



Vol. XXXVI No. 11  
November 2022

# HUMANIST Monthly

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

**On Sunday, November 13th, 2022, 1 PM**

**The Capital District Humanist Society Presents  
Rosemary Armao:**

## **An Analysis of Election Results**

With the extreme polarization, both political and cultural, taking place in the United States a lot hinges on our elections. For keen insight into the results of the November 8th mid-term elections, and what they might mean for the future, join us for a most insightful look at the results.

Rosemary Armao is an adjunct professor of journalism at SUNY Albany, and RPI. She is also a public affairs commenter on WAMC in Albany, and an editor for the online news service WhoWhatWhy. She is a former editor for the Organized Crime and Corruption Project and has worked on media development and training in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and north and eastern Africa. She is a former head of the Journalism and Women's Symposium and of Investigative Reporters and Editors in the U.S. She teaches writing, reporting, investigative techniques, disinformation and the media, and ethics.

This program will take place online, via Zoom. Current paid CDHS members will receive an invite to the meeting via email. *Anyone who is not a currently paid-up member is invited to attend.*



## **November Social: Sunday, November 6, 2022**

Be sure to wear your walking shoes for a 90 minute mansion tour in Albany. **We will first meet at noon the Olde English Pub at Quackenbush Square on Broadway. After lunch, we will reconvene at 2PM outside the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at 125 Eagle Street.** There is plenty of free parking on the street or lot next to NYS Museum.



To be clear for those who may suffer from ecclesiophobia, the cathedral is not part of the tour. Tony Opalka, who is the official historian for the city of Albany, will be our guide and will be selecting the route.

**Please contact Candace Fuller at [candacelf13@gmail.com](mailto:candacelf13@gmail.com) for more information or to confirm your attendance for either or both events.**



The Capital District Humanist Society provides a supportive community for exchanging ideas, heightening our knowledge of the world and ourselves, fostering moral and ethical growth, and promoting the principles of secular humanism. CDHS is a member organization for people with humanist values. Our values include commitment to free inquiry, rational thought, lifelong education, democracy, social concern, and fellowship.

### **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)

## Recap of our October Speaker's Presentation

On Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, we were treated to an examination of the life of "Yellowstone Kit", a showman who managed to travel to and become conspicuous in just about every state in the union.

Named George Edwin Grant at his birth in 1850, Grant took the name of Yellowstone Kit as he created one of the most impressive medicine shows, mixing entertainment with the sales of tonics, such as "Kickapoo Indian Sagwa."

Kit claimed that from an early age, he had been given great healing power. The ever-present medicine shows were elaborate spectacles, with often scores of performers, a variety of novel acts to attract and entertain the crowds and keep them buying his healing potions. He even brought in electric lighting and often ended shows with fireworks and engaged performers from various native tribes (although at least two of the "Indians" were natives of Ireland) and Japan.

His shows became exceedingly popular with Blacks. Thousands gathered every night to hear him. They referred to him as the "Second Messiah" and felt that he could cure any ill. Things did not always go well for him when he meddled in local politics. Kit was a "wet", i.e., an anti-prohibitionist; Atlanta had banned the sale of alcohol two years before, and he was vocal in his opposition to that statute. In many cities on his performing route, he addressed local issues that he disagreed with, and laws introduced to curb the ever-present medicine shows. Blacks often congregated around his tents – the crowd often swelled until the number ran into the thousands.

Boy, did Bob Blaskiewicz do his homework! The discussion of Yosemite Kit is more than just the story of an interesting character in American history. Listening and seeing Blaskiewicz's presentation is disturbing, haunting, in that we see in Kit the prototype of many of the politicians we have experienced in our most recent elections, especially those to the far to the right of center and those with bright orange complexions. Kit wore an ostentatious three-foot long watch chain and stayed in the most luxurious hotels – in Atlanta, it was the presidential suite of the best hotel. Nothing succeeds like success. Sound like someone you didn't vote for?

In response to one of Yellowstone Kit's very large gatherings one newspaperman remarked, "the scenes of yesterday must not be repeated. There's a great danger in the gathering of an irresponsible class whose passions can be too easily roused." Sound like January 6<sup>th</sup>?

*Frank H Wind*



Medicine Show, Tennessee (1935), Library of Congress

### *Caring Network*

CDHS makes an effort to stay in touch with members in a general way through the Humanist Monthly and occasional emails about monthly programs and socials. The purpose of our Caring Network is to keep in touch more personally when members could use a get well wish, an expression of sympathy, or just a friendly greeting.

Of course, we have to know about these opportunities to reach out to members, which has been particularly difficult over the past couple years when COVID has often kept us apart from one another. If you are aware of members who would appreciate a note or greeting from CDHS, please let Rosina Ansaldo know.



## Separation of Church and State

Separation of Church and State is a phrase that refers to the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The phrase dates back to the early days of U.S. history, and Thomas Jefferson referred to the First Amendment as creating a "wall of separation" between church and state as the third president of the U.S. The term is also often employed in court cases. For example, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black famously stated in *Everson v. Board of Education* that "the First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state," and "that wall must be kept high and impregnable."

## Science's Contributions

Science has unleashed human potential and transformed our quality of life. It offers humanity the tools to overcome many of today's most pressing issues, from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change. But, it seldom gets the credit it deserves. On March 26, 2022—the anniversary of Jonas Salk's public announcement of polio vaccine success trials—nearly one third of states across the United States officially celebrated scientific achievement.

## Looking ahead.....

Sunday, December 11th, 2022, 1 PM

### Medical Aid in Dying: Smart, Compassionate Policy for New York

Faced with a terminal diagnosis, New Yorkers deserve the full range of medical options. Medical aid in dying allows a mentally capable adult with a prognosis of six months or less to live, to request and receive medication that they may bring about a peaceful death, so long as they are able to self-ingest the medication. Eleven U.S. jurisdictions have medical aid in dying. The NY State Catholic Conference has stalled such a law in Albany for seven years despite polls showing the vast majority of New Yorkers support the bill. Each year the legislature stalls, more terminally ill New Yorkers die suffering.

This presentation will describe what legislation authorizing medical aid in dying would do; how it has worked in other jurisdictions; who uses this option; what support the legislation currently has; who opposes it and why; and how individuals & organizations that believe in bodily autonomy can support it to strengthen the campaign. Compassion and Choices is the nation's oldest, largest and most active nonprofit organization committed to improving care and expanding choice at the end of life. Compassion and Choices works towards a society where people receive state-of-the-art care and a full range of choices for dying in comfort, dignity and control. Corinne Carey led the successful campaign for New Jersey's Medical Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act, which took effect on August 1, 2019, and now coordinates the organization's efforts to pass New York's Medical Aid in Dying Act. She joined Compassion and Choices after nearly a decade with the New York Civil Liberties Union where she served as Deputy Legislative Director. At NYCLU, she engaged in advocacy around a wide range of civil liberties issues, concentrating on public health, medical privacy, discrimination, drug law reform, and reproductive rights issues. She led the campaign to pass a 10-point Women's Equality Agenda as co-chair of the New York State Women's Equality Coalition. All 10 points, including strengthening equal pay laws and codifying Roe v. Wade into state statute, have become law. Prior to her tenure at the NYCLU, Corinne was a researcher with the U.S. Program at Human Rights Watch where she focused on access to public housing for people with criminal records, punitive and ineffective sex offender registries, and the treatment of prisoners during Hurricane Katrina. Corinne holds a masters degree in American Studies from the Univ. at Buffalo, and she graduated summa cum laude and first in her class from SUNY Buffalo School of Law in 1998. She also volunteers as a political & public affairs correspondent for the Hudson Mohawk Magazine, an evening radio show on WOOC 105.3 FM out of the Sanctuary for Independent Media in the capital region,



Current paid CDHS members will receive an invite to the meeting via e mail.

ANY ONE WHO IS NOT A CURRENT PAID MEMBER of CDHS CAN ATTEND. Send an e mail request to:

CDHS.Albany@gmail.com, 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. To learn more about us please go to: [www.humanistsociety.net](http://www.humanistsociety.net).

....and on January 8th ....

### Adam Neiblum: Manufactured Need; What Capitalism Learned from Christianity

Capitalism is, in many respects, an offshoot of Christianity. As capitalism developed, it borrowed significantly from the most successful sales model in society at the time: Christianity. In earlier Euro-America, as capitalism emerged and developed, Christianity was the dominant paradigm in terms of mass marketing, public relations, indoctrination, management, political influence and brand loyalty.

Adam Neiblum is the author of several works on atheism and humanism, including *Common Sense Recovery: An Atheists Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous*, as well as several articles in *Free Inquiry* and on The Fix website. Neiblum's most recent work, tentatively titled *Rise of the Nones: The Importance of Science & Freedom from Religion*, is soon to be released by Hypatia Press.

#### Wise Words on the Wonder and Meaning of Life— by Buzzy Jackson

It does not matter whether God exists. Any good that God is able or willing to do is insignificant compared to what we human beings must do for ourselves.

(Norm R. Allen, Jr. )

An atheist loves his fellow man instead of god. An Atheist believes that heaven is something for which we should work now—here on Earth for all men together to enjoy...He wants disease conquered, poverty vanished, war eliminated.

(Madalyn Murray O'Hair)

## Lawsuit shows how abortion bans violate freedom of religion

by Jennifer Rubin *in* The Albany Times Union (10/12/22)

In July I wrote about a lawsuit in Florida challenging the state's abortion ban on the grounds that it violates the religious beliefs of Jews — and members of other faiths — who do not believe in the Christian dogma that human life begins at conception. Now, three Jewish women from Kentucky have filed a similar suit.

One of the plaintiffs is undergoing in vitro fertilization. Another one is storing nine embryos. And another is “of advanced maternal age and faces many risk factors if she chooses to have a third child,” the complaint explains. It adds, “Individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry have a heightened risk of passing on genetic anomalies, like Tay-Sachs disease, for which there is no cure and the average life span of those with the condition is four years of age.”

Yet, Kentucky's abortion law, the complaint argues, would arguably make both an abortion after genetic counseling or the destruction of IVF embryos capital murder. Contrary to the officiousness of the right-wing Supreme Court justices, who seem not to understand that they applied their own religious views in their ruling overturning abortion rights, the complaint explains:

“Judaism has never defined life beginning at conception. Jewish views on the beginning of life originate in the Torah. ... Millenia of commentary from Jewish scholars has reaffirmed Judaism's commitment to reproductive rights. “Under Jewish law, a fetus does not become a human being or child until birth. Under no circumstances has Jewish law defined a human being or child as the moment that a human spermatozoon fuses with a human ovum.

“The question of when life begins for a human being is a religious and philosophical question without universal beliefs across different religions.” The last sentence is key. The so-called state interest in preserving “fetal life” depends on the assumption that a fetus deserves the same protection as a toddler. But for Jews, “the necessity of protecting birth givers in the event a pregnancy endangers the woman's life and causes the mother physical and mental harm” must control. Moreover, “the law forces Plaintiffs to spend exorbitant fees to keep their embryos frozen indefinitely or face potential felony charges.”

In a previous issue of the Humanist Monthly, Sherry Levine asked CDHS members to let her know about ways the denostrated their Humanism by volunteering and contributing to their communities during Covid. Here is her report:



### BOUNTY OF HUMANITY

As we near Thanksgiving, and during our Covid pause, I wanted to reflect on all the good we, as Humanists have contributed. I was pleased with the diversity and direction of goodness which included focus on interracial consciousness by attending a Juneteenth Celebration and engaging in community dialogue. Our good heartedness included helping family members with non-conventional family units, to more structured programs with family development. This is aided by trained mentoring program that helps with budgeting, financial literacy counseling, navigating community services, as well as teaching time management, organizational and life skills.

We showed compassion with aging members doing marketing and going to doctors, and making calls to those living alone. We stayed in to “Get out the Vote.” We've assisted in making household goods and sports equipment available to those without. Some members were environmental activists. We've donated time, gas and muscle to deliver groceries to those with food insecurity, as well as emergency food pantry work. One humanist worked in a community garden that earmarked its bounty for those in need.

Immigrants and refugees were tutored via Zoom for English as a second language, as well as naturalization to successfully realize American citizenship. Some were helped scheduling for Covid vaccines. Time, gas and compassion were generously sprinkled during our quite Covid pause. For awhile, the schools were closed, and roads less traveled, but I am proud that as individuals within CDHS we have taken action in society.

Wishing you all a warm heart and filled plate this Thanksgiving. We still have much for which to be thankful.

*Sherry Levine*



CDHS is now an Underwriter of WAMC. You can hear our ID line weekly during the *Roundtable, Vox Pop,* and *Earthdate* shows. We will also be listed as an underwriter on WAMC's website.



## A Special Thank You to Sandy Sussman

After many years of service on the Executive Council, Sandy has decided to step back. Sandy was instrumental in helping establish policies to protect our resources. Sandy is a dedicated Life Member of CDHS and enjoyed greeting members and guests at our monthly programs at Sage College.

## Winners of the Summer 2022 Annual Humanist Haiku Contest

In June 2022, TheHumanist.com announced the winners of the Annual Haiku Contest, which was held in April in honor of National Poetry Month.

The Contest requested entries of haikus about humanism and humanist values. Submissions were required to be in the form of a haiku, a seemingly simple form of poetry in three lines: five syllables on line one, seven syllables on line two, and five syllables on line three.

The AHA received eighty-four entries, and the judges chose seven of their favorites. Here are the winning poems and poets:

The ballots are in! All of the EC members on the ballots were re-elected in a nearly unanimous landslide.

Fred Levine : Programs

Kevin Smith: Compliance

Frank H Wind: Newsletter

Sharpen the mind's quill  
Fill the well with ink and dra  
From experience

—Justin Hauxwell

It's not very hard.  
Common sense shows us the way.  
Love is the answer.

—Steve W

Inhabit nature  
Take hold of your destiny  
Boundless potential

—Jean Waller

World humanity  
A universe of wonders  
My adoration.

—Russell Dick

What leads to progress...  
Fantasy, faith, or prayer?  
No, people move us

—Don Sturm

Live for the moment  
And live for one another  
That's Humanism

—Justin Hauxwell

Pampas grass spreads plumes  
Across this hill. Noon sun comes.  
We feast on brilliance.

—John Laue

### CDHS Executive Council

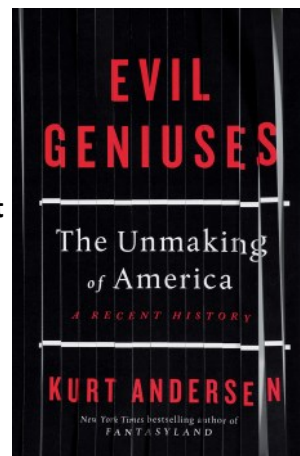
Executive Director	Don Porterfield
Secretary	Rosina Ansaldo
Treasurer	Roland Tozer
Programs, Publicity	Fred Levine
Publications	Frank H Wind
Social Activities	Candace Fuller
Membership, Telephone	Judith McCann
Meetup Coordinator	Fred Levine
Caring Network	Rosina Ansaldo
Compliance	Kevin Smith
Member at Large	Sherry Levine

### Appointed Positions

Hospitality	Mira Peck
Room Arrangements	Frank Robinson

The CDHS Book Group is reading *Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America: A Recent History* by Kurt Andersen,

which discusses the epic history of how America decided that big business gets whatever it wants.



### Contact

Frank Robinson if you want to join the spirited and informative discussion.

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(518) 533-2666 E-mail us at [cdhs.albany@gmail.com](mailto:cdhs.albany@gmail.com)  
Visit us on the web at [humanistsociety.net](http://humanistsociety.net)

The Capital District Humanist Society (CDHS) is an independent, non-profit (and non-prophet), non-partisan and strictly non-religious educational and social organization for those who share humanist values: commitment to education, rational and free inquiry, democracy, social concerns and fellowship. CDHS is affiliated with the four major humanist organizations - the American Humanist Association (AHA), the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) and the Humanists International (HI).

There are five types of CDHS member support: Individual, \$50/yr; Family, \$80/yr; Sustaining, \$100/yr; Patron, \$150/yr; and Lifetime Member, one contribution of \$1000 or more.

**Members** receive our publication, *The Humanist Monthly*, and vote by mail each September on the make-up of the governing Executive Council. Members are eligible for election to the Executive Council and may also serve as appointed officials. Members are welcome to attend Executive Council meetings.

The IRS recognizes CDHS as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, all donations, both cash and materials with established "fair market value", qualify as charitable contributions for income tax purposes.

**Donations** are gratefully accepted to help speed our growth. CDHS is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization under the IRS Code. Financial disclosure information and our annual report are available upon request.

**If you know** of someone who may be interested in CDHS, please pass this newsletter along or give us the name; we will send a sample copy or two with no obligation.

**We value your input.** In the best humanist tradition, CDHS has no rigid picture of itself. We ask you to join us, not follow us. What activities and services would you like CDHS to provide its members? Send us your suggestions, questions, and comments.



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PO Box 11209  
Loudonville, NY 12211-0209

FIRST CLASS

Address service requested

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**MEMBER SUPPORT FORM**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ 'Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City ++ State ++ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

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** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

- |   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership              | \$ 50                                   | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership                  | \$ 80                                   | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member                  | \$100                                   | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron                             | \$150                                   | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member                        | one-time contribution of \$1000 or more | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional tax-deductible donation | \$ _____                                | _____ |

***Please Make checks payable to CDHS***

☐ Please send me additional information