

# PIQUE

Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

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July 21, 2020

It's the hottest, life- and breath-smothering weekend of the year\*, so pour something refreshing and join us for Online Happy Hour (page 6). To start the discussion we offer essays herein on the human need (or not) for religion, the religious reason Americans dis science, the racial likeliness of Jesus, the babyish-ness of God, and your favorite classical music ... all while we consider Donald Trump as a grifter (Yes), a political philosopher (No), and a 21st century fascist (Not even). Stay cool. —JR

*\*Oh, wait, it could always get worse.*

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## WHERE DID AMERICANS LEARN THEIR DISRESPECT FOR SCIENCE?

Jonathan Engel

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown a spotlight on many of the deficiencies of American society. For example, our lack of any kind of coherent healthcare system. Endemic racial disparities. Unsafe working conditions for those at the bottom of the economic ladder, and more. One of the most dangerous things we've seen has been the off-hand dismissal of hard science. Doctors and scientists who try to tell the American people the truth have been ridiculed and marginalized in the Trump regime. Dr. Anthony Fauci, one of the most highly regarded experts on infectious disease in the world, is the current target of the know-nothing (and proud of it!) Trumpites. His crime: speaking evidence-based truth to power. As a result, many Americans think (if this can be referred to as "thinking") that it's okay to gather in large groups without face coverings no matter what the pointy-headed elitist scientists say. And, no surprise, now many of these people are getting sick. Why do Americans, much more so than in any other western country, have such a low regard for science? Many factors that play into Americans' calamitous disregard for empirical evidence. But our high level of religious belief has to be at the top of the list.

Many Americans, especially in the country's "Bible Belt" (the southeast and parts of the Midwest) grow up steeped in religious beliefs. And what are they taught in Sunday school and church pews (as well as temples and mosques)? They are taught that the finest attribute they can have as human beings is "faith". That is, belief in something for which there is no discernable evidence. In the classic movie "Miracle on 34th Street", there's a scene where the lawyer-hero, played by John Payne, says to the little girl played by Natalie Wood, "Don't you see; faith is believing in

something when common sense tells you not to." That may be faith, or, if you think as I do, delusion. But it certainly isn't science. The essence of the scientific method is that we believe only that for which there is credible evidence.

It is no surprise therefore that states with high levels of religious belief are now the ones that are bearing the brunt of the current surge in Covid cases. Texas, Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma (where the governor, who attended Trump's Covid-19 party disguised as a campaign rally, has just tested positive for the virus), etc., are now paying the price for scorning science on issues such as face masks and social distancing. The insistence that in-person religious services, where people cram together in an enclosed space and chant and sing, are somehow "essential", has also contributed to the spread of the virus in so-called "red states".

Can science prevail? In a recent *New York Times* opinion piece Thomas Friedman called on people to: "Respect science. Respect nature. Respect each other." This week former President Obama called on Americans to "put science over politics". Both are fine sentiments. But neither connects the dots from Americans' high susceptibility in believing dogma for which there is no evidence (including belief in all-powerful deities that are clearly a product of human imagination) to their disdain for science. You can have science or you can have magical fantasy. As we see now in the United States, it's pretty hard to have both.

## ONE CAN ONLY WONDER WHAT COLOR THE SKY IS IN THEIR WORLD

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said this about opening schools: "When he [Trump] says open, he means open in full. Kids being able to attend each and every day at their school. The science should not stand in the way of this."

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## DO WE STILL NEED RELIGION?

### Part 1

*(Transcribed from "Has Science Made Religion Useless?", at bigthink.com, 7/15/2020.)*

*Ed: The video from which the following is transcribed features religious scholars, a primatologist, a neuroendocrinologist, a comedian, and other brilliant minds considering the evolutionary function that religion serves, the power of symbols, and the human need to learn, explore, and know the world around us so that it becomes a less scary place. Part 2 will run next week.*

**FRANS DE WAAL** (Primatologist; Author, *Mama's Last Hug*): Well, religion is an interesting topic because religion is universal. All human societies believe in the supernatural. All human societies have a religion one way or another.

**REZA ASLAN** (Religious scholar; Author, *God: A Human History*): Religion has been a part of the human experience from the beginning. In fact, we can trace the origin of religious experience to before Homo sapiens. We can trace it with some measure of confidence to Neanderthals. We can measure it with a little less confidence all the way to Homo erectus. So we're talking hundreds of thousands of years before our species even existed.

**ROBERT SAPOLSKY** (Neuroendocrinologist; Author, *Behave*): Essentially there has been no culture on Earth that has not invented some form of what could be termed meta-magical thinking, attributing things that cannot be seen, faith-based belief systems, things of that sort. It's universal.

**ASLAN**: Religious thinking is embedded in our cognitive processes. It is a mode of knowing. We're born with it. It's part of our DNA. The question then becomes why. There must be some evolutionary reason for it. There must be a reason, some adaptive advantage to having religious experience or faith experience. Otherwise it wouldn't exist.

**SAPOLSKY**: It makes perfect sense why they've evolved because they're wonderful mechanisms for reducing stress. It is an awful, terrifying world out there where bad things happen and we're all going to die eventually. And believing that there is something, someone responsible for it at least gives some stress reducing attributes built around understanding causality.

**ALAIN DE BOTTON** (Philosopher): Religion starts from the view that we are torn between good and evil. There is definitely a good core, but it's permanently tempted. And so what the individual needs is a structure which will constantly try and tug a person back towards the best of themselves.

**DE WAAL**: Our current religions are just 2,000 or 3,000 years old, which is very young and our species is much older. And I cannot imagine that, for example, 100,000 years or 200,000 years [ago] our ancestors did not have some type of morality. Of course they had rules about how you should behave, what is fair, what is unfair, caring for others. All of these tendencies were in place already so they had a moral system.

And then at some point we developed these present day religions which I think were sort of tacked onto the morality that we had. In societies with 1,000 or several thousand or

millions of people we cannot all keep an eye on each other and that's maybe why we installed religions in these large scale societies where a god kept watch over everybody and maybe they served to codify them or to enforce them or to steer morality in a particular direction that we prefer. And so instead of saying morality comes from god or religion gave us morality, for me that's a big no-no.

**PENN JILLETTE** (Magician, entertainer; Author, *Presto!*) People are good. If you look at the seven billion people on this planet just about seven billion of them are really good. We can really trust them.

Can we please learn something from Las Vegas? Learn something about gambling, right. We know how the odds work. We know the house always wins. In this case the odds are always on someone being good.

**BILL NYE** (The Science Guy; CEO, The Planetary Society): When it comes to ethics and morals and religion to see if there's anything different between what religions want you to do and what you feel you should do, what you think is ethically innate within you. For most people – most people are not inclined to murder people, but certain religions quite reasonably have rules against that. It's antisocial. See if that comes from within you or it comes from outside of you, from without you.

**ROB BELL**: (Spiritual Teacher; Author, *What is the Bible?*): My understanding of spirituality is that this life that we've each been given, the very breath that we took and we're about to take is a gift. That life is a gift and how you respond to it, what you do with it matters.

**PETE HOLMES**: (Comedian, actor): It's not about literal facts or the unfolding of what happened in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. It's a story because sometimes you need an explanation and sometimes you need a story. And a story is going to transform you and symbols are going to transform you. You see this in our culture. Batman is a symbol. Go out on the street and look at how many men, especially, are wearing Batman shirts. It's a symbol. It's something that speaks to our psyche about the pain of a boy who lost his parents using his wound to become super and try and change his reality. That's a symbol. That's a Christ story. That's a hero story and we need those because it's not about at the end of the day winning a televised debate or finding DNA on the Shroud of Turin or proving his burial was here. I've been to Israel. I studied in Jerusalem. They're like, he was crucified here and then they're like well, he was crucified here. Guess what? We didn't start writing that down until 150 years later because nobody gave a shit. It wasn't about that. It was about your inner transformation. You. Yours. I don't care how you get there. It can be photos from the Hubble telescope. It can be Buddhism, atheism, agnosticism, Catholicism. It doesn't matter. Who fucking cares? Whatever gets you there because we're talking about something. An energy that you can feel and be quiet to and respect, but most importantly you can flow with and dance with and feel and listen to and attune to.

*Ed: See the 14-minute video at <https://bigthink.com/videos/has-science-made-religion-useless>*

## GOD IS A SPOILED BABY

**Bob Seidensticker**

*(Excerpted from "When Christians Treat God Like a Baby" at Cross Examined, on patheos.com, 7/11/2020)*

**M**y oldest granddaughter is now four years old, and I remember playing with her in her first year. I found myself treating her like I did my dog. Neither understood English very well, but they could understand tone. She rolls over? "What a clever girl!" She bites Piglet's nose? "What a talented girl!" She burped, she pooped, she has a wet diaper? "What a good girl!"

This is surprisingly analogous to how many Christians treat God. You get what you wanted in prayer? "Thank you, God!" You didn't get what you wanted in prayer? "Thank you, God!" God is too emotionally fragile to handle constructive feedback. Christians aren't supposed to say, "God, the next time you think it'd be instructive to give a five-year-old leukemia, get back on your meds and think again." God is (supposedly) omni-everything and so could achieve any goal without the human cost. God's actions are assumed to be good at the outset, and any negative reaction is your fault for not seeing the hidden good.

God is either giving you great stuff or teaching you important lessons, and no matter what happens, God gets the credit. Whether you got the perfect parking space when you were late or God dealt some tough love by not giving you that promotion, he can't lose. When bad things happen, God is never blamed. That's man's fault. Even natural disasters are recast as part of God's marvelous, inscrutable plan. And when bad things happen to someone, they endured the ordeal only with God's support.

Empty and groundless platitudes like "God doesn't give you more than you can handle" or "God must've needed another angel" or "Everything happens for a reason" litter the internet. Doubt is discouraged, and faith (in the sense of belief despite poor evidence) is put forward as a great virtue.

God is always perfect and infallible, especially when you conclude that before you start. There is even the scholarly discipline of theodicy to add somber scholarly support to this claim. Christians give all the other supernatural beliefs (unicorns, Xenu, Zeus) the critique of a skeptical adult, but their god can only handle baby food. And just like a baby, he's never called to account, never has to clean up his messes, never has to explain himself or follow adult rules. God doesn't even need good evidence that he exists.

## TEE-SHIRT THEOLOGY

*Imprint on a tee shirt sold online:*

**CHRISTIANITY:** The belief that some cosmic Bronze Age Jewish zombie can make you live forever in a magical cloud land if you symbolically eat his flesh and telepathically tell him that you accept him as your master, so he can remove an evil force from your soul that is present in humanity because a rib-woman was convinced by a talking snake to eat from a magical fruit tree. **MAKES PERFECT SENSE**

## JESUS AND MO DISCOVER QUANTUM PHYSICS

*(Transcribed from [jesusandmo.net/comic/quark](http://jesusandmo.net/comic/quark))*

**Jesus:** You scoff at our beliefs, Barmaid, but what about quantum physics?

**Barmaid:** What about it?

**Mohammed:** Subatomic particles behave in incredible ways.

**Jesus:** They're the smallest things in the universe.

**Mo:** Everything is made of them.

**Jesus:** A quark can appear in different locations at the same time.

**Mo:** I think they can even travel through time.

**Jesus:** These are scientifically observed subatomic miracles.

**Barmaid:** Therefore ... what? You can justify believing in any old bullshit you want?

**Mo:** I wouldn't put it in such stark terms, Barmaid ...

**Jesus:** But yes.

## THERE IS NO WHITE JESUS

*(Transcribed from the video forwarded from Diane Ravitch's blog by Sidney Finehirsh. See it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APMu32sC2nM&feature=youtu.be>)*

**Young Man (in church, in prayer):** Jesus, can you hear me? I don't know where to turn. I'm desperate. I need your help.

*(Blinding light, organ music)*

**Black Jesus (in dreadlocks, with an upper-class Brit accent):** I can hear you, my son. And I've always been listening.

**YM:** Who are you?

**BJ:** It is I, Jesus. I heard your prayer, and I've come to help.

**YM:** You're not Jesus.

**BJ:** I ... I am.

**YM:** But doesn't Jesus look a bit more like ...

*(Gestures to painting of standard sacred-heart Jesus)*

**BJ:** Oh! Oh, I see ... er, you thought I'd be white.

**YM:** Kind of, yeah.

**BJ:** Look, I don't know what to tell you. I was born in the Middle East, the Bible's pretty clear about that. It should be obvious that I don't have blonde hair and blue eyes.

**YM:** I guess so.

**BJ:** Plus, have you heard my story? I was arrested by a mob of angry government officials and beaten for a crime I didn't commit. That shit doesn't happen to white people.

**YM:** And there was confusion over who your father was.

**BJ:** Okay, that's just racist.

**YM:** Sorry. It's just ... you're not really what I was expecting, that's all.

**BJ:** Would you like me to fetch White Jesus instead?

**YM:** Oh, could you?

**BJ:** No! There is no White Jesus! It's just me. Now, do you want my help or not?

**YM:** Yeah, I suppose so. After all, black or white, we're both still Christians, right?

**BJ:** I'm guessing now's not the time to tell you I'm Jewish.

**W**henver I'm in doubt, I ask myself, "What would Jesus do?" And then I remember that Jesus chose to be crucified, so maybe his decision-making skills weren't all that great.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUMPISM AND FASCISM

George F. Will

(Excerpted from *washingtonpost.com*, 7/11/2020)

So many excitable Americans are hurling accusations of fascism, there might be more definitions of “fascism” than there are actual fascists. Fascism, one of the 20th century’s fighting faiths, has only faint echoes in 21st-century America’s political regression.

Europe’s revolutionary tradition exalted liberty, equality and fraternity until revolutionary fascism sacrificed the first to the second and third. Fascism fancied itself as modernity armed, science translated into machines, especially airplanes, and pure energy restlessly seeking things to smash. Actually, it was a recoil against Enlightenment individualism: the idea that good societies allow reasoning, rights-bearing people to define for themselves the worthy life.

Individualism, fascists insisted, produces a human dust of deracinated people (Nietzsche’s “the sand of humanity”), whose loneliness and purposelessness could be cured by gusts of charismatic leadership blowing them into vibrant national-cum-tribal collectivities. The gusts were fascist rhetoric, magnified by radio, which in its novelty was a more powerful political tool than television has ever been.

The Enlightenment exalted freedom; fascism postulated destiny for those on “the right side of history”. Fascism was the youthful wave of the future: Mussolini was 39 when he became Italy’s youngest prime minister until then; Hitler became chancellor at 43; Franco was 43 when he ignited the 1936 military insurrection in Spain. ...

Fascism was entertainment built around rallies – e.g., those at Nuremberg – where crowds were played as passive instruments. Success manipulating the masses fed fascist leaders’ disdain for the led. Hitler described them as feminine, the ultimate fascist disparagement. Imagine the contempt a promiser feels for, say, people gulled by a promise that one nation will pay for a border wall built against it by another nation.

Mussolini, a fervent socialist until his politics mutated into a rival collectivism, distilled fascism to this: “Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.” The Nazi Party, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, effected an expansion of socialism’s agenda: Rather than merely melding the proletariat into a battering ram to pulverize the status quo, fascism would conscript into tribal solidarity the entire nation – with exceptions.

Fascism based national unity on shared domestic dreads – of the media as enemies of the people, of elites, or others who prevented national homogeneity and social purification. Jews were reviled as “cosmopolitans”, a precursor of today’s epithet: “globalists”.

In the 1920s, fascism captured Italy, in which, it has been said, the poetry of the Risorgimento – national unification achieved in 1870 – was followed by “the prose of everyday existence”. Mussolini, the bare-chested, jut-jawed, stallion-

mounted alpha male, promised (as Vladimir Putin today does in diminished, sour Russia) derivative masculinity for men bored by humdrum life in a bourgeois “little Italy”. “On to Ethiopia!” was Mussolini’s hollow yelp of restored Roman grandeur.

Communism had a revolutionary doctrine; fascism was more a mood than a doctrine. It was a stance of undifferentiated truculence toward the institutions and manners of liberal democracy. “The democrats of [the newspaper] *Il Mondo* want to know our program?” said Mussolini the month he came to power in 1922. “It is to break the bones of the democrats of *Il Mondo*.”

In the 1930s, Spain acquired ... fascism without a charismatic personification: nervous nationalism, leavened by clericalism and corruption. Spain’s golden age was four centuries past; what was recent was the 1898 humiliation of the Spanish-American War. Paunchy Francisco Franco, a human black hole negating excitement, would make Spain great again by keeping it distinct from modern Europe, distinct in pre-Enlightenment backwardness.

Donald Trump, an envious acolyte of today’s various strongmen, appeals to those in thrall to country-music manliness: “We’re truck-driving, beer-drinking, big-chested Americans too freedom-loving to let any itsy-bitsy virus make us wear masks.” Trump, however, is a faux nationalist who disdains his nation’s golden age of international leadership and institution-building after 1945.

Trumpism, too, is a mood masquerading as a doctrine, an entertainment genre based on contempt for its bellowing audiences. Fascism was and is more interesting.

## THERE IS NO THERE THERE

(Excerpted from “*Trump is Capable of Almost Anything*”, an interview of former Trump advisor John Bolton by the German publication *Der Spiegel* 7/17/2020)

*Der Spiegel*: Trump, though, has similar conflicts [as he has with German Chancellor Angela Merkel] with a number of other world leaders. Could it be that he simply has a problem with women?

*Bolton*: I do think that is a factor. But he has a problem with a lot of democratically elected leaders, male or female. He seems to have better relations with authoritarian figures than with many who are elected in democratic countries.

*Der Spiegel*: How would you explain that?

*Bolton*: Part of Trump’s difficulty with international affairs is his lack of any philosophical basis. He has no philosophy. ... I am a conservative Republican. He is not. But he’s not a liberal Democrat either. He tends to confuse personal relationships with foreign leaders with the underlying bilateral relationship between the U.S. and that country.

*Der Spiegel*: In her visits to the U.S., Merkel intentionally presented herself as a kind of anti-Trump, such as in the speech she held at Harvard, during which she sang the praises of multilateralism. Was Trump annoyed by that?

*Bolton*: No, because I don’t think he knows what multilateralism is.

*Der Spiegel*: Why does Trump show no interest in

cooperation with America's long-time partners?

**Bolton:** There is a constant effort by political commentators in the U.S. and Europe to understand Trump or to define a Trump Doctrine. Stop wasting your time! There isn't any Trump Doctrine. The decision you get in the morning could be different in the afternoon, largely dependent on political considerations. He is primarily interested in his reelection.

## **TRUMP: THE GRIFT THAT KEEPS ON GRIFTING**

**Karen Tumulty**

*(Excerpted from washingtonpost.com, 7/17/2020)*

There has long been an element of grift to political campaigns. But there has never been anything quite like the racket that President Trump appears to have going.

In two days during March, the president's reelection effort forked over roughly \$380,000 of its contributors' money to his hotels for "facility rental/catering services". The campaign has also been paying more than \$37,000 a month in rent to Trump Tower in New York, which is odd, considering that the campaign's headquarters is in an office building in Rosslyn.

The campaign and its related committees have steered \$2.6 million to Trump's family-owned properties and businesses. The Republican Party has spent nearly \$1 million as well, and GOP candidates, elected officials and political action committees have spent another \$391,000.

Sophisticated political contributors are generally wary when they see campaigns holding events in expensive hotels and resorts with lavish catering. That's because they are well aware who is paying for it: They are.

## **TOO BAD HE CAN'T JUST BANKRUPT IT**

*(Excerpted from Alternet.org 7/12/20)*

Puerto Rico is an American territory, the island's three million people are American citizens, and the territory's government estimates that 2,975 of those Americans were killed by the hurricane that devastated the island.

Elaine Duke, Donald Trump's former acting Secretary of Homeland Security, who describes herself as a lifelong Republican, told the *Times* in a "wide-ranging interview" about her 14 months working for Trump, that during the response to the hurricanes she heard Mr. Trump raise the possibility of "selling" Puerto Rico as it struggled to recover.

*"Can we outsource the electricity? Can we sell the island? You know, or divest of that asset?"*

Donald Trump said that because the Rolling Stones won't let him use their music at his rallies or in his political ads, they are "un-American".

Take all the time you need to think about that.

## **READERS RESPOND**

*To the Editor:* Re "Resign, Dr. Fauci (PIQUE July 14), I don't claim any remarkable judgement about how to defeat the spread of deadly COVID-19 throughout the US to save the lives of thousands or millions. And neither do I expect or

imagine how Drs Fauci and Birx resigning could possibly make a difference in the path that Trump has already taken or might yet lead us down. Recall how Trump's hirings and firings of his generals and spy masters who tried to inform and moderate his impulses and acting out, which have been so unfailingly tragic for the country. After an uncertain but eventual amount of time there was and is no shortage of stooges, variously devious, transparently corrupt and incompetent. In the meantime we're stuck with ring masters Trump and Barr and no guarantee there won't be a second term or a letup of COVID-19. If Fauci and Birx resign for the sake of making a pointless point—and whether or not Trump wears a surgical mask—do you expect red states to turn blue? I have more confidence in political action, as it has been in the past. So if you want to help and aren't up to knocking on doors and participating in phone banks, you can make a few political donations to the presidential candidate you favor and particularly the senatorial challengers in battleground states. — *Joel Galker*

## **THE EDITOR RE-RESPONDS**

*Dear Joel:* You're right, and I've changed my mind – the inevitable firing of Fauci (and/or Birx) will make a vastly more powerful political statement, while preserving his/their non-political bona fides. — *JR*

## **YOUR CLASSICAL FAVES**

Last week we asked: What is your (single) most-loved piece of classical music to brighten your locked-in days? You answered ...

To pick one favorite out of the vast pool of classical music—and we're so lucky to have it—is impossible. However, I offer a bit of Bach that never fails to delight and bring a smile, something needed these days: the "Badinerie" from "Suite No. 2 in B minor". — *Sunny Barnhart*

I have so many favorites, it would be difficult to choose just one, but the piece that I've asked to be played at any memorial service that may be held for me is the Trio from Act II of Gilbert & Sullivan's "Iolanthe". — *Emily Kingsley*

My favorite consists of some of the orchestral excerpts from Wagner's opera "Tristan Und Isolde". The ethereal Prelude to Act One is often combined with the transcendent "Liebestod", which ends the opera. This is glorious music way ahead of its time. — *Dennis Middlebrooks*

If I had to pick just one piece, Bach's "Well Tempered Clavier". Why? I think I like Bach (and the WTC in particular) for the same reason I like Shakespeare's sonnets. Working within a fairly rigid structure, he creates extraordinary beauty and does it without "reaching". It's easier to describe what I mean for the sonnets: Reading, say, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" we can almost forget we are reading a sonnet. Listening to WTC, we can almost forget that half are fugues. It's hard to write any sonnet or any fugue. To write such beautiful ones ... — *Peter Flom*

The first classical music I remember hearing was my mother singing a lullaby to my baby sister to the music of Dvorak's "Humoresque". I like to think that she sang the same lullaby to me. — *Cheryl Payer*

## SHSNY CALENDAR: JULY – OCTOBER 2020

### FICTION BOOK CLUB ONLINE

The SHSNY Fiction Book Club meets online via Zoom, and will continue so for the duration of our enforced isolation.

To be included and notified of each meeting's link and password, email your address to Sharon Krutzel at [sharonkrutzel@rcn.com](mailto:sharonkrutzel@rcn.com)

#### TUES, AUGUST 11, 7:00 pm DOUBLE WHAMMY Carl Hiaasen

Just for fun, follow the adventures of a news-photographer-turned-private-eye as he seeks truth, justice, and an affair with his ex-wife. A hilarious caper with unforgettable characters, including the lunatic ex-governor of Florida whose diet is roadkill.

#### TUESDAY, SEPT 8, 7:00 pm ALOYSIUS THE GREAT John Maxwell O'Brien

By Joyce scholar, author of *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy*, and PIQUE subscriber O'Brien, *Aloysius* is now available in paper and e-formats at Amazon.

Mr. O'Brien advises that to purchase *Aloysius* in paperback most economically go to <http://bit.ly/AloysiusTheGreat>. \$22.99 there, with free shipping.

#### TUESDAY, OCT 13, 7:00 pm AMERICAN DIRT Jeanine Cummins

Stephen King calls it "extraordinary," and this *NYTimes* best-selling story of a comfortable, middle-class Mexican family caught up in the flight to *el Norte* and away from drug violence has been called "the international story of our times". Hardcover, Kindle.

### HUMANIST BOOK CLUB ONLINE

We continue online for the duration of our social distancing. Harry French will send the linking codes for the Zoom meetings. Send your address to:

[htfrench46@gmail.com](mailto:htfrench46@gmail.com)  
Meanwhile, do the reading ...

#### THURS, AUGUST 6, 7:00 pm UNORTHODOX: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots Deborah Feldman

Deborah Feldman grew up under a Satmar code of relentlessly enforced customs governing every aspect of her life. At nineteen, with a baby, she realized that she would have to forge her own path to happiness and freedom.

Now a very good Netflix series.

#### THURS, SEPT 3, 7:00 pm SURVIVING AUTOCRACY Masha Gessen

As seen on MSNBC Morning Joe and heard on NPR All Things Considered: the bestselling, National Book Award-winning journalist offers an essential guide to understanding, resisting, and recovering from Trump and the ravages of our tumultuous times.

"When Gessen speaks about autocracy, you listen."  
— *The New York Times*

#### THIRD THURSDAY GROUP THURS, AUGUST 20, 7:00 pm

Regulars of the Humanist Book Club have formed a Zoom-in "non-book" club to enjoy each other's company and more conversation. To join, send an email with your address to:

[htfrench46@gmail.com](mailto:htfrench46@gmail.com)

### HUMANIST HAPPY HOUR ONLINE

#### SUNDAY, JULY 19, 5:00 pm

Let's get together even when we can't get together, via Zoom. Get comfortable at your computer with your beverage and/or snack of choice – and join 15, 20, or more of your fellow humanists in our Humanist Happy Hour!

Zoom in at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9806344432?pwd=c0NrNUoweDVGWHo2ditvYmJlVjVVGdz09>

Meeting ID: 980 634 4432

Password: SHSNy

Join by Skype for Business

<https://us02web.zoom.us/skype/9806344432>

### MONDAY MOVIES

#### MONDAY, JULY 27, 8:00 pm

We'll discuss Billy Wilder's  
**SOME LIKE IT HOT**

Movie buffs meet every other Monday eve to discuss interesting and socially relevant films.

1. Together we choose a film.
2. You have 2 weeks to watch it at home, free or cheap rental.
3. We meet via Zoom to discuss it (probably over wine).

Let's watch "Some Like It Hot" (\$3.99 on Amazon Prime), then discuss societal attitudes re gender-bending, homophobia (*i.e.*, actual fear of) then (1959) and now. Meanwhile, Marilyn Monroe, Jack Lemmon, Joe E. Brown – how can it not be fun?

To be included, email your address to [sharonkrutzel@rcn.com](mailto:sharonkrutzel@rcn.com)

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