



Humanists of Sarasota Bay, Inc.  
Sarasota, Florida

Founder, Noel Smith (1933-2022)

## HUSBAY NEWSLETTER

August 2023

### Hope Remains in the Fight Against Theocracy

By Phil Zuckerman—AHA



At the end of June, in the case of *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*, the six conservative judges of the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is perfectly legal for business owners to refuse to serve homosexuals. All judicial justifications and verbiage aside, this ruling is based—squarely and

simply—upon the traditional religious belief that there is a magical, invisible, all-powerful deity who disapproves of homosexuality. Even though LGBTQ+ people cause no harm or suffering in society, and even though our Constitution is explicitly meant to provide protection for hated minorities from a hostile majority, and despite decades of legal precedence against such forms of bigoted discrimination, these pious justices have placed their brand of Biblical faith over and above our secular, democratic system of law.

And our nation is now less just.

Of course, these judges—like all Americans—have every right to hold religious beliefs as deeply and sincerely as they wish, and to let those beliefs guide their lives, inform their choices, and shape their morality. But what they should not be able to do, is impose their version of the Christian faith on the rest of us, thereby curtailing the rights of those of us who do not share their spiritual worldview.

In the wake of *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*—as well as other related rulings such as *Carson v. Makin*, *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, and *Greece v. Galloway*—a specific segment of conservative Christian Americans will enjoy greater privileges: their prayers will dominate public and civic spaces, their private schools will

be subsidized by everyone else's tax dollars, and their distinct version of theistic morality will be bolstered as they deny services to those they personally deem sinful or unworthy. And the rest of us—those who don't want to join in Christian prayers at public school sporting events or at city council meetings, who don't want our tax dollars paying for Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, or Scientological indoctrination, and don't want society's morality determined by esoteric belief in supernatural beings—we will see our standing as full and equal citizens eroded.

What is needed—in the face of this ever-encroaching theocratism—is a strengthened commitment to, and enlivened activism on behalf of, the First Amendment's core principle of political secularism, which, as Thomas Jefferson explained back in 1802, sought to create a wall of separation between church and state. Or as President Ulysses Grant echoed, in 1875: "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the Church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the Church and the State forever separate." Or as President Ronald Reagan affirmed, a century later, in 1984: "We establish no religion in this country...church and state are, and must remain, separate."

As the conservative Christians dominating the Supreme Court continue to trample upon this core, original, and formerly bi-partisan American Constitutional value, our democracy will suffer. After all, in a pluralistic, diverse, and multi-cultural nation such as ours, with every stripe of religious believer—as well as those who don't subscribe to any religion at all—political secularism is the only mechanism that treats all such worldviews and belief systems equally: none are subsidized or privileged, none are harassed or oppressed, and all enjoy government neutrality when it comes to religion's presence—or lack thereof—in our civic lives.

Continued on page 5

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

### Is It Any Wonder?

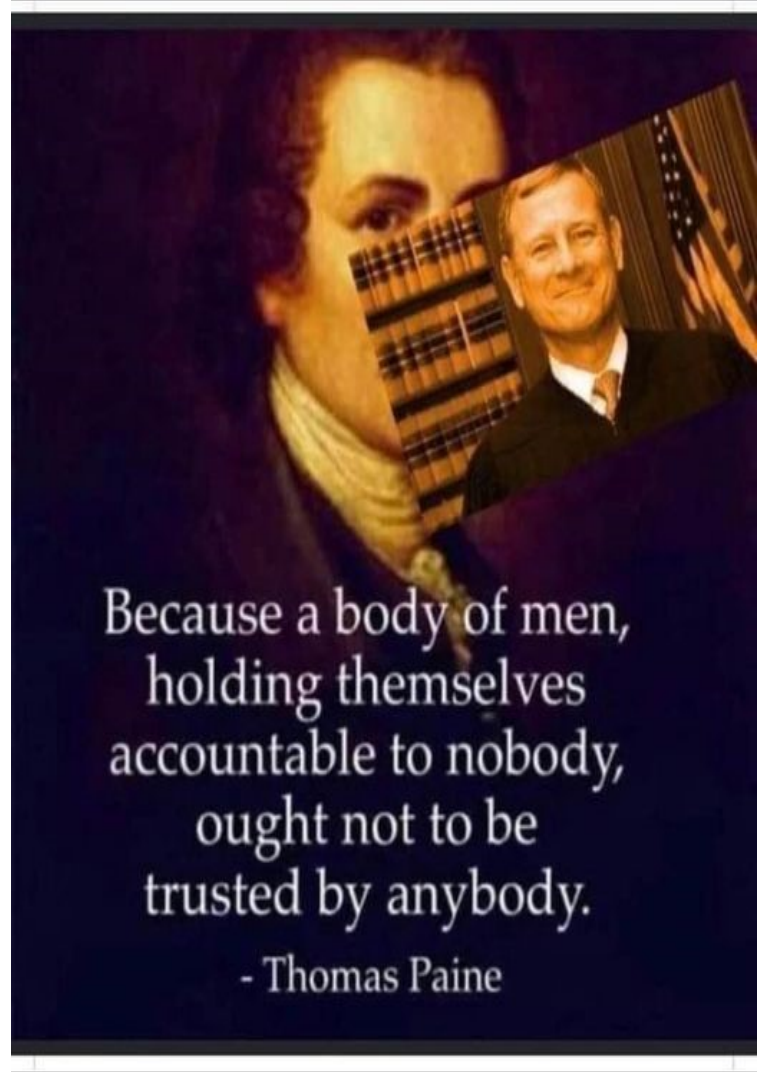
from birth we're fed bunk:  
Sky Daddy is watching us,  
then, eternal bliss

God's messengers preach  
bizarre fictions as pure truth  
in straight-faced belief

loving parents teach  
what their own parents taught them,  
pretending wisdom

we crave safe harbor  
from life's Great Unknowns lurking  
our dark worried nights

so, it's no wonder  
conspiracy theories thrive  
in this moonstruck world



Because a body of men,  
holding themselves  
accountable to nobody,  
ought not to be  
trusted by anybody.  
- Thomas Paine



**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](#).

## Maternal Mortality Is Rising, and Pro-Lifers Don't Care

**Abortion opponents expect all pregnancies to be carried to term. But they won't lift a finger to help mothers.**

The Nation - Katha Pollitt



Maternity care in the United States is in crisis. Since 2011, 217 hospitals have closed their maternity units. According to March of Dimes, more than 2.2 million women of childbearing age live in counties without [obstetrical care](#). You would think this situation would be a major concern of abortion opponents. After all, they are the ones forcing thousands of people to continue unwanted pregnancies that have already resulted in thousands of births. Maybe make sure there's adequate care for pregnant and delivering women and their babies before you vastly increase their numbers?

But no, anti-choicers frame abortion bans as the only protection necessary, when in fact bans interfere with the practice of medicine even in the case of wanted pregnancies. They cause patients to come close to death because doctors are afraid to treat them. They force patients to carry dying fetuses to term. They prevent doctors from helping patients with complicated risk factors. Moreover, bans are causing doctors to leave states where they [can't practice](#) compassionate, evidence-based medicine without risking their license or worse. In Louisiana, where legislators have refused to clarify confusing medical exceptions, the penalty for violating the abortion ban is up to 15 years in prison and a fine of \$5,000 to \$200,000. No wonder medical students are refusing to train in abortion-ban states.

The maternal mortality rate in the US has been higher than in any other major industrialized country for more than two decades. In fact, data from UNICEF and the World Health Organization suggest that as of 2020, the United States, with 21 deaths per 100,000 live births, was [on par](#) with Malaysia and Lebanon. Since then, our maternal mortality rate has only risen: According to the CDC, the number climbed to [32.9 deaths](#) per 100,000 births in just one year.

We talk a lot about how to improve the numbers, but a new study from the University of Washington suggests the will isn't there. In the 20 years from 1999 to 2019, maternal mortality more than doubled, with by far the worst outcomes among Black, Native American, and Alaskan Native people. In [Mississippi](#), the state that gave us the *Dobbs* case, the maternal mortality rate increased from 33.2 deaths per 100,000 between 2013 and 2016 to 36 deaths between 2017 and 2019, the latest figures available. For Black women, the news was a disaster: Deaths rose from three times the rate for whites to four times, or from 51.9 to a staggering 65.1 per 100,000.

Abortion opponents love to promise that they will do all sorts of good things for pregnant women and new mothers. There will be diapers! Health care! Maternity homes like the Texas evangelical "maternity ranch" [profiled](#) in *The Washington Post* a while back. After all, in the 14 states where abortion is illegal, anti-choice Republicans can no longer say, "Well, having a baby was your decision, so why should I pay for it?"

Except, of course, they can and will say that. Sure, there have been some token tweaks to the cruelty and disdain long meted out to low-income mothers and fathers. In some states, disposable diapers will no longer be taxed—which they never should have been in the first place, since they are not luxuries but necessities. One [calculation](#) estimates that the exemption will save parents a big fat \$76 a year. Tennessee's Republican governor, Bill Lee, is proposing that his state, where abortion is now totally banned, will cover half the cost of diapers for the first two years.

If it doesn't seem like they're trying very hard, they're not. As of this writing, 40 states (plus Washington, D.C.) have taken advantage of the expanded Medicaid coverage offered under the Affordable Care Act, and 10 haven't bothered, despite [data](#) showing that low-income people who receive health insurance through Medicaid have better outcomes than those who are excluded from coverage. Those [10 states](#)? Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Nearly all are controlled by Republicans who have banned or severely restricted abortion access (or attempted to). On the plus side, several of these states have recently expanded postpartum coverage from 60 days to a full year; in Mississippi, Republican Governor Tate Reeves [declared](#) the one-year coverage part of his state's "new pro-life agenda." Whatever his intentions, the expanded coverage is crucial to saving lives. Many people don't understand that the risk of maternal mortality is not just about the dangers of childbirth itself but the continuing effects of pregnancy and delivery, which may not show up till months later—high blood pressure, heart conditions, infections, hemorrhage.

**Continued on page 6 (Pregnancies)**

## 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

<b>Thoughts of the Day (1st Wed)</b>	Attendees discuss non-political topics that effect most of us.
<b>Current Affairs (CAF): (3rd Wed)</b>	Events discussed during the current news cycle—3rd Monday
<b>Life's Experiences (LEX):</b>	Your memorable experiences to share with the group
<b>Non-Fiction Review (NFR):</b>	Reviews of non-fiction books, magazine articles, films and TV
<b>Creativity (CRE):</b>	Includes short stories, poetry, blogs; in other words fiction writing (including reviews) as opposed to non-fiction review.
<b>Roundtable (RT):</b>	A discussion of a topic selected by the SIG hosts
<b>Science Technology &amp; Medicine (STM):</b>	What have you learned, and would like to share
<b>Open Forum (OF):</b>	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 programs begin at 5:30pm with a social gathering and presentation at 6:00. Times for other events are noted. Presentations are held at the Fruitville Library, 100 Apex Rd, Sarasota, FL 34240

### 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. 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.

## Google-Owned YouTube Makes Millions From Channels Pushing Climate Disinformation: Analysis

"It's time for YouTube to step up, detox its platform, and protect the integrity of the fight against the climate crisis," said Ekō's campaign director."

From Common Dreams

JESSICA CORBETT

Jul 28, 2023

Google-owned YouTube is again facing allegations of profiting from not enforcing its own ban on the monetization of climate misinformation, this time in a report published Friday amid legislative battles in Brazil over policies on the Amazon rainforest, Indigenous rights, and social media.

Google announced in October 2021 that for advertisers and publishers along with creators on its video platform YouTube, the company would "prohibit ads for, and monetization of, content that contradicts well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change."

For four weeks, researchers with Ekō—a group formerly known as SumOfUs that works to curb the power of big corporations—reviewed 60 YouTube videos in English and Portuguese that contained disinformation and conspiracy theories about Amazon deforestation, Indigenous rights, and the climate emergency.

Over two-thirds of the videos were monetized, and Ekō identified more than 150 brands in the ads. Using a common industry tool, researchers estimated that the channels—which collectively had over 40 million subscribers and more than 5 million views—earn \$636,000 to \$10.1 million a year through mone-

tization.

*"The proliferation of disinformation and conspiracy theories are helping to derail efforts by the Lula administration to advance policy agendas around Amazon protection, Indigenous land rights, and social media regulation."*

"Well-known Brazilian and global brands like Lyft, Calvin Klein, Budweiser, Panasonic, and Samsung, as well as environmental and human rights groups like [Friends of the Earth](#) U.K., UNICEF, and the Peace Corps, are appearing next to extreme climate denial content and conspiracy theories," the report states, "effectively pouring money into the pockets of conspiracy theorists and climate deniers."

"Ekō researchers found top-name apparel, electronics, and drink brands appearing next to videos suggesting actor Leonardo DiCaprio funded nongovernmental organizations to commit arson in the Amazon," the publication continues. "Other false claims include that the rainforest is too humid to catch fire, and that manmade global warming is a lie."

"The proliferation of disinformation and conspiracy theories are helping to derail efforts by the Lula administration to advance policy agendas around Amazon protection, Indigenous land rights, and social media regulation," the document adds, pushing for policy "that prevents platforms from monetizing and profiting from disinformation and lies that are subverting the legislative process."

In a statement Friday, Ekō campaign director Vicky Wyatt also demanded action from the company.

**Continued on page 6—(Climate)**

## President's Message

At a recent Thoughts of the Day SIG, hosted ably by member Mike Gruenfeld, we had many thought-provoking topics and discussions.

One of the questions: "Why have humans waged wars throughout history and how can the reasons be reduced and eliminated?" was particularly apropos considering world history and today's war in Ukraine.

Several reasons were given, including one I had thought about myself, that men are the culprits. Some members believe we have a "man" problem, though not stated, with their need to conquer and control. They've started all our wars, participated in brutality, particularly on women.

There were other reasons given, but I got the impression that most of those at the luncheon couldn't disagree, particularly the women.

Then we turned to how this need to war can be reduced or eliminated?

Most of the conversation centered on educating our young men. I see that as having minimal success in the short term, particularly globally. In the US, I have my doubts as well, as I watch the mass killings and the gang violence all committed by angry young men.

Perhaps it could be attributed to lack of jobs, education, family support, and positive leadership. I think religion is a major culprit.

For me the answer is humanism. As I read the American Humanist Association's Ten Commitments, humanism jumps out as the answer. As more young people are turning away from religion (according to polls), I see hope.

Dave Helgager

## From Page 1

Fortunately, there are several rays of hope, amidst the darkening fog of fundamentalism. For the first time in our nation's history, there now exists a nascent Freethought Caucus in Congress, led by Representative Jared Huffman (CA-2), which promotes public policy formed on the basis of reason, science, and moral values, and seeks to protect the secular character of our government by adhering to the strict Constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. Additionally, there are well-staffed activist organizations, in addition to the American Humanist Association, committed to secularism, such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, that are gaining both mem-

bers and influence. Finally—and most importantly—our country is undergoing an unprecedented surge of irreligiosity, with record numbers of Americans embracing a secular orientation. We're talking tens of millions of humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, and countless others who simply prefer to live their lives without religion.

All of us—along with the comradery of the millions of well-meaning religious Americans who don't seek to impose their faith on others—must double down on our passionate fealty to the human-created ideals of the Constitution that sought to keep secular government out of the business of religion and religion out of the business of secular government.

## DONOR'S CORNER

### Donations made during the month

**Contributor: \$25 to \$49**

**Supporter: \$50 to \$99**

**Leader: \$100 to \$199**

**Nora Luna Righter \$150**

**Martin Fried \$150**

**Dave Helgager \$100**

**Allstar: \$200 to \$500**

**Want to have your name appear here?**

## That's all, folks

by Robert Magill

ALL, small word, large meaning. All we know; all we believe, all of our dreams, our hopes and our striving, all of our various faiths, beliefs, knowledge and spiritual longings.... ALL of this originated in the mind of a human being on this Planet.

ALL, small word, large meaning. all.

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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 3—(Pregnancies)

The dismissal of the physical and social risks of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood is endemic to the anti-abortion movement. Whatever a woman's situation, they say, it will all be fine. That 10-year-old rape victim in Ohio? She didn't exist. (Update: Her rapist has just been sentenced to life in prison.) Savita Halappanavar, the Irish woman who died after doctors refused to complete her septic miscarriage because the fetus had a heartbeat, must have died of something else, and so did the three Polish women who died under the same circumstances. I've spoken to pro-life protesters on the street who dismiss the CDC's statistics on maternal mortality because they include deaths up to one year after the end of pregnancy. If you die in a car crash, it counts, one pointed out.

I would respect abortion opponents more if they acknowledged that they expect women to endure whatever suffering comes their way due to their impregnation by some man, who, let's not forget, suffers nothing. I wish they would just admit that having a child when your life is not in a good place might mean a lifetime of poverty and violence and struggle—not just for the mother, but for the child too. Crucial as they are, diapers are just the beginning of what children need to thrive. When that baby is toilet-trained (and seriously, Bill Lee, how many toddlers are trained by the age of 2?), she will still need clothes and shoes and healthy food and a safe and stable place to live in a safe and stable community. Where are the so-called pro-lifers when that cute little innocent baby is 10 or 12 or 20? Where are they if she gets pregnant herself?

### From page 4 — (Climate)

"While global warming, deforestation, and wildfires reach their highest levels ever recorded, YouTube's shameless greenwashing is exposed—with the company giving profits to climate deniers to the tune of millions," said Wyatt. "This is a clear slap in the face to the brands whose advertisements unknowingly support climate disinformation. It's time for YouTube to step up, detox its platform, and protect the integrity of the fight against the climate crisis."

Ekō's analysis follows a May report from Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD) for which researchers found 200 YouTube videos containing climate mis- and disinformation. The videos had a total of 73.8 million views and all had featured ads.

YouTube spokesperson Michael Aciman told *Engadget* in response to those findings that the company is "constantly working" to remove content that violates its rules and welcomes third-party feedback to "help improve the accuracy of our enforcement over time."

"In 2021, we launched a new, industry-leading policy that explicitly prohibits ads from running on content promoting false claims about the existence and causes of climate change, which we designed in consultation with experts and authoritative sources on climate science," Aciman also said. "We do allow policy debate or discussions of climate-related initiatives, but when content crosses the line to climate change denial, we remove ads from serving on those videos."

Meanwhile, Callum Hood, head of research at the Center for Countering Digital Hate, part of the CAAD coalition, said at the time that "despite Google's green grandstanding, its ads continue to fuel the climate denial industry."

"Whether it's taking cash to target users with climate disinformation, or running ads that make climate denial content profitable, the company is selling out," Hood added. "Tech companies make big promises on hate and misinformation because they know it's hard to see if they've kept them. We need to force Google to open up the black box of its advertising business."



**To fear love is to fear life,  
and those who fear life are  
already 3-parts dead.  
Bertrand Russell**

**NOTHING FAILS LIKE PRAYER**