



Humanists of Sarasota Bay, Inc.
Sarasota, Florida

Founder, Noel Smith (1933-2022)

HUSBAY NEWSLETTER

June 2023

Fighting for Inclusion: Secular Lawmakers Battle Hostility at Work as Activists Fight for a Seat at the Table

By Sarah Levin from The Humanist

When New Hampshire State Representative Sherry Dutzy was elected to her first term in 2018, she was surprised to find that every day of the legislative session opened with Christian sermons. She wasn't the only legislator to find this to be an inappropriate establishment of religion in the people's house.

"You don't go to church expecting a political speech. I don't come to the legislature to hear a sermon," Dutzy stated. But when she asked the Speaker of the House if a humanist invocation could be delivered, she was at first stonewalled by bureaucracy, and then explicitly prevented from doing so even when every newly invented requirement was met.

Funny enough, shortly after requesting a humanist invocation, a guest Rabbi was brought in to deliver a prayer to session. Tokenizing Jewish people to maintain the appearance of inclusivity is nothing new—look no further than the often-repeated Christian nationalist talking point that our nation is based on "Judeo-Christian" values.

Soon followed the ending of the "guest chaplain" program and the reinstatement of a house chaplain, who was booked to deliver prayer for the remainder of the session—previously, the Speaker was typically scrambling to find the next guest Christian chaplain a few days prior.

But Dutzy was determined to hold the Speaker and the Assembly accountable to being a space inclusive of all of the legislators New Hampshire voters elected to represent them. She reached out to legislators who share her commitment to protecting religious freedom, the separation of church and state, and the rights of religious minorities. They established a Secular Values Legislative Caucus in 2021.

Their first action as a caucus was to propose a rule, then a floor amendment, including support from six Republicans, which would designate time for an "invocation" instead of a "prayer" before each session. This would open it up to non-

religious participation, but the proposal was narrowly defeated.

New Hampshire has the largest state house with 400 members, and the state has among the highest percentages of religiously unaffiliated people in the nation at 34%. And yet secular lawmakers are being explicitly kept from having an equal opportunity to represent their views.

Even when secular lawmakers are given the opportunity to deliver invocations, they are sometimes met with hostility. Arizona State Representative Athena Salman's secular invocations have been repeatedly derided and mocked.

Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon experience among legislators. Irene Grimes, a Cumberland County Elections Board member in North Carolina, has been publicly attacked by her colleagues for being an atheist and for proposing the end of sectarian prayer at elections board meetings. "I don't have anything against anyone's faith," she says, "I just don't think it belongs at an elections board meeting."

The practice is illegal, and the Board has been advised by a county attorney to discontinue the unconstitutional practice. And yet they continue, because establishing Christianity as the dominant force in society is what we should expect when Christian nationalists are in power. And Christian nationalism is not compatible with democracy.

In the same state, Senator Julie Mayfield had a peculiar experience being sworn in. When she requested to be sworn in on a Constitution (imagine that)—instead of the Bible inscribed with her name that the state gifted to her—the clerk was frazzled and unprepared.

This is the point in the story where folks in blue states often roll their eyes, shake their heads and dismiss this as a red state problem, just what we should expect from highly religious Christian areas of the United States. But Christian nationalism and Christian supremacy permeate our entire culture. Diverse, metropolitan cities like Los Angeles and New York City are far from immune.

[Continued on Page 6](#)

Haiku Quintets: dandana.us/fivepalms

Manatee

large, slow, peaceful beasts
prefer to swim with other
large, slow, peaceful beasts

you are my escort
for these precious few minutes
in your hydrous home

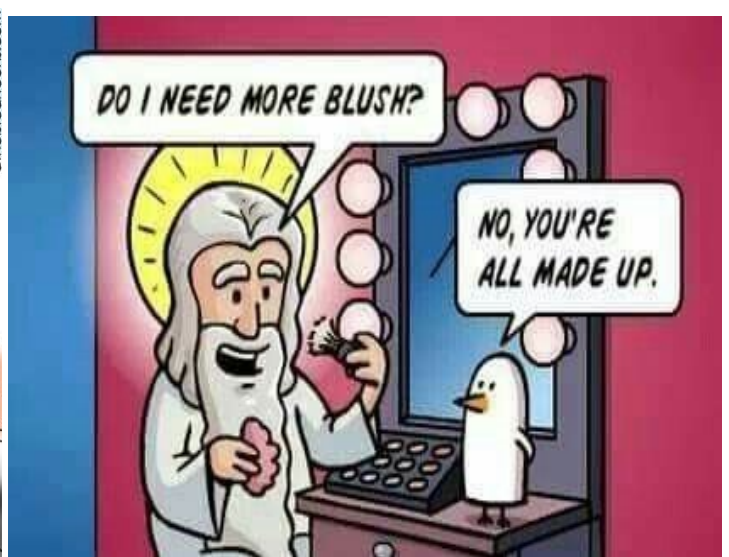
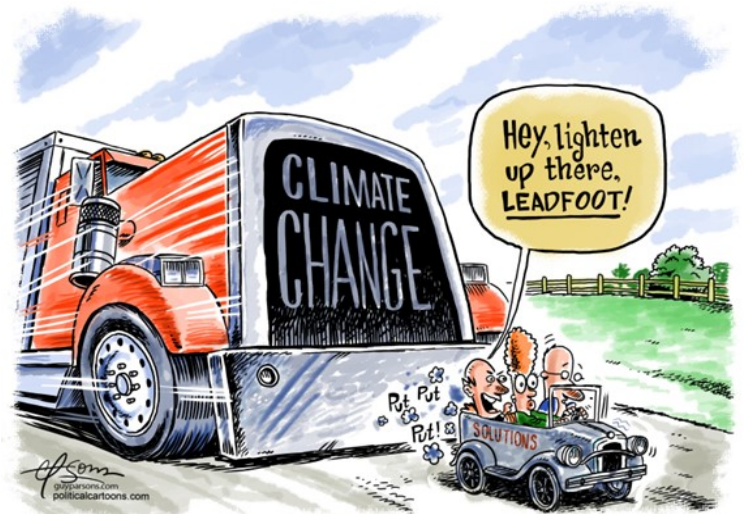
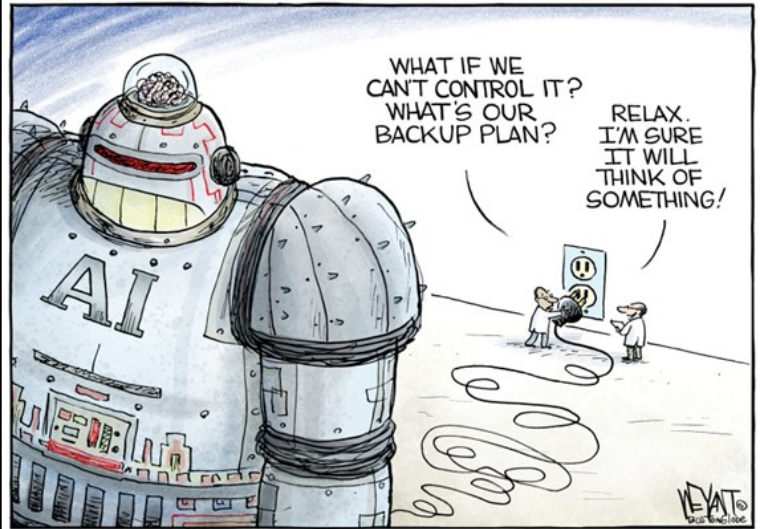
in calming silence
you're minding your own business,
as you wish of me

I hear you munching
your endless lunch of seagrass,
doing no one harm

as stewards of Earth,
I wish we humans would be
rather more like you



Photo: Crystal River, Florida, 9 March 2023 (credit: Plantation Manatee Tours)



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](#).

The Intelligence Trap: Why Smart People Make Dumb Mistakes

By Karen R. Koenig

From the NY Journal of books

“you cannot be wise about the world around you if you cannot first know yourself.”

In this primer on how to grow wise, David Robson provides an enlightening array of answers to three questions: “Why do smart people act stupidly? What skills and dispositions are they missing that can explain these mistakes? And how can we cultivate those qualities to protect us from those errors?”

Grounded in well-researched scientific studies, Robson synthesizes concepts from history, sociology, biology, education, science, philosophy, and psychology, illustrates them with anecdotes about people who are famous, infamous, and, surprisingly often, just like us, and instructs us on how to be wiser than we are no matter what our intelligence. Robson shows us how luminaries such as Charles Darwin, Socrates, Steve Jobs, Richard Feynman, Linus Pauling, Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Houdini, and Arthur Conan Doyle either benefited from or fell prey to their intelligence when it came to making dumb mistakes.

Part 1 begins with a discussion of the origins and evolution of intelligence testing. It explains how we came to value—then overvalue—academic tests based on our assumption that people are automatically better at evaluating factual evidence if they have heightened intelligence. One misconception, among many others that Robson notes, is how we admire people who act or react quickly and decisively rather than slowly because we associate the latter with their being stupid. Scientific studies, however, “suggest that general intelligence depends on the way our genes interact with the culture around us.”

Robson reminds us that other kinds of intelligence—creative, practical, and emotional, for example—are as important to success as academic knowledge. He stresses the need for rationality—“Our capacity to make the optimal decisions needed to meet our goals, given the resources we have at hand, and to form beliefs based on evidence, logic and sound reasoning.” Additionally, he urges us to recognize our many “my-side” biases: the availability heuristic, confirmation bias, sunk cost fallacy, framing and intuitive judgment biases, using intelligence to dismiss evidence, and overconfidence in intelligence.

Part 2 contains Robson’s toolkit for building “practical wisdom” in schools, work, sports, marriage, medicine, and the military. He advises developing social, emotional, cultural, and innate intelligence skills and underscores how social reasoning helps us consider the perspectives of others. He describes how emotional intelligence is bolstered by humility, acceptance that there is much we do not know, recognizing our limits, open-mindedness, and acknowledging our blind spots. Because problem-solving may make us anxious, Robson explains how a technique called self-distancing may reduce it and lead to success.

In the forefront of his toolkit are self-reflection strategies to help us recognize and shed biases and focus not simply on what, but how, we think. He examines the neurology of our “gut instinct” and the value of staying connected to emotions and “somatic markers” during decision making. He advises ongoing reframing and re-evaluation of problems to find the best solutions to them.

Robson next looks at how to spot lies and misinformation, including fake news. He explains how it is carefully constructed to suck us in and how it plays to traits that make us gullible. Then he lays out what is needed to seek “truthiness.” Self-reflection is once again key. We can learn to weed out lies from truth by, among other strategies, evaluating credentials of so-called experts, carefully examining claims, noting our own assumptions, and scrutinizing evidence.

Part 3 is replete with practical strategies to develop wisdom, especially the need for curiosity about the world and other people. We learn how self-curiosity promotes honest reflection and a growth rather than fixed mindset and how other curiosity generates interest in what makes people tick and the world go ‘round. Robson endorses the concept of “playing with” rather than “working at” whatever task is at hand and makes the case for allowing ourselves to acknowledge confusion in order to improve memory and learning.

In Part 4, Robson focuses on how to make groups and organizations function more intelligently. He cautions against having team members compete against each other, explains how status conflicts can hinder collective intelligence, emphasizes how our performance may be affected by group members, examines the role of hierarchies on success, and encourages hiring people with high social sensitivity. He ends this chapter by describing the dangers of functional stupidity, which allows our view of short term or narrow success to blind us to the greater good.

NOTHING FAILS LIKE PRAYER

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.

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.

The Joys of 'Otherhood' by Robert Magill

Along with first mother's milk, well certainly, by the time of introduction to solid food, baby should have learned in addition to mother, father, sister and brother...'other'. For 'otherness' is perhaps the most important and most overlooked lesson a child needs be taught. The lack of such instruction clouds every human life. Welcome then, youngster, to the wide, wide world of 'otherness'.

The 'other' is here to stay. Our universal failure to regard this phenomenon as primal has caused humankind untold grief, misunderstanding and chaos. Each generation labors to pave-over or paint afresh the countless errors and harm the lack of wholesome embrace of the 'other' has long created.

Thus, well intended, but ego-centered lore bestowed on the young through rote offering does a disservice and contributes to a lifetime of distress. Embrace of the 'other' should be rewarded and not any shibboleth. Warning to the young of possible ill intentions of various 'others' should, of course, follow. Self-preservation always needs to be present in well balanced offspring. But ill intentions of 'others' are to be seen as personal or institutional failures and not indictment of the 'other' out of hand.

We flounder constantly when presented with faces that are different, cultures deemed exotic, perhaps threatening; and gender issues not easily assimilated. Decisions are often faulty especially when proper early exposure might have prevented outcomes that resulted in injury or worse. Special courses, often at university level, study closely areas that would be barely moot if attention to the 'other' had been a basic, early in life.

Note: The other is herewith released from the straits of

quotation marks. If we don't recognize the *other* as a standalone entity by now...perhaps we never will.

We are the other...to each other, of course. We as a species rightly know the other animals as other and rarely stumble with this identity. But the actions and/or sheer presence of another human animal is confusing; often daunting.

The joy of confronting the other, if not joy at least then, the refreshing discovery of otherness hopefully. will be, someday, a daily routine. The other should be/could be the spice of life. A relief from a lifetime of 24/7 doting on the familiar. Alas, most often interacting with another is weighted with bias and its flavor lost.

A word here about demonizing the other for profit or gain or revenge. Enter here the body count of all body counts from such demonizing. When humans lived in scattered tribes, maybe not so much demonizing. Along came agriculture, courtesy of the ladies and ...presto. Surplus! Civilization. The other now had a permanent target projected on it. Carl Jung, and others, argued that projection is used to protect against fear of the unknown, often to the projector's detriment. Steady increase of the body count for the next ten thousand years aided by the coming of all those terrific machines and devices. Progress. Technology. Jeepers! How many zeros in a Trillion?

We should have figured out by now where it all starts, this disdain for the other. As with culture, life styles, religion etc, it gets going early in life from parental fears and biases. Indeed, the error is generational and just about bred in the bone. Well intended training is passed on, no doubt, but it is devastating in practice. Which will be the pioneer generation to snip the cords and free the young from the fear and loathing of the other we've all grown up with?

**President's Message
The Resurrection**

JUNE 21 IS WORLD HUMANIST DAY

June 21 is World Humanist Day which is also the day of the June solstice. It was founded by the American Humanist Association and is celebrated world-wide but mostly in the US. It began in 1980.

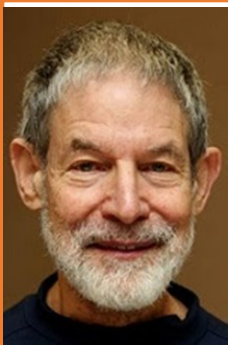
It's an occasion for all of us who call ourselves humanists to pause and be grateful that we are part of a group who believes in science and reason and rejects divinity and the supernatural. We can be grateful for an organization such as HUSBAY where like-minded people can come together for conversations and enjoy discussions.

Our SIG in June falls on World Humanist Day and provides us an opportunity to reflect. The Board and I will be giving this some thought at our Board meeting June 8.

In the meantime, if you have the where with all to write a Haiku, go to The Humanist and submit your Haiku to commemorate this important date. (See page 6) If accepted, it will be published by the American Humanist Association.

Additionally, take time to have a party or lunch with humanist friends. Or just take time to think about all the ills of our world and be grateful for your humanist friends, and that you are part of a like-minded group such as HUSBAY.

Dave Helgager



From The Humanist Magazine

"People who put deeds above creeds and compassion above dogma, regardless of whether they are religious or non-religious, are our allies against those who put the needs of and imagined god above the needs of humans"

Herb Silverman

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Contributor: \$25 to \$49

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Nora Luna Righter \$150

Martin Fried \$150

Dave Helgager \$100

Allstar: \$200 to \$500

**Want to have your name appear here?
Just make a donation of \$25 or more
during the month.**



Mark Weston and our fearless leader after the meeting on May 1st which was well attended. Mark spoke about an innovative way to conduct our presidential elections; via a five star rating like we do with

movies and TV shows. This may sound strange, but it actually made sense. All had a good time and enjoyed the talk.

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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

From page 1

In Los Angeles, the executive director of Atheists United, Evan Clark, discovered that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors was hosting “faith leader listening sessions” for faith-based organizations to discuss ways the government could partner on social services. All but two were hosted in Churches and opened with a Christian prayer (many often ended with a prayer too).

Not only did Clark find that the initiative made no outreach efforts to include the secular community, it made little effort to recruit any minority religious identities. “The meetings were overwhelmingly attended by Christians and had very little secular and minority religious representation,” said Clark. “The rooms were often over ninety percent Christian-identifying, nothing like the diversity of LA.” At one meeting a county supervisor emphasized frustration with the wall keeping government money from supporting church initiatives that aligned with city initiatives.

Too often “faith-based initiatives” privilege and center Christian organizations. Even when “faith-based” is interpreted more inclusively and brings in other religious minorities, the secular community is rarely included. In Los Angeles County, an area representing over ten million people, there are countless community organizations and leaders being left out of high-level policy discussions simply because they’re not “faith-based.” Clark and his community are advocating for a simple fix: change the program from “faith-based” to “community-based” and include groups like Atheists United, secular non-profits and community leaders, and faith-based organizations.

On the other side of the coast at an interfaith breakfast in February, New York City Mayor Eric Adams outright rejected the separation of church and state and blamed “lack of faith” (read: nonre-

ligious people) for systemic challenges in New York, including homelessness and domestic violence. Despite criticism from religious and secular leaders, he has only dug in further, saying he wants NYC to be a “place of God.”

Public acceptance of nonreligious people has been steadily improving over the years—as of 2020, 60 percent of Americans say they would vote for an atheist for president, compared to 45 percent in 2007. And according to research conducted by the Center for Freethought Equality, it no longer seems to be as much of a political liability as people perceive it to be. But the fact remains that Christian nationalists wield a lot of power in our politics, and too many politicians in both parties are complicit in upholding Christian supremacy. Ceremonial demonstrations of Christian power, like invocations and swearings-in, are only the tip of the iceberg.

Still, courageous lawmakers like Rep. Sherry Dutzy, Rep. Athena Salman, and Elections Board Member Irene Grimes are fighting back. We can do our part as voters and constituents by showing them we have their backs. Get involved by becoming a member (it’s free!) of the Center for Freethought Equality. Get to know the secular elected officials who live in your state and let them know how much you appreciate their work. Let them know they’re not alone, and that our community is there to support them.

When elections come around, back the candidates who share your values, or consider running for office. And if you’re part of a local secular community, hold your elected officials accountable and keep fighting for your seat at the table. Nonreligious Americans have the potential to be a formidable, game-changing political constituency. Making that a reality starts with you.

Write a Humanist Haiku for World Humanist Day

Poetry has the power to transform minds and bring forth powerful moments of introspection. Now in its fourth year, TheHumanist.com’s annual haiku contest is back in 2023 to give our readers the opportunity to commemorate World Humanist Day on June 21 through creative and provocative poems.

A haiku is a seemingly-simple form of poetry in three lines: five syllables for the first line, seven syllables for the second, and five syllables for the third. The challenge is to capture a moment in just seventeen total syllables. The best haikus should convey evocative imagery through words. A title is optional—and some say a skilled haiku writer doesn’t need one.

We invite you to express your thoughts about humanism and humanist values while adhering to the haiku format. Your submissions will be reviewed by our editors and staff, and we’ll publish our favorite haikus right here on theHumanist.com on World Humanist Day, June 21, 2023. Established in the 1980s, World Humanist Day is an opportunity for humanists around the world to celebrate the positive values of humanism and explores issues of concern to our movement. [Learn more about World Humanist Day here.](#)

The deadline for submissions is Monday, June 12th. Submit [HERE](#)



Our Annual Carl Sagan Picnic A Huge Success

A goodly crowd of HUSBAY regulars enjoyed the sun and beautiful weather at our annual picnic held on Siesta Key Beach. The food was plentiful and oh so delicious to accompany the pleasant chat and good fellowship. A delightful time was had by all. For those of you that didn't or couldn't attend, we missed you. Make plans to join us next year.

Photos courtesy of Gale Midwood

