

PIQUE

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

Upcoming SHSny Programs and Events

ZOOM Happy Hour,
Every Sunday. 5PM
ZOOM Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9806344432?pwd=c0NrNUoweDVGWWho2diTvYmJlVjVVGdz09#success>

Topics include a wide range of timely and humanistic issues

Sunday Brunch & Conversation
Sunday, Feb. 20th
Noon-2PM
The Globe Restaurant
158 E. 23rd. St., NYC

Topic: What does personal responsibility mean to you?

Fiction Book Club Info
Wednesday, Feb. 9th,
7:30 Via ZOOM - See [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for details

Non-Fiction Book Club
Thursday, Feb, 3rd, 7PM
- Online - See [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for details

It's Darwin Day:
FEBRUARY 11/19, 2022
Darwin Day: Speaker: George Beccaloni, UK Director of the Wallace Correspondence Project.

Unlike Caesar We Have No Time To Weep

By Dr. David I. Orenstein

There is a very old saying, "...and Caesar wept for there were no more worlds to conquer." Attributed to be about Alexander the Great, the phrase often connotes the idea that when we meet the purpose of our lives, that feelings of emptiness and a lack of purposelessness will invade our psyche, leaving us lost and wanting.

It is true that Alexander might have put himself out of business by conquering the known world. But in reality, and in an alternative reading of the quote, he might more accurately be weeping out of anger rather than sorrow. For now, there were no new throats to cut.

Regardless of how you might interpret the saying it still has deep meaning to me. No, I am not assuming we humanists are set to begin a bloodthirsty rampage across Europe and Asia or, to a lesser extent, start pillaging our neighbor's yard. Such actions would be anti-humanistic to say the least!

But the saying does deny the fact that life is an open, rather than closed system. That there are choices for us to make, mountains still left to climb, ideas, people and places to become acquainted with - all before we leave the stage. A humanist life well lived is a life spent moving forward like a shark, who would otherwise perish should it stop moving, rather than an autocratic genocidal emperor.

So there is no time to weep, each of us being the "Caesar" of our own lives, but there is still much left to accomplish and to build out for the future. To create for our current creature comforts and more importantly for human rights, not just for the NOW but for those who come after us.



Caesar (Continued)

We should be active in creating a world humanity that encourages love and protection of each other and our environment. As supporters of truth, science and secular democracy. We are agents of change that support human, civil and ecological rights. And according to data collected by Pew Research and even the Catholic and Evangelical churches, secular numbers are growing faster than our religious brethren.

And here Caesar and shark alike can be masters of their domain. Just as we secular humanists view our times and lives with equal vigor. But with our hearts and eyes, as well as our motives and actions, all firmly planted on making the world in which we live safer, richer and kinder.

New Humanist Voices – Race and School Shootings

By Anton

Recently I came across [this article](#) about the press coverage surrounding a recent alleged school shooter, where articles about him show a younger version of him praying. The article pointed out the inherent racial double standards the image entails. Most school shooters are white and male, yet the media humanizes them, painting them as victims, either of mental illness or bullying, as if to excuse them. Yet whenever a black teen is killed by the police, the press shows the victim engaged in antisocial behavior such as smoking or using drugs, making it seem as though they brought it on themselves. Also, the terminology is biased, as whites who commit mass shootings are commonly referred to as “gunmen” or “shooters” while nonwhites are deemed “killers” or “terrorists.”

Yet the article raises two issues. First, the fact that school shooters are described as “mentally ill” as if that would somehow exonerate them. Why should mental illness be equated with murder? Such only further stigmatizes mental illness and exacerbates systematic prejudice. When much was said about the perpetrator of the Sandy Hook shooting having Asperger’s Syndrome, as a spectrumite I feared that those like me would be grouped in with the likes of these evildoers.

Second, using prayer as a shorthand for goodness indicates religious privilege. If someone praying is supposed to make them sympathetic, does it mean they’re unsympathetic if they don’t pray? Even as nontheists grow in numbers in the US they are still marginalized and stigmatized, as there are those who actually think atheists go around sacrificing babies all day. After all, the article shows that being religious doesn’t necessarily prevent one from becoming a murderer.

I know it may seem churlish to complain ableism and religious privilege about while ignoring racism. It’s true that nonbelievers are not the ones killed by the police or paid less for the same job. I do not wish to ignore the inherent racism in this country that persists to this day. I only wish to point out the other biases involved, those that do not garner as much attention.

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The Secular Humanist Society of New York in Partnership with CFI-NY and NYCA is pleased to announce our:

DARWIN DAY PROGRAM

Time: Saturday, Feb 19, 2022, 12:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

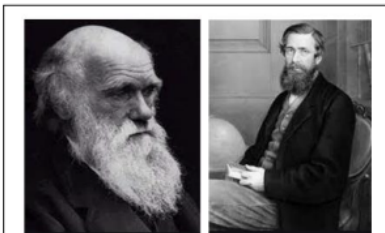
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87082544971?pwd=RHdjaU1BelNMM2pjTzV4dFNld2h1UT09>

Meeting ID: 870 8254 4971

Passcode: 139780



George Beccaloni holding a 1st Edition of the *Origin of Species*, dedicated to A.R. Wallace from Charles Darwin



Darwin

A.R. Wallace

Join us online as we meet George Beccaloni, British naturalist, and founding Director of the Wallace Correspondence Project, who will discuss the work of Alfred Russel Wallace.

Wallace is the co-discoverer of Natural Selection. Yet he is often omitted from the history of the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, and his role in shaping modern biology.

Together Wallace and Darwin proposed the theory of evolution by natural selection in 1858, and their prolific subsequent work laid the foundations of modern evolutionary biology - and much more besides.

However, Wallace's extraordinary quest to understand how evolution works is not very well known. Many seem to think that he discovered natural selection by chance, but this is very far from the truth.

This talk charts the development of Wallace's ideas about evolution, from his early life in Neath in Wales (UK) where he first became interested in the subject, through his four-year expedition to the Amazon (which ended with the destruction of his irreplaceable specimens and notes), to his epic eight-year journey around the Malay Archipelago where he finally discovered the process which drives the evolution of life on planet Earth.

Announcing New Board Member – Dr. David Madison

The Board is pleased to welcome Dr. David Madison to the SHSNY board as an ad hoc member until he is voted on by the membership to take his full seat on the board in the coming weeks.

An active member in the Clergy Project, David is a well-respected author and speaker on humanism and atheism. His research focus is on the fallacies of faith traditions and, in particular, the failures of Christian theology.

Having an acknowledged intellectual such as David on the Society's team can only highlight our leadership in the areas of both freethought and being good without god.

Reminder - It's 2022 - Time to Renew Your SHSNY Membership

What better way to start the new year than with the important renewal of your SHSNY membership? Rates are accessible and your donation is tax deductible and helps support our year-round programs.

You can join/rejoin online at www.shsny.org. We take PayPal, credit and debit card payments and donations.

Announcing our First New Guest Board Member – Kevon Cameron

Starting in February 2022, the board has selected Kevon Cameron to be our first guest board member whose focus will be helping SHSNY reach out to several minority communities in NYC.

Kevon has been an active member of Black Nonbelievers since 2018. He also hosts a show on the Black Nonbelievers Youtube channel specifically focused on highlighting events within the atheist community as well as the organizations and individuals behind the events. The goal being to get people to actually show up and participate either in person or online.

Please join us in welcoming Kevon to his seat on the SHSNY Board. We wish him much success in bringing new people, ideas and programs to our Society in the coming year. Watch for Kevon's future writing in PIQUE as well.

Topic for our Globe Meeting on February 20th

SHSNY board member, Dorothy Kahn, will lead a discussion on free will, humanism their impact on politics and society.

Dorothy will offer insights and perspectives from as far back to the original stoic philosophers to our modern-day theorists, political leaders and religious apologists.

Enjoy great food and wonderful conversation at our live Sunday program.

You Must Be Vaccinated to Attend SHSNY Live Events. You Will Need To Show Proof of Vaccination To Enter the Globe Restaurant.

SHSNY Voting Update and Details

Beginning February 1, 2022, and running through February 10th, SHSNY members in good standing will have electronic access to vote for the current and new slate of board candidates running for the 2022-2024 calendar years.

Your vote for any and all of the candidates affirms your trust and SHSNY's commitment to remain the premier Secular Humanist organization in New York City.

If for any reason you do not receive an email from the Society to vote, please contact us at, info@shsny.org.

**The Secular Humanist Society
Board. Dr. David Orenstein,
Board President, Members:
Nancy Adelman, Jonathan
Engel, Dorothy Kahn, Brian
Lemaire, Carl Marxer, Claire
Miller, John Wagner**

**Mailing Address: P.O Box 7661, FDR
Station, New York, NY 10150**

Warnings Ahead: Book Banning Grows in America

Seattle drops *To Kill a Mockingbird* from its approved school reading list. The holocaust parable, *Maus*, is removed from the shelves of Tennessee schools. A local Pennsylvania government refuses to fund their public library because it hosted an LBTQ support group. In New Jersey, a community refuses to put any librarians on their committee to review school books in an effort to censor access to reading materials.

Carl Sagan wrote, "The dumbing down of America is evidence in the slow decay of substantive content, a kind of celebration of ignorance." It is true that censorship comes from many quarters of society, from both the political right and political left. However, the greatest loss to our world is the regressive destruction of the access to knowledge for the sake of ALT-Right and ALT-Left cancel culture.

As humanists, we stand for knowledge. No matter how inconvenient the truth or personally insulted one may feel about the nature of a content of a book, or the results of an Internet search. Certainly we should protect children from accessing pornographic materials and other age-inappropriate books and online content.

But in a free, democratic and secular society information, like water must flow free even for us to learn, gather and choose what we wish to consume intellectually.

Information censorship is not new. It has been going on for decades in America. But we humanists must be the antidote and the bullwork to ensure the free flow of ideas. To stand together with others to protect content and to ensure the ability for each of us to be free to read, gather and share.

Otherwise, tomorrow it will be YOUR favorite book banned. Or your access to science denied. Or your freedom to gather peacefully to be ignored and stifled.