HUMANISTS OF MINNESOTA
HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

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Saturday
April 15th, 2017

Monthly Chapter Meeting

First Unitarian Society
900 Mt. Curve Avenue
Minneapolis

Doors open at 10:00 a.m.
Program 10:20 a.m.-Noon

HUMANISM:

A better life for all through education, democracy, free speech, reason, and science, without reliance on arbitrary dogmas, revelations, and faith.

Chapter Meeting:

The Irresponsible Pursuit of Paradise

with Dr. Jim Bowyer, Professor Emeritus, U. of Minnesota

Saturday, April 15th, 2017

Under the banner of environmental protection, barriers of all kinds have been erected to discourage domestic raw material extraction. But because raw materials obviously must come from somewhere, when extraction is obstructed in one region this activity and all associated impacts are simply shifted to some other region – often magnifying environmental impacts in the process.

A collision of global trends – including explosive global economic expansion and resource consumption, relentless population growth, and rising environmental impacts of raw material procurement – substantially increase the urgency of finding a solution to the raw materials procurement problem. Now there is concern among the economic elite – traditionally the dominant consumers of minerals and raw materials of all kinds – about prospects for future access to raw materials.

All of this raises questions. Is current environmental and resource policy ethical? Sustainable? Is the best global strategy to largely ignore resource concerns and simply invest heavily in military preparedness so as to prevail in resource conflicts? What is the downside risk of ignoring global equity concerns?

Dr. Bowyer is Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota Department of Bioproducts and Biosystems Engineering. He is President of Bowyer & Associates, Inc. – a consulting firm focused on helping organizations improve environmental performance, and Director of the Responsible Materials Program in Dovetail Partners, Inc. – a nonprofit that provides authoritative information about the impacts and trade-offs of environmental decisions, including consumption choices, land use, and policy alternatives.

Bowyer is author of two books (one through 5 editions), six book chapters, and over 400 scientific articles. His latest book – *The Irresponsible Pursuit of Paradise* – was released in late 2016. He has published widely on the topics of life cycle assessment, carbon tracking and reporting, bioenergy, green building standards, and environmental policy and is a frequent speaker nationally and internationally on these topics. Ω

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As I write this column, the Supreme Court confirmation hearing for Neil Gorsuch is well underway. It has taken a fair amount of discipline on my part to shut off NPR and stop listening to the hearing to focus on the task at hand. Call me audacious, but as a former civics teacher, I feel compelled to write about judicial philosophy and the role of the Supreme Court. What concerns me is that while I learn of Gorsuch's many stellar attributes as a jurist and his likeable personality as a public figure, he may well be a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Since his confirmation is all but assured, believe me, I hope I am wrong about Gorsuch. However, one does not need to be a scholar to be troubled by the judicial philosophy he espouses—that of "originalism." It is a philosophy that has gained traction in the past three decades as a backlash to the successful use of constitutional law to advance civil and human rights in the early to mid-20th century. At which point conservative scholars got themselves funded and organized to promulgate the idea that ascertaining the "original intent" of the Founding Fathers was the best way to rein in the increasingly progressive trajectory of history; any change from the "original intent" of the Constitution should only be made by an amendment.

That philosophy is contrary to long-established jurisprudence and my education as a civics teacher in the 1980s. Most mainstream constitutional scholars taught that we are governed by a "living constitution" – a document intentionally written rather sparingly and mostly in generalities to be able to adapt to changing times. Even now the Supreme Court's current webpage states: ". . . constitutional interpretation and application were made necessary by the very nature of the Constitution. The Founding Fathers had wisely worded that document in rather general terms leaving it open to future elaboration to meet changing conditions."

Historically the role of the Supreme Court has been as the final arbiter in interpreting the Constitution when conflicting views remain intransigent. That ever-growing body of constitutional law has become part of this "living document" by which we are governed; still written most often by wise but fallible *men*—along with the *Founding Fathers*. A foundational governing document to be sure, but always a work-in-progress. Ever-changing through the amendment process *and* judicial review.

But today's conservatives who espouse "original intent" seem to view the Founding Fathers as some kind of holy men—whose words and intent are immutable law. Excuse me, but these men did not think of themselves that way—and if any of them succumbed to that view, one of their ever-so-mortal peers would put them in their place. Today's political conservatives are looking for "Truth" with a capital "T" and they mistakenly try to imbue the Constitution with a transcendent and absolute quality.

For the record, the Constitution was extremely controversial at its inception. It was a second attempt at a governing document for the newly formed United States after the first one failed—the Articles of Confederation. It was conceived in conflict and established through unseemly compromises; e.g. the continuation of slavery and women's subjugation. It was a pragmatic document, circumscribed by its time--both innovative *and* restrained. But what has made it resilient has been its ability to adapt to the emerging complexity of contemporary society and respond to new generations of Americans by incorporating ever-evolving inclusive democratic ideals and governmental protections.

Present day jurists who espouse "originalism" misrepresent their philosophy as value-neutral—when in fact it is no more value-neutral than "living document" proponents. The Founding Fathers were mortal men shaped by their 18th century worldviews—not demi-gods of democracy or liberty. They encapsulated no singular "intent." They were not of one mind. They compromised to come up with a workable document that ever-so-tenuously held the country together in those early days. Through the last two centuries, the Constitution has been stretched and flexed by the American experience to give shape and relative cohesion to the country we know today.

Consider, for example, how women today would be regarded by the "original intent" of the Constitution. Be given equal rights? Hardly. Nowhere in the Constitution are women expressly accorded such rights. While the 19th Amendment gives women the right to vote, it is only through historical jurisprudence—the living constitution--that women have any expectation of equal rights. Feminists and other progressives have lobbied for decades for an equal rights amendment to explicitly ensure those rights. Yet conservative "originalists" have in-

(Continued on page 3)

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sisted that such an amendment is unnecessary while any coherent application of "original intent" would deny women equal standing. Are "originalists" hypocritical, inconsistent, or perhaps just unabashed modern-day chauvinists?

Constitutional "originalists" cherry-pick judicial "truths" like religious fundamentalists cherry-pick biblical wisdom. Who knows how Gorsuch will come down on any particular controversial issue? Maybe he won't be as bad as some fear; his cherry-picking may be actually—judicious. Or, maybe he will live up to all the expectations of the political right. But whatever happens, beware of any judicial arguments based on "originalism." We seek jurists who are adept at meshing the highest ideals of the entire American experiment with real-life circumstances. Not those who employ pie-in-the-sky "truths" conjured out of a mythical past. We can't begin to settle our differences if we don't have an honest assessment of our history, our governing documents and a judicial philosophy that's based in the real world. Ω

Nominations for Humanists of Minnesota Board of Directors are Open!

At the March Chapter Meeting the organization announced the members of this year's Nominating Committee. This slate was selected and approved by the Board of Directors. The job of this committee is to organize elections and to nominate candidates for officers and at-large directors of the Board. The committee will report its nominations at the April Chapter Meeting and the election will be held at the Annual Meeting in May.

The Nominating Committee will nominate candidates for President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. It also hopes to nominate at least five at-large directors, including two one-year positions that have been vacated during the past year. All officers and directors are otherwise elected for two-year terms pursuant to the organization's bylaws.

Because of the need to facilitate the process of securing candidates before the April meeting, the Nominating Committee has already started its search for qualified members to serve on the Board. However, if you 1) have a desire to serve on the Board; 2) are willing to exercise the responsibilities of a Board member; and 3) have been a member in good standing for at least one year, please contact Harlan Garbell at hgarbell@comcast.net. Please note that the Nominating Committee cannot guarantee that you will be nominated.

At the April meeting additional nominations from the floor are permitted. Members can nominate themselves or another member. However, by that time the Nominating Committee will have already screened nominees that have been identified and have agreed to serve and these members will be recommended as a slate of candidates at the April Meeting. Ω

Humanist Community

We're Rolling Out Our New Meetup Group Just for You!

By Ellie Bjorklund

Humanists of Minnesota is rolling out a new Meetup group just for you! "Just Members" will be your hub for programming open only to dues-paying members of our organization. There you will find special small group events as well as community building opportunities. Some events will be noted as "Just Members +1," which will allow you to bring along a family member or a friend. This group will not replace our public Meetup group, but will instead allow you to host and attend events targeted specifically to our members. We are very excited about the potential of this new Meetup group for members to meet new friends while supporting humanist activities. All this and having fun, too! What's not to like?

Please visit **http://bit.ly/2nVPs6q** to submit a request to join this new group. We will also be sending out an email with the link. We are looking forward to "seeing" you there! Ω

Announcements

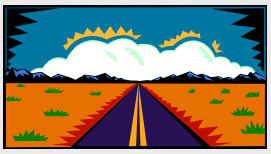
DISCUSSION GROUPS ETC.

2nd Friday, 5:00 p.m., *Humanist Happy Hour St. Paul,* Green Mill Restaurant & Bar, 57 Hamline Ave S.
4th Friday, 5:00 p.m., *Humanist Happy Hour Minneapolis,* Pizza Luce, 800 W. 66th St., Richfield
2nd Friday, 10:00 a.m., *Coffee and Current Events,* Loring Park Dunn Bros., 329 W. 15th St., Mpls.
2nd Saturday, 10:30 a.m., *Blasphemers' Brunch***,** Pizza Luce, 800 W 66th Street, Richfield
2nd Sunday, 11:00 a.m., *Sunday Assembly.* 514 Lowry Ave. NE, Minneapolis.
1st Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-noon, *Lake Superior Freethinkers monthly meeting.* Radisson Hotel Duluth, Viking Room. For information contact Bill van Druten, (218) 724-4176.
1st Sunday, 10:00 a.m., *Central Minnesota Freethinkers, St. Cloud Coffee Social.* Check their website for details*: cmfreethinkers.org* or contact them at *info@cmfreethinkers.org*
Mondays, 5:00-6:30 p.m., *Atheists for Human Rights Happy Hour,* Ol' Mexico Restaurant, 1754 Lexington Ave., Roseville (just north of Larpenteur). Tables on terrace level. Call Paul Craven, (763) 788-8918.
1st and 3rd Mondays, 6:30 p.m., *Freethought Toastmasters Club*, Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Ave. W., St. Paul. Contact George Kane, nup@minn.net or (651) 488-8225.
2nd & 4th Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., *Freethought Dinner Social*, Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Ave So, Bloomington. Call Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.
1st Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m., *Freethought Lunch,* Dragon House, 3950 Central Ave. NE, Columbia Heights, MN. Call Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.
3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., *Freethought Lunch*, Dragon House, 3950 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights. Call Bill Volna, (612) 781-1420.
2nd Thursday, evening, *Rochester Area Freethinkers (RAFT),* Downtown Rochester Public Library, Meeting Room A. Contact Jim Salutz, jsalutz@aol.com or (507) 280-8012.

OTHER EVENTS

2nd Wednesday, 7 p.m., *Humanists of Minnesota* Board of Directors meeting. Open to all members. Contact Audrey Kingstrom at akingstrom@comcast.net.
Thursdays, 7:00 p.m. (during school year), *Campus Atheists, Skeptics and Humanists (CASH)* general meeting. 3rd floor Coffman Memorial Union, 300 Washington Ave. SE, Minneapolis. Contact cash@cashumn.org.

Check out our Meetup events at
http://www.meetup.com/humanism-166



Spring Highway Cleanup

May 6th

Time again for our semi-annual highway cleanup. This is a great opportunity to show Humanists at work in the community. We pick up trash between mile markers 38 and 39.5 on I-35W. A big turnout means we finish sooner and have more time to socialize, so please consider volunteering.

We meet at the Holiday station store, located at exit 36 of Interstate 35W at Highway 23 (right turn from 35W northbound). **This is the last exit on 35W going north, five miles *before* it joins 35E, and is about nine miles north of 35W and I-694.**

Trash bags and pastel-colored vests will be provided. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes; bring along sunscreen and insect repellent as needed. Gloves are useful, too!

We are usually finished by noon and invite you to join us for lunch and good conversation at Matthew's Family Restaurant:
2 South Pine Dr., Circle Pines, MN 55014
Here is a link to a google map of the 2 locations:
Holiday station to Matthew's restaurant

If you have questions, contact Juliet at
smithbranca@gmail.com.

Support Humanists of Minnesota! Painlessly!

Do you shop at Amazon.com?

If so, Amazon will donate some of their profits to Humanists of Minnesota! Just use the following URL to enter their website when you shop there (note: though the charity listed is the AHA, the funds will go to HofMN):
http://smile.amazon.com/ch/41-1570800

"Humanist Views," our weekly cable program, airs at **6:30 p.m. Mondays** on MTN Channel 75.

March Chapter Meeting

Putting Refugees First

Summary by Nathan Curland

40 humanists and friends came to the March Chapter meeting to hear Leah Jaslow from the American Refugee Committee (ARC) talk about the world refugee crisis and what ARC is trying to do about it.

Jaslow began by declaring that we live in a world of abundance but some do not benefit from this abundance and live in conditions unthinkable to us in the West. Though there is much humanitarian work happening, unfortunately, for the most part, it is transactional. What ARC is trying to do is bring humanity and empathy into the process. 99% of the millions of refugees in the world today are in camps or formal settlements, where they have little say in how they are treated. Yet it is the refugees themselves who really know best what their needs and wants are and what ARC is trying to do is find out what these are, treat refugees as customers, and help them learn what their options are going forward.

Jaslow gave us a brief history of ARC: How it was founded in 1978 by Neal Ball, who after sponsoring a Thai refugee into the US, organized a volunteer team to return to Thailand where they concentrated (mostly) on providing medical services. ARC decided to focus not on bringing more refugees to the US but rather on international services to help the plight of refugees that live in camps or settlements and to work on making their lives better. They currently offer services in 11 countries. 99% of their staff are local nationals.

The major fact that most people do not understand about the refugee condition is that, although the camps were set up as temporary sites, the average refugee spends 17 years in one before his/her situation changes. To ARC that means we must rethink a number of issues: How should the camp be set up to handle millions of people over long periods of time? How do we set up health care services to serve these people? How do we provide clean, safe water and sanitation? How do we protect women and children from violence? How do we create economic opportunities, training and help people rebuild their livelihoods, given that most camps do not permit people to work and remain in the camp? In addition, transition services are needed to help people to either settle in a new country or return to their home country.

Jaslow then proceeded to some examples of the work they are doing. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they have established a Health Care site, given agricultural support to farmers and developed a Patients Bill of Rights. In Uganda, a campaign was established to treat refugees as customers, get feedback and establish accountability and trust. In Somalia, the "I am a Star" initiative works with the Minnesota Somali diaspora community to help "flatten out" the funding for Somali refugees (as opposed to the "spike" funding that occurs only when news media focus on refugee plights).

A new program is the Change Maker 365 initiative which was launched in the Ugandan Bidi Bidi camp that services 250,000 South Sudanese refugees. Here the field staff is empowered to develop ideas that cost less than $500/day to enrich the lives of the refugees. So far the program has fostered such initiatives as a 'plate library' that loans plates so that people can have food served to them (yes, this is really a problem!), participative sporting events, and new training opportunities.

Jaslow ended by presenting a chart which summarizes the refugee input process that ARC has adopted to work toward meeting refugee needs beyond the basics. This consists of: helping to re-establish one's identity by dealing with the weight of one's loss and accepting a new reality; helping to orient people to their new surroundings; helping them to develop a vision for their future; helping to develop resilience by being a real participant in the system; helping them to reconnect with the world; and enabling them to become conduits by helping them develop purpose, passion and unique abilities.

After the meeting nearly half the attendees stayed for further discussion, socializing, and an excellent lunch organized by Mark Thoson. Ω

Highlights from the Board

by David Guell
Secretary

From the March board meeting:

- Rohit, Mahad, and Dave reported what they learned from attending the Technology for Nonprofits conference.
- A motion to allot $1000 in the budget to pay projected costs of moving to Squarespace and MembershipWorks was approved unanimously.
- The (Board) nominations committee has been selected.

Humanist Community

Social Action Team Lays Groundwork for Advocacy

The new Humanists of Minnesota Social Action Team has laid the groundwork for advocacy in four areas: climate change, criminal justice reform, end of life options, and health care. Following are updates from members coordinating work in these fields. - ***Suzanne Perry, suzanneper@msn.com***

Climate Change

Given White House efforts to reverse the battle against climate change, it is more critical than ever for humanists to stand up for science. On April 22nd (Earth Day), HofMN is joining forces with many other organizations to co-sponsor the March for Science - Minnesota in St. Paul (http://www.marchforsciencemn.com). Marchers both here and nationally will show support for science funding, regulatory agencies, and evidence-based policymaking. Please watch for a Meetup announcement for details.

Our goal is to help inform you about state and federal legislation that affects our carbon footprint. We will keep in touch with MN 350, a group that fights to lower carbon levels and publishes a monthly calendar of state climate change activities at www.MN350.org, and other environmental groups -- and explore ways to partner with them. - ***Heidi Hoy, heidihoyart@gmail.com***

Criminal Justice Reform

HofMN has connected with Justice4All (J4A) —a project of TakeAction Minnesota—to engage in criminal justice reform efforts in Minnesota. J4A works to remove barriers to employment and participation in democracy for individuals and families affected by the justice system. Current initiatives focus on educating and lobbying legislators about restoring voting rights to ex-felons, stopping the re-opening of Appleton prison, and fighting against the criminalization of addicted pregnant women.

On March 23rd, HofMN hosted a viewing at the Tryon theater of the acclaimed documentary "13th", which explores the intersection of race, mass incarceration and justice. Thirty people attended and stayed for a discussion with 14A organizer, Tommy Franklin- ***Audrey Kingstrom, akingstrom@comcast.net***

End of Life Options

On March 1st, Senator Chris Eaton held a press conference to introduce the new End-Of-Life Option Act, which allows terminally ill adults to be prescribed aid-in-dying medication under certain conditions. In support was Senator John Marty and Representative Mike Freiberg, who sponsored the House version of the bill, along with an overflowing room of supporters and media. I, along with two others, shared my story of why I support this legislation. (The event can be viewed at Minnesota Senate DFL YouTube: End of Life Press Conference.)

HofMN had a great turnout for the "Are They Getting the Message?" workshop, sponsored by Compassion & Choices on March 7th. We learned how to identify our legislators and the best way to approach them. We even did a bit of role playing with a former legislator.

On April 11th at 1 p.m., C&C will hold a training session on organizing Action Teams. A Meetup invite will be posted with the details. All are welcome. - ***Bobbi Jacobsen, bjjacob67@gmail.com***

Health Care

We are tracking federal and state developments in multiple arenas - the individual insurance market, MinnesotaCare, Medicare, and Medicaid. Because of the furor surrounding the proposed American Health Care Act and the general sorry state of U.S. health care, there is no shortage of advocacy opportunities. Social Action Team members participated in the Health Care Lobby Day on March 9th sponsored by TakeAction Minnesota and other groups; and in TakeAction's annual meeting on March 18th.

Several members attended a town hall in Minneapolis on March 21st hosted by three Minnesota state representatives plus TakeAction, the Minnesota Nurses Association, Voices for Racial Justice, and the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance. Speakers emphasized the importance of supporting the Minnesota Health Plan (single-payer) legislation (Senate bill 220/House bill 488).

We are exploring partnering with one or more local advocacy groups to leverage our efforts. Any HofMN member who wants to help fight for comprehensive and affordable health coverage should contact me or Suzanne. - ***Joyce Edwards, joyce.e.edwards@gmail.com*** Ω

HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS

Editor, Nathan Curland
Editorial Committee - Harlan Garbell, Suzanne Perry, Mahad Muhammad, Nathan Curland

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: *editor@humanistsofmn.org* with the word "newsletter" in the subject line, or to P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. (E-mail submissions are preferred.) All submissions must include the writer's full name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. All submissions become the property of this newsletter and cannot be returned. Submission deadline is the 23rd of the prior month.

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Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings

Twin Cities Chapter: Sunday, April 2nd, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "How Long Can We Ignore the Corruption in Our Banking System?" by Jack Carter. Augsburg College, Christensen Center 1st Flr, 720 22nd Ave S., Minneapolis.

Stillwater Chapter. Monday, April 10th, 7:00 p.m.: "The Fourth Turning: An American Prophesy," by David Trauger, Prof. Emeritus Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.

West Metro Chapter: Saturday, April 22nd, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Terrorism, Fear, Evil and the Developing Global Crisis," by Dr. Michael Andregg. RidgePointe Senior Apts, 12600 Marion La. W, Minnetonka.

Maple Grove Discussion Group:

Saturday, April 8th, 10:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.: "Iran," with William O. Beeman, Chair, Department of Anthropology, UofMn. Maple Grove Community Center, 12951 Weaver Lake Rd, room 133, Maple Grove 55311, $5 donation. Register at landforsale@visi.com or call Laurie at (763) 420-6350.

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Humanists of Minnesota is a nonprofit educational corporation and has been granted a 501(c)(3) tax exemption as an educational, scientific and charitable organization. Donations to Humanists of Minnesota are tax deductible. HofM is a chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA) and an affiliate of the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies of the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH). Address inquiries to the Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. E-mail us at *president@humanistsofmn.org* or visit our web site: *www.humanistsofmn.org*

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April 2017

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Your membership is vital to the growth of Humanism and the Humanist community. Our membership categories are:
(For categories at RH and above, married couples or domestic partners will be considered as one membership, if you so indicate.)
( ) (B) Budget, $25.00
( ) (RI) Regular Individual, $40.00
( ) (RH) Regular Household, $60.00
( ) (S) Sustaining, $100.00
( ) (P) Patron, $250.00
( ) (BN) Benefactor, $500.00
( ) (L) Life Membership, $1000.00
( ) (T) Trial subscription for 3 months, just ask
*Full time students at an accredited institution can receive a complimentary subscription

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For national or international membership write to:

American Humanist Association
1821 Jefferson Place NW
Washington, DC 20036
www.americanhumanist.org

Council for Secular Humanism
PO Box 664
Amherst, NY 14226
www.secularhumanism.org

Please check the appropriate box, complete the information and mail with your check to Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997.

Name: _____

Address:_____

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(for special announcements, blogs etc. Keeps you in touch!)

I would like my newsletter sent via email ( ) (in color!)

Second Member at same address (for RH and above):

_____

Visit our website at:
www.humanistsofmn.org