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**Saturday  
 January 21st, 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:***

***Cuba and Its People :***  
***What's on the Other Side of That Door?***  
***with Prof. August H. Nimtz , Jr. and Nancy Albrecht***  
***Saturday, January 21st, 2017***

Ever since President Obama started the process of restoring diplomatic relations with Cuba, Americans have been abuzz with finding out more about that isolated island country just off our shores. We are pleased to have two distinguished and knowledgeable speakers to talk about this important topic for our January Chapter Meeting.

Professor Nimtz will provide an overview of Cuban-American relations since the Cuban Revolution of 1959. He will discuss the efforts under Barack Obama and Raúl Castro to begin the process of restoring diplomatic relations, and the normalization of other relationships, between the two countries. Professor Nimtz will also touch on what the death of Fidel Castro and the election of Donald Trump could mean for this relationship going forward.

Nancy Albrecht is a member of Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis. She was able to travel to Cuba on the first trip that Plymouth took to Cuba in 2005 on a religious visa. She has traveled to Cuba every year since then and stays for three to four weeks. About seven years ago, she started a knitting project with women of Iglesia Bautista Emanuel (church) in Ciego de Avila, Cuba. Nancy's talk will be about the changes she has seen in Cuba since 2005.

August Nimtz, Jr. is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Minnesota. He started as an instructor at the University in 1971. Professor Nimtz's areas of specialty are Comparative Politics, African American and African Studies. He has also taught courses on the Cuban revolution.



Nancy Albrecht is a retired medical social worker. The last ten years of her work she worked as a hospice social worker. She lives in south Minneapolis and has two adopted adult daughters who are originally from Bogota, Colombia. Ω  
*(Nancy is the one in the back!)*



*Guest Editorial:*

## ***“Humanism and the New Administration”***

***by Harlan Garbell,  
Vice President***

One of the reasons I joined Humanists of Minnesota was that the organization's core values (e.g. the promotion of science and reason, separation of church and state, racial and gender inclusion, etc.) converged with my own personal values. I suspect that other members feel the same way or they wouldn't have joined.

However, since joining the organization I have been unsure and ambivalent as to whether or not to express my political views, which may be different from those of other members.

Surely, in an organization of 200+ people there will be members from across the political spectrum: Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Libertarians, and Greens. People have their own political views and I respect that. The organization, ideally, should not be in the business of promoting political parties or any specific candidate.

However, I have grave concerns regarding the incoming administration coming to power on January 20th. In my opinion, these concerns are more than just the typical ones that have divided Democrats and Republicans over the years, e.g. the size and scope of government, tax reform, etc. Anyone following the current political situation would have to conclude that science, reason, separation of church and state, and democracy itself may be at risk during the next four years. These issues go to the heart of why we are humanists, not whether we are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents.

Consider separation of church and state. Trump's choice for Education Secretary is Betsy DeVos, the billionaire heiress who was raised in the strict Christian Reformed Church. DeVos and her family have given huge sums of money to the Religious Right, including the Family Research Council which opposes and lobbies against abortion, LGBT rights, and stem-cell research. Paradoxically, she and her children never attended public schools. A strong proponent of school vouchers, her goal is to steer students to private schools, especially private religious schools, with taxpayer money. She is also a proponent of adding the teaching of Intelligent Design to school curricula.

Consider science and environmental issues. The person chosen to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt, is not only a climate change skeptic but a fierce foe of the agency he has been chosen to lead. Having this "public servant" protecting our air and water is like the fox guarding the chicken coop. President-elect Trump's new chief of staff (Reince Priebus) recently stated that Trump believes that climate change is "a bunch of bunk." Moreover, there has been a significant amount of speculation that the new administration will take the United States out of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. As the U.S. is a leading source of carbon emissions this would be a troubling development for the Earth's climate. Other major countries could also follow suit as a result and abandon the agreement so they would not be at an industrial and commercial disadvantage to the U.S. This would be disastrous for the climate and the millions of people who live in fragile environments, such as the Earth's coastlines.

Consider immigration and civil rights. Trump's choice for chief strategist in the White House is Steve Bannon, the former editor of the "alt-right" publication Breitbart News. This online site is infamous for its white nationalist and anti-Semitic views. During the campaign, Trump liberally used racially divisive language to fire-up his audiences, e.g. referring to Mexicans as "rapists." His choice for Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, was once rejected for a federal judgeship for his inflammatory views and statements. Sessions, of course, will be entrusted with enforcing the nation's immigration and voting rights laws. Laws which he has opposed in the past.

This is really the proverbial tip of the iceberg. I don't have space for details of other concerns I have regarding, for example, the inevitable rollback of worker safety regulations, weaker gun laws, attacks on First Amendment rights, etc. The question for us, as humanists, is how do we respond to these events?

In my view it is critical that humanists mobilize to preserve our values when they come under attack by those who wish to lead us backwards. The values that make us humanists- separation of church and state, democracy, science, racial and gender inclusion, and the protection of the environment- require vigilance and effort on our part. This could include sponsoring educational programs, fundraising, political organizing, and civil disobedience when necessary. If our goal is to create a better world where humanist values are advanced and respected, it can only happen through organized action. It is not enough for concerned citizens to wring their hands and hope for divine intervention. 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](http://cmfreethinkers.org) or contact them at [info@cmfreethinkers.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:cash@cashumn.org).

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

## Hospitality Team Initiative

### Get Involved! Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers are needed to help out with hospitality at Humanists of Minnesota events—especially the monthly meetings. Our long-time volunteers Juliet Branca, Jerry Smith and Mark Thoson would like to share these responsibilities with others. And the Board would like to establish a hospitality team to help them manage refreshments and lunches going forward. Responsibilities would generally include: make and/or arrange for coffee and tea, pastries and lunches as planned; purchase necessary supplies; provide food and beverage service set-up and clean-up. The team would meet as needed.

Please contact Audrey at:

[akingstrom@comcast.net](mailto:akingstrom@comcast.net) if you are willing to serve on this team. Thanks!

## Are You a 'Hard Core' Humanist?

*Are you interested in getting more timely information about humanist events and issues nationally and internationally? If so, sign up for the Humanists of Minnesota "Hardcore" Group either via your on-line member's profile or send an email to :*

*[editor@humanistsofmn.org](mailto:editor@humanistsofmn.org)*

*(Note: 'HardCore' group is an optional benefit of HofMn membership)*

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





### *December Chapter Meeting*

## *“What Does Peace Mean to You?”*

*Summarized by Harlan Garbell*

It may have been cold and snowy outside, but at the December chapter meeting of Humanists of Minnesota those who braved the weather were rewarded with a wonderful presentation by author and photographer John Noltner. His talk entitled "What Does Peace Mean to You?" told the stories of a number of people he interviewed for his award winning book.

Noltner traveled the country for months speaking to people from many backgrounds and asking them this simple question about peace. The answers were often profound and moving.

Some examples:

1. The father of a victim of the Oklahoma City federal building bombing who wanted nothing more than the execution of Timothy McVeigh until he realized that McVeigh's father was just as afflicted with sadness as he was;
2. The Philadelphia man who served 36 years in prison for second degree murder who spoke of the need for restorative justice in his community;
3. The young college student in Illinois who became the leader of the Muslim student association on campus right before 9/11 and learned how to relate to the suspicion and fear from other students.

During the question and answer period after the presentation, Noltner was asked about some of the things he learned about peace from his lengthy travels over the years. He acknowledged that bridging differences between people is hard, but stressed it was necessary and important work that needs to be done to reduce the conflict inherent in human relations. His advice was to build relationships at every opportunity so that when conflict inevitably arises there is a base of respect between the parties essential to resolving the conflict before it escalates. Noltner also impressed on his audience the vital importance of doing this work **now**-casting aside any excuses due to lack of time or resources. His view is that waiting for the perfect opportunity to act will not be effective in the quest for peace.

The program was followed by an excellent lunch coordinated by Poldi Gerard with offerings from the Wedge Co-op. Ω

### *Humanist Community*

## *‘Just Members’ Program Will Soon Have Its Own Meetup Group!*

*by Ellie Bjorklund  
Membership Team*

We will be creating an additional Meetup group for the organization's "Just Members" program. This is in an effort to streamline the process and move away from the current (very manual) email notifications. We believe this will make browsing, RSVPing to events, and reminders much easier as well as giving participants a view as to how many are signed up for each event.

We will begin rolling this out after the New Year and will share more information on joining the new group soon. Ω



### *Highlights from the Board*

*by David Guell  
Secretary*

From the December board meeting:

- Harlan Garbell, Nathan Curland, Suzanne Perry and Mahad Muhammad will serve on the new Editorial Board.
- The organization raised \$2,270 in its Thanksgiving fundraiser for the Food Group.
- The survey concerning summer picnic location showed a slight but not compelling preference for staying at Wabun Park.



*Humanist Community:*

## ***Food Shelf Fundraiser Update***

*By Brad Bolin, Treasurer*

As Treasurer of Humanists of Minnesota I am pleased to report that our recent annual fundraiser for The Food Group (formerly the Emergency Foodshelf Network) brought in another impressive total. Our membership sent in \$2,320 (just shy of last year's record collection of \$2,415). In a break from the past several years, the board voted NOT to match the first \$1,000 from our reserves, choosing to reallocate those funds to other endeavors.

The Food Group has been feeding Minnesota's hungry for the past 40 years in a secular fashion. Humanists of Minnesota is proud to be a partner in their mission (we get credited as such in their annual report) as well as participating in their Mobile Food Shelf program. You can find out more about their organization at [www.thefoodgroupmn.org](http://www.thefoodgroupmn.org).

Once again our board would like to thank our members for their generous contributions. We will happily accept additional contributions in the coming weeks if you missed the first plea. Please feel free to drop a check in the mail to P.O. Box 582997; Minneapolis MN 55458 if you wish and I will pass it along. Unfortunately, there are always plenty of hungry families out there who can use a helping hand. This is another great example of Humanism in action. We will be publishing our annual financial report in next month's newsletter. Ω



*Humanist Community:*

## ***Caring Connection Corner***

*The Caring Connection Corner is a place for members to share with our community. It's a space to share good news, life events, health updates, and times of need. Communities flourish with openness and support, so let's unite in celebrations and difficult times. If you have an update you'd like to share (for yourself or on behalf of another), please send it to [editor@humanistsofmn.org](mailto:editor@humanistsofmn.org).*

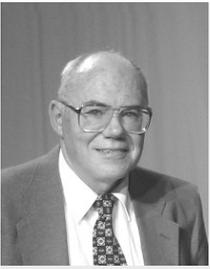
*Greetings from long-time member and former HofMN president, Hiero Russell, and an update on his well-being. (as reported to Audrey Kingstrom)*

Hiero continues to be plagued by back pain—which has been an ongoing health concern for 50 years. He also is dealing with celiac disease which developed in his seventies. Over the years Hiero has created his own gluten free recipes so he can still enjoy all the good food his wife used to make—and he would be happy to share them with others.

Hiero's wife, Janet, has Parkinson's disease and is increasingly plagued with arthritis. While she can mostly take care of herself, Hiero is uncomfortable leaving her alone for any length of time. Hence he does not go out very much anymore. However, Hiero continues to visit with an inmate at Oak Park Heights Correctional Facility along with fellow member Paul Heffron every Sunday when possible. They have been doing this for many years.

Despite his current challenges, Hiero says: "I consider myself lucky. I have never had any cancer, have no circulatory problems, no worries about salt or cholesterol, and at 85 take no prescription medications . . . I am so pleased to hear that the organization is moving in the direction of becoming more publicly active such as with the food shelf. Good luck with the 'caring connection' effort. Maybe this time it will click. I've always felt that we are a community, not just another organization . . . Please give my regards to the membership."

Feel free to send good wishes to Hiero or request gluten-free recipes at [hiero@comcast.net](mailto:hiero@comcast.net) Ω



*Book Notes:*

***Some Suggestions for Humanist  
Book Readings this Winter***

***Paul Heffron, Chapter Historian***

Herb Silverman is Professor of Mathematics Emeritus at Charleston College in South Carolina. He is also the founder of the Secular Coalition for America and the Secular Humanists of the Low-country and serves on the AHA board. He tells his life story in *Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt* (Humanist Press LLC, 2012). The title refers to his

run for governor of South Carolina, which was a successful court challenge of the state constitution's stipulation that an atheist is not allowed to run for a state office. So he did get to run, thanks to the US Constitution, which prohibits religious tests for office. As not only a Jewish atheist but also a Yankee liberal academic, he knew he couldn't get elected in the Bible Belt. When someone asked him, "What would you do if you won the election?" he replied, "I'd demand a recount."

The founding of the Secular Coalition for America and getting all the secular organizations to belong was to my mind the most astounding miracle of our time. As Richard Dawkins says in the forward, "Herb Silverman is the cat herder beyond compare: quite possibly the only person in America who could amicably unite all factions of the non-believing community." We were privileged to have this executive director of the SCA speak at our banquets (where he was a smash hit). We know how important it is to have a coalition of all seculars for lobbying and advocacy. It reflects the fact that currently there really is a Secular Movement in America.

To Silverman's many titles could be added "humorist." His humor is on almost every page of his book. His answer to the question of "how does his wife put up with him?": "I make her laugh every day." I think humor is one of the most valuable assets for humanists. In combination with reason and a sense of humanity it is a formidable force for good human relations and personal well-being, as Herb Silverman's autobiography so delightfully demonstrates.

\*\*\*\*\*

Susan Jacoby is an independent historian and culture critic, a best-selling author and secular humanist intellectual. She spoke at one of our banquets on the theme of her book *The Age of American Unreason* (2008). This followed her immensely important book *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (2004), our one and only history of our past which oddly didn't cover humanism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I asked her about that, and she in effect said the humanists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not nearly as historically noteworthy as the freethinkers of the previous era. We are still in need of a comprehensive and definitive history of American humanism.

In 2011 Jacoby published *Never Say Die: The Myth and Marketing of the New Old Age*, a critique of the idea that we should all gear ourselves and our resources to live to a very advanced age without being, or seeming to be, old. After that she did the Ingersoll intellectual biography which I reviewed previously in this newsletter.

Her latest book is *Strange Gods: A Secular History of Conversion* (Pantheon Books, 2016). After its release, she came to Minneapolis for a book signing and a talk at which the local atheists and humanists were out in force. Jacoby documented that the conversions in the West, from Augustine to Ali, were more often than not products of secular factors: everything from threats of banishment and execution to opportunities for advancement, accommodation in marriage, or adapting to social environment. There were conversions which were primarily intellectual, as well as emotional. Those included from one religion to another or from non-religion to religion or from religion to rational religion or to secularism of one sort or another. Most of us are converts to humanism and, though there may be non-intellectual factors at work, we usually identify experiences of disillusion with religion along with reason-based quests for truth and integrity that led to our adoption of humanism. My conversion from liberal Protestantism to humanism involved my adoption of freethought, atheism, and skepticism, all of which have large and growing organizational representation. This multiple connection gave me a new sense of my place in history and a community of like-minded people—local, national, and international. It also gave me a sense of meaning and purpose as part of the global advance of secularism and humanistic values. In Jacoby's book I see that I am part of a long succession of converts to reason and humanity, many of whom paid a big price for their integrity and courage. 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](mailto: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, January 8th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Skepticism," by Burke Hilden. Augsburg College—Christensen Center 1st Flr, 720 22nd Ave S., Minneapolis.*

*Stillwater Chapter. Monday, January 9th, 7:00 p.m.: "2017 Minnesota Legislative Expectations," by Senator John Marty. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.*

*West Metro Chapter: Saturday, January 28th, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Wisdom Isn't Rocket Science," by Judith Carol Stern. RidgePointe Senior Apartments, 12600 Marion La. W, Minnetonka.*

**Maple Grove Discussion Group:**

*Saturday, January 14th, 10:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.: "Do Stockbroker's Commission Structures Steer Consumers to the Wrong Products?" by Professor Mark Egan, University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management. Maple Grove Community Center, 12951 Weaver Lake Rd, room 133, Maple Grove 55311, \$5 donation. Register at [landforsale@visi.com](mailto:landforsale@visi.com) or call Laurie at (763) 420-6350.*

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Scott Lohman, Nathan Curland, Brad Bolin, Grant Lohman

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](mailto:president@humanistsofmn.org) or visit our web site: [www.humanistsofmn.org](http://www.humanistsofmn.org)

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January 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  
1777 T Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009-7125  
[www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org)

Council for Secular Humanism  
PO Box 664  
Amherst, NY 14226  
[www.secularhumanism.org](http://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: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

(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):

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