

HUMANIST

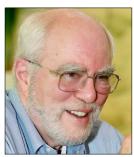
Vol. XXXIX No. 9 September 2025 A Publication of the Capital District Humanist Society Connecting the Secular Humanist Community of Upstate New York, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont

Sunday, September 14th, 2025

In Person at 12:30 PM and Online at 1:00 PM

U.S. Policy on China

Since the Obama Administration announced its Pivot to Asia policy in 2011, U.S.-China relations have been in a downward spiral. The trade war, the pandemic, growing technology competition, rising tensions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, and contrasting approaches to the Russia-Ukraine conflict have collectively fed a sense of fatalism that the countries were heading toward the abyss of outright economic decoupling and a disastrous military conflict.



Dr. Joseph Gerson

Dr. Joseph Gerson is President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, and was a member of the Nihon Hidankyo Nobel Peace Prize delegation in December 2024. He served as Co-chair of the Committee for a Sane U.S.-China Policy, and former Vice-President of the International Peace Bureau, Vice President of the Nobel Peace Prize recipient organization, the International Peace Bureau, and as Director of Programs and Disarmament Coordinator the American Friends Service Committee's Northeast Region. He was a co-founder of the United for Peace and Justice Coalition. He has often delivered keynote speeches in Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the annual World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs.

Dr. Gerson did his undergraduate work at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and received his PhD in politics and international security studies from the Union Institute and College.

His books include Empire and the Bomb: How the U.S. Uses Nuclear Weapons to Dominate the World, The Sun Never Sets...

Confronting the Network of U.S. Foreign Military Bases, The Deadly Connection: Nuclear War and U.S. Foreign Military Intervention, and With Hiroshima Eyes: Atomic War, Nuclear Extortion and Moral Imagination. His articles have appeared in The Boston Globe, Eurasia Review, Common Dreams, Truthout and other publications.

The program will take place both in person (at 12:30 PM) and online (at 1:00 PM) via Zoom. The in-person event will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, NY. It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be available at the inperson meeting before the speaker's presentation, but please bring your own beverage. Current paid CDHS members will automatically receive an invite to the on-line meeting via email. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please see the paragraph below to request an email invitation to attend.

This event is free and open to the public. It will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, New York and via Zoom. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please follow the instructions below to request an email invitation to attend.

ANYONE WHO IS NOT A CURRENT PAID MEMBER of CDHS can attend. Send an email request to: CDHS.Albany@gmail.com. Please send the request several days prior to the meeting.

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)

On Sunday, October 12th, 2025, 12:30 PM (In Person) and 1:00 PM (Online) The Capital District Humanist Society Presents:

What's So Funny About Humanism?

Who says humanists don't know how to laugh?

Join award-winning stand-up comedian and Executive Director of the American Humanist Association, Fish Stark, for a stand-up comedy presentation that lets us laugh at ourselves just as much as we laugh at the Christian Right. Covering humanist history, ethics, and of course the loyal opposition - and referencing the comedy styles of American humanist humorists from Mark Twain to Quinta Brunson, George Carlin to Kurt Vonnegut, and even a Brit or two - come ready to laugh at the state of the world and our struggle to strive for humanity within it."



Fish Stark

Prior to coming to the AHA, Fish was the Head of Program + Curriculum at Legends, an educational technology startup, where he led research and implementation teams to create products that helped children build self-confidence, positive mental health, and critical thinking skills.

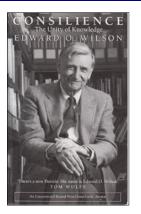
Previously, Fish served as the Director of Programs at Peace First, a global nonprofit that provides training and funding to youth social justice activists, where he led a global team of organizers who empowered thousands of youth grantees in 140+ countries to make lasting change in their communities, and worked with organizations such as the Red Cross and Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation to develop youth leadership programs.

Fish's other professional experiences include managing progressive political campaigns, leading a mentorship program in the West Virginia coalfields with the American Friends Service Committee, building a nationally recognized peer-to-peer bullying prevention program, and teaching students from pre-school to high school.

A self-proclaimed developmental psychology nerd who is passionate about giving everyone the tools to live lives of meaning, service, and self-determination, Fish holds a Master's degree in Education with a concentration in child development and psychology from Harvard University, and a Bachelor's degree from Yale University with a certificate in Education Studies. While at Yale, Fish served as a student board member of the Yale Humanist Community and received a Dean's Prize for his work to build a stronger relationship between Yale and New Haven. He moonlights as an award-winning stand-up comedian and has performed in 13 states.

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CDHS Book Group is reading Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge by Edward Osborne Wilson. The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays.



Contact Frank Robinson if you would like to join the spirited and informative discussion.

CDHS Executive Council

Executive Director Don Porterfield
Secretary Vacant
Treasurer Roland Tozer
Programs, Publicity Fred Levine
Publications Carol Quantock

Social Activities Candace Fuller
Membership, Telephone Judith Herbert
Meetup Coordinator Fred Levine
Compliance Vacant
Member at Large Vacant

Appointed Positions

Hospitality Sue Parry
Room Arrangements Frank Robinson
Caring Network Rosina Ansaldo

Election for CDH\$ Executive Council Positions Begins

CDHS will be holding an on-line election in September for these six positions on our Executive Council:

Executive Director Membership Treasurer
Secretary Socials Editor, Humanist Monthly Newsletter

We will using the ElectionBuddy System for this online election. Voting will begin on September 1, 2025 and continue through September 16, 2025. Members should watch their emails for a message from mail.electionbuddy.com in early September. The email will provide a unique link for each CDHS membership to access their online ballot. Please note that each CDHS membership level (Individual, Family, Sustaining, Patron, or Life) is entitled to **one** vote. We will report the election results in the October Newsletter and via email. Please contact Don Porterfield at cdhs.albany@gmail.com if you have any questions about this election.



Volunteer Opportunities On the CDHS Executive Committee

EC Vacancies: CDHS is continuing its search for volunteers to fill vacant positions on the Executive Committee: <u>Compliance Officer</u> and <u>Member-at-Large</u>. These positions require a minimal amount of work done on a monthly basis. Neither position is difficult, but necessary for records and reporting purposes. Contact Don Porterfield at <u>CDHS.Albany@gmail.com</u>.

Ready for a Photo Op?

Or Not...



As your editor, I've been including photos of members, significant others, and guests that have been submitted for publication in articles about past events, socials, and meetings. In order to ensure that anyone who does not want their

image reproduced in this newsletter, please reach out to me at cdhs.albany@gmail.com and express their wishes. Additionally, if you bring a non-member guest to a CDHS event, please make sure that they are aware that photos will be taken, so they have the option of staying out of range.

Carol Quantock, Editor



RECAP OF OUR AUGUST SPEAKER'S TALK

by Frank Robinson

Whitney Phillips and Mark Brockway spoke about their book, *The Shadow Gospel: How Anti-Liberal Demonology Possessed U.S. Religion, Media, and Politics*.

Well, not all of it, but a big part. Phillips said what's involved here is not love of God but hatred of the "liberal devil." Today's American right thrives on conflating "liberals" (and Democrats) with Satan. Indeed, for them the category extends even to some conservatives and Christians not fully on board with their political project.

But another key point is the complexity of this political landscape, with some of the issues involved not being obviously political. For example, DEI, obsessively demonized by today's American right. Phillips opined that the DEI idea shouldn't even be politically divisive. [Perhaps a naive notion — FSR.] Anyhow, she suggested that this rightist movement is fear-driven, while it's not even clear what the threat is — a "fight against shadows," she called it.

Brockway traced today's anti-liberal demonization as the successor to 1950's anti-communism, with its fears of subversion. He also cited a 1942 preacher gathering identifying "liberalism" as a threat to the Christianity they valorized, thus rejecting the "social gospel" of compassion for the disadvantaged. Schools pushing such ideas seen as a particular threat — the preachers felt a need to save children's souls from Satan, which was linked with communism. Still today (despite the USSR's demise) invoked as a bogeyman by the right, the name "Marx" is ubiquitous in their messaging.

But the bigger bogeyman now is homosexuality, especially transgenderism, the new thing they want to protect children against in schools. Here again, transgenderism is coded as being associated with the liberal left. And here too, Brockway suggested such matters shouldn't even be political issues. He questioned what the term "liberal" even really means anyway. The right treats it as referring to everything in American culture they loathe, especially anything having to do with sexuality.

Trump was quoted talking about kids' gender being changed in schools without parental consent. But the right cloaks its crusade in language about "local control, school choice, and protecting parents' rights" which, Brockway said, "sounds much less nuts."

A recording of this presentation is available at: https://youtu.be/r4nyLgz3m7w.

September Social — Art of the Brick: The Most Elaborate Display of Lego Art Saturday, September 13, 2025

11:00 AM - Noon tour. Arrive by 10:45 AM if you did not purchase your ticket online. Senior price \$22.90 + \$4.00 booking fee. Children \$20.99 + \$4.00 booking fee, in case you want to bring a grandchild.

Go to <u>feverup.com</u> to purchase your ticket(s). To guarantee a ticket, it's advisable to purchase your ticket ahead of time online. For information on the display, go to https://theartofthebrickexpo.com/schenectady/.

This display is traveling around the world and has arrived in Schenectady. The collection includes many sculptures alongside reimagined versions of some of the world's most famous masterpieces such as Michelangelo's David, Van Gogh's Starry Night and Da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

Many of us have used Legos over the years, as well as our children and grandchildren.

We will gather inside the Armory for the tour that begins promptly at 11:00.

Schenectady Armory, 125 Washington Avenue, Schenectady. Lot C, adjacent to Armory Studios, is designated for free ADA parking. Street parking is also available and free on weekends.

After the tour we will go to Clinton's Ditch, 112 South College Street, Schenectady for lunch (https://www.onefortheditch.com/). You may sign up to one or the other or both. We look forward to seeing you there.

Email Dee Fuller at candacelf13@gmail.com by September 11 if you plan to attend.

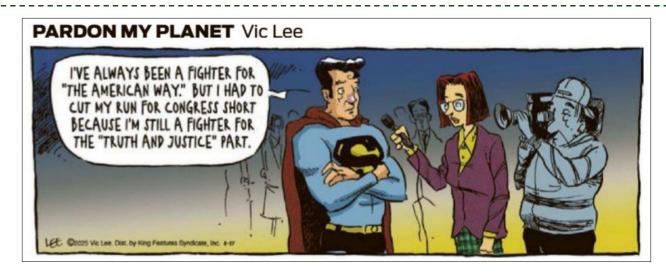




Calls to Action/Get Involved

- Monday, September 1, 12:00 Noon to 4:00 PM: Labor Day Rally and Celebration, co-sponsored by the Capital District Area Labor Federation, the Greater Capital Region Building and Construction Trades Council and the Labor Parade Committee. Lanthier's Grove, 4 Dunsbach Ferry Road, Latham. Bring your family for good food, fun games and a day of celebrating why it's better in a union!! (https://www.mobilize.us/mayday/event/816210/)
- Monday, September 1 and September 8, 5:00-6:00 PM: Guilderland Honk and Wave: Join your neighbors for a weekly honk & wave at one of our busiest intersections to protest the actions of our current administration. Bring signs and a friend or two. Get creative and fun with your signs. Need inspiration? Do an internet search for creative No Kings Day signs. Location: State Farm Road and Western Avenue, Albany. (https://www.mobilize.us/indivisible/event/818816/)
- ♦ Wednesdays, September 3, 10, 17, 24, 4:30-5:30 PM: What is the RushHour Overpass Resistance? We know people need "social proof" to inform them how best to respond to the country's crisis. Our goal is to remind neighbors of our nation's emergency and to suggest simple actions they can take and encourage support of a pro-democratic Nation. We literally stand over our banner messages and signs, waving at passing cars, reminding everyday people that they are not alone in these unprecedented times. Please join the "Bridge Party"! Where: Western Avenue, Albany on a CDTA busline, off-street parking. (https://www.mobilize.us/indivisible/event/835034/)
- Sunday, September 7, 3:00-4:00 PM: Letter Writing to Younger Pennsylvania Voters: Write letters to help turn out younger voters for the 2025 Pennsylvania Supreme Court judicial elections! In 2025, three justices on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court are up for re-election, and the results could influence court decisions on major issues like mail voting, gun safety laws, and public education. Most registered voters do not participate in odd-year elections like this one. Our letters will encourage younger voters to turn out, and will also provide a number to reach a volunteer support team for authentic conversations about this election and the importance of voting. Guilderland Public Library, 2228 Western Avenue, Albany. (https://www.mobilize.us/indivisible/event/826782/)
- Monday, September 8, 6:00 PM or Thursday, September 11, 12:00 Noon: The Art of Advocacy Webinar with Rachel Deitch. Ready to do more to make your voice heard? We're training volunteers to get their hands in the political mud with us to build an advocacy team to advance our policy goals. This training will equip you with the know-how to speak truth to power—without breaking the rules. You'll learn exactly how advocacy and lobbying differ, and how to use both to push our values into the halls of power while being 501(c)(3) compliant. We'll dig into sharp strategies for swaying state and federal leaders, crafting messages that stick, and the logistics of how to have a successful meeting with your elected officials that actually builds influence. You'll leave with resources, templates, and tips—ready to be a bold, ethical force for reason, compassion, and human dignity. September 8th registration at (https://americanhumanist-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/n-StWUzkR1uzpAn2StAX5w? link id=6&can id=57ec75932e3f33bd390582c4b8f9dc57&source=email-humanist-organizer-digest-3&email referrer=email 2861058&email subject=humanist-organizer-digest-3&email-referrer=email 2861058&email subject=humanist-organizer-digest-3&email-referrer=email-programmer
- Ongoing: Card Campaign: The Card Campaign researches and then writes cards based on the information retrieved from verified sources. Sources can include articles from unbiased legacy media and independent media that are factual and impartial. Also, journalists who are producing work independently, and articles from independent writers who are following the administration's implementation of a dictatorial government. (https://cc4democracy.com/)
- Ongoing: Progressive Caucus Action Fund: uniting the progressive movement around common goals. This organization provides information and downloadable materials for people and groups to use to solve problems, plan, and organize to make their voices heard. (https://www.progressivecaucusactionfund.org/)

<u>Editor's note:</u> Each month, this column will highlight events, action items, or other items of interest to CDHS members. If you are aware of any other volunteer opportunities that would be a good fit for CDHS, please contact Don Porterfield at <u>CDHS.Albany@gmail.com</u>, and type in **Community Events** in the subject line.



Humanists International at 73: From Amsterdam to a Global Movement

(The Humanist International Newsletter, August 29, 2025)

On 26 August 1952, humanists from across the world gathered in Amsterdam for the first World Humanist Congress. Guided by pioneers such as H. J. Blackham, and with the cooperation of colleagues from Holland, India, America, and Austria, they established the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) – today known as Humanists International.

The Congress produced the Amsterdam Declaration, a landmark statement affirming the democratic, scientific, creative, ethical and liberating principles of Humanism as "a way of life for everyone everywhere."

The Declaration emerged during a world reeling from the trauma of World War II and standing firm against the threat of dogmatic ideologies, offering a rational, ethical alternative rooted in democratic human development. It emphasized that moral progress stems from human reasoning, not supernatural authority, and that science offers the means, but human values must define the ends.

Seventy-three years on, Humanists International has

grown into a truly global federation, uniting more than 160 humanist, secular, rationalist and freethought organizations in over 80 countries. Our work spans continents and cultures, connecting grassroots initiatives with international advocacy, always with the aim of advancing reason, compassion and human dignity.

Recent years have seen important milestones. At our 2025 General Assembly in Luxembourg, delegates elected Maggie Ardiente as President, following Andrew Copson's tenure. This change represents not just a new face at the helm but a renewal of leadership at a pivotal time for the movement.

Alongside leadership renewal, our Grants Program has continued to provide lifelines to humanist groups around the world. In 2025, over £32,000 was distributed to projects tackling superstition, promoting science and critical thinking, and building stronger secular organizations in regions where resources are scarce. This funding is more than financial support, it is a statement of solidarity with humanists who often work in difficult or hostile environments.

Advocacy, likewise, remains central to our mission. At the United Nations, Humanists International has spoken out on issues ranging from the role of religion in perpetuating gender-based violence to the importance of protecting LGBTI+ rights. We have joined with over 1,200 other NGOs in urging the renewal of the UN mandate on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, ensuring that international commitments keep pace with human rights realities.

Our annual Freedom of Thought Report continues to be a vital tool in this work. The 2024 edition once again shed light on discrimination and

persecution faced by the non-religious worldwide, highlighting restrictions on freedom of belief, blasphemy laws and systemic inequalities. This report has become an authoritative source for governments, media and advocacy groups alike.

Looking back, the founders of 1952 could not have imagined the scale and reach of the movement they launched in Amsterdam. Yet the challenges they sought to address – dogma, authoritarianism and the denial of human dignity – remain with us. Humanists International continues to meet those challenges head-on, inspired by the Amsterdam Declaration and powered by a global community of supporters.

As we celebrate our 73rd anniversary, we do so with gratitude for the past and determination for the future. Humanists International is not only defending freedom of thought and supporting those at risk; it is also building a global humanist movement equipped to shape a world grounded in evidence, ethics and empathy.

Here's to the next chapter of humanist progress.

2025 Humanists International Conference attendees in Luxembourg. Don Porterfield is in the fourth row, fifth from the left



We had a great time at the Pegasus Restaurant and the Bronck House on Saturday, August 21.

Eleven of us ate a great lunch, followed by a very interesting, informational tour of the Bronck House and environs led by a young tour guide who impressed us with her in-depth knowledge. She had just graduated from college this and had only been on the job three months. It was also a beautiful, sunny late summer day!

Interfaith Alliance Applauds Federal Court Decision Rejecting Religious Coercion in Texas Schools

(from the Interfaith Alliance Newsletter, August 20, 2025)

Interfaith Alliance, a leading advocate for healthy boundaries between government and religion, today welcomed a federal district court's preliminary injunction blocking Texas school district defendants from implementing Texas Senate Bill 10, a law that would require the Ten Commandments to be displayed in every public school classroom across the state.

In his decision in Rabbi Nathan v. Alamo Heights Independent School District, the federal judge ruled that the Texas law likely violates both the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment. He made clear that "[T]he displays are likely to pressure the child-Plaintiffs into religious observance, meditation on, veneration, and adoption of the State's favored religious scripture, and into suppressing expression of their own religious or nonreligious background and beliefs while at school."

"This ruling is a victory for the Constitution, for Texas families, and for true religious freedom," said Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, president and CEO of Interfaith Alliance. "Public schools should never be used to impose one religious viewpoint on all students. By rejecting SB10 as a violation of the First Amendment, the court ensures that public schools remain places where every student belongs, regardless of their and their families' particular religious beliefs. And that the home and house of worship be the location for religious instruction, not outsourcing that sacred responsibility to the public school. As a pastor, a parent of children in public school, and an American, I applaud the court for defending the constitutional promise of religious freedom for all. Interfaith Alliance pledges to continue leading the fight for religious freedom in public schools with our diverse religious and civil rights allies."

The court's decision upholds a long-standing precedent set by the U.S. Supreme Court in Stone v. Graham (1980), which ruled that mandatory displays of the Ten Commandments in public schools violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

Interfaith Alliance and its partners are proud to be at the forefront of efforts across the country to defend against and defeat similar bills advanced by Christian nationalist activists - all of which seek to promote religious coercion and break down critical boundaries between religion and government. Strengthened and encouraged by rulings like this one, the organization will continue to mobilize a diverse array of faith leaders and communities to safeguard diversity and free expression in our public schools and beyond.

"There are many more battles ahead," said Rev. Raushenbush. "We're confident that all of us on the side of the Constitution and diverse multi-faith democracy can continue to win critical victories for our democratic values.

apital District Humanist Society, Inc. PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209 (518) 533-2666 E-mail us at cdhs.albany@gmail.com Visit us on the web at 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 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.

Tell the Senate to reject the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act!

(via email from the American Humanist Association/Center for Freethought Equality)

Our vote is the most powerful tool we have to help ensure that every American has a say in the decisions that impact their communities and lives. But freedom and democracy are not guaranteed in America - these principles have to be actively fostered and protected.

Yet again, the majority in Congress is trying to make voting inaccessible by pushing a bill that disenfranchises voters by needlessly making them jump through hoops - and it has already passed the House.

The SAVE Act is a vehicle for voter suppression deceptively proposed as an 'election integrity' measure to 'secure elections'. This legislation would require American citizens who are registering or updating their registration to vote to go in person and present proof of citizenship documents. Among many other grave concerns, this measure would disenfranchise mail-in, online, and automatic voter registration that have been trusted parts of our electoral process for years. It would also needlessly create barriers for eligible voters, like the tens of millions of married people who've changed their surnames, people who have changed addresses, and rural voters and voters in the military.

We need to make it easier to vote in our country: not harder. Take just one minute <u>NOW to tell your senators in Congress to soundly reject the SAVE Act.</u>

Sincerely, Isabella Russian Policy Manager



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MEMBER SUPPORT FORM

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