



The Utah Humanist

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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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President's Message

Autumn Greetings!

Back to school is upon us and a level of normalcy is coming back around as the heat starts to subside. It's interesting, the term "normalcy". With the pandemic, it shook all of our lives to the core and redefined what we all knew and counted on in our societies, our personal and also professional lives. With this, comes responsibility and defining what your comfort level is in engaging with others. These have been tough questions. Especially if you are a social person, like me. I am so grateful for technology that has allowed us to stay in contact with others and to try to maintain a positive forward outlook, but it all still misses the human element. I believe that is critical for our connections to include sharing physical spaces with each other and face to face interactions. But how do we do this safely? Again, what are your comfort levels? Do you ever think that we will be able to go back to the way things were? Can you feel comfortable in open spaces with lots of people? These are good questions? I know there are so many other factors too, in each of our own lives. Sometimes, timing is a key element to how much we can participate in social gatherings and events.

As a board, we are going to be evaluating the current situation and heavily discussing where we stand as a group. Many of you have reached out and asked if we will be meeting again soon. This is a very good question and will be a main focus at our meeting. We will be discussing the upcoming holiday season, possibly having our annual BBQ (a little later than usual) and many of the suggestions that you, as our humanist community has asked about. We are excited to explore the next chapter of our organization and see if it is time for us to hybridize as we work to going back to the activities and meetings that we all enjoy and love.

We would love to hear from you. We miss you and hope you are all happy, safe, and well. We hope that back to school season is a good one for your reflection and studies on things that are important to you. As humanists, we are looking forward to helping those around us and to continue on our paths of learning, action with ethics and reason and continued knowledge.

I send my best wishes to you all. See you very soon!

Kindest regards,
Melanie White-Curtis
HoU President

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James Madison

Remembering the Founders

There has been so much discussion during the political turmoil over the past decade about the Constitution, rights, responsibilities, and the Declaration of Independence. However, most do not know or even understand how they came into being and who actually constructed them.

James Madison Jr. is hailed as the "Father of the Constitution" for his crucial role in drafting and promoting both the Constitution of the United States and The Bill of Rights.

He was born in Virginia to a prominent planter family. He served as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates and the Continental Congress during and after the American Revolutionary War.

Due to his disillusionment of how weak the national government was (it was established by the Articles of Confederation), he helped organize the Constitutional Convention, where a new constitution was produced. Madison was one of the most influential individuals at the convention. His Virginia Plan served as the basis for the convention's deliberations. It was during this convention, that he pushed heavily to strengthen the states unity and to establish laws and protections for America, her lands and her people. He said, "a crisis has arrived which was to decide whether the American experiment was to be a blessing to the world, or to blast forever the hopes which the republican cause had inspired." He committed to an intense study of law and political theory. He sought out works on international law and both ancient and modern constitutions. He came to believe the US could improve upon past experiments by its size. With so many district interests competing against each other, James hoped to minimize the abuses of majority rule. This is one of the many motivations he returned to Congress in 1787.

He became one of the leaders in the movement to ratify the Constitution and along with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, created and wrote The Federalist Papers. This series of pro ratification essays are still considered one of the most influential works of political science in

American history.

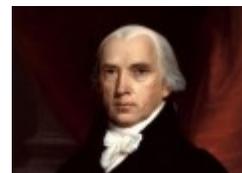
James emerged as an important leader in the House of Representatives and was a close advisor to President George Washington. In the late 1790's James opposed the economic program and its accompanying centralization of power favored by current Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton. He organized the Democratic-Republican Party in opposition to Hamilton's Federalist Party. When Thomas Jefferson was elected president, James served as his Secretary of State from 1801-1809. While in that position, he supervised the Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the size of the US.

James Madison won the 1808 presidential election after he contested it. Due to the diplomatic protests and trade embargo failures with the British seizures of American shipping, he led the US into the War of 1812. The war was ultimately inconclusive and more of an administrative mess, but a majority of the American people saw it as a successful "second war of independence" against Britain. As the war progressed, James won the next election in 1812. One of the best things of the war was that he realized that it was critical to create a stronger federal government.

He presided over the creation of the Second Bank of the United States and the enactment of the protective Tariff of 1816. In 1817, James Madison retired from public office and returned to his plantation in Montpelier, VA where he passed away in 1836.

*kindest regards,
Melanie White-Curtis
HoU President*

- Feldman, Noah (2017). *The Three Lives of James Madison: Genius, Partisan, President*. Random House.
- "The Life of James Madison". The Montpelier Foundation. Retrieved February 14, 2017.
- [The White House Presidents—James Madison](#)





What Is Not and What Is Happening

I've probably already mentioned this before, but the Congressional hearings into the January 6th insurrection have been quite interesting. Being retired I have the flexibility to be able to watch them all. It's the one thing lately that gives me hope that the truth will and is being presented to the public. It is becoming clear to me that the former (fake) president and his cadre of fools committed several crimes. I'm hopeful that many will be charged in the coming months. That's what's happening lately for the good.

One thing that really surprised and delighted me is that finally we have real movement on the environmental front. The passage of the "Inflation Reduction Act" looks like we are finally starting to have meaningful action on the environment. At last, there is a sense of urgency about a crisis we quite literally are already experiencing. Climate change is not just a theory anymore and time is running out. If humanity doesn't get its act together soon, politics will not matter much if we are facing famines, droughts, severe weather, etc. presently we are seeing record breaking head and the subsequent and inevitable fires. The coral reefs are dying, the South American rain forest is still being cut down at an increased and alarming rate. Acidification of the oceans is ongoing and if we lose the oceans ecosystems then we are pretty much toast

as the saying goes. That said it is hard for me to understand what inflation reduction has to do with the environment.

Amy and I have been busy lately, we've traveled, and we have visitors as I'm writing this note for the newsletter, and we will have other visitors soon. We are happy to have friends and relatives visit us. Reconnecting, reminiscing, and partying with loved ones are some of life's greatest pleasures. We have both decided we need to do more visiting and being visited and are going to make sure we do it. Being around friends and relatives also reminds me of how this ongoing pandemic is keeping us, as a group of humanists, from being able to have gathering. I'm not sure how but I hope we can get together soon. I keep saying it, but I do miss our socials and Darwin Day and all the interesting speakers we have had through the years.

That's about it for now, stay cool and safe and I hope to see you soon.

—Robert Lane
HoU Board Member



Christian Nation?

More than half of the residents in 11 Southern states believe the United States was founded as an explicitly Christian nation, according to the Winthrop Poll Southern Focus Survey. This doesn't come as a surprise to anyone who lives in the Bible Belt. You probably don't have to think back too far to remember the last time someone made that claim.

While humanists aren't surprised by the results of the poll, religious southerners might be shocked by the truth.

Many of the founding fathers were so skeptical about religion they would have a hard time getting elected today.

George Washington

George Washington was technically an Anglican, but many of his contemporaries referred to him as a deist, a label that Washington himself seemed to embrace when you consider the way he described god and religion. While deists do believe in god, they don't believe he intervenes in the universe. Basically, they don't see god as some supernatural entity that interacts with humans. He referred to god as a "supreme architect," showing that while he believed in god, he didn't necessarily believe that god was pulling the strings on the earth.

This isn't just about his

(Continued on page 4)



Christian Nation? Not According To These Founding Fathers

(Continued from page 3)

belief in god, though. It's also about the way he viewed religious freedom. Washington was a staunch advocate of religious freedom for all regions, not just Christians. He stated he wouldn't have signed the constitution if it had endangered the religious rights of any group, not just Christians.

"All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support."

It's clear that Washington didn't believe the United States was founded as a Christian nation, and he did everything in his power to embrace all religions.

John Adams

When Christians talk about the United States being founded as a Christian nation, they must be ignoring John Adams. While he was part of the Congregationalist church, he was actually a Unitarian who didn't believe in the divinity of Jesus.

One just has to turn to Adams' own diary to see how much he rejected this core Christian belief. "A pleasant morning. Saw my classmates Gardner, and Wheeler. Wheeler dined, spent the afternoon, and drank Tea with me. Supped at Major Gardiners, and engag'd to keep School at Bristol, provided Worcester People, at their ensuing March meeting, should change this into a moving School, not otherwise. Major Greene this Evening fell into some conversation with me about the Divinity and Satisfaction of Jesus

Christ. All the Argument he advanced was, 'that a mere creature, or finite Being, could not make Satisfaction to infinite justice, for any Crimes,' and that 'these things are very mysterious.' (Thus mystery is made a convenient Cover for absurdity.)"

Adams also signed the Treaty of Tripoli, which states, "The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

So, it's probably safe to say Adams wasn't into the idea of a Christian nation.

Thomas Jefferson

If you want to know Thomas Jefferson's religious views, you don't need to look any further than the "Jefferson Bible." Jefferson edited the New Testament, taking out all the miracles while leaving behind Jesus's moral teachings. Basically, he liked what Jesus had to say from a moral standpoint, but he didn't care for all the supernatural miracles that didn't make any sense.

He was also concerned about religion creeping into the government, and famously used the phrase "wall of separation between church and state" when talking about the First Amendment. Many members of the religious right like to say that the founding fathers didn't intend to have a separation of church and state, but Jefferson made it very clear that was the intention.

And Many More

The list goes on and on. James Madison, Thomas Paine, and others made it clear that they had no interest in forming a Christian nation. The next time someone tells you otherwise, show them this post and let the facts do the talking.

—by Amy Blue

Mississippi Humanist Association

December 2018

***This subject was addressed in HoU's 2006 Newsletter:
How Religious Were America's Founders?***



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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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:

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Membership/Renewal Application

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

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



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A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

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