



Founder, Noel Smith (1933-2022)

HUSBAY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2023

The Supreme Court takes up a messy, chaotic case about religion in the workplace

By [Ian Millhiser](#) Apr 16, 2023,

Groff v. DeJoy, a lawsuit that could potentially revolutionize the balance of power between religious workers and their employers and co-workers, will be heard by the Supreme Court.

It is an agonizing case, in part because it seeks to unravel a very real injustice.

Federal law requires employers to “reasonably accommodate” their workers’ religious beliefs and practices unless doing so would lead to “undue hardship on the conduct of the employer’s business.” Nearly half a century ago however, the Supreme Court said that an “undue hardship” exists whenever an employer must “bear more than a de minimis cost” when it provides such religious accommodations (the Latin phrase “de minimis” refers to a burden that is so small or trifling as to be unworthy of consideration).

Pretty much no one thinks that this “more than a de minimis cost” rule is correct. Even Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed a brief arguing that “*Hardison* is wrong in too many ways to withstand scrutiny.”

But, while a reevaluation of *Hardison* may be overdue, *Groff* also will be heard by a Supreme Court whose current majority is so sympathetic to the interests of the religious right that it often advances those interests to the exclusion of all others.

Just one month after Justice Amy Coney Barrett’s confirmation gave Republican appointees a supermajority on the Court, for example, the Supreme Court handed down *Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo* (2020), which gave individuals who object to a state law on religious grounds unprecedented power to defy that law. The Court did so, moreover, at the height of a deadly pandemic, and the *Roman Catholic Diocese* case halted attendance limits at places of worship that

were intended to slow the spread of Covid-19.

The Court, in other words, deemed the interests of religious conservatives to be of such transcendent importance that they justified abandoning public health measures intended to save human lives.

The *Groff* case involves a postal worker who didn’t want to work on Sundays because of their religion. But the case could similarly empower conservative religious workers who seek accommodations from their employer that could disrupt that employer’s business or demean the religious worker’s colleagues.

Imagine, for example, a manager who refuses to hire gay people because of his faith, and who demands an accommodation permitting them to discriminate. Or a worker who insists upon preaching their conservative religious views about sexuality or gender roles to their colleagues, even when many of those colleagues feel harassed by this behavior.

Hardison, for all of its flaws, permits employers to forbid this kind of behavior — and even to discipline employees who claim a religious justification for behaving disrespectfully toward their colleagues. But *Groff* could fundamentally upend this balance of power, giving religious conservative workers the power to demand that their workplace culture be reshaped in their image.

The danger from *Groff*, in other words, is that the Court will overreach, replacing *Hardison*’s too-weak protections for religious workers with something that will give far too much power to the religious right.

Even fairly simple requests for a religious accommodation can disrupt a workplace

The *Groff* case involves a former postal worker, Gerald Groff, who wanted to be exempted from working on Sundays because of his religious beliefs. In this sense, *Groff* is factually similar to *Hardison*, which involved a Saturday Sabbatarian who wanted that day off for religious reasons.

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

Haiku Quintets: dandana.us/fivepalms

Les Downing
1941-2023

In fond memoriam

so much to discuss ...
lifetimes of deep reflection
beyond ivy walls,

our midwestern roots,
academic scholarship
founded in reason,

how we met our mates,
our psychological art,
our humanism's voice,

peppermint ice cream,
a guilty pleasure no more,
we've set ourselves free

we tilled our friendship
in New Year's fresh, fertile soil
... but ran out of time



Photo: January 1, 2023, a hazy day on Sarasota Bay, the very view shared with Les and Holly as our dinner guests that evening.

The Humanist Movement Poem

Generated by ChatGBT

Thanks to Donna Gannon

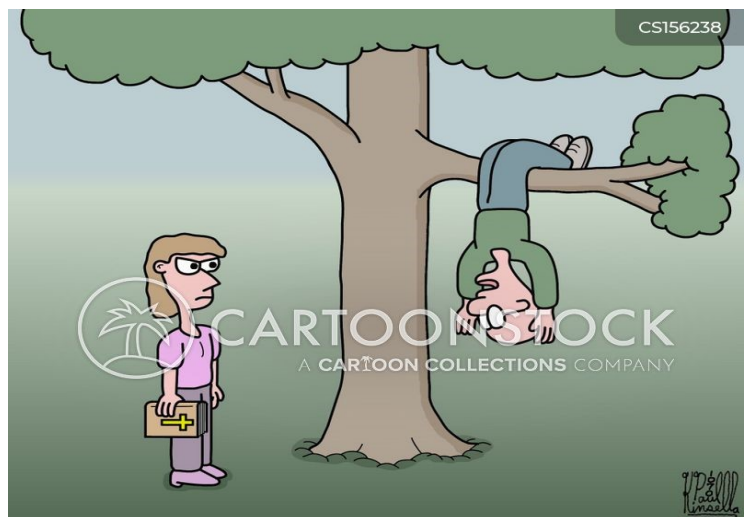
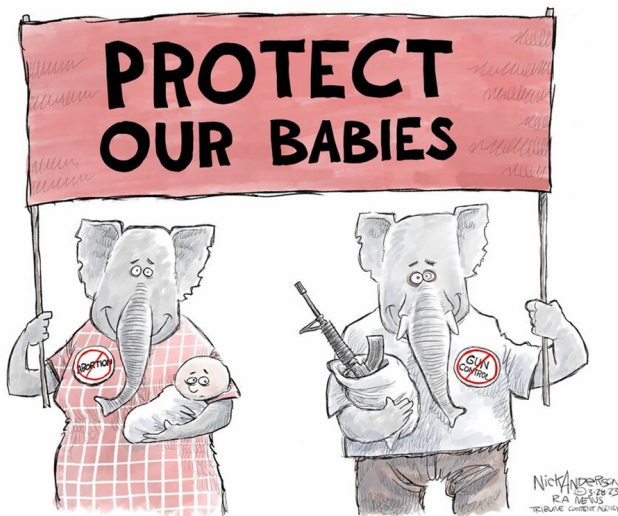
The humanist movement is a way of thinking
That says humans are good and worth respecting
It started in the Renaissance with scholars and writers
Who studied ancient texts and became enlightened fighters

They wanted to learn about the world and themselves
And not just follow the rules of the church and its bells
They valued reason, art, and education
And believed in human dignity and liberation

The humanist movement continued to grow and change
With new ideas and discoveries in every age
It challenged superstition, dogma, and oppression
And promoted freedom, democracy, and expression

The humanist movement today is still alive and strong
It says humans can make the world a better place for every-
one
It does not need a god or a holy book to guide it
It relies on science, ethics, and compassion to decide it

The humanist movement is a hopeful vision
That invites us all to join in its mission
To create a more humane and peaceful society
Where everyone can live with joy and dignity



"I'll make you a deal, Stacy. If you stop trying to save my soul, I'll stop trying to free your mind."

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](#).

Trans, Bans, and Elephants, Oh My! A Discussion With a 4th Grader

From Daily Kos, March 31, 2023

A couple of nights ago, I had a discussion with my daughter, who is in 4th grade. It started because she had heard about banned books (which mercifully isn't a thing in her school library because we live in a place where those who write the rules are sane). She was wondering what it was about these books that would make people so upset that they didn't want anyone to read them. So we looked at a few examples, and LGBTQIA themes kept emerging. So she wanted to know what all of those letters stood for.

So, I started from the beginning, with lesbian being a woman who is attracted to women. She knew what gay means, and thought it was interesting that gay men are just called gay, but there's a specific word (lesbian) for gay women. Bisexual wasn't much of a leap for her, because understanding that some people like men and some like women, it didn't seem so strange that some people might like both.

When we got to the T, I thought it might be interesting to see what she might already know, so I told her that T stands for transgender and then asked her if she knew what that meant. She said she did and went on to explain that being transgender is what happens when your body doesn't match what you know inside you really are, like your body looks like a boy but your brain knows you're a girl.

I learned that this knowledge came in part from a book she read at school, and in part from talking with others. It seemed like a pretty solid understanding, so we moved on to the Q, which I explained as a broad term that can apply to any number of sexual identities or orientations that are not exclusively heterosexual. My biologist brain used the analogy that cats are mammals, but not all mammals are cats, just like gay people are queer, but not all queer people are gay.

Intersex surprised her a bit, because she did not know that sometimes people are born with physical characteristics (maybe visible things like genitals, maybe invisible things chromosomes) of male and female. (I also noted that intersex and transgender are not the same thing.) She asked, "what do they do?" which I took to mean how do they live — as a boy, or a girl, or both? I told her that in many cases they don't choose themselves, because their parents and/or doctors pick one and go with it. I think she understood the practical aspect of this, but it seemed like she wasn't so sure about the idea someone else choosing for that person. So, I asked her what she thinks it would be like to be trans if everyone else thought that *they* should decide who you are. She seemed offended by the concept that such a fundamental aspect of our-

selves should be up to anyone else.

Asexual was also a new one for her, but it made sense once I drew some parallels with how she feels about her best friend or her mom. You love them, but you aren't sexually attracted to them, so just imagine that along with not being attracted to your best friend and your mom, you're also not attracted to anyone else either. When I mentioned that some people don't think it's possible for someone to feel that way, her "how would they know" response suggested that she gets that sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. are deeply personal and individual things.

Now that we'd made it through the acronym, I steered the conversation back to the beginning, and explained that along with banning books, some people try to pass laws that prevent trans people from getting health care, tell them which bathrooms they must use, and even to dictate whether or not *any* women can prevent or end pregnancies, and that only a few years ago — within her own lifetime — federal law did not fully recognize same-sex marriages. I asked her if she could guess who was pushing those laws in government. She rolled her eyes and sighed "Republicans..." (She hears a lot of political discussion in our house.)

That's when I explained that while I have many reasons for disagreeing with Republicans, these issues are deep, because with these laws they're not just doing the wrong thing, they're coming after people I know and love, so it's personal to me. I want my daughter and her mother to have control over their own bodies, and I want LGBTQIA people to be safe and free and I don't think I'm really free if they aren't. She asked if I knew any LGBTQIA people, and I told her that I know several, and that her mother and I have friends in that community, some who she has met herself. She asked me if I know anyone who is trans (I know half a dozen and said so). I asked her if she knows anyone who is trans. She said no, but that a friend of hers at another school does. "So you're not trans, and Julie (not her real name) isn't either, but Julie cares about her friend who is trans, and you care about Julie. So, laws that harm trans people can still harm you too."

Then I asked her — After all of this discussion, did she think there's anything that we just talked about that shouldn't be in any of the books in her school? She said no, with a look that implied that such an idea was silly. "Do you think there should be rules that don't allow your teachers to even *talk* about any of this in school? Because — "And she already knew what I was going to say.

I think she's on the right path. It will be several years before she's old enough to vote, but I'm optimistic that she'll know what to do when she gets there.

If you would like to learn more about our economy and where it has gone wrong, Prof. Robert Rich gives a series of very good classes on YouTube that you may find interesting. Click [HERE](#) to access.

Special Interest Groups

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

SIG Names

Focus of the Group

Thoughts of the Day (1st Wed)	Attendees discuss non-political topics that effect most of us.
Current Affairs (CAF): (3rd Wed)	Events discussed during the current news cycle—3rd Monday
Life's Experiences (LEX):	Your memorable experiences to share with the group
Non-Fiction Review (NFR):	Reviews of non-fiction books, magazine articles, films and TV
Creativity (CRE):	Includes short stories, poetry, blogs; in other words fiction writing (including reviews) as opposed to non-fiction review.
Roundtable (RT):	A discussion of a topic selected by the SIG hosts
Science Technology & Medicine (STM):	What have you learned, and would like to share
Open Forum (OF):	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](#).

Monthly Meetings

All lectures begin at 6:30pm with a social gathering and lecture at 7:00. Time for non-lecture events are noted. Lectures are held at the Center for Arts and Humanity, 1226 N. Tamiami Trail, 34236.

May 1 TBA

May 8 Annual Carl Sagan Picnic (4pm), (See below)

Chat & Chew

Meets every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month at Perkins restaurant at Fruitville and Cattlemen at 12noon. All are welcome at Chat & Chew regardless of membership status. Enjoy the company of like minded folk and have a leisurely lunch and some stimulating conversation.

Annual Carl Sagan Picnic—is scheduled for Monday, May 8, 4-7PM at the Sea Turtle Siesta Beach Pavilion, rain or shine!

THE REAL REASON SOCIAL SECURITY IS GOING BROKE

And how to save it forever! -

By Robert Reich

Friends,

I run into lots of young people who don't believe Social Security will be there for them when they retire.

They have reason for concern. The trustees of the Social Security Trust Fund — of which yours truly was once a member — just released their annual report on Social Security's future. The report says Social Security will be able to pay full benefits until 2034 but then faces a significant funding shortfall. After 2034, it can pay only about 80 percent of scheduled benefits.

The biggest reason Social Security is running out of money is *not* what you (and the media)

think it is: that boomer retirees are, or will soon be, soaking it all up.

The Social Security trustees *anticipated* the boom in boomer retirements. This is why Social Security was amended back in 1983, to gradually increase the age for collecting full retirement benefits from age 65 to 67. That change is helping finance the boomers' retirement.

So what did the trustees *fail* to anticipate? Answer: the degree of income inequality in 21st century America.

Put simply, a big part of the American working population is earning *less* than the Social Security trustees (including me) anticipated decades ago — and therefore paying less in Social Security payroll tax.

Continued on page 6

**President's Message
The Resurrection**

MAY 2023

The Board and I have a perplexing situation regarding our monthly lectures. We have a group of members who want our meetings to be held during the afternoon while another group of members prefers evenings.

The afternoon meetings were not well attended due largely, I think, to the massive traffic issues downtown and members who have appointments or meetings on Mondays, or just preferred evenings. As a result, the

Board decided to return to evening meetings during daylight saving time while working on a solution.

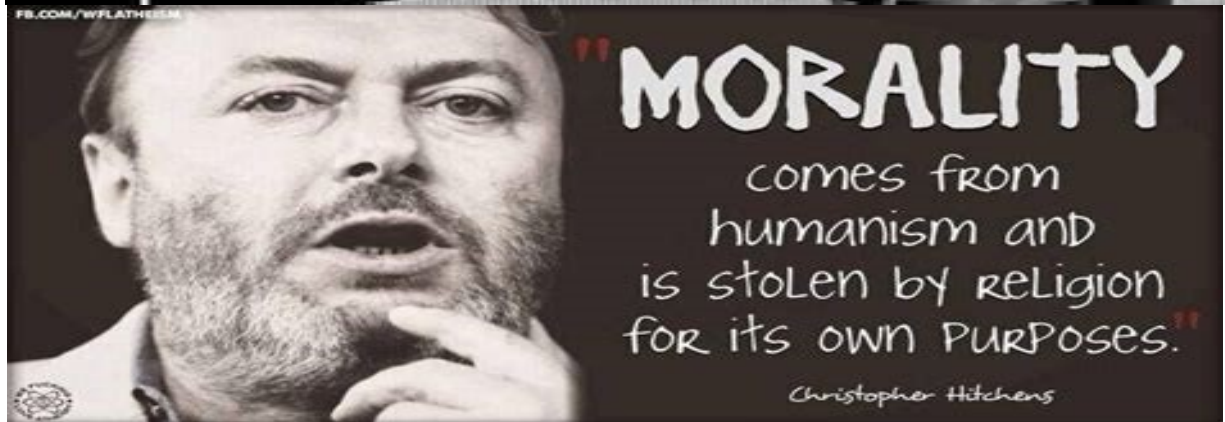
I also think there's a larger issue: Our membership is aging out, and maybe what we have been doing program-wise is no longer feasible.

The Board has its regularly scheduled Board meeting in June and this issue will be on the agenda. We are looking for comments from members, including suggestions for resolving the issue.

Dave Helgager



Fear is the main source of superstition,
and one of the main sources of cruelty.
- Bertrand Russell



"MORALITY
comes from
humanism and
is stolen by religion
for its own purposes."
Christopher Hitchens

HUSBAY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Helgager, President
Barry Zack, Vice President
Holly Downing, Treasurer
Sandie Zellick, Secretary
Paul Jacques, Bob La Salle, Donna Gannon

This is Vol 5 Issue 5 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: rlasalle390@gmail.com

S@%t Hit The Fan, plus 5 years by Robert Magill

It seems like light years of just ghastly memories; but most of the deceased finally have been dealt with. Seven billion tortured souls buried, burned, or scattered in waste lands. Lately, the last happens much more than the others. We have no fuel nor vacant ground to spare these days..

It was the failure of the machines that began the great famines and the pestilences. We slowly realized that without the mechanical helpers, the farm machines, the truck fleets, the power grids and the rest; we were in peril beyond all knowing.

The onset of rampant hunger, starvation and lack of clean water created the major panics that ensued. Governments trying to put on a good face and not accepting responsibility serve to sow confusion and delay any sort of sensible responses. People were left to their own resources without direction or information. Chaos became their only constant.

Unlike other humanitarian episodes involving hordes of the desperate, this time the privileged swelled the helpless mobs. Countless millions of high-rise dwellers were permanently and instantly made homeless by power grid failures, worldwide. These hapless souls, stranded without even the survival instincts of the less fortunate, were suddenly naked on the cruel streets. Large cities could see a million plus distressed persons appear almost overnight as power grids quit operating.

The expected looting and gun violence was short lived as very early on only possessors of food items were of interest to the mobs. Hunger caused even the most street wise and trigger happy to gladly settle for a morsel or two. Hordes of the starving drifted from the cities seeking refuge. There, the locals, often former city dwellers who had anticipated safety in suburbs and exurbs, found themselves overrun by

these dispossessed minions. Thoughtful advance planning had fallen short and soon the planners were themselves refugees.

The dying began slowly but as ravaged constitutions could no longer cope with diseases and injuries; it became endemic. Survivors who maintained a semblance of health began to arrange local styles of group behavior that were applicable to their environments. Groups did well except those who continued to try to recreate a close semblance to past lifestyles. To persist in trying to impose old energy-based habits on the new reality was doomed to failure. The horse and buggy life such as lived by the Amish and others was quite helpful until the neighbors ate the horses.

The first half decade after the fall had been struggled through to the point people wanted stability to return somehow. Worldwide communication, primitive by former standards, had been cobbled together. Questions were asked and the following became the guideposts. How could we humans as self-appointed custodians of the Planet make such a botch of things? What basic errors Must not be repeated so it does not all happen again?

A list began appearing in all the important quasi governing bodies that had arisen. Abolishing war, threats of war; resorting to violence was established as the prime consideration. Fiduciary systems so rigid as to favor only one approach to financial equality were condemned. Any actions taken by humans that threatened any other species was prohibited.

The role of gender in terms of privilege, coercion and human welfare was of paramount importance. Roles were closely examined. Post -menstrual females, and males above forty five years of age were considered equal in all aspects of decision making, enforcement and forward projection..

The future, a half decade after SHTF, looks more promising than any era since the beginning of civilization. end

From Page 4

Had the pay of American workers kept up with what had been the trend decades ago — and kept up with their own increasing productivity — their Social Security payroll tax payments would have been enough to keep the program flush.

At the same time, a much *larger* chunk of the nation's *total* income is going to the top than was expected decades ago.

Here's the thing: Income subject to the payroll tax is capped. Every dollar of earnings in excess of the cap is *not* subject to Social Security payroll taxes. This year's cap is \$160,200.

The Social Security cap is adjusted every year for inflation, but the adjustment is tiny compared to what's happened to incomes at the top.

As the rich have become far richer, more and more of the total income earned by Americans has become concentrated at the top. Therefore, more and more total income escapes the Social Security payroll tax.

The obvious solution to Social Security's funding shortfall 11 years from now is to lift the cap so that

the super-rich pay more in Social Security taxes.

To make sure it's the super-rich — and not the upper middle class — who pay, it makes sense to eliminate the cap altogether on earnings in excess of, say, \$400,000.

As it happens, Joe Biden campaigned for the White House on a plan to do exactly this.

What happened to that plan? The budget Biden proposed last month made no mention of any tax increase linked to Social Security (although it did include tax increases on high earners and corporations as a way to extend the solvency of Medicare by 25 years).

I suspect Biden's plan for Social Security was a casualty of the bare-knuckled politics surrounding both Social Security and the debt ceiling. Biden doesn't want to give Republicans any opening to debate Social Security in the coming fight over lifting the ceiling.

Hopefully, he'll revive his plan for Social Security after that brawl. The long-term future of Social Security depends on it.