



## HUSBAY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022

### Meet Leonard Leo: The capo behind the Supreme Court coup *From the Hightowerlowdown*

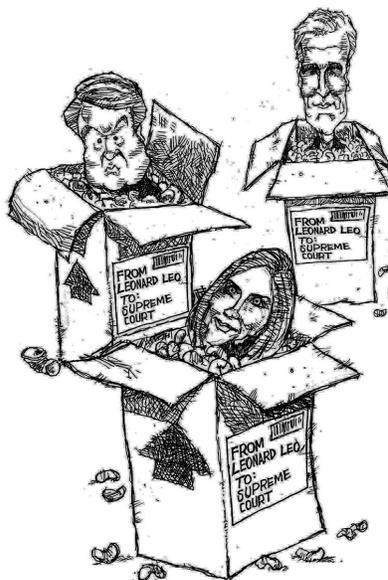
It's generally assumed that autocrats are brutes who operate with no subtlety, seizing power through jackbooted actions, imperious edicts, media lockdowns, and such. Yes, many are brutes, but actually it's even more common for anti-democratic power grabbers to be well-heeled sophisticates who make their play not by violent raids, but by advancing on little cat feet, noiselessly closing in on an unsuspecting democratic public. In many countries today, for example, wannabe autocrats, plutocrats, and theocrats have hit on a surprising channel for achieving their despotic ambitions: **Supreme Courts.**

While these top judicial bodies purport to be bulwarks of justice, most are secretive, aloof chambers of absolute governmental authority run by a mere handful of unelected judges. Obscured from the public, media, and lawmakers, they are susceptible to capture by quick political strike or by patient, stealthy schemers. And the prize is worth the effort, for these high and mighty judges can both enact measures of autocratic control and apply a patina of legality to emerging autocracies. *Put plainly: Own the judicial robe and you own the law.*

No surprise, then, that Hungarian despot Viktor Orban moved quickly to remake his country's courts, which subsequently sanctioned a rigged election that cemented one-party rule and maintained the oxymoron he calls an "illiberal democracy." Or that Vladimir Putin recently used his control of Russia's Supreme Court to arbitrarily kill the nation's most important human rights organization. Thus, with one court ruling—POOF!—Putin disappeared a major political force opposing the fabrication that his regime is a continuum of Russian glory under strongman

rule. Well, yes, you might think, that happens in Russia, China, Venezuela, and places like that ... but not here, where We the People are on-guard, and no one, not even a president, can pull off anything as huge—as seemingly impossi-

ble—as a Supreme Court coup.



### MEET LEONARD LEO

You've probably never heard of Leonard Leo, but this obscure, far-right ideologue is a major capo in the tight little world of the anti-democracy extremists who hold an iron grip on today's Republi-

can leadership. A lawyer, Leo is a fanatic devotee of the plutocratic fiction that our Constitution was intended not as a founding document for democracy, but as a legal structure for enshrining property rights as supreme over all others and protecting the wealthy from the democratic majority.

Yes, he's nuts ... but he's also cunning. In only 20 years, this shadowy Washington operative rose from the pack to become a darling of Washington's right-wing social swirl and the kingpin of corporate and GOP efforts to impose their agenda on America.

:Three big factors boosted Leo's star:

Read the rest of the article [HERE](#)

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

### The Swing

A life-snippet

the little Black boy  
walked with his mom on the path  
in front of my swing

he gazed longingly  
I looked up from my reading  
brown eyes met blue eyes

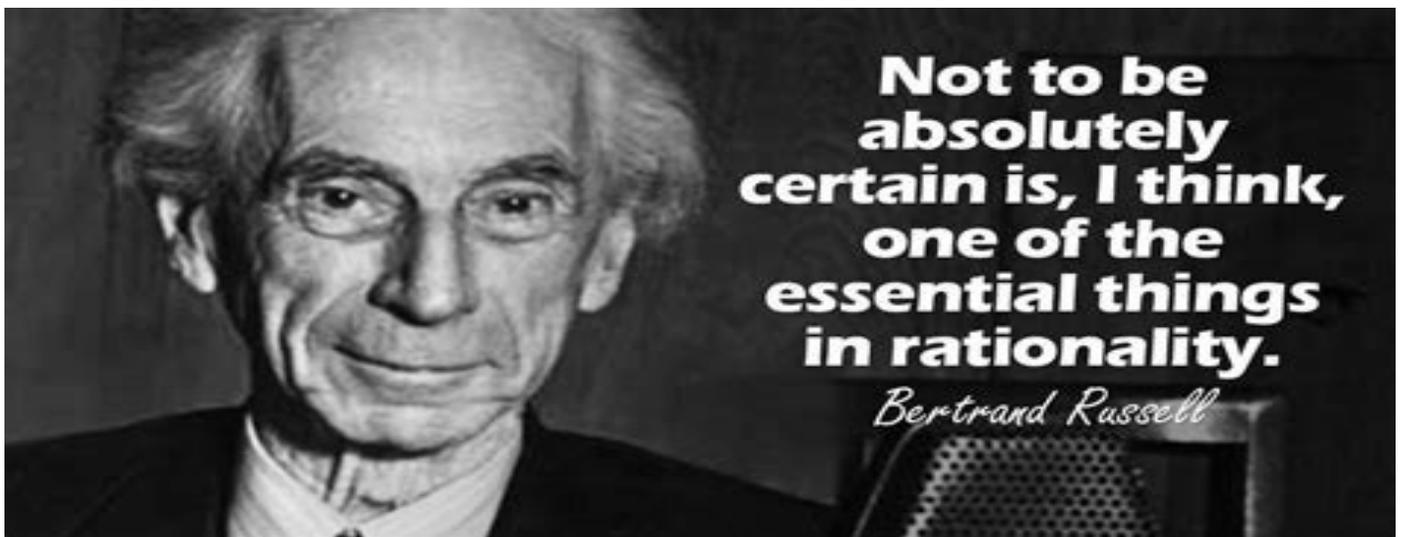
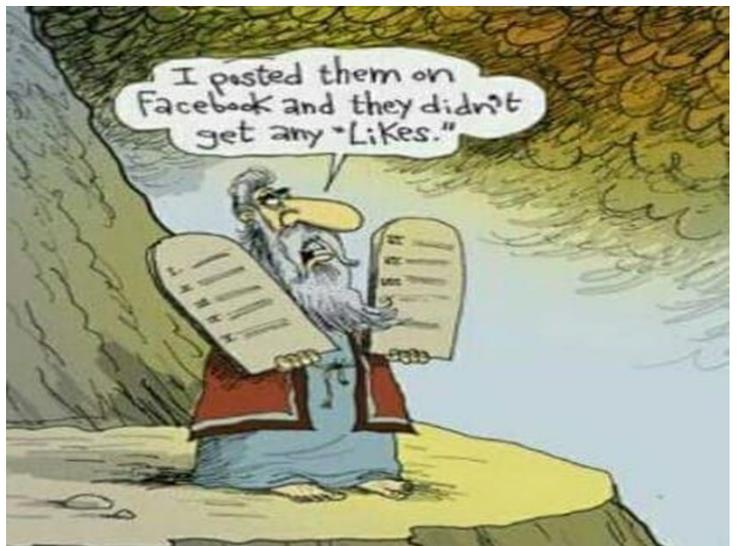
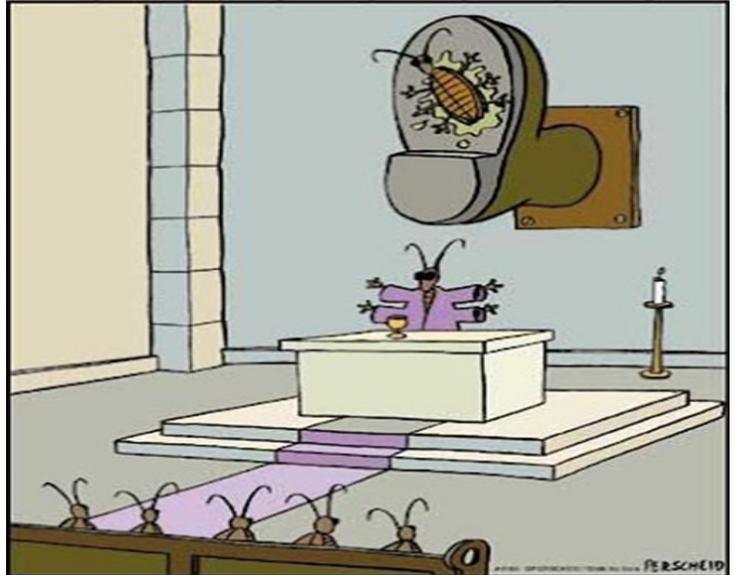
we each understood  
this instant in history  
through our race's lens

standing, I gestured  
"would you like to have the swing?"  
Mom smiled "thank you, sir"

one more grain of sand  
to resist racism's vile tide;  
White men can be kind



Setting: Bayfront Park, Sarasota FL, 9 March 2022



**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](#).

## **Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole**

Book review by Karen R. Koenig  
From the NY Journal of Books

**“Bittersweet grants us permission to explore and experience sorrow and longing by transforming them into acceptable, inspiring, even hopeful emotions that help us heal and grow.”**

In *Bittersweet* Susan Cain explains why it’s crucial to embrace all our emotions, especially those that are bittersweet. She takes on this nation’s pursuit of perpetual positivity with the same gusto, erudition, compassion, and thoughtfulness that made her book, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*, a bestseller.

Cain describes the emotion of bittersweet as “longing, poignancy, and sorrow; an acute awareness of passing time; and a curiously piercing joy at the beauty of the world” along with recognition that light and dark, birth and death—bitter and sweet—are forever paired.” She even provides a short quiz to help readers determine if they lean temperamentally toward sanguine or bittersweet or travel between the two states.

A lifelong devotee of Canadian singer-songwriter, poet and novelist Leonard Cohen, Cain uses examples from his life and evocative works to illustrate how sorrow and longing come together time and again to produce something altogether beautiful and magical. Born of Cohen’s own pain, his work manages to touch us all deeply and remind us of our suffering while at the same time lifting us out of it because it is shared. His is among the numerous fascinating stories, including her own very personal one, that Cain uses to bring home her points.

Part one of the book is about sorrow and longing. Cain describes all the good sadness can do for us, including triggering compassion, which is hardwired into humans to help us bond with each other. Experiencing our own sadness allows us to empathize when others feel sad, increasing our connection to them.

The author details how “negative” emotions, those that cause pain rather than pleasure, have been viewed through the lens of modern psychology. While Sigmund Freud analyzed angst and neuroticism, psychologists Abraham

Maslow and Martin Seligman aimed to lift our spirits by teaching us to focus on positive emotions such as gratitude.

Cain and others in the field have intentionally swung the pendulum back to embrace sorrow and longing, giving these feelings their rightful place in the emotional arena. She explains that longing and sadness should not be conflated with depression or malaise, maintaining that “If we could honor sadness a little more, maybe we could see *it*—rather than enforced smiles and righteous outrage—as the bridge we need to connect with each other.”

Exploring longing, Cain explains how yearning for a “soul mate” is perhaps universal, but not reality-based where the best we can do is appreciate the partners we have. She explores creativity born of longing—in art, literature, poetry and music—as movement from darkness to light and as desire sparking momentum in a quest for union or transcendence. And in both theoretical and practical terms, she teaches us how best to cope with longing due to lost love.

Part two of the book examines how our culture came to fear emotions like sorrow and longing and single-mindedly embrace positivity while other societies opened their hearts and minds to a fuller range of emotions. She views American contempt for “negative” emotions as stemming from our rigid cultural beliefs about rugged individualism in which “we’re encouraged to see ourselves, deep down, as winners or losers—and to show, with our sanguine-choleric behaviors, that we belong to the former group.”

She illustrates how this country has buried the horrors of its history and spun its tragedies and failures into distortions to avoid feeling discomfort and shame: The point of our American exceptionalism is to blind ourselves and others to everything but our successes and the good we’ve done and to outrun failure by achieving perfection. Sadly, this has turned us into a culture so bereft of compassion that we must distance ourselves from our losses and those who are losers and, in doing so, have forsaken our humanity. Paradoxically, this armored mindset has left us with more, not less, depression, anxiety, anger, addiction, and suicides, as ghosted emotions come back to haunt us as we should have known they would.

For the rest of the article 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

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

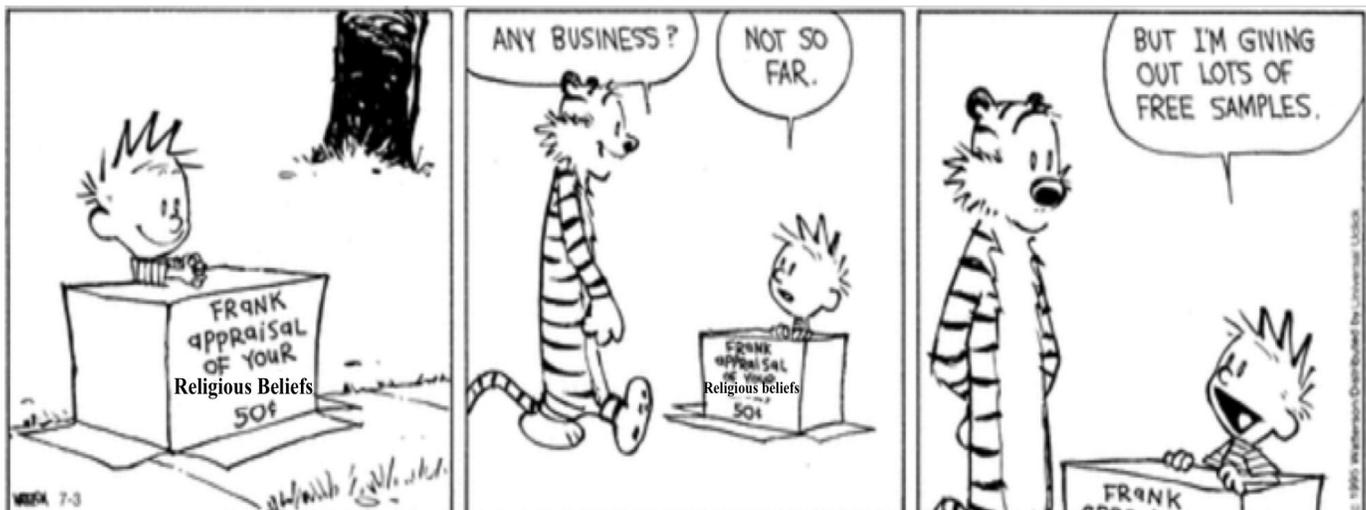
**ALL LECTURES, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, WILL BE AT THE CENTER FOR ARTS AND HUMANITY, 1226 N. TAMIAMI TRAIL, SARASOTA 34236** (Corner of 13th and Tamiami Trail) Suggest if coming west on Fruitville, you turn right at Coconut and proceed to 13th St., turning left. All lecture dates are on Mondays.

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.



## President's Message June 2022

As many of you may know, I occasionally find some stupid things citizens do that warrant my Darwin Award. In the paper recently, I ran across a couple instances that, for better or worse, qualify for a Darwin Award.

It seems a man was found dead in a lake known to be a hotbed for gators. Signs are posted all around the lake. Apparently, he was in the lake looking for frisbees.

Then, I read the sobering fact that 74,000 Floridians died of COVID in the last 12 months. Reluctantly, I need to

give them my next Darwin Award as none of them were vaccinated. They rejected science and stupidly followed the advice of Trump and DeSantis both of whom are vaccinated. Are the poor souls now out of the gene pool leaving more intelligent people behind? Probably not.

The Board will be meeting this month. We need your suggestions for speakers for our lectures this summer and fall. We will be scheduling day time lectures so, hopefully, more of you will venture out to join us.

Hurricane season is upon us and time now to prepare. We want to keep all of you in the gene pool.

## Humanists Condemn SCOTUS Opinion in *Shurtleff v. Boston* From the Humanist

The Supreme Court of the United States handed down an opinion in *Shurtleff v. Boston*, holding 9-0 that the city of Boston violated the First Amendment when it refused to fly the Christian flag at city hall. The American Humanist Association denounces this decision and defends the City of Boston's actions.

"To realize a truly inclusive democracy, we must reject the myth that the United States was founded upon Judeo-Christian values," comments AHA Executive Director Nadya Dutchin. "We are disappointed in the Supreme Court's decision to sup-

port the continued erosion of separation of church and state."

The case involves a group that was denied permission to fly a "Christian flag" at city hall, claiming that this decision unconstitutionally silences their speech. The city of Boston has argued that their practice of allowing outside groups to fly their flags amounts to speech by the city and that they need to be able to choose which flags it wants to fly.

The AHA signed onto an amicus brief filed in the Supreme Court in December 2021 in support of the City of Boston and joined a friend of the court brief in 2020 when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit heard the *Shurtleff* case.



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## FFRF: “Thoughts and prayers” are not enough for school shootings — and never have been

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is sickened by the massacre at an elementary school in Texas in which 21 people, including 19 children, have been senselessly murdered by a young man armed with assault rifles. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the grieving families of this terrible carnage.

In the last few days, the United States has again witnessed multiple mass shootings — first in Buffalo, N.Y., where 10 Black individuals were slaughtered in a racially motivated attack at a grocery store. Then, in Laguna Woods, Calif., a gunman opened fire in a church. Now, there’s yesterday’s massacre of children in Texas. FFRF deploras all gun violence, which, unfortunately, occurs on a regular basis in the United States, and will continue to speak out until a reason-based approach to meaningful regulation is adopted.

Already, religious platitudes — thoughts and prayers — are pouring out from elected officials nationwide. There are also calls for a “return to God” as a purported solution to the gun violence epidemic instead of calls for meaningful action. It is far past time that we take real steps to address these massacres rather than telling people to pray about it (which is the same as doing nothing).

For instance, Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick went on Tucker Carlson’s show [hours after the killings to say](#), “We gotta unify in prayer. We have to unify in faith. . . . This was a country founded on faith, Tucker.” Following the shooting, Rep. Brian Babin (also from Texas) espoused white Christian nationalist rhetoric, [claiming](#): “The United States of America has always had guns. It’s our history. We were built on the Judeo-Christian foundation and with guns.”

It is a lie that the United States was built on a Judeo-Christian foundation — to the contrary it was the first country to explicitly omit all religious references in its Constitution, except for those separating state and church. Nor is it true that our Constitution requires us to guarantee unfettered access to assault weapons. The insistence by these elected officials to double down on the “God, guns and country” stance in the face of mass murders instead of enacting legislation to protect our children and our nation isn’t just insanity, it’s inhumanity.

Babin’s remarks follow a long trend of invoking religion rather than taking action to address gun violence. Rep. Tony Gonzales, whose district includes the site of the shooting, [tweeted](#), “Pray for our families” along with a bible verse. Sen. Ted Cruz (who, of course, represents Texas) [said he was](#) “lifting up in

prayer the entire Uvalde community,” adding that he does not see gun control measures as an appropriate response.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott [predictably commented](#), “The first lady and I extend our prayers of comfort to the survivors and the families of the victims, and we will continue to keep them in our thoughts and prayers.”

These statements are reminiscent of what Abbott [said following the 2019 mass shooting in El Paso](#), when he called for the usual mindless “thoughts and prayers” at a press conference on the shooting and tweeted, “We ask God to bind up the wounds of all who’ve been harmed.”

The calls for prayer did nothing in 2019, and they will do nothing now. Our lawmakers, **at both the state and federal levels, have the ability to address this recurring carnage if they choose to do so, but instead they appeal to religion and do nothing.**

Other political figures from across the country have chimed in with similar pointless verbiage. Rep. Lauren Boebert [tweeted](#): “It is in times like these that we should, as individuals, communities, and as a nation, turn to God for comfort and healing.” Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene [followed deflection](#) — “Our nation needs to take a serious look at the state of mental health today” — with denial: “We don’t need more gun control. We need to return to God.”

Last night, President Biden addressed the nation in primetime and [predictably quoted Scripture](#). He “ask [ed] the nation to pray” for the parents and siblings of victims. This, at least, was followed up by a fervent call for legislative action.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor points out, “Fully [94 percent](#) of FFRF’s 36,000 members support common sense tighter restrictions on gun control. This shows what a crucial issue this is, with nearly unanimous agreement among the secular community.”

As long as public officials continue to urge prayer — and they always mean Christian prayer — FFRF will continue to call them out for failing to provide real solutions.

“Prayer is a way of pretending that you’re doing something when you’re doing nothing at all,” adds Dan Barker, FFRF co-president. “Prayer is pure posturing.”

**NOTHING FAILS LIKE PRAYER**