

The Idaho Humanist

Humanists of Idaho is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and the Council for Secular Humanism. We are a non-profit corporation organized to promote ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism in the state of Idaho through public awareness, education, and community involvement.

Oct 2001

<http://go.to/hoi>

humanist@email.com

(208) 429-1866

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 super-naturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that all 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 and ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,

Official publication of the American Humanist Association

Responding to tragedy

In the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11th, much media coverage has focused on people of faith and how they have been coping with or responding to the tragedy. But humanists have also been deeply affected. Humanists around the country have felt compelled to speak out, and have been using the Internet to draw closer together as a community and to discuss how to respond. Our web site has several statements from leading humanist organizations in response to the attacks. In this issue we also include letters from humanists around the country.

One of the first questions humanists asked was “How can we help collectively, not just as individuals?” The Council for Secular Humanism has set up S.H.A.R.E. (Secular Humanist Aid and Relief Effort), which will direct money collected to a fund established by the City of New York for families of the uniformed services personnel who lost their lives in the rescue effort. Donations can be made out the Council for Secular Humanism and send to CSH, P.O. Box 664, Amherst, NY. Please note on your check that the donation is for S.H.A.R.E.

Humanists are also encouraged to support the American Red Cross at 1-800-HELP-NOW.

Halloween Party

Humanists of Idaho will be having a Halloween get together on Sunday, October 28th. It will be at Nicolle and Daniel Foster’s house, 2815 Tamarack Drive in Boise at 7:30 PM. Call Nicolle at 344-4622 for details. Come, bring a friend and join us for an evening of spook-filled escape from the madness and terror of recent days. Costumes are optional.

Inside This Issue

A Place At the Table.....	2
Religious Root.....	3
Member News.....	3
Upcoming Events.....	4

A Place at the Table

Herb Silverman is president of Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry in Charleston, SC

I had an interesting and very worthwhile experience on Sunday afternoon. A Unity Prayer Service was organized by members of the Baha'i faith here in Charleston, SC. Religious leaders of all faiths were invited, as well as some civic and community leaders. As president of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry, I was also invited. I told the organizer that I would not be saying a prayer because I did not believe in any deities to pray to, but that I would be happy to make a statement of unity. They agreed. The service included a representative from several mainstream Christian denominations as well as an AME, Greek Orthodox, Quaker, Islam, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and Unitarian representative. Several politicians were also given a platform. About 20 people spoke for three minutes each...

Afterward, many people told me that they liked what I had to say. Some also said that they agreed with us more than they did with the Fundamentalist Christians (who ignored this Unity Service). Should such unity events occur in your community, I highly recommend that you request a place at the table. Here was my statement:

During this time of mourning and remembrance, the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry call on all people to respond with thoughtful reason and compassion. We pledge our best efforts to help one another, and to defend the rights of all citizens and residents of our nation, regardless of their philosophical or religious beliefs or national origins.

Some in our own secular community have suffered prejudice and exclusion because we do not share the religious beliefs of the majority.

. At this time, we feel particular compassion for those Muslim Americans who are being mistreated. We must all remember that the acts of terrorism were the work of individual extremists and that no racial, ethnic, or religious group is responsible for them. We must not react with personal acts of hate and violence. In the words of Martin Luther King, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

As we struggle to cope with the consequences of attack, and possible further attacks, there will be great temptation to restrict freedom of speech and other freedoms in the name of national security. This would also be a great tragedy. Governments and guns alone cannot maintain freedom. Nor can the tactics of terrorists destroy it. The truest defense of a civilized society is a culture that respects each person while taking into consideration the needs of all. Some individuals with absolutist views often demonize people simply because they are different.

Rev. Jerry Falwell recently stated that certain groups he disapproves of, including secularists, evoked God's anger against America and must therefore share the blame for this devastation. These words could just as easily have come from the lips of Osama bin Laden. It is precisely this kind of righteous finger pointing that we hope people of conscience everywhere will repudiate. Rather than focusing only on who to blame, let us address root causes. Rather than being dragged down to the level of others, let us rise to the height of our own ideals.

The way we react to the challenges before us will shape our world far more than the recent acts of terrorism. We are gathered today, both religious and secular members of our community, with the shared belief that we must treat our fellow human beings with respect and dignity. This provides evidence of something more important than the creeds that all too often divide us. It is our common humanity, which unites us.

Religious root

Printed Sept 23 Idaho Statesman

I am concerned that in response to the attacks on our country by religious extremists, our leaders are trying to encourage religious feelings with mass prayer rallies on public property. They forget that religion caused these attacks in the first place.

We live on one planet, where no religion has a majority and where a billion people have no religion at all. How sad that in such times most of us pray to a God who in our minds would condemn most of humanity because they don't talk to him or call him by the right name.

What unites the major religions is also what sets them at each other's throats: the idea that God will reward all those who follow the one true faith and punish all others. This idea that belief alone, not living a good and moral life, is the key to heaven, is what brings forth extremists. Hell, after all, is a place where we imagine eternal violence being carried out against "infidels". Terrorism is insignificant by comparison.

If humanity is to survive, religions must give up the idea that people with different beliefs deserve violence in the next world, because it breeds violence in this world we can no longer afford.

*Chris Struble, President,
Humanists of Idaho*

Next Meeting

This month's membership meeting will be on Thursday, Oct 4 at 7:30 PM, at the Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton, Boise.

This month's meeting will focus on discussion of the Sept 11 tragedies, including readings of responses and comments from humanists organizations and individuals form around the world. Also to be discussed are campus outreach and fall volunteer activities.

Nameless

Letter to the Strubles, Sept 25

Dear Chris, I just reread your letter to the editor and I want to say thank you. Yours is the first and only letter to the editor that I fully agree with on this subject, and I read them all, though some are hard to take.

How I appreciate your expressing these views. I have never written a letter to the editor of any paper in any place I've lived in, so I would never write in. I've never written an anonymous letter either, and part of me is ashamed for doing so now. But I felt I had to express the relief of not feeling so alone in my convictions, since even my family and friends don't think like I do in this respect.

Sincerely, *Sorry to be Nameless*

Member News

Welcome to new members, Chris and Kirsten Madden of Coeur d'Alene.

In an effort to make budgeting and book keeping easier for the group, we would like to try to bring everyone to an October membership due date. In your newsletter many of you will find a renewal form for your membership that gives you the amount you owe to bring your membership current through October 2002. If you have any questions or concerns about this please contact Chris or LeAnne at 362-6873.

To Nameless

Dear Nameless,

Don't be sorry. I understand why you feel you cannot speak out about your views. But I wish you had told me your name so I could thank you and say how much your letter meant to me. I will post this exchange on our web site in hope you will find it one day and contact us.

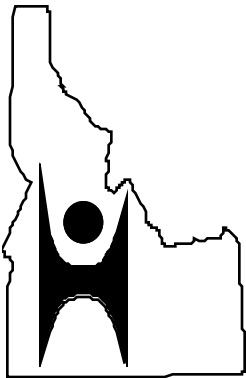
You must understand you are not alone. Others have contacted me both openly and anonymously to express support for my letter. I wrote it not just for myself but so that more of us can openly proclaim our views so we don't have to be nameless anymore.

"You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope some day you'll join us, and the world will live as one."

-- John Lennon

Upcoming Events

- Oct 4, 2001 General Membership Meeting
7:30 PM at the Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton
- Oct 27, 2001 Make a Difference Day
- Oct 28, 2001 Halloween Party
7:30 PM, 2815 Tamarack Dr (see inside
for details)



Humanists of Idaho
P.O. Box 44913
Boise, ID 83711-0913