



# The Utah Humanist

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**H**umanists 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*,  
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## The Meaning of Freedom

**Robert G. Ingersoll**

*Richard Layton's Discussion Group Report July 1988*

“When I became convinced that the universe is natural—that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood, the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell, the dungeon was flooded with light, and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world—not even in infinite space. I was free—free to think, to express my thoughts—free to live with my own ideal—free to live for myself and those I loved—free to use all my faculties, all my senses—free to spread imagination’s wings—free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope—free to judge and determine for myself—free to reject all ignorant and cruel creeds, all the “inspired” books that savages have produced, and all the barbarous legends of the past—free from sanctified mistakes and holy lies—free from the fear of eternal pain—free from the winged monsters of the night—free from devils, ghosts, and gods. For the first time I was free. There were no prohibited places in all the realms of thought—no air, no space, where fancy could not spread her painted wings—no chains for my limbs—no lashes for my back—no fires for my flesh—no master’s frown or threat—no following another’s steps—no need to bow, or cringe, or crawl or utter lying words. I was free. I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously faced all worlds.

“And then my heart was filled with gratitude, with thankfulness, and went out in love to all the heroes, the thinkers who gave their lives for the liberty of hand and brain—for the freedom of labor and thought—to those who fell on the fierce fields of war, to those who died in dungeons bound in chains—to those by fire consumed—to all the wise, the good, the brave of every land, whose thoughts and deeds have given freedom to the sons of men. And then I vowed to grasp the torch that they had held, and hold it high, that light might conquer darkness still.”

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# Meeting Your Heroes Can Hurt

Andy Larsen, a *Salt Lake Tribune* reporter, says that in his exposure of basketball legend John Stockton's support of the anti-vax movement, that one should never meet their heroes. It seems that Stockton has embraced the anti-vax movement. He is a major performer in a \$79 anti-vaccine video series. Larsen notes that he idolized Stockton when he was growing up, thought that he essentially walked on water; he did the equivalent on the basketball courts. Now that Larsen has written many articles about the Pandemic, he could not be more disappointed than he is by the discovery of Stockton's opinions.

I just learned today that Richard Dawkins had been stripped of his 1996 The AHA Humanist of Year honors. The AHA declared:

Regrettably, Richard Dawkins has over the past several years accumulated a history of making statements that use the guise of scientific discourse to demean marginalized groups, an approach antithetical to humanist values. His latest statement implies that the identities of transgender individuals are fraudulent, while also simultaneously attacking Black identity as one that can be assumed when convenient. His subsequent attempts at clarification are inadequate and convey neither sensitivity nor sincerity.

Consequently, the AHA Board has concluded that Richard Dawkins is no longer deserving of being honored by the AHA, and has voted to withdraw, effective immediately, the 1996 Humanist of the Year award—April 19, 2021

For most of my life I've held Bill Cosby as a personal hero. I believed that he was a 20<sup>th</sup> century Mark Twain. I read his book *Fatherhood* when my wife and I were starting our family. I bought that book as a gift to friends when they were expecting children. I am heartbroken to discover that he is a rapist; is there anything worse?

Is it wrong to appreciate good deeds, thoughts, and actions of someone who turns out to have a really nasty side? It seems to me

that it should be okay, but there is part of me that is not so sure. My favorite T-shirt reads, "Science is the Poetry of Reality." I have contracted to have this maxim carved into my tombstone. The quote comes from Dawkins. Do I need to throw out my shirts, change my tombstone? Actuality a two-person "boulder" that serves as a mausoleum to store ashes from two people.

The *Bill Cosby Show* was such a wonderful pursuit, a black family ala *Father Knows Best* dealing with the trials and tribulations of family issues that were always solved by love and understanding.

I am interested to hear any comments you may have. Please write email to [webmaster@humanistsofutah.org](mailto:webmaster@humanistsofutah.org) or mail your input to Humanists of Utah, PO Box 1043, West Jordan, UT 84084.

—Wayne Wilson

## President's Message

We are now in the full swing of summer—heat an all! It is an exciting time and one to look at through open cautious eyes. While we are past the craziness of the pandemic that we witnessed last year, we are not out of the woods yet. With this in mind, and following the guidelines and instructions of the CDC, state, and local authorities, we can move forward with in person activities and meetings. Everyone's well-being is our first priority, so we will be adhering to safety protocols. Our first big event will be our Annual Humanist Picnic next month! All are invited, and there is no cost! We will be grilling, having games, it will be family friendly, and it is outside at beautiful Sugarhouse Park. See the flier on our website, our FB page and there will be more details to come. In September, we will have our first speaker and will continue to have our monthly meetings.

We are very excited to see you all! It has been a rough year, but now is the time to come together as a community of friends, neighbors and fellow human beings and move on with the values we believe in and help build a better future for us all.

kindest regards, and have a blessed day.

—Melanie White-Curtis  
President, Humanists of Utah



# Freedom

(Continued from page 1)

—Robert Green Ingersoll

“Rarely will a high-school student of today encounter the name of Robert G. Ingersoll,” says Gordon Stein, editor of the Encyclopedia of Unbelief. Nor will most college history students. Yet during the latter part of his lifetime, he was perhaps the best-known and most listened to American alive. From about 1880 to his death in 1899, he probably spoke to more Americans in person than anyone before or since. He had audiences of as many as 3,000 people a night several months a year while he was on tour. In those days it was very rare for an unbeliever to be allowed to speak publicly; yet he lectured nightly to thousands of people against organized religion and received front-page coverage. This situation struck fear in the hearts of many clergymen. They struck back with mud-slinging, but he led such a “squeaky clean” life that no mud would stick. He was a close friend of U.S. presidents.

He believed that nothing was “sacred” or immune to discussion. He felt that mild satire often could make people consider the error of their views when straight discussion could not. He attacked the idea of the literal truth of the Bible relentlessly. He showed how the Bible was largely responsible for the prevailing attitudes toward slavery, women’s inferior position, and much of the hypocrisy and injustice of the world. He decried the idea that belief in the Bible or religion was necessary to morality or worthiness as a human being. He pointed out what he thought was wrong with the design of the world; he said that if he were designing the world, he “would make good health catching instead of disease.” He advocated equal rights for women and all races, civil liberties, and responsible care of the natural environment. He opposed any limitation on freedom of speech, including criticizing religion. He called science “the only possible savior of mankind.”

His view of life was, “Happiness is the only good. The place to be happy is here. The time to be happy is now. The way to be happy is to make others so.”

# Humanist Humor

## Re-Imagining John Lennon’s *Imagine*

Imagine there’s no Facebook,  
It’s easy if you try.  
No trolls to berate us,  
Around us no more lies  
Imagine all the crackpots  
Silenced for the daaaayaaaay.  
Imagine there’s no Twitter,  
It isn’t hard to do.  
Nothing to shill or cry for  
And no retweeters, too.  
Imagine all the people  
Being kind to youuuuouuuu.  
You may say that I hate screamers,  
But I’m not the only one  
Who hopes one day we’ll stop this  
And the world will be more fun

—Stefan Pastis

Transcribed from “*Pearls Before Swine*”, 4/11/2021

Reprinted from PIQUE, 4/20/21

## Hindu, Rabbi, and Critic

While traveling separately through the countryside late one afternoon, a Hindu, a Rabbi, and a Critic were caught in the same area by a terrific thunderstorm. They sought shelter at a nearby farmhouse.

“That storm will be raging for hours,” the farmer told them. “You’d better stay here for the night. The problem is, there’s only room enough for two of you. One of you’ll have to sleep in the barn.”

“I’ll be the one,” said the Hindu. “A little hardship is nothing to me.” He went out to the barn.

A few minutes later, there was a knock at the door. It was the Hindu. “I’m sorry,” he told the others, “But there is a cow in the barn. According to my religion, cows are sacred, and one must not intrude into their space.”

“Don’t worry, said the Rabbi, “Make yourself comfortable here. I’ll go to sleep in the barn.” He went out to the barn.

A few minutes later, there was a knock at the door. It was the Rabbi. “I hate to be a bother,” he said, “but there is a pig in the barn. In my religion, pigs are considered unclean. I wouldn’t feel comfortable sharing my sleeping quarters with a pig.”

“Oh, all right,” said the Critic, “I’ll go sleep in the barn.” He went out to the barn.

A few minutes later, there was a knock at the door. It was the cow and the pig.



# All God's Children Got Guns

I don't know about anyone else, but during these ridiculously fraught times I need a laugh once in a while. So, a few weeks ago I watched the Marx Brothers' classic *Duck Soup*. Absolutely hilarious. If you've never seen it, you must. *Duck Soup* is also an incisive satire on government and war. There's a musical scene towards the end where everyone happily sings "Fredonia's Going to War!", including the lines, "They got guns; we got guns; all God's children got guns." In the United States today it's hard to argue with those statements.

Which brings us to our current crisis in policing. Many people are saying that America's towns and cities should "defund" their police departments. There doesn't seem to be full consensus on exactly what "defund" means, but there at least seems to be agreement that we need to re-think our concept of public safety. This would probably include transferring some police functions and funding to alternative responses, e.g., mental health therapies, substance abuse treatment, job training, housing. This needs to be researched (using evidence-based analysis, of course) and implemented in order to enhance public safety for all people, including police officers themselves, regardless of race, religion (or the lack thereof), sexual orientation and gender identity.

There have also been calls to de-militarize the police (at least partially) as a reaction to seeing thousands of police on the streets of America who, with their body armor, high-powered weapons and military style vehicles, look more like an invading army than peace officers whose duty is to protect and serve the communities in which they work. It has been suggested even further that perhaps American policing should follow the U.K. model where most officers make their rounds unarmed. Only 5 percent of police in the U.K. routinely carry guns. The problem with this proposal is the ubiquity of gun ownership in the U.S. There are 393 million firearms in private hands in our country, which comes to 120 for every 100 people. (Quick aside: there are millions of Americans who don't own a

gun. So given the numbers, it means that there are individuals in this country who must own flat-out arsenals. What could possibly go wrong?) In the U.K. there are approximately 1.8 million firearms in public hands, 1.3 million of which are licensed shotguns used for hunting. This is about 2.5 guns, including the shotguns, for every 100 people. It doesn't seem realistic to expect our police to follow the U.K model and go without guns while our country at large is armed to the teeth.

It is also not surprising that police in this country rely on their weapons way too often. If they expect every citizen with whom they interact to be armed, the data shows that they just may be right. For years we have chosen to ignore the out-of-control gun violence that wounds our nation in so many ways. Over reliance on firearms (and force in general) by the police is just one of them. So, as we re-think public safety in this country, which is a good idea, let's not forget that reducing the number and lethality of firearms in public hands must be part of the solution.

—Jonathan Engel

*Reprinted from PIQUE, 6/30/20*





**H**umanists 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!**

**D**isclaimer: 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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## Nonprofit

Humanists of Utah is a nonprofit organization supported in large part by dues paying members. Our other major source of funds comes from generous gifts, mostly from the same dues payers who give a little more. In February 2003, chapter member Marion Craig died and left HoU a bequest of \$20,000. We invested this money in an endowment fund. The interest is still helping to pay for banquets, special events, etc. When you create your personal will please consider leaving a gift to Humanists of Utah.

## Membership/Renewal Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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- \$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.

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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.

## Charitable Giving While You Shop

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- Select “Your Amazon Smile.”
- Search for “Humanists of Utah.”

This will find “American Humanist Association” in West Jordan because we use the AHA as our umbrella for sales tax exemption.

- Click the “Select” button.

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

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## Humanists of Utah

*A Chapter of the American Humanist Association*

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