



The Utah Humanist

February 2021

HumanistsofUtah.org

Volume 32 No. 2

Humanists of Utah is a Chapter of the *American Humanist Association*.

We are a nonprofit corporation organized to advocate and promote ethical, rational, and democratic humanism among our membership and the larger community.



Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,

Official publication of the American Humanist Association

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Mid-Thirties Millennial

Last month, I turned 36 years young, and as I've been keenly following the phenomenal journalist-historian Heather Cox-Richardson this past year (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/27/business/media/heather-cox-richardson-substack-boston-college.html>), I have been reflecting on the entire political, economic, and historic context/backdrop of my life thus far.

Since I was born in 1985, the United States has not been a particularly ideal place to grow up and become an adult. Being raised in a devoutly conservative LDS/Mormon working-poor family, I became a first-generation college student at 18 by taking on far more debt than I feel I will ever be able to repay. I left the LDS/Mormon faith tradition at age 21, became a humanist by reading about the histories of world religious traditions, and eventually also became a Buddhist, through personal study, and joined the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) as an avowedly religious humanist who believes deeply in the capacity of human beings to create a better world, together.

I am not a particularly 'preachy' religious humanist/atheist, as I value many aspects of religious traditions and practices found around the world and throughout history—I do not tend to care so much what others believe but find how we act a much more relevant and compelling measure of whether that person is someone I can respect, trust, and work with to make this world better. Since experiencing my 'crisis of faith,' I also then experienced other 'crises of identity,' realizing that I was in fact liberal - not conservative; and that I was queer, not straight!

These perspectives put me in a complicated sort of non-category, as I would both consider myself part of 'the nones' and others in the U.S. who do not identify with any religious tradition/community, as well as an active Buddhist and Unitarian Universalist. I do not believe in a god/gods, but I do have faith (in humanity), and I am an active member and participant in my local UU church community.

As we are all reflecting at the beginning of this new decade,

(Continued on page 6)

Inside This Issue

President's Report	2
Quiet Change	2
Reviving A Community Tradition	3
Not The Train?.....	3
Darwin Day Remembrance.....	4 & 5
What A Month	6



President's Message

Hello Beloved friends,

As we enter the second month of 2021, it is already a big time of reflection. So much has happened this year. I have been thinking a lot about the state of our country, the past years, and the hope for the future. So much movement from both sides of aisle in our government has created chaos that for many is just overwhelming. We are living in unprecedented times for sure. I do not know about you, but I am tired of hearing that phrase because it has been so accurate in the accounting of the past four years. It will also be relevant for the next while too. We are just plain living and witnessing history. With a pandemic and all that it entails, it has been hard to live our humanism the way we are accustomed to. We are having to be creative in our reach and basically, bring it back home. I admonish you to investigate your lives and see how you are doing it. Do you live by example? Are you reaching out to those closest to you - within the safe parameters for social distancing? Are you utilizing social media or other outlets to create harmony and peace rather than chaos and dissent? Are you just holding on for dear life? There is no right or wrong, just your own personal experience. But as time has told and will continue to tell - we all need community to draw strength from. Our humanist community is the same. We need each other. Check out our FB page. Share your stories there, funny pictures or other things that we can all draw strength from. It is part of our legacy and right now while we are physically far apart—we can still be connected as much as we would like.

We have witnessed the call to action for the insurrection that has occurred right here on US soil. It was awful, disgusting and unfortunately - not surprising given the temperature that was created to insight it. We have the power to call to action the exact opposite of it. A call to peace. A call for science. A call for truth. A call for

Goodness and Hope.

Charles Darwin's birthday is in a few days. I am so sad that we are not able to throw the party we have done for the past decade plus. But our safety is more important this year. So in lieu of it, we are including content from past celebrations in this newsletter.

I wish you the best my friends, hang in there. We are brave, we are strong, and we fight for what is true and fair.

Kindest regards, and have a blessed day.

—Melanie White-Curtis
President, Humanists of Utah

Quiet Change

Change can enter our lives quietly, and this change can be just as important as change we have worked hard for.

We all see things about ourselves, our relationships, and our world that we want to change. Often, this desire leads us to take action toward inner work that we need to do or toward some external goal. Sometimes, without any big announcement or momentous shift, we wake up to find that change has happened, seemingly without us. This can feel like a miracle as we suddenly see that our self-esteem really does seem to be intact, or our partner actually is helping out around the house more. We may even wonder whether all of our hard work had anything to do with it, or if it just happened by way of grace.

As humans, sometimes we have relatively short attention spans, and we can easily lose track of time. We may worry about a seedling in a pot with our constant attention and watering for several weeks only to find ourselves enjoying the blooms it offers and wondering when that happened, and how we

(Continued on page 5)



Reviving A Community Tradition

Almost all cultures have used storytelling to pass down family history, using the power and energy of the human voice.

Ever since our ancestors could first communicate, we have gathered to share our stories. We have passed along creation tales and tragic stories of love lost. We have repeated accounts of real heroism and simple stories of family history. When our forebears lived closer to the land and to each other, the practice of storytelling was imbued with ritual and occasion. Members of the tribe would often gather around the fire to hear their genealogy recited aloud by an elder or master storyteller. Listeners could track how their own lives, and the lives of their parents, interwoven with the lives of the other tribe members, as everyone's ancient relatives once played out similar life dramas together. It connected us to one another. It gave us roots in who we are and where we come from.

As a custom, some cultures' storytellers repeat the same tale over and over because they believe that each time you hear it, you come to the story as a different person and view the plot and characters in a new light. Hearing the story over and over is a way to gauge where you have been and where you are now on your path of personal evolution. It also helps the younger generation learn the stories so that they can pass them to forthcoming generations, keeping the history alive.

When we hear others tell stories, we can laugh at their humorous adventures, feel the thrill of exciting encounters, see parts of ourselves in them, and learn from the challenges they face. Though most of our formal traditions of storytelling are lost, it does not mean we have to be without. We can begin new practices in our own families of listening to one another, of honoring our own journey, and witnessing the journeys of those around us. We can revive the fireside communal by gathering around the campfire or hearth with family and friends, sharing in stories. By building new practices of

storytelling, we give ourselves and the ones we love an opportunity to draw ever closer in our shared human experience.

With technology, our communication styles and efforts have drastically changed, written word surpasses spoken word. We are quick to respond rather than think first and communicate deliberately. Communication is truly an art form. What suits you best? How do you want to be portrayed or remembered? Have you passed on stories from your life to others? We move fast and furiously in this life, as of late, can you slow down and reflect on your stories and who you would like to hear them?

kindest regards, and have a blessed day.

—Melanie White-Curtis
President, Humanists of Utah

Not the Train?

We are starting to hear the refrain, “there is a light at the end of the tunnel!” The nagging worry is, “what if that light is the train?” I received my COVID vaccinations in September and October as part of the Pfizer Phase III Safety and Efficacy trial. I just found out in the middle of January that I did get the vaccine and not the Placebo. My wife, Cecilia, works at Lone Peak Hospital and she got her second jab January 20 and so we are both post-inoculation long enough to reasonably expect solid immunity against the Pandemic Virus. It is such a feeling of relief to go out in public, still following mandated masking and distancing norms, but NOT worrying about being infected. It truly is a great feeling of freedom. I hope that you all are also either fully vaccinated or in the process.

(healthy sigh of relief)

—Wayne Wilson





Darwin Day Remembrance



*"To kill an error is as good
a service as, and sometimes,
even better than, the establish-
ing of a new truth or fact."*

*Charles
Darwin*

b. Feb. 12, 1809

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First Darwin Day 2008

Quiet Change

What Would Darwin Do?

David N. Campbell is a retired university professor. He is founder and past president of the Center for Inquiry Community of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Currently, he becomes Charles Darwin for a weekly cable television show and for live performances. He prepared for this over a three year period, reading everything Darwin wrote that was available, including the four volume, *From So Simple a Beginning* edited by E.O. Wilson. He read Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* three times. The article "What Would Darwin Do?" is a synopsis of some of the main points he makes during his presentations.

Quoting from the article: "When people proudly announce, as so many do, 'I don't believe in evolution.' I politely reply, 'Neither do I. No one believes in evolution. Evolution is science. It is not about believing in anything. We either know and understand—which is why you have these electric lights, and can expect to live beyond the age of 40—or we are in the process of knowing and understanding.'" In just a few words the author summarizes my philosophy of life. I think most humanists, agnostics, and scientists would agree with Darwin. The only message we can hope to pass on after our demise is what science has achieved, how it has transformed all our lives, and how much more there is to know and understand. There are no true alternatives, just a desperate longing for some hope to be spared, to be exempt from the reality we have finally come to know.

Darwin's life was a transformation from a more standard philosophy of life to that of a scientist. Many people do not know that he completed a degree in theology before he became a naturalist, and before he journeyed around the world on the ship *HMS Beagle*. He, himself stated that early in the voyage of the *Beagle* he talked with his shipmates about his natural science studies from a biblical language, but by the end of the voyage he used a more "naturalistic" language.

Darwin struggled with his own religious hopes and yearnings for many years. Quoting again from the article: "There must be 'something' beyond this world. There has to be a creator, a mover." Darwin went through this questioning acutely when his precious Annie died in his arms at age ten. Darwin wrote, "After that, I no longer accompanied Emma to church. I knew for sure then that there was no loving benefactor anywhere in this world or the universe. I was just beginning to understand. What obviously existed was the struggle to survive that I had

(Continued from page 2)

didn't notice it. Nature, on the other hand, has infinite patience and stays with a thing all the way through its life. This doesn't mean that our efforts play no part in the miracle of change--they do. It's just that they are one small part of the picture that finally results in the flowering of a plant, the shifting of a relationship, the softening of our hearts.

The same laws that govern the growth of plants oversee our own internal and external changes. We observe, consider, work, and wonder, tilling the soil of our lives, planting seeds, and tending them. Sometimes the hard part is knowing when to stop and let go, handing it over to the universe. Usually this happens by way of distraction or disruption, our attention being called away to other more pressing concerns. And it is often at these times, when we are not looking, in the silence of nature's embrace, that the miracle of change happens.

I once heard that all it takes is 20 seconds of insane courage to do anything that feels impossible. The hardest part is starting, so 20 seconds breaks that barrier and gets you right into the process. Sometimes, the hardest part is just to let go of what you cannot change. Ironically, that is when change usually comes.

Change carries with it empowerment too. Whether it is change that comes quietly into your life or whether it was planned, or just a happy accident—view it with an open mind and enjoy the ride. It is worth it.

kindest regards, and have a blessed day.

—Melanie White-Curtis
President, Humanists of Utah

observed."

The article ends with Darwin's admonishing us about others. "I know firsthand, as do all scientists, that it is not easy thinking, and perhaps we should consider the possibility that we can never expect everyone—or even most—to think in this fashion.

I would end with the admonishment; we need to expect others to think rationally, we really have no other choice.

—Craig Wilkinson, MD



What a Month it Was

For me January was a month with some good news mixed in with all the mayhem. It felt good early on as Amy and I were watching and waiting for President Biden to get sworn in. It gave us some real hope that some good things were going to start getting done. We were also delighted to hear from John Kerry, who will be heading up the efforts on climate change. In his appearances on MSNBC that I have seen, he has explained and iterated quite well the many ways we can move into a better, cleaner more efficient future that will also provide a lot of good jobs in clean energy infrastructure. It also gave us some hope when Georgia voters changed the Senate majority to the democrats by voting in two democrats as senators.

Plus, since the January 20th we have had the pleasure of a daily briefing from the White House. After nearly four years without one we kind of forgot what it was like to have truthful information relayed and questions answered.

We were happy that Amy got her first COVID-19 vaccine shot and the V.A. hospital made me an appointment for Jan. 30 for my first shot. It helps to relieve the anxiety a little.

But then there was the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol building incited by Donald Trump and his boot licking Republican followers. But I really do not want to rehash what happened except to say that I consider them all traitors, seditionists, and just plain criminals. Take your pick or possibly all the above. Instead, I thought I would relay a couple of items that show just how really stupid some of if not most of these people are.

One you may all be aware of is the U.S. Republican Representative who says that the shooting at Sandyhook, Las Vegas, and elsewhere were fake. She also believes that the wildfires out west were caused by Jewish space lasers.

But someone I know of locally has related that "Donald Trump won the election and is still president but is governing from Florida and that all the stuff you see about President Biden is fake and is being produced at a sound studio

(Continued on page 7)

Mid-Thirties Millennial

(Continued from page 1)

what will happen in the next 10 years, in the U.S., globally, and in our own personal lives—encourage everyone to take a moment and reflect not only on what will be happening this decade, but on what has happened in the past five. Who is it that has been predominantly in charge of dictating what is and is not taught as 'the history of our country' and 'the history of our world?' And if the stories that we have been brought up learning are turning out to not be as true as we once believed, what can we, each and every one of us, do to lift up the voices and perspectives of Black people, Indigenous people, and all people of color?

I hope you will consider taking time this year (and this decade) to learn the histories of the LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and other marginalized groups of people, here in the U.S. and elsewhere around the world, so that we can all start learning our actual collective history, together. As we chart our way forward into the 2020's, 2030's, and beyond, we need to know where we all came from, if we are to have any hope of altering our course and charging forward in a new and better direction.

—Elaine Ball

Elaine is a former member of the HoU Board of Directors. She moved to Vermont following her dreams. Every time I interact with her I always let her know that we would welcome her back here with open arms in a heartbeat.





Humanists of Utah meetings are open to the public and free of any admission charge. A discussion and light refreshments follow the speaker's presentation. Come join us and **bring a friend!**

Disclaimer: The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Humanists of Utah nor the American Humanist Association. Reprinting of articles is permitted for humanist groups promoting the interests of humanism if attribution is properly stated.

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>> Put Your Name Here <<
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What a Month it Was

(Continued from page 6)
somewhere.”

That is just bat shit crazy. How the hell do you have a rational discussion with someone that stupid. You really cannot.

We must be clear about a few things. On the political spectrum between the far-right and the far-left, conservative or liberal, republican or democrat we know who is to blame. It is not liberals who have tried to disenfranchise voters, who have called the election a fraud without any evidence, who have stormed the Capitol with intent to kill, who continue to threaten anybody who disagrees with them, who still suck up to the biggest liar and worst president ever. It is people on the right side of the political spectrum plain and simple.

Getting back to climate change, the American Humanist Association sent me an email awhile back regarding Climate change and their efforts and ways for us to help and donate. I will donate through them along with a few other organizations. I trust them to put the money to work where it will do the most good.

—Bob Lane

Membership/Renewal Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

\$50 Regular Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist

\$90 Regular 2-year Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist

\$35 Regular Annual Membership with email delivery of the Utah Humanist

\$65 Regular 2-year Membership with email delivery of the Utah Humanist

\$20 *Student* Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist

\$20 Annual subscription to the Utah Humanist (I do not want to be listed as a member of **Humanists of Utah**)

Please send a *FREE* trial Subscription to the Utah Humanist

\$_____ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism

⇒ All contributions in excess of the \$20 subscription fee tax deductible.

⇒ *Members* have the right to vote in Chapter elections and participate in Chapter decisions.

⇒ Dues provide for information packets, honoraria to speakers, expenses of newsletter publication, trial subscriptions, copies to libraries, and newsletter exchange with other chapters.

Humanists of Utah

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Notes:

- ◆ *General Meetings* are for all members and the general public. There are no admission charges.
- ◆ *Discussion Group* meetings are open to everyone. A different book or topic is covered every month.
- ◆ *Board Meetings* are planning and business sessions. They are open to all members.
- ◆ Eliot Hall is in the First Unitarian Church located at 569 South 1300 East in Salt Lake City.
- ◆ RE 201 is upstairs in the East Educational Building at the First Unitarian Church.

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If you have a bookmark for Amazon please modify it to go to smile.amazon.com—you always want to use the “smile” option.



Smith's Grocery Stores

Humanists of Utah is enrolled in Smith's Inspiring Donations program. If you have a Smith's Fresh Value card, you can register it to benefit Humanists of Utah. Simply visit www.smithsfoodanddrug.com/inspire, create an account, associate it with your Fresh Values card number, and then enter NPO Number: KQ330 within your “account summary.” All future purchases will now benefit HoU.



All Public Meetings are
CANCELLED until further notice
Due to the Pandemic



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