



HUMANIST Monthly

Vol. XXXVI No. 6
June 2022

A Publication of the Capital District Humanist Society
Connecting the Secular Humanist Community of Upstate New York, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont

On Sunday, June 12th, 2022, 1 PM:

Judy J. Johnson: Wither Democracy

This presentation will address the psychology of authoritarianism which, according to Freedom House, currently threatens western democracies.

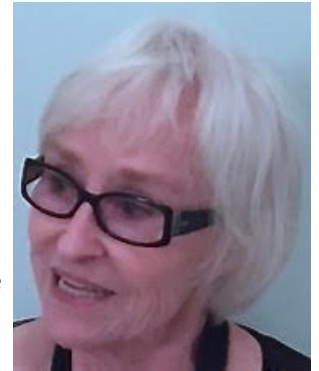
Philosopher Charles Taylor claimed that, "Understanding the 'other' will pose the 21st century's greatest social challenge." Given the sewage that floods social media and the Internet with outrageous conspiracy theories, racism, and attacks on democracy, science, and the media, Taylor's challenge seems daunting. Will the worrisome lure of authoritarianism further polarize and divide people into warring camps that scar the face of America's democracy?

Judy J. Johnson is Prof. Emerita, Psychology Department, Mount Royal Univ., Calgary, Alberta. Her postgraduate theses and her postdoctoral fellowship at the Ellis Institute in NYC explored the biological, social, and psychological forces that insidiously shape dogmatism's unique profile. She currently focuses on authoritarianism, a trait that shares many overlapping features and causal influences with dogmatism.

Following her experience as a clinician and supervisor of therapy, Johnson taught psychology to university students, inmates in two penitentiaries, women on the Sarcee Reserve, and Palestinian students in Gaza, Israel, during the intifada.

Her nonfiction book, *What's So Wrong With Being Absolutely Right: The Dangerous Nature of Dogmatic Belief*, (Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York), and her novel, *Thief of Reason*, (Iguana Books, Toronto), focus on the psychological nature of dogmatism. Her website is at: www.dogmatism.ca

Anyone who is not a current member can attend: Send an email request to: webmaster@humanistsociety.org, several days prior or log onto our Meetup page: <https://www.meetup.com/Capital-District-Humanist-Society/>. Click on Join, then on Attend, and use the RSVP function and the link will be available to you.



The June social will graciously be hosted by Mira and Dave Peck— (12 Stoney Heights Court, Clifton Park)

Noon—Saturday, June 25th.

Our theme will be World Humanist Day, so please bring a dish appropriate for that theme.

The date is Saturday, June 25th

(World Humanist Day is June 21st).

Weather permitting, the event can be held outside.

RSVP to Dee Portzer by June 22nd.

Phone: 518-653-1622 or

Email: candacelf13@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you there.



WORLD HUMANIST DAY IS JUNE 21st

Capital District Humanist Society, Inc.

Established 1986

Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety>



CDHS is affiliated with:

The American Humanist Association (AHA)

Center for Inquiry (CSI)

Humanists International (HI)

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA)

Dear Readers,

I apologize for this very abbreviated issue of the Newsletter. When I looked at my calendar, it became apparent that I would not be able to compose the full next issue until half-way through June, so I am sending this out with a heads-up for our upcoming meetings.

The 2022 International Humanist Conference will be held in Glasgow, Scotland from June 3rd through June 5th. The Capital District Humanist Society is a voting member. CDHS will be represented by Don Porterfield.

*Dee and Frank Wind will also be attending the conference, looking forward to hearing the presentations and attending the dinner and Ceilidh**

**a party with music, dancing, and often storytelling—pronounced “kay-ley”.*



Performing a Wiccan Wedding: A Change in Perspective - *theHumanist.com* (May 12, 2022)

I stopped in a church parking lot and got off the motorcycle to stretch my legs and get my bearings. A car pulled up beside me and the passenger window rolled down. The older gentleman at the wheel leaned over to speak to me.

“I’m the pastor of this church,” he said. “Can I help you with anything?”

“No thanks,” I said. “I’m just taking a break.”

“I’m a retired minister, myself,” I continued. “I’m on my way to perform a wedding ceremony.”

He brightened when he realized he was talking to a colleague. We chatted and traded pedigrees. He was a preacher for an Independent Fundamental Baptist Church—very conservative. I told him where I was educated and confessed I was on the liberal end of the spectrum, although I chose not to reveal that I was now an atheist humanist celebrant. We were cordial and wished each other well as I glided away on the bike. I also neglected to tell him I would be performing my first Wiccan wedding.

I reached the park and met with the wedding party and their families. They were a little stressed as most wedding participants are, but they were also pleasant and kind. The young man was tall, slender, and perhaps shy. I helped him straighten his tie and I took the opportunity to clasp his shoulders and say he was a handsome young man. The beautiful young woman had long hair and wore a simple but elegant dress. The party also included a small, adorable baby girl.

It was my first Wiccan ceremony, and although I once taught World Religions in college, I had to study up on the proceedings. We conducted the ceremony by a luminescent spring.

The woman laid out a circle of small rocks around us. The father of the bride handed the young man a small knife (called an athame) as a symbolic act of passing the responsibility of protecting his daughter to the man who would be her husband. In the handfasting ritual, I wrapped a thin rope loosely around the bride and groom’s wrists. When they pulled their hands away, they held onto the ends of the rope, forming a knot in the middle. Near the end, they jumped over a broom to signify stepping into a new life.

While the baby gurgled, they offered each other their vows using words like love, community, life forces, eternity, magic, the sun, moon, land, and sea. At the end, I pronounced them married and they kissed each other.

The preacher I met earlier would be obligated to believe these proceedings were evil, which is preposterous. They are a lovely couple, joining hands to make their way in life. They value the qualities of wonder, love, and each other. They embrace the idea of making the world a better place. And they are kind and gracious.

When I was a young conservative preacher, I often said Wiccan was evil, which I see now is preposterous. I regret that I might have caused someone to feel pain from my words. I’m glad I’m in a different place where I get to participate in the formalized union of this sweet little family.



David Mercer is a Humanist Celebrant and a writer in Orlando Florida. You can find more of his “reflections on humanity and spirituality” at his website, davidashleymercer.com.



CDHS
 PO Box 11209
 Loudonville, NY 12211-0209

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CDHS ++ PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209 ++ (518) 533-2666

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MEMBER SUPPORT FORM

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How did you hear about the Humanist Society? _____

All this information will be included in our Directory, which is distributed to members only, unless you request otherwise by checking and signing here [] I do not want to be listed in the CDHS Member Directory _____

Levels of Member Support	Annual Payment	Date ____/____/____
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[] Family Membership	\$ 80	_____
[] Sustaining Member	\$100	_____
[] Patron	\$150	_____
[] Life Member	one-time contribution of \$1000 or more	_____
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Please Make checks payable to CDHS

[] Please send me additional information