuit Court of Appeals.

The AHA is vehemently opposed to the use of taxpayer dollars to fund religious instruction, considering that it results in the unfair, forced participation of the nonreligious in supporting religious indoctrination. Oral arguments in these cases were heard in late 2021. Decisions are expected later in 2022. Published in the Winter 2022 Humanist

### Darwin Day Luncheon a Smash Hit

With almost fifty people in attendance, the event went a smoothly as could be. Meals were served promptly and enjoyed by all. Then our speaker, Alison Goldy took the floor with a wonderful presentation with slides and very knowledgeable talk regarding the state of the coral reefs in Florida.



**Alison Goldy, Community Engagement Coordinator, Mote Marine Laboratory**  
Alison just celebrated her 5th year at Mote, where she is currently responsible for coordinating the Community Engagement Program,

delivering engaging marine science-based lessons and presenting Mote research to underserved and underrepresented community organizations as well as to the public. Alison is also a member of the Florida Marine Science Educators Association and holds a National Geographic Educator certification.

**Corals** — Coral reefs are the most diverse ecosystems in the ocean and provide significant environmental, biologic, recreational and economic value. Florida's Coral Reef has lost all but 2% of



Our Board Officers with our speaker LtoR: Sandie Zellick, Dave Helgager, Alison Goldy, Holly Downing, Barry Zack



its living coral cover in recent decades and is struggling to survive amid growing environmental pressures. Mote's Coral Reef Restoration Program develops and applies science-based strategies with the goal of restoring depleted coral reefs in our lifetime.



REHABILITATING MR. WIGGLES @NEIL SWARB 2008 WWW.MRWIGGLESLOVESYOU.COM NEIL@MRWIGGLESLOVESYOU.COM

## 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.

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

SPECIAL NOTE: Summer lectures under consideration and will be announced sometime in 2022.

Chat & Chew

Meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at Perkins restaurant at Fruitville and Cattlemen at 12noon.

The SIG is meeting for chat and discussion at the New Dynasty restaurant in Sarasota, every other Wednesdays at noon or when no SIG is scheduled. SIGs will be presented via ZOOM. Watch your email for announcements.

**HATS OFF TO HUSBAY:** At our annual meeting, member Karen Koenig suggested that space be created on our website so members could comment on what HUSBAY means to you. All of you came to HUSBAY for many reasons, and we urge you to go to HATS OFF TO HUSBAY on our website telling us in a brief comment what HUSBAY means to you.. You can find HATS OFF TO HUSBAY by clicking [HERE](#)



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are again seeing the failure of prayer as millions of people pray for the Ukrainians as they battle for their freedom and watch their cities burn. As a secular Humanist, I can't but see the irony in all the praying.

Those who pray can now feel good about themselves as they have called upon their mythical god to help the Ukrainians. Nothing fails like prayer and nothing makes a Christian feel better about life than prayer. This mythi-

cal god is nowhere to be found and has abandon the Ukrainians.

As a secular Humanist, I find it all surreal. Putin is a Christian and is now carrying out his own crusade to bring the Ukrainians into the fold. I hope at some point he pays for his folly.

Member Dan Dana's Haiku published in this newsletter says it all for me.

Dave Helgager

## Humanists Defend Boston's Refusal to Fly Christian Flag at City Hall

(Washington, DC, December 22, 2021) – The American Humanist Association (AHA) signed an [amicus brief](#) filed in the United States Supreme Court today in support of the City of Boston's refusal to fly the Christian flag at city hall in *Shurtleff v. Boston*.

"Our Bill of Rights leads with the separation of church and state for a reason: our freedom and democracy depend on it. The City of Boston's refusal to fly the Christian flag over city hall in a manner that would connote a strong alliance between church and state was therefore mandated, not only by the First Amendment, but democracy itself," noted AHA Legal Director and Senior Counsel Monica Miller. "Tragically, we can all but guarantee the Supreme Court will rule in favor of the Christian plaintiffs – the question is, at what cost?"

The brief submitted by Americans United for Separation of Church and State and joined by the AHA, along with numerous other sec-

ular and religious groups, argues that the flags in front of Boston's city hall represent government speech rather than private speech. Government speech is subject to the restrictions of the Establishment Clause.

"In these circumstances, Boston is not constitutionally obligated to vary its practice so as to display divisive religious images that will graphically associate the city government with the beliefs of particular faiths, in a manner that will alienate many residents and inevitably generate feelings of exclusion and resentment," the brief recounts.

In 2020, the AHA joined a [friend of the court brief](#) when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit heard the *Shurtleff* case.

"The misconception that the United States is a Christian nation is dangerous and should not be furthered by allowing a Christian flag to fly at a city hall," comments AHA Executive Director Nadya Dutchin. "We urge the Supreme Court to protect the rights of Bostonians who would feel ostracized by the flying of a religious flag that does not represent them."

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This is Vol 3 Issue 2 of the HUSBAY Newsletter edited by Bob La Salle. It is published monthly and delivered by email to our members. If you have anything you would like published herein, please send it to: [Husbaynewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Husbaynewsletter@gmail.com)

## The Expectation Effect: How Your Mindset Can Change Your World

Reviewed by Karen R. Koenig

“Whether you’re looking to make major or minor changes in your life, this book will help you leave the starting gate with positive expectations of success.”

In *The Expectation Effect*, award-winning science writer David Robson answers these questions: “What are the beliefs and expectations that rule our physical and mental well-being? How do the body, brain, and culture interact so potently to produce these self-fulfilling prophecies? And how can we use these fascinating findings to our own benefit?”

He explains how beliefs “shape your health and well-being in profound ways, and that learning to reset our expectations . . . can have truly remarkable effects on our health, happiness and productivity.” He also shares how he reset his own expectations regarding his anxiety and depression and how much better he feels and is faring since changing his assumptions about them and himself.

The book is replete with studies and stories from around the world about how expectations affect us physically, mentally, and emotionally. When speaking of expectations, Robson stresses that he’s not referring to general optimism or pessimism, but to the meanings we assign events and, based on them, our specific beliefs about what will happen to us. He explains that being unaware of the power of expectations doesn’t prevent them from driving our destinies for better or worse. His goal is to help us become cognizant of our expectations in order to take charge of them to make ourselves smarter, fitter, less

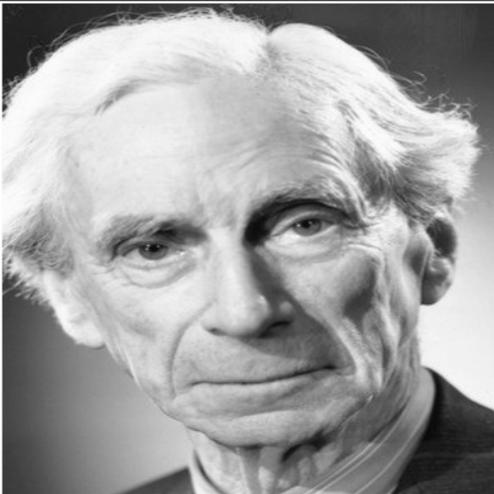
stressed, happier and healthier.

The first chapter explains the placebo (meaning “I shall please”) and nocebo (meaning “I shall harm”) effects that Robson refers to throughout the book. The placebo effect is the expectation that we will be healed or served well by something (or someone), which actually produces “physiological changes to blood circulation, hormone balance, and immunological response.” The nocebo effect is the expectation that something will harm or hurt us. It, too, generates “measurable physiological changes, including significant shifts in our hormones and neurotransmitters.” In brief, beliefs or expectations are the catalysts that generate biological changes that cause us to flee or fight, sink or swim, and succeed or fail.

Robson describes the brain as a “prediction machine that constructs an elaborate simulation of the world, based as much on its expectations and previous experiences as on the raw data hitting the senses.” Because predicting affects what we *think* we see, taste and hear, what we perceive and experience is often a product of sensory expectation. Unfortunately, due to our brains’ biases, what we think and feel may warp our perceptions of reality without our knowledge.

Prediction works for or against us. Positive expectations about illness and disease or the drugs we’re given to cure or comfort us may promote physiological changes that actually make us feel better. The same is true for nocebo expectations which may make us feel worse. This process explains why some people appear to self-heal and others take unexpected turns for the worse with similar conditions.

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



Remember your humanity, and  
forget the rest.

— Bertrand Russell —

AZ QUOTES