



The Utah Humanist

July 2022 HumanistsofUtah.org Volume 33 No. 6

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

Copyright Humanists of Utah
1991-2022

Chaplain's Corner

Divided States of America

Doesn't it seem like most post-apocalyptic movies are set in the United States? (Mad Max is set in Australia, but Australia can already wrestle an apocalypse).

I read a joke that said that perhaps the reality of those movies is that every other country is totally fine and functional, while only the United States descends into an apocalyptic hellscape. "Should we tell them?" the other countries ask. "Nah," they conclude. The depressing thing is, that's pretty much our current reality. Many other countries have mostly figured out how to you know, actually be decent humans and care for each other, while in the US women have fewer rights than guns and corpses. And those guns end up killing our children, with no end in sight.

It is understandable if you are feeling that way right now, that civilization is burning around us. But at least we can pray in school, right? "Is that how they are going to stop school shootings?" my 19-year-old asked darkly.

Accepting the Truth

It is demonstrably true that the United States is in a dark place. We are a global embarrassment. The reality is that we are more the Divided States of America, experiencing a Cold Civil War. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is deadly horrifying, and both reveals and intensifies cultural divides that we need to face and address. As surreal and terrifying as the Capitol Riot of January 6 was, we need to sit with the fact that 35% of Americans don't believe the 2020 election was legitimate, including 65% of Republicans. It is maddening that our government cannot make meaningful progress on gun regulation even though almost 90% of Americans support mandatory background checks, for example.

For all its challenges, the present provides unparalleled transparency. We are hearing about the literal ketchup-splattering temper tantrums that Trump threw in the wake of the election. The Supreme Court is overturning rights considered established for decades. This transparency is a challenging gift for each of us. We are seeing these issues. It is

(Continued on page 3)

Inside This Issue

President's Report.....	2
Ups and Downs.....	2
Subrogation	4



President's Report

Ups and Downs

Wow! So much has happened in the past few weeks. This seems to be the general statement for the past few years. Just when we think it is time for a break to relax a bit, another huge "something" happens. The country is very triggered with the *Roe vs. Wade* decision. It doesn't matter what political party you belong to....this impacts us all. As we watch this unfold it is clear that it affects every single one of us, even those who are not in our country that are watching closely. My friends, this is such a blow to human rights issues. Because of the umbrella element to this, the decision to overturn it just opened doors and conversations that will harm more folks if allowed to overturn more protections we have as a nation. Utah, our own backyard, is a hotbed for such legislation. So much so that the ACLU has named us as one of the top five states that they are assisting in the fight to keep protections for our people. I know I encourage peace and harmony. I am a believer in goodness and justice. Our organization promotes these things as well through solid ethics, knowledge, accountability, and truth.

That said, we are also called upon to fight the good fight. Or as the beloved, John Lewis said, "Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year. It is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble." Now is the time. It is critical for us to establish support for the things we believe in, to throw down if you are called to. I am watching the cycle of human nature over this issue and am hopeful that if we all stand together, get loud, lock arms and not be afraid - we will prevail in helping get things back on track and stopping the madness from continuing. This is not just a political thing. Take this message to heart and apply it where you feel there is injustice and darkness. We are strong. We are not alone. We are unbelievably brave. This is what we have been made for. Standing in our sense of humanity and protecting each other.

I admonish you to get as involved as you are able. For me personally, I am called to open my mouth more, attend more legislation, protest, support and come out of the comfort zones that are in my world. I was sad/shocked at first. Then I was sick about it. Now I am angry. Mad as hell, in fact. And now, I am going to get loud. Not hurtful toward people (not necessary), but not standing down until the result is fair and just for all. I love you all, as I do this community, this state, and this country. I love this planet and my life's mission is to make the world a better place. Well, now is the time. My sleeves are rolled up....GAME ON!!!

During this month of our nation's Independence Day, reflect on exactly what that means. It is time to do it again. Join me in the fight. Check out the ACLU's website. There is much there that you can support and participate in. The AHA's site is a good one too. We will be updating our social media much more often on what is going on and opportunities to participate.

See you on the frontlines, we got this!

*Kindest regards,
Melanie White-Curtis
HoU President*

The month since my last newsletter submission has been one of ups and downs. Amy and I attended the life celebrations for two people dear to us, a family member and a friend we have known for decades. These events are themselves an up and down sort of thing. On the one hand we are saddened that someone we love has died, and on the other hand we are happy to celebrate lives well lived and share that celebration with others who loved them as well. Plus, I am happy they were celebrations rather than mournful funerals with viewings and burials. Rather, they both were cremated, and their ashes are in the hands of family members to be dealt with whenever and however they choose.

Last month I said that the SCOTUS was about to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*, and as you know they did just that. The Supreme Court's decision has emboldened the right-wing conservative totalitarians and the conservative majority of the Court is in fact a part of this totalitarian movement. The court is already hinting that other past decisions could be up for review and reversal. Decisions that could affect same sex marriage, transgender rights, contraceptives, and on and on.

While thinking about this decision I had an absurd thought, almost as absurd as the notion that other people should have power over a woman's reproductive rights. To force them to have a baby when they might

(Continued on page 4)



Divided States of America

(Continued from page 1)

harder to ignore them. They have entered mainstream conversation for all of us. The wider threat to our rights and privileges can remind us that marginalized communities have been suffering and combatting injustices for decades and centuries. I hope that we can unite and help those who have experience working from the margins.

Presence over Performance

The most urgent thing we can do right now is take care of ourselves. I'll share a Chaplain training secret... Chaplains cultivate what is called a "ministry of presence" or "healing presence". The science behind that is that we train ourselves to regulate our nervous systems and remain calm in almost any situation. That is something all of us can do, care for ourselves well enough to show up for ourselves and those close to us. I hope that we can be gentle with ourselves. If it is too much to watch the news or worry about the big problems, we can lean in and show up for the moment.

Caring for ourselves can help us get to the next step, which is the day-to-day hard work of supporting those in our lives who suffer from the problems I've brought up. For example, the challenge to *Roe v. Wade* can invite listening to women, better understanding abortion, and discussing birth control options. Social media encourages performance such as sharing memes about *Handmaids Tale* rather than digging in and doing the daily work. Our brain rewards both behaviors, but only one makes a difference.

Work within the System

It's understandable that pretty much all of us are overwhelmed, because we are embedded in overwhelming systems. Each of us needs to do the best we can to live an aligned and ethical life, but in a very real way, the emphasis on individual responsibility is a corporate conspiracy. A handful of individuals and corporations hold the most money, power, and influence. It also doesn't help that natural selection targets systems, not individuals. That's why we need to work together to create

systems that take care of us--in a word, civilization. Let's keep that going. Back to the focus on presence, as we practice remaining calm and present in challenging circumstances, we become a healing and constructive influence in the systems we belong to.

Courageous Conversations

We need to talk to each other. Softening the divisions between us happens best between individuals. I think one key to addressing our divided state is to have open, compassionate, curious conversations with those who have differing beliefs. We live in a time of trigger words and superficial gut reactions. And the media capitalizes on this superficiality to increase ratings and profits. Most people are responding to the word and idea "abortion" for example, without understanding the medical and ethical nuances relating to actual abortions. Multiple life saving procedures are counted as abortions.

It is relatively rare that arguing changes anyone's mind, as much time as some dedicate to doing so on social media. It is much more effective to learn why people believe what they do, understand the underlying values, and build connection, compassion, and perhaps even constructive responses based on those shared values. And when there are not many shared values, even respectful understanding goes a long way. Recently I've been thinking about three powerful questions that are always productive: 1) What is it like to be in your mind and body? 2) What do you want to do with that? 3) What resources and support do you need? These questions focusing on the human experience can bridge our divides and connect us across divisions.

Even in this divided and sometimes apocalyptic country, we can take a deep breath and show up to the moment. As Humanists, we don't have the luxury of delusion or saving myths. It is up to us to show up to life and make this world, and this country better.

—Chaplain Jared Anderson



Ups and Downs

(Continued from page 2)

choose not to. I thought, why not go all the way with controlling human reproduction. Can we say that if you can be forced to have a baby, then we ought to be able to say when you can't have any more babies. Sounds more logical than absurd the more I think about it. Being that much of the poverty and hunger around the world is generated by, in my opinion, overpopulation. Therefore, we should be able to restrict people to only replacing themselves or said another way, "only two per couple." Truth is, that no government or zealous religious group should have any power over a person's reproductive rights. Instead, we should strive to provide health care that will help people avoid the need for an abortion. While in regards to overpopulation we should also strive to help people world wide out of poverty and empower women to make their own decisions about their healthcare and reproduction.

In the last month, the most positive thing has been the January 6th congressional hearings. Being retired gives me the luxury to be able to watch these hearings as they occur in real time. I'm grateful to the committee for presenting in detail and in order the events before, during and after the Insurrection at the Capitol. I'm starting to feel like the criminality of Donald Trump and his enablers is coming to light. I'm also hopeful that some of them will be indicted, and ultimately punished for their misdeeds.

In closing I want to suggest that you check out a guy named Jordan Klepper. This man goes around to Trump events and gatherings and asks questions of Trumps supporters. The results are often hilarious and at the same time make you shake your head in amazement at how vacuous, ill-informed, and unwilling to face facts they are. For example, when he asked two young women about what happened on January 6th, they said, "the election?" They had no idea there was an Insurrection or that there are hearings taking place about the incident. That's why I call them willful idiots.

With that I'll say so long for now.

—*Bob Lane*
HoU Board Member

Subrogation

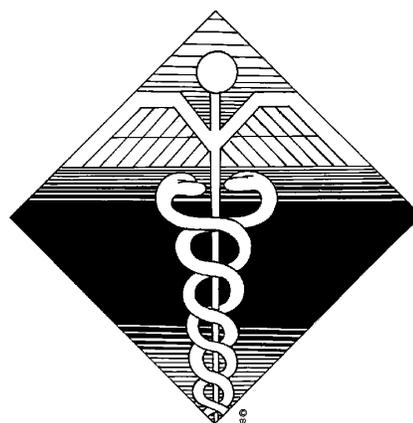
Healthcare in the USA is more expensive and less efficient than in most other industrialized countries in the world. I received a letter from my health insurance provider the other day that explains part of the reason. The subject of the missive was "subrogation." They wanted to know if several of my recent visits for care might have been due to negligence of businesses or other people so that the insurance company could sue those institutions or people to cover the costs for my medical care.

Insurance companies have cadres of accountants and legal professionals ready and willing to "cut my costs." Paying for this information is part of the cost of my medical care. This amounts to accountants and lawyers practicing medicine.

The letter stated that all insurance companies obtain and use this type of data. I am sure that they do. I am also sure that this contributes to the high cost of health care. I also believe that this negatively affects the quality of healthcare here in the USA. Medical providers spend many hours learning ever changing billing coding numbers to capture this type of information. I would prefer that medical providers were keeping up on medical advances rather than staying current on billing numbers.

We really need a single-payor healthcare system that covers everyone and includes comprehensive longitudinal medical records.

—*Wayne Wilson*
HoU Board Member





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.



Humanists of Utah Board

Melanie White-Curtis-----President
 Open-----VP
 Lauren Florence, MD-----Secretary
 Leona Blackbird-----Treasurer
 Wayne Wilson-----Editor/Webmaster

Board Members:

Jared Anderson
 Jeff Curtis, Advisor
 Bob Lane
 Lisa Miller, Webmaster
 Brian Trick
 Craig Wilkinson, MD

Key Contacts:

Melanie White-Curtis—385-495-3786
 melaniewhitecurtis@gmail.com
 Wayne Wilson—801-561-0406
 wwilson@xmission.com

Website:

<https://HumanistsOfUtah.org>

Newsletter Contributors:

Jared Anderson
 Melanie White-Curtis
 Bob Lane
 Wayne Wilson

>> Put Your Name Here <<
 >> Write an Article! <<

Support the AHA

Humanists of Utah urges you to support the American Humanist Association.

The AHA is dedicated to preserving individual rights and promoting nationally the philosophy of humanism.

Membership brings you the *Humanist* magazine and *Free Mind* newsletter six times a year.

Annual membership is only \$45.00 (**\$35 Introductory Rate**) and can be paid with plastic. Phone (800) 743-6646 or write to:

American Humanist Association
1821 Jefferson Place, NW
Washington DC 20036
Or visit online:
<https://americanhumanist.org/>

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
P.O. Box 1043
West Jordan, UT 84084

Now you can pay online with PayPal!

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

Amazon.com

Sign up for Amazon Smile and a percentage of your purchase will be donated to HoU:

- Log into amazon.com and open your personal account settings.
- 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

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 in person
meetings are CANCELLED
again until further notice
Due to the Pandemic



Humanists of Utah

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

P.O. Box 1043
West Jordan, UT 84084