

A photograph of a man surfing a large, powerful wave. The man is shirtless, has a beard, and his hair is flying. He is holding a surfboard and looking up at the sky. The wave is massive and white with a lot of spray. The background is a clear blue sky.

SCOTT DOUGLAS JACOBSEN

The Good Men Project:
Compendium II

In-Sight Publishing

**The Good Men Project:
Compendium II**

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Scott

The Good Men Project

Emile Yusupoff, Freedom and Choice, Hikkikomori, and Virtue Signalling

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

September 13, 2017

Emile Yusupoff sits down to talk about traditional gender roles, and gender, in the United Kingdom in the early 21st century.

Emile Yusupoff is a 24-year-old unregistered barrister in the process of applying for pupillage. Emile's undergraduate degree from the University of Edinburgh was in Philosophy and Politics, and he maintains involvement with these fields through writing from a classically liberal perspective for publications including Conatus News. Here is part 2. Part 1 [here](#).

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: And with the desire for a space to choose, what do you consider the main barriers to provide that space for that freedom and choice?

Emile Yusupoff: I don't know if I can use the term patriarchy because that has a bunch of connotations, but I do think a lot of what feminists complain about in terms of the way that physical gender roles are structured to have a similar impact on men in terms of saying "these are the roles and behaviors men should have." I think the most difficult thing about being a man in Britain in the 21st century is that we are given signals to behave in the traditional male roles. For example, in dating, we're told we must be confident, we must be forward, it's our role to ask the girl out. But, at times, we're told that we can't be forceful or aggressive and that there's something of a rape culture around that. The difficulty is navigating through that.

Jacobsen: In terms of navigating it, how do men do it now?

Yusupoff: I think most of them are very successful. I think part of the explosion of lad culture is indeed a response to that and that it's a result of people thinking they can't express their masculinity so they go overboard. Similarly, I think you can see the old alt-Right like that as well, with the hyper-awful version of that.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Yusupoff: And I guess I've noticed men disengaging. It hasn't happened here as much as it has in somewhere like Japan. But statistically, I think we have less sex than our parent's generation and that's part of that disengagement. And I think generally in this country, men are not marrying or are less willing to marry. So that's one of the ways people try to deal with it... by withdrawing and not bothering. I think that's unfortunate, although, it's probably not as bad as the hyper-compensating route.

Jacobsen: And to clarify on two points, you mentioned lad culture. For those not from the UK, what does lad culture ensure?

Yusupoff: I suppose it's men acting like boys in the sense that it's very much group-focused, it's about male bonding. It's about reveling in traditionally male pursuits such as drinking, sports, girls. In practice, it arguably translates to idiocy in the streets, aggression in the sheets. I have a

hard time properly pinning it down but I guess it's similar to fraternity culture in the US, in terms of attitude and reason behind its existence.

Jacobsen: You also mentioned Japan. The Hikikomori- the shut-ins or hermit men who are an extreme result of that opting out. In America, they have the opposite of that with the Guido culture or pick-up culture. And that would probably bring that range of reactions to extremes. So not at the individual level but at the cultural level in the UK as a whole, how can you navigate so that we don't produce the extremes?

Yusupoff: I suppose it might be partially about a different approach to feminism. So, a more individualized feminism which is less combative and recognizes more that men should be pitched to as potential allies and should be included as much as possible. And we shouldn't be afraid of saying that men can benefit from feminism and it's okay to follow it not because of some detached or disengaged reason, but because it's better for you to do it. It's not a rejection of you being masculine in the sense of perhaps being outdoorsy and bloody and having male mates and going out drinking and stuff, that's all fine, as long as you're not imposing on women or anyone else while doing it. So it does come down in part to how we promote feminism and having male role models that are specifically meant for boys to look up to who are not cartoonishly good or pure or selfless but instead are people who are desirable to be and are better models than that hyper-masculinized figures.

Jacobsen: Do you think— and I mean this semi-facetiously and semi-seriously —that there are two sides of a coin here? On one hand you have those people who are from the “political left” that would be “allies” for the purpose of hooking up or getting a date, and on the other hand, you have people from the “political right” who are bashing those on the left in their own form of virtue signaling and trying to get a date or get laid.

Yusupoff: Yes, I think that's part of the wider trend of virtue signaling, which is really as old as time. A lot of the way our moral understanding works is in the eye of the beholder and those who seem to be virtuous and have a character that warrants positive responses from others. I think it's no wonder that people do that and it has always been, I guess, the two sides of physical calling. It's like what we see with socialism where someone will signal that they're a socialist and then someone else will ridicule them for it, and for each of their own audiences that are more desirable. Similarly, you'll see a heated debate on TV and each side supports what their supporters were as if the aim is to perform for an audience.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time.

Yusupoff: Thank you very much.

Scott Davies, Conatus News, Progressivism, and the Personal Narrative

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

September 15, 2017

Scott Davies and I are both writers at Conatus News. Here we talk about his own journey surrounding progressivism, and his views.

Scott Davies and I are both writers at Conatus News, which is a Progressive-activist news platform meant to put those kinds of voices center stage in the discussion. The lens of the organization is known up front. Please find enclosed here one interview with a colleague from the site.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: We both write for Conatus News. It is a progressive publication, politically and socially, which is oriented, often, towards the center to center-left. How did you find the publication?

Scott Davies: I initially discovered the publication via Twitter, after following various liberal and progressive Twitter users who tweeted out links to Conatus articles. From there, I began to follow and interact with some writers from Conatus News for a period of time. Recently, Conatus put out a request for writers and social media officers, which I responded to and have since begun to work for Conatus as a writer and social media officer.

Jacobsen: What is your personal narrative? How'd you get to this point?

Davies: My personal narrative, in terms of my political beliefs, is that I have generally been center-left and liberal for the majority of my life. I have always believed that the state can have a positive role in peoples' lives, especially in terms of issues such as healthcare and the welfare state more broadly. I have also always believed in the fundamental right of freedom of speech. I believe speech should not be regulated in any way, and I am also increasingly wary of private and corporate pressures being placed on free speech. Although I still considered myself broadly left-wing, I am increasing with elements of the Left who seek to restrict speech, whether it be through government regulation, de-platforming or otherwise. These positions, ones which Conatus also hold, are a major reason why I decided to get involved with them.

Jacobsen: If you could summarize the progressive position, how would you do it? What is it?

Davies: The progressive position is fundamentally forward-thinking and egalitarian in nature. It seeks to continually enhance and improve the quality of life of people as a whole. It is reform-minded and emphasizes civil liberties.

Jacobsen: How accepted is progressive politics in Australia?

Davies: Progressive politics are becoming more and more accepted within Australia. In some measures, such as marriage equality, Australia is behind many Western nations. However, for the most part, Australia is becoming more socially progressive.

Jacobsen: In the context of the current controversies around the religious dress, especially the fundamental right to wear them, how are Australian politicians taking in the challenge, in a mature or immature way?

Davies: It is interesting that you ask this question, as this issue flared up recently in Australian politics. One Nation senator Pauline Hanson wore a burqa in the Senate chamber as a protest against the garment. The move was widely condemned as being an act of bigotry against Muslims and as being unnecessarily inflammatory and provocative. It did, however, spark an important conversation about religious garments in general, as well as the general separation of church and state in politics.

Jacobsen: What is the fastest growing faith or non-faith position in Australia?

Davies: According to the most recent Census results, released just a few months ago, for the first time, the 'No Faith' position is the most widely held position. A majority of Australians still identify to a religious faith, but the 'No Faith' option was held more than any one religion.

Jacobsen: What do you consider the pivot topic, the more important fulcrum point, for politics at the moment – upon which all or simply most else hinges?

Davies: I believe that one of the most important pivot points or trends in current politics is the change from the traditional left-right political spectrum to a divide between globalism on the one hand and nationalism on the other. Within this, the majority of economic and social issues are encompassed.

Calistus Igwilo, the Atheist of Nigeria and Its Relevance

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

September 21, 2017

Calistus Igwilo is the President of the Atheist Society of Nigeria, who was kind enough to give an extensive, exclusive interview with GMP's Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

Calistus Igwilo is the President of the Atheist Society of Nigeria, who was kind enough to give an extensive, exclusive interview with me. Here we talk about religious faith, atheism, and religion in Nigeria. Part 1 here.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Was there a family grounding in religious faith?

Calistus Igwilo: I was baptized a Catholic, couple of months after my birth, and was raised a Catholic until about age 13 when I joined my mum to attend a prayer ministry (Where they purport to see the vision and predict the future). And I eventually became a “visioner” at about age 15. Then about age 20, I became a “born again” Christian and was supposed to live above sin, to be holy even as Christ was holy, so I sincerely and honestly struggled to live above sin, I didn’t watch television at the time because I could see a sensual advert that will make me lust in my heart thereby committing sin. Prior to being born again, I masturbated a lot, but as a born again I tried very hard to resist masturbation and struggled for about 1 year until I lost it. So it dawned on me that I was a “sinner” and numerous attempt to repent proved abortive as those desires were real, therefore, I stopped going to church in other not to be a hypocrite. And when I accepted life the way it really was, I started to have doubts about religion but I was alone on that thought, there was no like minded person to share my doubts with.

Later, when I became independent and started living by myself, I asked myself some crucial questions: “all the things I know so far, who thought me?” My answer was mainly my parents, then I asked, “Who thought my parents” the answer was my grandparents. Then I asked the crucial question “What do these grand and great grandparents know? Are my not supposed to know more than them, since they did not have the level of education I have?” And that was how my journey into skepticism started, I resolved to reevaluate everything that I have been thought by my parents and choose for myself only things that made sense and conform to the knowledge I had gained thus far. I began to think for myself, I became responsible for my life and my actions, then I realized that the whole religious stuff lacks logical merit.

About that period, I met my first business partner Leonard F. Runyon Jr. who we formed a computer company together. He lived life the way life was without any recourse to a supernatural being or superstitions. We never discussed religion or talked about atheism, I do not know about atheism at the time, but for the first time in my life, I associated with people that live their lives very plainly without invoking God or religion for any task, they depend on their brain to make decisions. At that point, religion became irrelevant in my life and any thought of returning to it someday vanished. After few more years, I started looking for Nigerians like me, I couldn’t see any around me, so I took to the internet to search for Nigerian Atheists. Leo Igwe’s

name was the prominent name that pops up each time I searched so I did him an email which he replied and informed me about an upcoming humanist convention in 2011 at Abuja. I attended that conference and met for the first time, Nigerian atheists, and that was the beginning of my association with atheists.

Jacobsen: Who were some influences in losing it or simply becoming an atheist?

Igwilo: The first influence was my personal experience. I have always tried to be sincere and honest to myself, so when I started struggling to keep up with religious teachings, I knew somehow that they weren't tenable, then I became a "backslider" and because I don't want to deceive myself claiming to be what is not tenable, I gave up on religion. The next influence was Leonard F. Runyon, my business partner, in whom I saw for the first time in my life how someone can live one's life without the need for a God. Then when I a degree course in Biotechnology, everything fell into place, I had a rational explanation for the emergence of life and I applied that knowledge to every other supernatural belief. Life ceased to be mysterious to me and I never looked back since then. There was nothing to look back for anyway because I have traveled the road of religion and have studied the bible from page to page from cover to cover so there was nothing curious left there to go back to.

Jacobsen: What is the prevalence religion in Nigeria? What are the types that you'd typically find there?

Igwilo: The prevalent religions in Nigeria are Islam and Christianity, the traditional religion is steadily going extinct. Majority of northern Nigeria are Muslims while the majority of Eastern Nigeria are Christians, the western Nigeria are split between Muslims and Christians. So each region is dominated by their own common religion (Christian or Muslim) and they tolerate each other to a good extent except for some small part of northern Nigeria where sectarian crises arise once in a while.

Jacobsen: Why did you found the Atheist Society of Nigeria?

Igwilo: While I was doing my masters degree at the University of Nottingham, UK, I joined the University of Nottingham Atheists Secularists and Humanist (UNASH) association, it was my first experience of belonging to an atheist group, I also joined the Nottingham Secular Society an umbrella body for atheists and humanists living in Nottingham. I was elected to serve on the executive committee and was closely mentored by Dennis, the then President of Nottingham Secular Society and I gained some experience in running a secular society. So when I returned to Nigeria in 2013, I started Port Harcourt Secular Society with Timothy Hatcher under the suggestion of Becca Schwartz. The main reason was to create a community for Atheist, Humanist, Secularists and Freethinkers. By then there was a vibrant Nigerian Atheist group and Nigerian Humanist group on Facebook which serves as home for all atheists, humanists, and freethinkers. The need to organize so that we can engage with government, institutions, and societies led to us applying to be registered with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), but our application suffered numerous setbacks, when we got some kind of nod to go ahead, we didn't have the fund to see the process through as Port Harcourt Secular Society had very few members then. So we organized at the national level to register Humanist Society of Nigeria but it suffered a huge setback from the CAC, they always come up with a reason to have us start the application all over again, it's been up to 2 years now and Nigerian Humanist Association hasn't been incorporated. While at it, some group of Atheists who belong to a Facebook group called Proudly Atheist made a move, and quietly got initial approval after their lawyer threatened to sue

CAC, so we rallied around the process and finally got it registered. This has given us the backing of the law, to engage our community.

Calistus Igwilo, Registration of the Atheist Society of Nigeria

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

September 21, 2017

Calistus Igwilo is the President of the Atheist Society of Nigeria, who was kind enough to give an extensive, exclusive interview with GMP's Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

Calistus Igwilo is the President of the Atheist Society of Nigeria, who was kind enough to give an extensive, exclusive interview with me. Here we talk about religious faith, atheism, and religion in Nigeria. Part 2 [here](#), and 1 [here](#).

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How momentous is the occasion of ASN registration?

Calistus Igwilo: Well, the day the news broke that we have been incorporated, it was in the evening, I was just speechless, I couldn't describe what I felt, and it was the same for other 9 members of the board of trustees. But very quickly, it dawned on me that we have achieved something very great something capable of making a positive lasting change to Nigeria and I could see the enormous task ahead of us. I still don't have words to describe the feeling that night, but that sense of accomplishment drove us to this present day.

Jacobsen: Also, it was registered as an official organization, which is a first for an organization of its kind. How else is this a momentous occasion for the atheist community in Nigeria?

Igwilo: First it has given the Atheists, Secularists, Humanists and Freethinkers a sense of community backed by the law, where they can actualize their common goals, it has given them a voice which hitherto was non-existent, many never believed that this day will come. ASN wants to engage with the Nigerian community to raise awareness on why public policies, scientific inquiries and education policies should not be based on religious beliefs but rather on sound reason, rationality and evidence. This will help liberate people from superstitions and myths and promote science and technology, it will also make Nigeria a saner, safer, more sustainable place for reason and freethought.

Jacobsen: What are some initiatives underway to normalize atheism, reduce superstition, and secularize public life in Nigeria more?

Igwilo: We have started campaigning against qualified professionals that use their authority to promote superstitious practices among vulnerable Nigerians which could lead to loss of lives. A case study is our petition against the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria about some medical doctors and healthcare professionals that refer patients to "faith healing homes" and some that support phantom miraculous healing testimonies in their places of worship giving credence to superstitious beliefs.

We also want to promote religious tolerance in Nigeria because Nigeria is grossly divided along religious lines which breeds suspicion and mistrust among the divide. Our solution is to educate

the youths on various religions in Nigeria, this can be achieved by campaigning for the merging of all religious studies under a single subject of learning in secondary schools. We are making the case that Traditional Religious Knowledge, Islamic Religious Knowledge, Christian Religious Knowledge be taught as a single comparative subject of study, it will enable the students to critique religions and have an academic knowledge of various religions and help them develop critical thinking and reasoning. When they become adults, they will vote in people with rational and critical thinking into governance who will in turn make public policies that are not based on religious beliefs but on sound reason, rationality and evidence. It will be a very long drawn out campaign, we will lay the foundation now and sustain it.

Nigerian national assembly has passed some laws that breed hate and victimization against some minority citizens, we intend to mount campaign in due cause to call for repeal of those obnoxious laws that infringes on citizens fundamental human rights.

Jacobsen: How can people get involved or donate to the Atheist Society of Nigeria?

Igwilo: People can get involved with us by registering as members of Atheist Society of Nigeria through our membership registration portal on our website at www.atheist.org.ng.

We are a not-for-profit organisation and depend on donations and goodwill to carry out our programs and local development projects. We are open to donations and volunteering of time and skills to help implement our projects. For monetary donations, we have a bank account where we can receive donations, it can also be done online using credit or debit card. We also have a portal for volunteers registration on our website.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Calistus.

Meaningful Conversations Begin With Ethics

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

March 9, 2018

Shaykh Uthman Khan of Critical Loyalty discusses the essence of meaningful conversations with Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

—

Islam, akin to Christianity, remains one of the largest religions in the world, with an enormous number of followers well over one billion. This means a variety of views, interpretations of religious scripture, values, and perspectives on one's role in society—especially gender roles.

Shaykh Uthman Khan, Academic Dean of Critical Loyalty, an online university, recently took the time to sit down (virtually) with me to answer some questions about gender roles in Islam. Khan is an academic and Muslim.

◆◆◆

When I asked about effective means of communication in documented Islamic history and gender roles, Khan noted, “You should listen with the intention to understand and not with the intention to reply.” If someone wants to take on a new perspective, then dialogue becomes foundational, with the intent of the conversation to listen and understand the other person's point of view.”

When it comes to some Islamic theology and some Islamic scholars, Khan noted that even if from the same religion, the disagreements in theology can make a scholar not want to associate with another: “I still don't associate with you because we're not from the same group.”

“A grouping that we've done within ourselves, different groups that we've created. It's a big problem,” Khan explained. “The only way to overcome that is to come to a common understanding or a common ground.”

I have friends who are Christians and Jews. When I'm talking to them, I don't talk theology with them.

“Religion aside,” he continued, “I have friends who are Christians and Jews. When I'm talking to them, I don't talk theology with them. The theological conversation eventually starts trickling in if I need to talk theology, but we'll talk about something that we both agree on.”

Finding that common ground within the faith, with disagreeing interpretations and perspectives of the faith, can be a tool applied to a broader context as well. For example, before a discussion on gender roles in the modern period, there must be the common ground as a foundation first.

Then the dialogue can move forward into the appropriateness of certain gender roles, for men and women. He notes this as a phenomenon extending beyond the intrafaith dialogue of the Muslim community, saying, “Muslims, I find, have segregated themselves a lot from others, from everyone else that's not a Muslim. So, it's like, ‘I'm a Muslim and you're a non-Muslim.’”

He noted that this segregated approach is promoted in Islam and hasn't found this to be the case in other religions. The dichotomy becomes Muslim vs. non-Muslim. But finding that common

ground can be a good start to have the important conversations on gender, at which point he spoke about a mutual friend, Shireen Qudosi.

What do you call Shireen Qudosi? So, it happens to her all the time...She is called a slur, which is, 'I consider you a kafir.' Kafir means a non-Muslim.

She is a Muslim but doesn't wear a hijab, for instance. "What do you call Shireen Qudosi? So, it happens to her all the time," Khan described, "She is called a slur, which is, 'I consider you a kafir.' Kafir means a non-Muslim." The reason for the epithet is because she is not wearing the hijab.

Shaykh Khan stated the same happens to him. He becomes considered, by some, a kafir or a non-Muslim because of disagreements on Islam, while both people identify as devout Muslims. Khan stated that this is a big impediment to the development of pluralism. It is a "big problem".

He shared the following story from seminary. There was a dialogue course, which is a course where discussion and dialogue are encouraged. As an exercise, the people came from outside and put sticky notes on the wall. The notes had different identities on them: religion, age, education, and so on, in the myriad self-identifications of people.

"Believe it or not, 99 percent of the Muslims went and stood by the religion part," he said in a surprised tone. Religion becomes a primary way that Muslims identify themselves—more than education, age, or other descriptors. He talked about explicit and implicit rules within Islam surrounding the community of Muslims.

He stated, "There are these rules there, but people are forgetting that Islam and ethics create a barrier in between because ethics are universal. You can be ethical and not be a Muslim, right?"

What defines you and makes you a Muslim is these few things that you're doing, this belief that you have, believe in one god, in the prophet Muhammad, that's what makes you a Muslim. Then your rituals will add on to that, then your ethics are universal.

"What defines you and makes you a Muslim is these few things that you're doing, this belief that you have, believe in one god, in the prophet Muhammad, that's what makes you a Muslim. Then your rituals will add on to that, then your ethics are universal."

Ethics will bring people together because ethics are universal, in his opinion, where the discussion on beliefs—those that comprise Islam—can then become part of the discussion. But if the religion becomes translated into ethics, then the ethics becomes subjective, so people have to worry about how do they urinate, how do they dress, how do they eat, and so on. Those failing to meet those subjective ethics become non-Muslim or the outsiders.

That is where ethics must be primary, according to Khan, in order for the discussion to take place. Finding one more common ground with ethics because his religion is his dealing with God, and ethics is his dealing with everyone.

Public vs. Private Healthcare According to a World Medical Expert

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

March 19, 2018

Misinformation is clouding our perceptions of private and public healthcare.

In March of 2017, one of Canada's most distinguished academics, Professor Gordon Guyatt at McMaster University, talked about healthcare. In particular, his area of expertise in public and private healthcare, with an emphasis on the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

He took the time to have a discussion with me on the nature of the two different healthcare systems, the positives and negatives of each, and which might interest particular populations within a country.

When it comes to the general factors for the discussion for private versus public healthcare, Guyatt said, "When I gave the talk, I ask people, 'How should we decide?' There are a number of things that people raise. One is health outcomes."

"It depends on the ultimate goal of healthcare, such as keeping people healthier. We also must consider what the impact is on people's health, access to care, patient satisfaction, and autonomy—often characterized as a choice, and so on."

He went on to describe the cost of healthcare as a major factor. But he also lamented that there is a lot of misinformation. This is distressing because the necessary ingredients for an informed decision by the public on the matters of healthcare require accurate information, not misrepresentation and distortion.

He notes that one of the major drivers for everything is the dissatisfaction with the way things are working now. That there must be a better way.

"You are looking for something different. It depends on who you are talking to. Their perspective might make a difference," Guyatt explained. "The outcomes of private versus public funding will differ depending on who you are."

"If you are very rich, it is a different calculus than if you are very poor. It changes across that spectrum. And it is very different if you are a healthcare provider versus a healthcare consumer."

Income becomes an important factor. If you are a wealthy citizen, then the healthcare considerations will be different than if you are not as wealthy or a regular Canadian citizen. One concern for people is the sustainability of the current healthcare costs.

These differing frames of reference change the ways in which people are able to take into account the idea of "cost" within healthcare. He continued, "When I talk to audiences, there are notions that people have about what is affordable. There are notions people have about what it will do to their own income."

To deal with the sustainability of the healthcare system, Guyatt said that he asks people about the healthcare expenditures as a proportion of the GDP over the last seven years. He gives multiple choices: gone up every year, most years, and so on.

“People end up surprised when the answer is that it has been stagnant or declined. So, as a percentage of GDP, healthcare is actually lower than it was seven years ago. They also tend to be surprised when you inform them that in 1991, that it was 10% of GDP for all healthcare expenditures. Now, it is a little bit below 11%. That is over more than 25 years.”

The healthcare expenditures over 25 years have been more extreme, according to Guyatt, “About 7% to 7.5%”. These influence the perception of the public on the costs of healthcare spending as a share of national wealth, which turn out to be false perceptions.

If we don’t clear up the misinformation, then making an informed choice on healthcare systems won’t be possible, but Gordon Guyatt is doing what he can to change that.

The Humanism Time Machine

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

April 7, 2018

What kickstarted the humanistic trends that have transformed the world and made it modern?

—

Andrew Copson, the Chief Executive of Humanists UK and the President of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, talked with me about humanism in terms of its meanings and origin.

Copson said, “In English since the mid-nineteenth century, when it first appeared as a word, ‘humanism’ has had two main meanings. One refers to the cultural milieu of Renaissance Europe, which we now more often call ‘Renaissance humanism’. The second refers to a non-religious approach to questions of value, meaning, and truth, which emphasizes the role of humanity in these areas of life rather than the role of any deity.”

The second form of humanism inspired the organizations for humanist thinkers and activists. When I asked about the mobilization of those outside of a faith-based framework, and inquired if there are any similarities in the frameworks, Copson stated that there were not that many differences, as people have beliefs that motivate action in the world.

“Certainly, humanist organisations and leaders don’t have the god-backed power to instruct their fellow believers to do this or that, but then that doesn’t work out terribly well for religious leaders either,” Copson explained. “I think that leadership in a humanist context is about being clear in public forums about our values and beliefs, and then living out and modelling them in practice too. If people agree with your reasoning and warm to your manner, they will consider doing as you suggest.”

When I talked with Copson further about the founder of humanistic values, whether an entire society or an individual thinker, he pointed to several incidents bubbling up in the historical record including people such as Mengzi in China about 2,300 years ago. In addition to Mengzi or Mencius, he noted the Charvaka school in India, which had a similar counterpart in another part of the Greco-Roman world between 2,500 and 1,800 years ago.

“None of the societies in which these views were expressed could be described as humanist—they were diverse societies in which there were many schools of thought,” Copson explained, “but they were certainly more humanistic than, for example, the Christian states of medieval Europe. It was in part the rediscovery and reception of these humanistic thinkers that kickstarted the humanistic trends that have transformed the world and made it modern.”

Humanism has been an emergent property in world cultures. The principles of the philosophy have arisen at different times. As the different cultures and times have come forward, the definitions have changed, but the core of humanism has been consistent. It is in this that the humanist philosophy appears to be something universal to human beings. But the question remains as to why it is stayed so small in adherents.

Laity and Catholic Hierarchs on Abortion

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

April 19, 2018

How do the Catholic hierarchs and laity differ on abortion?

Jon O'Brien, the President of Catholics for Choice, took the time to discuss reproductive health issues and the Roman Catholic Christian faith with me. I asked, in particular, about the situation in America regarding both, especially touching base around pro-choice issues.

When asked about the more pressing issues within the faith community, O'Brien said, "One of the biggest problems is the disconnect between the Catholic hierarchy and the Catholic people on issues of contraception and abortion. For example, in the failing days of the Pinochet regime of Chile, the Catholic hierarchy there pressured General Pinochet to introduce a restrictive anti-abortion law. In 2017, Chile, a country that is still predominantly Catholic, changed this Pinochet-era law on abortion. We see that sort of law all over the world, especially in Latin America."

A stark example of the differences between the hierarchs of the Catholic Church and Catholic laity. O'Brien stated that there does need to be a deeper comprehension of civil rights, human rights, women's rights tied to the ideas of conscience and autonomy.

He pointed to the stereotypes, from the outside, of the Catholic laity, where if someone is known as Catholic then they are viewed as anti-abortion or pro-life.

O'Brien gave an example of the prime minister of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, who introduced a law to reform the complete ban on abortion with the now limited allowance of abortion dependence on the case, e.g. the pregnancies that may result from a rape or with fetal abnormalities and to save the life/health of the woman.

He does note an important point, "What is significant is we're seeing Catholic voters and Catholic politicians no longer feeling intimidated by the institutional Church and standing up and saying as Catholics, 'We don't see a contradiction between allowing people to follow their conscience,' which is a Catholic thing."

He points to two intellectual giants within the theological traditions of the Catholic Church with Thomas Aquinas and Saint Augustine. Both Aquinas and Augustine taught that the final arbiter in an ethical decision is conscience.

That is, the individual conscience of the Catholic Church layperson in opposition to the hierarchy's teaching within the church. It amounts to issues around autonomy, personal freedom, and LGBT issues as well.

Catholics support homosexual marriages in the United States. O'Brien reflected, "Although the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic hierarchy ran really highly funded campaigns against the idea of marriage equality, they lost. In the Republic of Ireland, the country of my birth, we've seen a referendum on the same subject. In other words, the people themselves voted in favor of marriage equality, despite the views of the Catholic hierarchy."

It comes to the same story over, and over, again with conscience deciding against the hierarchical authority in favour of the ordinary believer of the church, the laity. He does not view these people as less Catholic. He views them as living social justice as they view it.

Catholics are making decisions for themselves. They say, ‘Your baptism makes you Catholic,’” O’Brien stated, “Being Catholic is not a litmus test as to whether you adhere to the letter of law in every teaching. Nor does it mean you get up in the morning and do whatever you want to do. It means you properly form a conscience and follow it. You must examine your conscience and that is a serious process of looking at what the church leaders have said, looking at what the Church has written and looking at your impact on others.”

He made a stark point that 99 percent of Catholic women who are active, sexually, in America use a form of birth control, which the bishops of the Catholic Church does not like.

On the Avenues of Intergenerational Communication

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 8, 2018

What are the ways for intergenerational communication in the modern context?

Melvin Lars is a fellow Good Men Project writer and Social Interest Group call listener-commentator. One topic was intergenerational communication. I wanted to garner some insight with a conversation between an older American and a younger Canadian.

We both live in North America, in different countries, and lived in different generations growing up (and continue to, of course). This is intended as a series on the subject of intergenerational conversation. Mr. Lars comes from Bossier City/Shreveport, Louisiana.

Lars earned several undergraduate and graduate degrees, is married to Ann Lars, and has a son named Ernest Lars. Here we talk about intergenerational communication.

When I asked Mr. Lars about the subject matter of intergenerational bonding, communication, and the facilitation of bonds through communication between generations, he talked about the importance, first, of listening.

Listening as the foundation to understanding, compassion, and exchange of experiences. Different generations have different experiences. In that, older generations and younger generations need to communicate with one another.

It seems like the foundation for long-term societies. Otherwise, society does not have anything other than a short-term perspective. Lars talked about one of the problems in the listening of the older generations. He talked about how they want to share wisdom and expect the wisdom to be absorbed.

However, they do this without first taking into account building that bond through listening and communicating in the first place with the younger people. I posted this to him as listening to learn rather than listening to respond to the young person.

He considers this exactly on point. Later in the conversation, I asked about some stronger points of communication or wisdom coming from the younger generation to the older generation and from the older generation to the younger generation.

Lars responded by talking about the attempts of the older guys to try to appease the younger guys. He argues that we need to delete the idea of a preconceived outcome for a conversation or dialogue. He also talked about deleting the idea that a young person has nothing to offer an older person. We also talked about the need to delete the attempts of the placation of the young people.

Lars goes on to note that placation is something people notice and do not like. At that point of understanding that they are being placated, people will shut down. He gives an analogy with Charlie Brown with the teacher going, “wa-wa-wa-wa.”

In terms of barriers to communication between adolescent men, young men, middle-aged men, and elderly men, Lars talked mainly from his own demographic of older men. He notes that older men have a tendency to put on a persona of seeming as if they have everything together.

However, he describes the reality is quite different often: older men may not necessarily have it together. They may not want to take responsibility for skeletons they have in their closet or mistakes they made in the past.

The Changing Discussions Around Gender Roles from Progressives and Traditionalists

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 9, 2018

How do progressives and traditionalists talk about the changing gender roles?

Faisal Saeed Al Mutar is the founder of Ideas Beyond Borders and Bayt Al-Hikma 2.0. I sat down and talked with him about the conversations happening around traditional gender roles and progressive gender roles. Those gender roles more in the public discourse for deconstruction, debate, conversation, negotiation, and inquiry.

When I asked Al Mutar about the reasonable and unreasonable aspects of these debates, he responded, “I see it as kind of sad that the conversation about gender roles is happening again even in progressive societies.”

Al Mutar considers the segmenting of people into categories is limiting. He mentioned a recent attendance at a Liberty Con conference. There was a discussion around the categories and the limiting of people into categories.

Al Mutar said, “In the Roman Empire, you needed the military to be strong, physical men with good equipment and all that.” He gave that as a point of comparison. Where “a good soldier” might not need the same physical requirements now, this is contrasting the Roman Empire with now.

With the drone technology, Mutar explains, and the advancement of military equipment, the limitation on gender with these old views can seem outdated.

“What happens is, sometimes, they make generalizations... even if they use stats, they are using it as a generalization which is ironic because obviously statistics are the opposite of generalizations,” Al Mutar opines, “So, I don’t want to make it sound like they’re the same, but the argument is that, ‘Oh, according to stats, more men prefer jobs in engineering and more women prefer jobs in social arts and liberal arts.’”

Al Mutar emphasized less the statistics and more the point of the advancement of some arguments. He thinks that, sometimes, conversations on gender roles can lead to bad outcomes or consequences. The emphasize, he thinks, should be on the individual pursuing their potential rather than having a societal restriction on an individual based on their gender.

When asked the people putting forward this more progressive worldview rather than traditional worldview, Al Mutar talked about the emerging movement comprised of many people. Those more often are left-leaning people.

Al Mutar describes how some in this emerging movement can be extreme. Extreme to the point of ignoring the differences between men and women, in denial of the science.

“So, within the more left-leaning, anti-gender roles groups, while I’m fully supportive of that and something I’m more aligned with; there’s also a movement too that pushes against the science

behind it, which I think is not helpful to their cause in trying to say there is almost zero biological difference,” Al Mutar stated.

Al Mutar looks more for the type of society someone wants to live inside. Even if the science says otherwise, he posed the question, “Do we really want to put limitations on people based on their gender?”

“If more of the secular folks make arguments based on that rather than denying the science, I think they will be able to convince more people of the arguments rather than denying basic facts,” Al Mutar concluded.

#BNChangesLives and Lives Changed by Black Nonbelievers, Inc.

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 10, 2018

What can sharing the stories of leaving a faith community and finding non-believing one do?

Mandisa Thomas is the Founder of Black Nonbelievers, Inc. One of, if not the, largest organization for African-American or black nonbelievers or atheists in America. The organization is intended to give secular fellowship, provide nurturance and support for nonbelievers, encourage a sense of pride in irreligion, and promote charity in the non-religious community.

I was lucky enough to have a short conversation with Thomas about a new hashtag campaign of Black Nonbelievers, Inc. (BN). When I asked about the reason for the campaign, [#BNChangesLives](#), Thomas pointed to the consistent theme of hearing the personal stories of members and allies of BN.

Many people who felt as though they were helped in the transition out of their faith and to be able to find a community. With campaign on social media and elsewhere, the messages that are shared can be a few words and even a couple paragraphs in order to share their story. This sharing of personal narratives can help bridge the gap of aloneness for many nonbelievers and help bring them together with fellow atheists and nonbelievers, Thomas noted.

BN has been around for about 6 years now. Thomas explained, “We wanted to give people the opportunity to be able to share how we have done that. We wanted to give supporters – people who support our organization – who do not know how we have made an impact. This is a way to tell members how we connect with the overall community.”

When I questioned about specific stories of lives greatly improved by activities of BN or other organizations, Thomas pointed to a woman who was “very heavily involved in her church. She questioned the Bible and decided to leave. She was lacking community. She saw the need to help build that community and help find other nonbelievers. In contacting myself and wanting to get involved with the organization, we started the Portland, Oregon affiliate. She is connected with other black nonbelievers in general, in her area.”

Thomas talked how they have begun to work on some events together in order to create a cultural connection in a community. Where once there was a church, they have one means of nonreligious community, even online forums for the members of BN. In particular, Thomas talks about one person who was contemplating suicide based on emotional trauma that came from being a believer.

She found BN and saw a means to connect with another community and express inchoate frustrations. While BN does not put themselves out there as an alternative to mainstream medical professionals, as Thomas makes clear, people with trauma from a religious community who can find another community feel a place in which to heal is BN.

Thomas talked about how the community helped this woman deal with suicidal tendencies. “Her frustrations were that family member who was a pastor or deacon in the church had molested her,” Thomas stated, “She was sexually assaulted by a family member who was a leader in the church. That is not frustrating [Laughing]. That is traumatic.”

The Urgent Death Penalty Case of Noura Hussein Hammad

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 11, 2018

What happens to the life of a woman if she murders a husband she was forced to marry who repeatedly raped her in a theocracy?

Sodfa Daaji is the Chairwoman of the Gender Equality Committee and the North Africa Coordinator for the Afrika Youth Movement. Here we talk about Noura Hussein Hammad's urgent case. The hashtag: #JusticeForNoura. Daaji's email if you would like to sign the petition, please provide first and last name and country to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

As I asked her about gender-based violence, as well as masculinity and gender roles as aspects in this, she talked about the multiple forms of violence faced by Noura.

Daaji stated, "Noura has faced multiple forms of violence, but she is still treated as the perpetrator, and not as a victim and survivor." She explained Sharia Law does not permit the detailing her case in full to the judges.

However, marital rape is recognized in Sudanese law, but this aspect of the law was ignored in the case of Noura. It was ignored and not applied in short. The father treated Noura as if this was a woman whose fate was written through being married to a man chosen by the father.

Daaji described how Noura had zero chance to state no and be able to decide for herself, for her body, for her future.

When I asked about the ways in which the general public, the ordinary people, can help, Daaji stated, "Now, we need to be heard. We have 15 days and we are literally fighting against a system and against the time. We are not willing to be polite anymore, and we just need to be heard. Sharing the official hashtag #JusticeForNoura and her story will help us to fight for Noura's justice."

The prevalence of the cases such as Hammad's seems common, according to Daaji. She wonders, along with other concerned people, if others are facing similar death penalties on similar grounds in Sudan.

"Women around the world are often the victim of injustice, and in some countries, laws are not equal. We are trying to mobilize to urge the Sudanese authorities to change as well the law," Daaji explained, "and to start to take in consideration the details of each story, case by case. And of course, it is our duty to advocate for the abolishment of death penalty."

Daaji cares passionately about the Sustainable Development Goals. She believes we cannot speak of leaving anyone behind in the developed world if we do not take other less well-off countries where the death penalty is part of the judicial system.

Hammad has less than 15 days to appeal the decision of the death sentence for her.

Ghada Ibrahim on Islam, Gender Roles, and Leaving the Faith

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 12, 2018

What are some of the consequences of interpretations of Islam on gender roles for men and women?

Ghada Ibrahim is a Former Muslim and Saudi Activist. In particular, an activist for the rights of women in Islam and talking about her former faith. Ibrahim took some time to sit down with me to discuss Islam, gender roles, and some of the limitations in interpretations and on some women as a result.

I asked Ibrahim about the gender roles in Islam. She talked about the standard, traditional gender roles found in Islam with women as the makers of the home and the men as the winners of the bread.

As I asked about the limits this puts on women, and even men, the restriction depends on where the women are located and if the separation between religion and government is strong or not.

Ibrahim explained, “For example, in Saudi, if the family imposes these gender roles on women, the women are limited to what their families impose on them. In secular countries, once women reach adulthood, they can break free and pursue their dreams.”

When I questioned the various interpretations of Islam, noting the different ones around, especially in regards to the similarities and differences between men and women, she couldn’t think of any. By Ibrahim’s analysis, the progressive Islamic interpretations tend to justify atrocities of Islam.

“For example, some progressive Muslims go on and on about how the word “beat” doesn’t actually mean “beat” in 4:34, but has several meanings in the Arabic language,” Ibrahim sated, “Or trying to justify the inheritance being half of that of men by excusing it saying men are required to provide for women and therefore it makes sense that they get more in inheritance.”

If she had to choose, Ibrahim went with the liberals and reformers of Islam who provide better interpretations of Islam. Also, if women want to leave Islam, some countries have mechanisms and structures in place for women to leave the religion.

Some women disagree with the tenets and practice and, by freedom of religion and freedom of belief, should be able to leave the faith. Ibrahim described the secular nations as safer for women to leave and seek out community.

“In the US and Canada, there is an organization called Ex-Muslims of North America that helps create communities for ex-Muslims to get together. Knowing that there are more people that have left the religion as well is therapeutic and helpful,” Ibrahim said, “In Muslim-majority countries, it is more difficult, but not impossible. Finding like-minded people is still a possibility and finding an outlet, whether it is in social media or a group of close like-minded friends is very helpful.”

So, the help exists for leaving the faith if a woman, or a man for that matter, feels the particular interpretation does not permit them to be free and happy. The support structures for men are similar as for women if they so wish to leave the faith.

However, men face fewer hurdles. The honor culture in many Muslim-majority countries makes the issue much more difficult for the women: “Women are in danger of honor violence as well.” The apostasy punishment, e.g. beheading and life imprisonment, is more dangerous for the men, though.

For the kids, I asked about their chances. “Unfortunately, they are trapped. In most countries, even secular western countries, forced indoctrination is not looked at as a form of abuse. So unless parents do something that is illegal,” Ibrahim opined, “such as trying to force their minor child into marriage or beating them when they do not pray, children will have to be diligent and prepare to walk out once they reach adulthood. It is even more difficult if the child lives in a Muslim-majority country, where leaving the religion is not even a choice.”

On Islam and Muslims, and the Difference Between Ideas, and Sociology and Politics

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 13, 2018

What makes the ideas behind Islam, and the sociology and politics and practice of Muslims different from one another?

Marieme Helie Lucas is an Algerian sociologist, activist, founder of 'Secularism is a Women's Issue,' and founder and former International Coordinator of 'Women Living Under Muslim Laws.' Here, and in a few subsequent article interviews, we will discuss gender, Islam, Muslims, and this context surrounding the urgent case of Noura Hussein Hammad.

Hammad has been sentenced to death and has less than two weeks to appeal the case. The hashtag: [#JusticeForNoura](#). There is a petition. [Sodfa Daaji's](#) is the person to email. Daaji's email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

This amounts to an activist and educational series.

Religion, culture, gender, sex, theocracy, and democracy work within controversial, but important, conversations, especially more in the modern period. Helie Lucas took the time to answer some questions on gender roles and religion.

When I questioned Helie Lucas about gender roles and legal rights, she made an important preliminary note to not presuppose "so-called Muslim countries – or Muslim majority countries – are automatically theocracies; that is definitely not the case, they are mostly democracies, technically speaking."

Where the emphasis for the faith and the democratic elements should be left to the theologians, that is, if they conform with Islam, the theologians have more authoritative statements.

Helie Lucas prefers not to use Islamic: a "doctrine, a philosophy, an ideology, a vision of the world, a faith... I use the term 'Muslim', which refers to human beings who claim faith in this ideology."

By making the distinction between ideas and then "actions, laws, practices, of sociology and politics," Helie Lucas, wisely, clarified the context of the conversation on Islam as a set of doctrines and suggested practices and Muslims as self-identified practitioners of one of the world's great faiths.

"In actual fact Muslim majority countries are anything but homogenous; they range from theocracies to democracies, from ultra conservative to socialist," Helie Lucas explained, "The rights granted to citizens in general and to women in particular therefore vary from country to country; factors that account for these differences are essentially political, economical – far more than religiously grounded."

Helie Lucas described the Koran and the Bible, in reading them, that one can find both the wrath-punishment god and the mercy-tolerance god. Each progressive and conservative

theologian dealing with particular passages of their scripture to justify the progressive or conservative view of the world.

She reflects on this happening with progressive and conservative Christian theologians as well. Helie Lucas believes the problem is political or, more properly, the political use of religion.

“And what is the balance of forces between those and the defenders and advocates of secularism is the next question,” Helie Lucas opines, “This is what really determines the status of women, among others. In Muslim contexts like anywhere else.”

The great problem, as identified by Helie Lucas, is the ultra-conservative political forces on the rise, in a steady patten, around the world. Some with the extreme right, or far-right, in Europe or in Trump’s America.

Also, the similar concern arising in Modi’s India with Hindu fundamentalists vying for power or the Buddhist far-right in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Helie Lucas uses these as points of comparison for the rise of the far right in the world.

With the rise of the far-right, this becomes the general context of which Islam sees a particular brand of the rise. In these mostly Muslim contexts, then the “gender roles and legal rights are different and unequal for men and women – but more so under conservative governments and less so under democratic ones; and even less so in socialist regimes.”

While looking at the history of the countries with mostly Muslim populations include Iraq, Libya, Syria, and the Central Asia Republics, Helie Lucas educates. She explains women had the right to vote.

In some cases, these women had the right to vote well before their European counterparts. “French women for instance only gained voting rights in 1945, i.e. after WWII; as for Swiss women, a last canton gave them voting rights in the last decade – would you believe it?, Helie Lucas said.

These distinctions matter. These histories matter or facets of national and religious and rights history matter. Approximately 100% of girls went to primary school in Libya and if they went to university most would receive a state grant.

This happens, Helie Lucas said, at the same time many women were kept in illiterate states and remained secluded in Asia and Africa. She talked about the quasi-equality and even outright submission of women to male relatives.

Helie Lucas argues that if we want to fight this appropriately then we should bear in mind the political nature of this far right movement. An ultraconservative movement that takes on the cloak of religion in order to justify its existence.

With cases such as Noura Hussein Hammad, Islam amounts to that cloak or guise, but the main theme tying these fundamentalist and ultraconservative movements together is the global tendency towards the right – a far-right global phenomenon.

“At the moment, for instance, many countries in Europe are facing terrible attempts at curtailing reproductive rights, from Spain to Poland, you name it,” Helie Lucas said, and then asked, “Would you say religion is the cause or would you name the far-right forces (eventually backed by Christian fundamentalists) that use Christianity and fear of god to prevent women’s access to contraception and abortion?”

These are important considerations for the contextual analysis of the global rise of the far-right while at the same seeing the rise of ultra-conservative religious and political movements at the same time.

Of course, Helie Lucas made an important concluding note for this session:

Let me clarify one thing: this is NOT a defense of 'Islam', it is just trying to position ourselves better in understanding the political forces we are confronting, whether or not they pretend to represent Islam. We should not fall into the trap they set for us.

The hashtag: #JusticeForNoura. There is a petition. Sodfa Daaji's is the person to email. Daaji's email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

An Urgent Human Rights Case of a Young Sudanese Woman

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 14, 2018

What does a case of rights violations and gender inequality against women look like?

Marieme Helie Lucas is an Algerian sociologist, activist, founder of 'Secularism is a Women's Issue,' and founder and former International Coordinator of 'Women Living Under Muslim Laws.' Here, and in a few subsequent article interviews, we will discuss gender, Islam, Muslims, and this context surrounding the urgent case of Noura Hussein Hammad.

Hammad has been sentenced to death and has less than two weeks to appeal the case. The hashtag: [#JusticeForNoura](#). There is a petition. [Sodfa Daaji's](#) is the person to email. Daaji's email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

Part 1 [here](#).

This amounts to an activist and educational series.

As the conversation progressed, we talked about the violations of rights for men and women, but more for women. This went into areas of gender inequality. All of this specified on the case Noura Hussein Hammad.

In the context of marriage in an Islamic context, Helie Lucas described two parts as normal for it. Two events with days or even years, depending on the case, between the events for the individuals.

In Hammad's case, she was married against her will. Her father was the signatory of the contract "as her legal tutor, her *wali*." She was married at the age of 16. In this context, the marriage was legal and permitted with the law.

The bride does not necessarily have to be around at this time for the marriage.

"The bride does not even have to be present during this signature. Then she was sent to her husband's house for the consummation of the marriage when she was 19," Helie Lucas explained, "She never flinched in her refusal of this marriage. Both Sudanese laws and international law prohibit forced marriages."

Helie Lucas described how the institution of *wali* forever leaves the woman, or women more generally, in a status of a legal minority. Someone less than the other. In this case, a woman less than the man by law.

She notes that this is specific to the Maliki ritual prevalent in North Africa for the most part. However, Helie Lucas stated that this is not practiced in all schools of thought in Islam.

Forced marriages "are generally prohibited under the law of the land, not all countries take it to heart to implement these laws. This is also a child marriage," Helie Lucas stated directly.

With the increasing influence and growth of the fundamentalist preachers, the marriage age continues to decrease to the puberty of girls. Some can be married off as early as 9 or 10 years old.

With the case of Noura Hammad, she has another violation of rights, not only forced marriage but also in, the rape. She had marital rape and gang rape.

“The second violation committed against Noura is rape – and not *just*, if I may say, ‘marital rape’, but it is gang rape, as – in order to crush her physical resistance,” Helie Lucas explained, “[the] husband sought help from several of his male relatives in order to pin her down and hold her arms and legs while he was raping her in front of them.”

According to Hammad’s lawyers, Hammad had bruises and scars from the fight. One day after the marriage, Hammad’s husband tried to rape her once more, but used a knife in self-defense and killed him.

“She went to her father’s house, but he disowned her and took her to the police. She was convicted with murder and sentenced to death,” Helie Lucas said, “With no consideration for the circumstances, and for a case of self defense. Hence Amnesty International’ recent demand that this judgment be annulled and for a more equitable trial to take place.”

There are cases like Hammad in many places around the world, but this is a particular case that made news and Hammad’s life is at risk with the call for a hanging. Sudan, as with some other Muslim countries, have a legal provision for blood money.

Helie Lucas stated, “...the family of the victim can demand a financial compensation for their loss, – rather than a death sentence for the culprit. In Noura’s case, the late husband’s family refused compensation and demanded the death sentence.”

More tomorrow.

The hashtag: #JusticeForNoura. There is a petition. Sodfa Daaji’s is the person to email. Daaji’s email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

Marieme Helie Lucas on the Context Surrounding Noura Hussein Hammad

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 15, 2018

Why does killing in self-defense from rape in a forced marriage accrue a death penalty for a woman in some Islamic contexts?

Marieme Helie Lucas is an Algerian sociologist, activist, founder of 'Secularism is a Women's Issue,' and founder and former International Coordinator of 'Women Living Under Muslim Laws.' Here, and in a few subsequent article interviews, we will discuss gender, Islam, Muslims, and this context surrounding the urgent case of Noura Hussein Hammad.

Hammad has been sentenced to death and has less than two weeks to appeal the case. The hashtag: [#JusticeForNoura](#). There is a petition. [Sodfa Daaji's](#) is the person to email. Daaji's email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

Part 1 [here](#) and part 2 [here](#).

This amounts to an activist and educational series.

The conversation with Helie Lucas moved into the topic of gender roles in Islam. The Islamic prescribed role for men and women. The question being: what makes for a better foundation for the rights of women compared to conservatism and traditional religion?

Helie Lucas is quick to point out. The we should fight within Islam, but, rather, within each of our societies. She does not feel personal responsibilities for the changing of Islam, Christianity, or other religions.

“As a citizen, I feel responsibility for changing laws in democratic ways, towards more equality between all human beings, regardless of class, age, sex, beliefs, etc.,” Helie Lucas said, “As a secularist, I do not want to live under non-voted un-changeable a-historical supposedly-divine laws. This is the essence of democracy.”

Helie Lucas described the ways in which activists in Muslim contexts fight conservatism. They fight to change regressive laws. They work to promote progressive ideals. She pointed to a case in Algeria.

In Algeria, since 1984, women have been working on *wali*. That is to say, women have worked to end the institution. In this termination of *wali*, women would become “legal adults and not forever minors who cannot enter into a contract, by themselves, without a male tutor. So far, we have not succeeded.”

Helie Lucas pointed to a courageous women's rights organization “20 ans Barakat! ('20 years is enough!').” It presents women and men struggling on the ground in many of their countries.

Helie Lucas provided a link:

The clip shows for instance, women's demonstrations in the capital-city, Algiers, during which home-made bombs were thrown to demonstrators by fundamentalist groups. These initiatives need to be supported – not lead – from the outside. In Sudan, on the forefront are the women's rights and human rights organizations that are leading the struggle for Noura's rights. They do so at great risk for themselves.

WACHDAK :collectif “20 ans barakat”par www.algerie-femme.com ...

► 4:33

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNkHmEN0III>

Helie Lucas described the undergirding progressive movements in the Muslim world and elsewhere.

“But they are little considered outside their countries – especially in the West which globally tends to ignore them. Noura's case is a good opportunity to reach out in solidarity to progressive, feminist, humanist, secular forces in our parts of the world,” Helie Lucas concluded, “It is an opportunity to create working links that would last even after we save Noura's life – as I am now convinced we will, collectively.”

The hashtag: #JusticeForNoura. There is a petition. Sodfa Daaji's is the person to email. Daaji's email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

Quick Checklist and Tips for Male Depression from the Mayo Clinic

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 16, 2018

What are the common symptoms and side effects of men who live with depression?

—

The [Mayo Clinic](#) pointed to a few questions to ask about men's depression. The case of male depression can, at times unfortunately, lead to suicide or isolation. They say, "Do you feel irritable, isolated or withdrawn? Do you find yourself working all the time? Drinking too much?"

These amount to unhealthy coping strategies. Men and women differ in their coping strategies. However, if a male and if feeling a bit different than usual on the more negative affect side, you can keep in mind a few things.

Some symptoms include:

Feel sad, hopeless or empty

Feel extremely tired

Have difficulty sleeping

Not get pleasure from activities they once enjoyed

Other behaviors in men that could be signs of depression — but not recognized as such — include:

Escapist behavior, such as spending a lot of time at work or on sports

Alcohol or drug abuse

Controlling, violent or abusive behavior

Irritability or inappropriate anger

Risky behavior, such as reckless driving

These unhealthy coping strategies may be clues that you have male depression. The behaviour and signs can overlap. The severity of the depressive symptoms and signs can be different as well.

However, the tendency in the culture is towards men not going out to ask for help. Males not asking for help can make the reportage about depression just that, an underreported phenomenon.

Men may downplay the symptoms: "You may not recognize how much your symptoms affect you, or you may not want to admit to yourself or to anyone else that you're depressed."

They may not recognize the depressive symptoms for depression itself, potentially: "Men with depression often aren't diagnosed for several reasons, including: You may think that feeling sad or emotional is always the main symptom of depression. But for many men, that isn't the primary symptom."

Men may be reluctant to even discuss it if they suspect something is up: “You may not be open to talking about your feelings with family or friends, let alone with a health care professional.”

Males who find, finally, that this is something wrong, amiss, and potentially needing to be dealt will still not go out and get proper help: “Even if you suspect you have depression, you may avoid diagnosis or refuse treatment.”

As a result, men may attempt suicide in these cases. In the cases of suicidal thoughts and fear that you, the man, may hurt yourself or are afraid a male in your life may hurt themselves:

Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

Call a suicide hotline number — in the United States, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) to reach a trained counselor.

In order to cope with the depression, as help is always available, some lifestyle and worldview things to do according to the Mayo Clinic:

Set realistic goals and prioritize tasks.

Seek out emotional support from a partner or family or friends.

Learn ways to manage stress, such as meditation and mindfulness, and develop problem-solving skills.

Delay making important decisions, such as changing jobs, until your depression symptoms improve.

Engage in activities you enjoy, such as ball games, fishing or a hobby.

Live a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating and regular physical activity, to help promote better mental health.

If you or someone you know needs help, it is always there. You simply need to ask or keep an eye out.

An Indigenous or Indian Perspective on Love, Fear, and the Future

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 17, 2018

What does an Indigenous or Indian elder have to say about a current future of fear but also an increasing future of love?

Morris Amos, or Giltimi, is of the C'imotza Beaver Clan. He is an advisor to Haimus Wakas, who is the Hereditary Chief of the C'imotza Raven Clan. He notes two communities in a part of British Columbia, Canada. One being Kitimat, British Columbia and the other being Kitamaat, British Columbia. Kitimat occupied by the white community. Kitamaat occupied by the Indian or Indigenous community.

We first met at a closed-door minor political party meeting. He came with two others. One of whom was Haimus Wakas. He came down from Kitamaat in order to disseminate knowledge.

Now, I did not know a lot before. I know some more now, but know the more I know the less I know in the scope of what I realize I do not know. I know young people, such as myself, take on particular views. One view is not knowing much about the history of the country and the various peoples and faiths within it.

Another is aggressive activism. This has its own problems by making other peoples “the other.” I mean this in the full context of othering people from all sides.

When I brought this perspective to Giltimi, and Haimus Wakas as well, Haimus Wakas and Giltimi educated me. They described a view of the current state of affairs for the current generation and the next generations.

One emphasizing getting beyond dualities and having real forgiveness – moving past, forward, and having younger generations think in terms beyond dualities. I reached out on the 14th to ask about expanded descriptions on non-duality and forgiveness from his perspective.

On moving beyond dualities, Giltimi said, “I am aware of what constitutes history, History, as we have known it, is largely written by the victors in war. What this tells me is history is a tool for the victors to continue control and manipulation over those conquered. This world view is mine, as a member of an oppressed race of people’s.”

Giltimi continued on the oppression through contact with whites and the written history of the Indigenous population out of the history books. He called this a history with an “entirely ethnocentric point of view.”

People are wising up, though. From Giltimi’s independent research, he views the perpetrators of violence against the Indigenous came with a larger plan. A plan to dominate the world.

“Some call this plan the New World Order. I am now satisfied that white people are victimized by this plan just like the Indian. We are all oppressed by this plan,” Giltimi opined, “I am not opposed to world order but I oppose the New World Order as planned due to the nature of the control and manipulation mechanisms as proposed and also to the reasons for desire of control

which is simply to be in control for self effacing purposes, not for the good interests of humanity.”

Giltimi referenced being an advisor to Haimus Wakas. He looked into the banking systems, big pharmaceutical companies, food production, the law, and oil and gas interests. He notes that they work within divide and conquer.

This permits ease of the creation of problems for the camps made in this process in order to self-aggrandize and benefit a small group of people. Giltimi views the emotional basis of this in fear, “which in resource terms equates to what I call the consciousness of lack.”

The basis of this is in the creation of poverty and forcing people to have a small number of jobs. A limited quantity of work where people compete for access to them. People become desperate and easily divided and conquered, Giltimi explained.

This, he related to duality as well as polarity.

“Duality of opposites such as up and down, in and out, black and white. This translates into what I call the dance of light and dark. The dark has held sway over humanity for millenniums of time,” Giltimi stated, “with the rise in consciousness, the light is now on the rise. The light equates with love, the polar opposite of fear.”

He sees fear as still prevalent and needing to be replaced by love. Giltimi sees the highest energy of the Great Spirit aligned with love. The work to bring light and love is what he sees as his work.

In a way, his work for unity is working for, within his philosophy of existence, for the highest energy of the Great Spirit. A new world built around love rather than fear. Giltimi views love as non-exclusionary.

“I now use this forum to call an end to the denial of my people, the genocide of my people, we must be included in the move toward love. The continued denial of my people is an obstacle to our spiritual evolution,” Giltimi said, “The denial of my people has created a resentment of settlers which can only be remediated by an end to denial based on divisiveness.”

He viewed the fear-based new order to have demonized Indians or Indigenous peoples. It caused the settlers to support a plan that resulted in resentment. With an acknowledgment of the truth, Giltimi says that the resentment of the Indigenous population would leave and the forgiveness would take its place.

Where a new real partnership with the visitors who never left can come forward, he made a distinction between a New World Order and white people. That it should be clear that the Indigenous resentment towards settlers is as misguided as the settler fear-based resentment towards the Indigenous.

He views this new real partnership as the basis for freedom.

“I now know the current fee simple land tenure system combined with banking elitism is at the root of a fraudulent pyramid scam that uses force to filter all wealth to the top, leaving the world struggling with induced poverty,” Giltimi explained.

The empowerment of the Indigenous with love and respect for them and with love and respect for the settlers can help the creation of the new real partnership and dislodgement of the fear-based world order.

Giltimi said, “I can say that in C’imotza our hereditary system is still in control of the land. If we can set as our goal a method to dislodge the NWO from control over us I am certain we can unite to develop a system of land tenure and banking that takes into account the best interests of both Indigenous peoples and settlers.”

He sees the corporations as taking control of common wealth against the common interests of the people, Indigenous peoples and settlers. Giltimi noted the power of corporations is pyramidal and used to create perpetual fear-based conflict in order to control and manipulate.

Giltimi said, “I am working on my end to make this happen, I call on all to join with us in this movement to unify humanity against those who would control us for their own dark based agenda. Let love be your choice not fear. I have spoken.”

Within Giltimi’s worldview, the nature of love has been forgotten, but the Mayan Tzolkin movement of the Earth into the Photon Belt is producing a rise in consciousness. One towards love rather than fear, where people would previously be divided they are being brought together.

“Those that are not attached to the energy of the great spirit, who some call the ether or ethos, who are detached,” Giltimi concluded, “think of themselves as isolated and in need of empowerment. In this case, they look for empowerment outside themselves and this form of empowerment always comes at the expense of the disempowerment of others. Those connected to the ether energy of great spirit will always look inward for their empowerment and will do so in a manner that empowers others. this knowledge will result in new leaders being called forth.”

On Early Life in America with a Cherokee Indian, African-American, and German-American Background

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 18, 2018

What was life like for one outstanding woman with an African-American, Cherokee Indian, and German background in America?

Dr. Margena A. Christian was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. She has a background of African American, Cherokee Indian, and German. I was lucky enough to interview her about some of the work done by her. Christian founded and owns DocM.A.C. write Consulting. Full interview [here](#). Here we look at some of her story and views and early life.

When I asked about her growing up and the geographic, cultural, and linguistic context for family, she talked about the relatively traditional African-American environment. A working-class family.

Her mother worked as a librarian and media specialist. His father worked as an inspector for General Motors. Christian stated, “Growing up in St. Louis was an interesting experience. There is much division there between African Americans and Whites. I lived on the city’s north side, which is predominantly Black.”

Christian talked about attending Most Holy Rosary as a Catholic grade school and Cardinal Ritter College Preparatory for a Catholic high school. The students who attended, she notes, looked like her.

She went to St. Louis University (SLU), which is a Jesuit institution. However, it felt like a major adjustment for her. Few people looked like her. She recalls being the only African-American in many classes.

“Going from being around my own 24/7 and then moving into a world where I was suddenly the only “one,” took some getting used to. I can say that I had a pleasant time as a Billiken at SLU,” Christian said, “I worked hard and made stellar grades so I stood out for more reasons than one. And, needless to say, I hardly ever missed class because the professor always seemed to notice.”

Now, as noted earlier, Christian’s mother was a teacher. While at kindergarten, she went to the same school that her mother taught. With her mother there, she did not feel the same need to work as hard.

It was a feeling of privilege over other students. Christian’s mother found that it was not a great idea for your kid to work at the same school as you. She explained, “I was headed to the third grade when my parents decided to take me out of the St. Louis Public School System and have me attend an Archdiocesan school. She didn’t feel that my siblings and I were getting the best education, so she convinced our dad to allow us to transfer to Catholic schools.”

She ended up going to a co-ed high school, which was among the best private and Catholic schools for an urban area. With Saint Barbara and in a leadership class, her life was changed ever-after.

“She knew how much I loved to write and told me about the Minority Journalism Workshop, sponsored by the Greater St. Louis Association of Black Journalists,” Christian remembered.

The program was meant for juniors and seniors in the high school system with some early college students as well. As a sophomore, she was accepted after an application.

“Renowned journalists George E. Curry and Gerald Boyd were founders of this pioneering workshop, which would become the blueprint for other minority journalism workshops throughout the country,” Christian said, “Training with professional journalists at such a young age helped to hone my craft and solidify my desire to do this for a living.”

With this, she honed her craft, as they say, and won two scholarships and earned a publication of her first article. She finds that nothing compares to hands-on, practical experience with a craft. As the only person to look like her at SLU, she felt uncomfortable and so did not write for the SLU student newspaper.

Rather, she did an internship at the top African-American publication in the country, which was the St. Louis American Newspaper. Later on, she wrote for Take Five. At the end of the experience, she had “an attractive portfolio.”

“However, coming from a family of educators, I did what most people who aspire to become a journalist do. I played it safe and got a job as an English teacher at a Catholic grade school, Bishop Healy,” Christian explained, “So, essentially, I taught by day and wrote by night. Healy was in the city and practiced the Nguzo Saba value system.”

She reflects on her life. Christian feels as though she was being prepared and “concepts in my dissertation were the Nguzo Saba,” which represented the publisher John H. Johnson and Johnson’s commitment to race in the presentation of documenting “our history in magazines.”

Editing, Professional Development, Proofreading, and Writing Services with Dr. Margena A. Christian

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 19, 2018

What does a clientele need with editing, professional development, proofreading, and writing services? One woman has the answers.

Dr. Margena A. Christian was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. She has a background of African American, Cherokee Indian, and German. I was lucky enough to interview her about some of the work done by her. Christian founded and owns [DocM.A.C. write Consulting](#). Full interview [here](#). Part 1 of this GMP series [here](#). Here we look at some of the professional work in editing, professional development, proofreading, and writing services.

As the conversation with Dr. Christian continued, I asked about DocM.A.C. write Consulting, which is a service for editing, professional development, proofreading, and writing.

In terms of the clientele, I wanted to know of the importance of these services to the improvement of written work. Christian said that people want to improve their writing as well as the skills necessary to improve it.

“Educators need to remain current with pedagogical strategies so professional development is one way to achieve this. I also do dissertation coaching,” Christian stated, “Thus far I’ve helped two people complete their dissertation. The coursework is the easy part; the hard part is crossing the finish line by submitting the dissertation! There’s a great deal of folks who are ABD (all but dissertation) who need the right push to move along. That’s what I do.”

However, to maintain the basis for training people, you need people. Christian needs clientele. Those who are clientele come from the word of mouth, as they say uncommonly, and through professional networking, as they say more commonly.

With the quality of the work, and the building of a base of a clientele through these means based on quality, Christian, and others can too, has been able to build a steady clientele and many of whom have recommended others to her.

One of the interesting things about Christian is also the lecturer position at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It amounts to a position requiring the ability to convey and correct. Convey the knowledge; correct the material for learning, these can be tough on a consistent basis.

She helped build the professional writing concentration as a minor at the institution. Christian developed and designed two of the courses entitled Writing for Digital and New Media and Advanced Professional Writing.

Christian reflected, “One thing I enjoy most about being a lecturer is that the focus is on teaching and not so much research. If I choose to conduct more or to write journal articles, it is optional and not mandatory. Each semester I teach three different courses so my prep time is far reaching. Thanks to my organizational skills, I make it work effortlessly.”

Christian worked on a dissertation entitled *John H. Johnson: A Historical Study on the Re-Education of African Americans in Adult Education Through the Selfethnic Liberatory Nature of Magazines*. She was hired by John H. Johnson in 1995 as an assistant editor for Jet magazine. He was lovingly called Mr. Johnson and died in 2005.

Not only with the consulting services and the teaching, the people behind a publication as well can make the difference in the style, content, tone, and quality of a publication.

“Let’s just say that I knew that one day the magazine and the company as I once knew it would be no more,” Christian stated, “It hit me that there would come a time when people won’t remember or know anything about a man who lived named John H. Johnson. It struck me that one day people won’t know about his iconic publications.”

She reflected further on the house built at 820 S. Michigan Avenue would be gone. Christian realized: “I was the last editor hired by Mr. Johnson and worked along his side who remained at the company before my position was eliminated in 2014.”

When Jet magazine ended, her position ended. Simeon Booker covered the 1955 Emmett Till story while Christian did further coverage in 2004. She found the experience “an honor to have Booker hand me the baton and for Mr. Johnson to have approved it.”

“After a series of stories that I penned for a few years, I concluded that chapter in my life and the magazine’s annals by purchasing a beautiful oil painting of Till (shown in image) that was done by a fellow JPC employee, Raymond A. Thomas,” Christian said.

Dr. Margena A. Christian on Editorial and Writing Positions and Abilities, Knowledge, and Skills Developed from Them

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 20, 2018

What can someone learn from editorial and writing positions in terms of abilities, knowledge, and skills acquisition?

Dr. Margena A. Christian was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. She has a background of African American, Cherokee Indian, and German. I was lucky enough to interview her about some of the work done by her. Christian founded and owns [DocM.A.C. write Consulting](#). Full interview [here](#). Part 1 of this GMP series [here](#) and part 2 [here](#). These can be read as a series. However, they are stand-alone article interviews as well. Here we look at some of the professional work in editing, professional development, proofreading, and writing services with some insights through important stories covered and the diverse experience in her time writing throughout her career with some as blessings in disguise.

Christian, in her dissertation research, wanted to know the ways in which John H. Johnson was using the magazines produced by him in adult education. An adult education oriented in order to combat forms of intellectual racism.

She found that he educated different races around the world on the forms of intellectual racism. Christian's professional life portion of the interview moved into the senior editor and senior writer roles at EBONY.

As well, she was an editor of Elevate and the features editor for Jet magazine. She also helped with the inauguration of the EBONY retrospective. She described the features editor position as being in charge of pitching and writing and editing human interest stories.

Christian also helped with selecting and securing the high-profile folks figured within the publication.

"Elevate was a section in EBONY that focused on health, wellness and spirituality," Christian explained, "EBONY's Retrospective was an opportunity for me to marry my love of entertainment with my interest in historical data by examining pivotal cultural moments in music, movies and TV that shaped my race."

As I asked about the abilities, knowledge, and skills developed from the editorial and writing experiences, I gained an insight into the peripheral and central aspects of the work.

If someone edits or writes, they work within a lens of the work alone. They also garner contacts and networks from the work, too. Christian talked about learning an art.

The art of multi-tasking and having steady relationships. It is important to focus on who knows you and returns the call. I suppose this can be interpreted to mean those who spend the time to consider you important to them as you consider them important to you.

One part of the publication for Jet magazine skills was an expectation. The ability to do due diligence in meeting a weekly deadline.

“This included tracking down sources, doing research, conducting interviews, writing stories and editing. Early on I handled images for both EBONY and Jet by operating the Associated Press photo machine,” Christian stated, “including breaking it down and cleaning what was called the oven. Moving to EBONY in 2009 offered me a bit more time to work on lengthy features.”

For the Retrospective pieces, she was expected to produce something like 1,500 words, but “would force their hand at close to 3,000 words!”

Another aspect of this is the finding of a diverse set of interests to guide writing. Christian has an interest in education, fashion, finance, health, medicine, parenting, relationships, religion, and spirituality.

This does seem to require a certain self-insight, which Christian starts with the career at Jet magazine. All news editors had to write on every subject with Christian’s specialty as entertainment.

Mr. Johnson and his daughter, Linda, expressed an intrigue in written work about celebrities for EBONY. “I recalled being told by Mr. Johnson that rank determined who would talk to the notables at EBONY, so he thought Jet would be a better fit since all editors had an equal chance of doing stories about celebs,” Christian said.

After this period, she began to write on health. Christian did not like it, but did find this to be “a blessing in disguise” because she “secretly began to enjoy writing about this subject.”

Christian did cover the death of Michael Jackson and described this as a hard time while also recognizing this as a job to complete. She was transitioning to the company. However, bear in mind, she had also garnered varied experienced prior to the transition and the difficult work.

All important for the development of profession relevant skill sets. She documented some of the history. However, Christian’s interest was in the artist rather than the history of the man.

“I spent three weeks in Los Angeles, spending time at the Jackson family’s Encino compound, camped outside with the hundred other reporters from around the world,” Christian opined, “and driving for hours to Los Olivos to visit Neverland. I met a man during a church prayer service named Steve Manning, who was one of his best friends who first ran the Jacksons fan club back in the day.”

She continues to stay in touch with them. One year after Michael’s death, Steve happened to be at the Jackson home. She was able to speak with the Jackson mom, Katherine.

It was the weekend before Mother’s Day. Christian was tongued-tied. Janet sent a Christmas card one time to Christian, by the way.

Christian said, “The Jackson family grew up at Johnson Publishing Company and were close friends with Mr. Johnson. I felt honored when I was selected by the managing editor, Terry Glover, to document this important history. She knew what I brought to the table and that I would deliver.”

Advice for Adult Women, African-American Women, and Professional Women from a High Achieving One

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 16, 2018

What can girls, women, African-American women, and professional women learn from a successful Cherokee-African-German-American?

Dr. Margena A. Christian was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. She has a background of African American, Cherokee Indian, and German. I was lucky enough to interview her about some of the work done by her. Christian founded and owns [DocM.A.C. write Consulting](#). Full interview [here](#). Part 1 of this GMP series [here](#) and part 2 [here](#), and part 3 [here](#). These can be read as a series. However, they are stand-alone article interviews as well. Here we look at Christian's advice for women tied to experience and experiences.

When I set the chat on the path of advice for the younger people or for those in particular demographic representations or in professional life, Christian provided some more advice based on further consideration.

It was near the end of the conversation, but it seemed to add more depth to the conversation. She said journalists should read, write, read, write, and find a mentor who can guide them.

Because those relationships and connections are crucial for this particular profession. However, this advice differed from those for girls. Where she stated, "The advice I have for girls is to discover your passion and then you'll find your purpose. Ask yourself, "What would I do for the rest of my life even if I never got paid to do this?" That's usually your answer."

Then I queried about women in general. She noted a nuanced point about the still and quiet voice inside each grown woman. That voice that women should listen to and develop when they make "any type of decision."

Christian described the need to trust your own individual instinct as a women because "you can't miss what is meant for you." This then built into a line of questions about African-American women and professional.

Of course, every woman is different. Every African-American or black American is different. At the same time, one should extrapolate trends based on statistics and then apply advice to yourself based on that framework if within a particular demographic within a country.

"The advice I have for African-American women is to never forget that you are a queen," Christian said, "Wear your crown with pride and know that you are wonderfully and divinely created."

When it came to professional women, and many of these levels of analysis and advice can overlap with one another, she explained the importance in having multiple streams of income and the independence of finances.

The independence of finances through not relying on only one job. As well as the crucial advice, no one will work harder for you than you.

Now, I wanted to ground some of this in the acknowledgement of a high achieving person. Most high achieving people encounter problems, personal and otherwise, and overcome them, or fail completely and then rise again from the ashes as if a mythical force like a phoenix.

However, these overcoming of trials and tribulations takes courage, fortitude, and power, which do not come overnight, easily, or even in a straight line. They take time.

In personal life, the greatest struggle according to Christian: “The greatest emotional struggle in personal life is realizing that people will disappoint because they are human.”

In professional life, Christian opined: “The greatest emotional struggle in professional life is being so passionate about making certain that my students learn and that my stories educate, enlighten and uplift.”

Of course, life has a time for celebration too. She said that the best surprise that her sister and close friends ever gave was a surprise graduation party post-doctorate. Humbly, Christian said, “I don’t like surprises and I don’t get fooled easily, but they managed to do a splendid job of knocking me off my feet. I was very touched.”

However, and on the other hand, people can be mean. “People did things to be mean but now I look at those encounters as part of divine order. I always remember that rejection is God’s protection,” Christian explained, “I also know that what people intended for harm was designed to help and push me into my purpose. So, mean things weren’t done to me only things that were MEANt to grow me.”

To close off the interview, I asked about drive. Christian said, “Faith and passion drive me.” She concluded by saying, “We keep someone’s legacy alive by educating future generations [ed. in reference to turning the dissertation into a book] ... Trust the process and always keep the faith. In the words of the Hon. Marcus Garvey, “Onward and upward.”

On the Autonomy, Efficiency, and Equity Factors of National Healthcare Programs with Professor Gordon Guyatt

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 22, 2018

What are the main points in national healthcare programs on Autonomy, Efficiency, and Equity?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

The British Medical Journal or BMJ had a list of 117 nominees in 2010 for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Guyatt was short-listed and came in second-place in the end. He earned the title of an Officer of the Order of Canada based on contributions from evidence-based medicine and its teaching.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2012 and a Member of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame in 2015. He lectured on public vs. private healthcare funding in March of 2017, which seemed like a valuable conversation to publish in order to have this in the internet's digital repository with one of Canada's foremost academics.

For those with an interest in standardized metrics or academic rankings, he is the 14th most cited academic in the world in terms of H-Index at 222 and has a total citation count of more than 200,000. That is, he has the highest H-Index, likely, of any Canadian academic living or dead.

We conducted an extensive interview before: [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). We have other interviews in [Canadian Atheist](#) ([here](#) and [here](#)), [Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy](#), [Humanist Voices](#), and [The Good Men Project](#).

As a specific topical interview, we focus on the efficiency, equity, and autonomy associated with national healthcare programs.

I got the opportunity to speak with professor Guyatt on national healthcare programs in developed countries. Guyatt spoke on things relevant to national healthcare in Canada. Those items Canada may have that other countries do not have.

Guyatt said, "It depends. There are two ways of doing national healthcare. One is a model like the German model. It is not a government program. It is a program that started as a job-based program. There are a whole bunch of organizations that the government ensures that, effectively, in the end, everybody is insured."

He continued to say that this is not an overall government program, which is less efficient. For physician and hospital services, we have a single program. That program is provincially administered, but, at its core, amounts to a national program. That means increased efficiency.

For physician and hospital services, Guyatt talked about the funding being more by the funding than most other places. He described the ways in which places have a private section for the ability to pay for better and quicker care.

However, for physician and hospital services, we lack that, which becomes a bi equity advantage for Canadians. By equity, this means more people can use it. More of the general public gets access to the physician and hospital services.

“On the other hand, for everything other than the physician and hospital services, we are quite severely disadvantaged. The only people who have their drugs covered are those on social assistance over 65,” Guyatt noted.

If you are under 25 in Ontario, there are some support programs. If a drug costs too high, then this becomes burden for the low-income people. Where, for many low-income people, it becomes a situation in which they simply cannot afford their drugs.

Guyatt explained that drugs are a big gap and dental care is another gap. Where “we have essentially no coverage for public dental care, other countries to some degree cover dental care. The drugs and dental care the big deficiencies in the Canadian program,” he stated.

As the conversation progressed, I wanted to focus on the things Canada has, which other developed nations do not.

“I do not know the details, but I would have thought that it was hit and miss if some things get developed here and there are some enthusiastic and leading physicians bringing something in,” Guyatt explained, “Then there may be areas where we do particularly well. In other countries, they have other physicians.”

Guyatt talked about the United States healthcare system. He describes theirs as in many ways a disaster. For those who can pay for it, for the well insured, for those who can pay out of pocket, the US does the best for highly advanced medical technology. However, it “is a hit and miss thing.”

Canada, by comparison, does not have a particular are in which we are far more advanced for the medical technology.

When I questioned about lifespan and health span differences for those who do and those who do not have efficient and equitable access to health in their country, Guyatt made the opening salvo statement, “So, universal coverage is universal coverage.”

“If you are now talking about gradients, you are talking about gradients of insurance that come with gradients of income. That then becomes impossible to tease out,” Guyatt explained, “The lower income people are sicker and live shorter lives than high-income people. They are also the people when there is no government insurance who are not insured. It is also confounded with that.”

He described some professional research into the health outcomes in Canada and the US. If anything, the outcomes were a small advantage for Canada. That was attributable to more universal healthcare coverage. “You have many Americans who cannot afford drugs, hospitals, and so on. They are at a disadvantage in health outcome because they are poor and because of a lack of health coverage,” Guyatt stated.

Overall, the equity and efficiency associated with national healthcare programs (read: public) tends to produce better outcomes for more people on those two metrics with marginal or questionable autonomy benefits on privatized healthcare programs (read: private).

On Islam, Humanism, and Questioning with a Sunni Scholar and Imam

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 22, 2018

What does a parent do to develop critical capacities in a Muslim or non-religious home from the view of a leading Canadian Sunni scholar?

Prof. Imam Soharwardy is a Sunni scholar and a shaykh of the Suhrawardi Sufi order, as well as the chairman of the Al-Madinah Calgary Islamic Assembly, founder of Muslims Against Terrorism (MAT), and the founder and president of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada. He founded MAT in Calgary in January 1998. He is also the founder of Islamic Supreme Council of Canada (ISCC).

Imam Soharwardy is the founder of the first ever Dar-ul-Aloom in Calgary, Alberta where he teaches Islamic studies. Prof. Soharwardy is the Head Imam at the Al Madinah Calgary Islamic Centre.

Imam Soharwardy is a strong advocate of Islamic Tasawuf (Sufism), and believes that the world will be a better place for everyone if we follow what the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has said, “You will not have faith unless you like for others what you like for yourself.” He believes that spiritual weakness in humans causes all kinds of problems.

Mr. Soharwardy can be contacted at soharwardy@shaw.ca OR Phone (403)-831-6330. Original interview [here](#). Some prior discussions [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Here we talk about questioning and faith and non-religion.

Imam Soharwardy took the time for an interview with me. We talked the young. In particular, the young non-religious and religious. Those who may believe in humanism. Those who may believe in Islam.

Humanists, mostly, coincide with the beliefs as atheists. Others, like super-minorities, may be theists in some modified definitions, deists, and even pantheists.

Their emphasis is humanistic valued. I wanted to focus on dialogue between communities. I find some sects in Islam and communities of the non-religious do not respect freedom of religion and freedom of belief for others.

In some sects of Islam, as seems pointed to, often, the tendency seems a desire to eliminate atheists, the non-religious, the infidels, and to, in secular terminology, disregard freedom of belief and freedom of religion, which includes other metaphysical propositions such as atheism.

Same with some sub-communities of the mob-religious. The tendency to want to eliminate or destroy religion. The desire to “free” the world of superstition through deletion of religious belief, which disregards freedom of religion and freedom of belief in some ways and not in others.

At the end of the day, as some say, people hold beliefs, which differs from the beliefs. However, the rights to the various freedoms amount to consensus-based abstract principles for everyone, not some, to hold rather than live in a Platonic vacuum.

In fact, a test may emerge from permission for those one most disagrees within these areas to hold the religious/non-religious beliefs. Not an agreement with the beliefs, per se, but the agreement in the right of the person to hold the beliefs.

Anyhow, Soharwardy took time to talk with me. He pointed to the youth in the congregation, saying “If you attend my congregation, especially the youth groups, you will see the lively discussion that I have with our students.”

He mentioned having a son and a daughter. Both, he noted, have been raised with the ideas that they should not believe in Islam because of them as the parents but, rather, because they want to through their own consciences.

Soharwardy talked about his religious text, “Being a Muslim and following the holy book, the Quran, in almost every volume of the holy Quran, it says, “Why don’t you ponder? Why don’t you think? Why don’t you explore?” It says, “Why don’t you explore the world?””

The emphasis being on questioning rather than blindly following. He believes, whether humanist, Muslim, or another belief system, that the point is to not be a “blind follower.”

“However, the steps to those make sense in intellectual discussion, not simply blind following or blind beliefs because I was born into a Muslim family. It is because it is a natural, normal, and common sense religion,” Soharwardy stated, “Our boys and girls have lots of questions. I never say, “You cannot question.””

He never discourages questioning from a youth: every symbol and figure in the Islamic texts should be questioned. “What happens, Scott, you talk to someone who does not understand his or her own religion. When the person him or herself is confused, somebody goes and asks the question, but the person cannot explain properly,” Soharwardy opined.

I noted the trends in some Canadian households, or homes, with the lack of questioning allowed because the parents, for the best of intentions, do not want to lose the child.

The two dominant faiths in Canada are Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. I suspected similar phenomena with Sunni Islam and Shia Islam. The parents not wanting the questioning of the faith for fear of losing their children to non-belief in heir brand of religion.

The parents disallow the questioning. The parents prevent the child from developing the critical capacities, and so on.

Soharwardy replied, “I completely agree with you. There will be families in the Muslim community who do not allow their children to question the faith. Some of the people and families are rigid. They have been told some things and simply follow it.”

He considers this against Islam to not question, seek, and explore. “To be a blind follower, that person loses the spirit of Islam,” Soharwardy said, “Some families, they do not allow thinking. It causes a serious harm to the boys and girl who have been forced to follow a belief system. Their heart is not in it.”

He went on to say that it is a requirement of the Islam faith to practice from the heart. If a good deed is done, while not an act from the heart, then Allah or God will not accept the good deed.

The acceptance by their God of the actions depends not only on the goodness or righteousness of the actions but also the intentions behind the actions.

Soharwardy bluntly stated, “If my intention is not to pray 5 times a day, but I have been forced to pray five times per day, that person should know, according to Islam, their prayers are not accepted. Nobody should be forced to pray five times per day or fast during the month of Ramadan.”

Compulsion in the faith, in other words, does not practicing the faith. If one is forced, then they do not count as one of the faithful. In this interpretation, the people without the heart in the acts could be considered infidels or heretics by the proper faithful who have their hearts in the acts of prayer or fasting during Ramadan as two examples.

“I always say that it bothers me, sometimes, when the newspapers talk about these terrorist groups. They are forcing people to convert to Islam,” Soharwardy said, “If people are forcing people to follow Islam, and if there is no compulsion in religion, then Islam does not recognize that person as a Muslim.”

A Tanzanian Freethinker on the Continent of Africa, Africans, and Freethinking

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 23, 2018

What does a Tanzanian freethinker have to say about Africans and freethinking?

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam) founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". He is the Founder of Jicho Jipya/Think Anew Tanzania. We have talked before about freethought in Tanzania. Here we talk about Tanzania and non-religion.

Here we continue the discussion, other conversations [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), and [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

My friend from Tanzania and fellow free mind, Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam), took some time in September of 2017 to talk about the life of an atheist in a highly religious country.

A country religious in the raw numbers of those who identify as religious. A highly religious country in the level of religiosity or adherence to the tenets of faith. Often, the continent of Africa, due to colonization and other influences, as with Canada (where I reside), remains permeated in the symbolisms, the language, the holy texts, and figures of Abraham.

Abraham who birthed over half the world's modern minds. The Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, especially Islam and Christianity, dominate our areas of the world and about half the world's population if combined.

Not necessarily a more difficult time in life, but a different way in life because a slight or even great, but no doubt different, point of view. I asked about atheism in Tanzania. He said that there have been freethinkers in Tanzania, Canada, and in other periods and places around the world.

"Canadians should know that as it is for every human society throughout ages and generations that there have been within independent thinkers and freethinkers, so too there are such ones in Tanzania, though few, as it has hitherto been," Nsajigwa said, "There are Tanzanians who think outside of the box of religiosity despite the fact that in Africa religion is overwhelmingly omnipresent and -potent, covering all aspects of life, from the birth point of entrance to death point of exit."

He described the previous stereotypes about Africans as those who think more emotionally and that the "philosophy of Negritude" is that of the spiritual. He said that this would assert "rational is Greece as emotion is black."

He points to this as too much of an exaggeration. He did, though, direct attention to the percentages in Africa.

He explained, "In terms of percentage, it is recorded that independent thinkers, individuals living without religion in Tanzania could be up to 1% of the population (the challenge is to make it rise to 10% as there might be enough such ones who however are in the closet)."

As our conversation continued onward, I wanted to know about the thoughts about atheism as a viewpoint from the broader population of Tanzania. He stated that this was viewed as part of socialism of a communist variety such as that found in the USSR and “thus ideological.”

However, he opined, “Tanzanians who are fundamentalist in their religious outlook, they view it negatively, as an arrogant rebellion against God’s will by the few people educated (to become confused) by too much secular book reading. Further extremes view it as for those who are “lost” and on Satan’s side (Satan being the opposite of good God).”

I wanted to know about the commonality of atheism there. He said, “As a movement it is coming up, emerging as is the reality of it all over Africa. Some individual independent thinkers to freethinkers exist.”

Nsajigwa continued that it was only since the new millennium that pioneering efforts have been done to teach philosophy in order to identify and bring atheists and the non-religious together.

Before the internet, as far as he knows and as far as I know, Nsajigwa has been the primary person, akin to Dr. Leo Igwe in Nigeria for humanism, for the advancement of not precisely atheism but more freethinking. He has been doing this, impressively, prior to the internet since the 1990s.

Nsajigwa concluded, “We are developing a fellowship to be a community in the future via Jichojipya – Think Anew as a formal organization and vehicle for that, we founded it to live to achieve common goals of institutionalizing Humanism ideas and ideals guided by Humanist’s Amsterdam Declaration 2002 of which I translated into Swahili that being first time that it was in an African language. Its Humanistic aspects happen to be similar to some aspects of Tanzanian own Arusha declaration doctrine of 1967.”

A Tanzania Freethinker on Tanzanian Atheism and Atheist Thinkers

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 24, 2018

What is the opinion of a leading Tanzanian freethinker on Tanzanian atheism and atheist thinkers?

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa 'sam) founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". He is the Founder of Jicho Jipya/Think Anew Tanzania. We have talked before about freethought in Tanzania. Here we talk about atheist thinkers in Tanzania and atheist thinkers and literature.

Here we continue the discussion, other conversations [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), and [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Nsajigwa talked about an individual elder in the Tanzanian community, who was known as a public figure. His name is Kingunge Ngombale-Mwilu. In Tanzania, and an important point for even some more developed countries, Ngombale-Mwilu is the only person known, in a public position, to be sworn in without holding a Bible or a Quran.

Since Tanzanian independence, he has served in top ranking positions as a minister of the state. "That is, how we suspected him to be a nonbeliever and on interviewing him recently he came out as such, a freethinker who is Agnostic (though our society thought of him as a socialist communist)," Nsajigwa explained.

In Nsajigwa's interactions with Ngombale-Mwilu, he, Ngombale-Mwilu, self-described as a freethinker. He was inspired by philosophy, especially the writings of Thomas Paine and Ludwig Feuerbach, saying, "It's not god creating man in his own image but rather a man creating God in his imagination."

Nsajigwa pointed to himself too. That he is a long-time freethinker and an autodidact, a self-taught Tanzanian philosopher. He is an avid reader and someone who believes, as a freethinker, in the ability to live ethically without religion.

I asked about some books. He noted a deceased person named Agoro Anduru. Anduru, by Nsajigwa's account, was a good writer. There are stories in Swahili written by Mohamed Salum Abdalla, or Bwana Msa, and "speeches by Mwalimu (Swahili for a teacher) Nyerere – Tanzanian founder father, teaching, insisting and reminding on several occasions that Tanzania is a secular state," Nsajigwa recommended.

There are, in general, biases and prejudices against the non-religious around the world from social ostracisation to the death penalty. The organized atheist community is beginning to emerge with some pioneering freethinkers such as Nsajigwa and others.

The writers, the public figures, the intellectuals and philosophers, these people are beginning to gain ground in some of the more difficult contexts for atheist or nonbelievers. Where this will

end up, it becomes a question of individual human choices with individual leaders providing some guiding light in the open seas of philosophical life, including Nsajigwa and others.

On the Prejudices and Biases Against Atheists and Freethinkers in Tanzania

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 25, 2018

What are the biases and prejudices against atheists and freethinkers in Tanzania?

Contacts: emails: mutazilitesfreethink@gmail.com Also jichojipya@gmail.com

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam), who is now 53-years-old male from Tanzania who is leading a community and who, founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". He is the Founder of Jicho Jipya/Think Anew Tanzania. We have talked before about freethought in Tanzania. Here we talk about atheist thinkers in Tanzania and atheist thinkers and literature.

Here we continue the discussion, other conversations [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), and [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Tanzania is an interesting country with an intriguing dynamic with the belief system landscape. The non-religious are a marginal or peripheral community within the country. However, there have been prominent, e.g. Kingunge Ngombale-Mwilu – though deceased as of February of this year, public figures who were freethinkers or even atheists.

Those who did not adhere to the central tenets of the faith. This provides a context for understanding some of the differential dynamics compared to, for example, the majority of the Good Men Project readership, insofar as I can discern, who live in North America.

The atheist and freethinking community will undergo severe and minor negative treatment in the public. The view of the African community, according to Nsajigwa, is a community outlook. One based on shared values and solidarity of community with an expectation of conformity of all people in it, of all members residing in the community.

The idea, Nsajigwa stated, is that “things should be done as traditions and what religions require. On religion itself, it is very influential, plus our political culture is illiberal, yes we are a peaceful Nation since independence but skepticism and criticism are not tolerated despite the fact we became a multiparty democracy since 1992.”

In the law, I asked about some of the anti-atheist biases, which may or may not exist. He said, “The founder father Mwalimu Nyerere was, fortunately, a good student of John Stuart Mills philosophy “on liberty”. He made it clear the fact that our Nation is secular though people (including himself) are in religions.”

“There is a temptation though from various players to wish that religion should penetrate more into government because people and their leaders are religious anyway. In Zanzibar, a semi-autonomous government with a majority of its population (90%+) being Moslem, Islamic laws applies (via what are known as kadhi courts) in dealing with matters of inheritance, marriage, and divorce,” Nsajigwa continued.

When I concluded this particular session, querying for potential feelings or thoughts, Nsajigwa talked about the modern world. Our modern cultures and societies with the need to provide an education with an emphasis on the STEM – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – professions. Jichohipya, or Think Anew, is part of this process.

The process of respect for the power of and responsibility that comes from that power of science. A science grounded and guided by a humanistic ethic, a secular humanistic and scientific outlook on the world. Nsajigwa directed attention to the need to eliminate the superstitions that lead to even the murders of Albino people because they are Albino.

“There is modern African triple heritage concept by which in Tanzanian case, Islam, Christian, and Traditionalists are almost one-third each by percentage (35-35-30 respectively), though there is much dominance of the first two in the public while the third (tradition believes) are somehow dormant, activated only when everything else fails to work,” Nsajigwa explained.

He described how many countries are illiberal in Africa. That independent thinking and freethinking are thwarted, where these people suffer lives of hard psychological, physical, and emotional strain *because they lack religion. Because they are atheists and freethinkers. Full stop. Period. Exclamation point.*

Freethinking, atheism, and humanism in Africa are intended to be a means by which to emancipate Africans from illiberal thought and religious fundamentalism.

“[They are the] mental slavery of religions that have evolved to become dysfunctional, as they shape ideas of superstition and wishful thinking that support dogma, irrationality, and fatalism,” Nsajigwa stated, “It’s a herculean task needed to be met to push the cause of African renaissance and its enlightenment. All due support by Freethinkers Humanists from other parts of the world (Canada etc) is needed, to sustain this work for modernism by secularism in Africa, Tanzania inclusively. That is the historic generational duty for humanity.”

The Human Rights and Women's Rights Case of Noura Hussein Hammad

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 26, 2018

What will become of Noura Hussein Hammad regarding her death penalty for the murder of her husband and rapist from a forced child marriage?

Marieme Helie Lucas is an Algerian sociologist, activist, founder of 'Secularism is a Women's Issue,' and founder and former International Coordinator of 'Women Living Under Muslim Laws.' Here we talk about Noura Hussein Hammad.

Hammad has been sentenced to death and has less than two weeks to appeal the case. The hashtag: [#JusticeForNoura](#). There is a petition. [Sodfa Daaji](#) is the person to email. Daaji's email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

The urgent case of Noura Hussein Hammad comes from the potential for the death penalty for a stabbing followed by death of a husband who raped her. She murdered in self-defense after a forced child marriage. Then she went to a religious court and was charged with the death penalty for the murder.

She murdered the husband and got the death penalty. When I asked Marieme Helie Lucas about it, she said, "As you know, Scott, in many – but not all – instances women in predominantly Muslim contexts are never considered as coming to adult age; and they are considered, in the law, as forever legal minors – it took a long time everywhere (including in the West, of course) to grant women legal equal rights."

As with the case of Hammad, she was given a marriage with matrimonial tutors or *wali*. Often, it will be the father or the guardian of the family. However, and even more interesting, the *wali* can be the youngest son.

Helie Lucas explained, "It is important to note that many so-called Muslim countries do not hold these conservative views, do not try to hide patriarchal ideology under the guise of religion, and that their national laws grant women citizens a lot more rights, including the right to sign a contract (marriage or commercial) – and in some countries equal rights in marriage."

There has been an international trend, though. There has been a political alliance between the conservatives to the far right. These amount to, in too many cases, antidemocratic forces. These tend to want to or actively work to curtail women's rights in legal and other ways.

Girls and young women do not have the protection of the law in too many cases, of which Hammad is one. There is a religiously sanctioned patriarchy in many places around the world. Helie Lucas argues everywhere, especially in the cases where the women do not have protection of the law without the protection of the father or the guardian.

"So-called honor crimes exist over all the continents (last year, one woman died under the blows of her male partner every three days in France) – even when the law criminalizes such crimes,"

Helie Lucas stated, “Hence the importance of pushing for changes concomitantly – at the same time: at the level of changing laws, of course, but also at the level of changing society, where there is a crucial need for support for women’s rights, and for human rights work in general. Right now, funding for women’s organizations has drastically fallen, everywhere.”

That means, to my mind, the need to increase the funding, in a robust fashion, for women’s rights organizations around the world in order to halt and even reverse, if not slow down, the efforts of the antidemocratic and anti-women’s rights organizations. Women have been left alone.

A sense of aloneness to deal with their issues by themselves. The organization and the women they support can be left bereft and on their own, unfortunately. Ordinary women may not even know about the resources available to them, for their rights to be realized and lives improved.

Helie Lucas talk about Hammad’s case, saying, “From age 15, Noura has steadily refused a forced marriage for four years before taking arms against the husband imposed on her against her expressed will, and she only resorted to self-defense after having suffered a first public rape in the name of marital rights and being threatened with a second one.”

Helie Lucas views Hammad or Noura as a hero who needs support from around the world. The family, the community, the society, and the religion can be used to restrict women, to say that they are less than others.

Progressive men and women who affirm the UN Charter and universal human rights risk liberty and lives at times for the rights and livelihood of others. “These voices are rarely heard outside the national context and they need to be heard, in order to confront ideological simplifications of ‘they’ (barbaric ones) and ‘us’ (civilized ones) that still prevail,” Helie Lucas said.

We need to raise those voices, save those women and girls at risk, and work to destigmatize and dehumanize Africans and others as backward or barbaric and having the wrong, violent religion.

Helie Lucas argues, “It will also help progressive westerners to overcome their ‘white guilt’. We need them now: they should not avoid supporting Noura for fear of being labeled ‘Islamophobic’ or ‘racist’. Support the existing local women’s rights and human rights work and the young courageous Noura.”

The hashtag: #JusticeForNoura. There is a petition. Sodfa Daaji’s is the person to email. Daaji’s email if you would like to sign the petition, and please provide first and last name and country, then please send an email to the following contact: daajisodfa.pr@gmail.com.

An Introduction to “Growing Up Manly” with Manqueens

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 27, 2018

What was life like regarding manliness in previous eras and now, even with "manqueens" now?

According to semi-reputable sources, Rick Rosner has the world's second-highest IQ. He earned 12 years of college credit in less than a year and graduated with the equivalent of 8 majors. He has received 8 Writer's Guild Award and Emmy nominations and was named 2013 North American Genius of the Year by The World Genius Registry. Here we talk about being manly and, in particular, manqueens.

Growing up in previous eras had different but thematically similar notions of masculinity, one that came to mind from a friend of mine, Rick Rosner, was “manqueens.” This is the concept of masculinity as itself a form of drag. It is a behavioural, mental, and aesthetic/visual/physical transformation of a male into a particular form of man.

That form of man means an adaptation to traditional masculine stereotypes. The stereotypes are seen in the one thinks, the way one dresses, the manner in which one speaks, the physique and dress in presentation, the lack of emotion or the excess and monochrome expression of emotion, and so on. “Think Clint Eastwood,” Rosner stated.

“Once a week, I argue with my conservative buddy, Lance. We were arguing, last week, about trans people. California is on the verge of passing some legislation, making it illegal for therapists to offer gay conversion therapy. It is also known as ‘pray the gay away,’” Rosner explained, “Programs where parents will stick their kids to get them converted from being gay to being straight, as if that is some normal, default mode, where it can be restored with enough praying or therapy.”

His friend, Lance Richlin, had the view that if they had a problem with their genitals then they should just get over it. However, in arguments with Richlin, Rosner notes that Richlin considers those who want to change their genitals “crazy” and in need of therapy. Because anyone who would want to mutilate themselves would be crazy.

The same way someone who would want to cut their leg off if they got a thrill from it. “It is a terrible and spurious argument. But in arguing against this point of view, I thought about all that I have done to make myself more manly. I realized that my manliness is a form of drag, a costume, because it serves a basic need of mine in the same way a person is trans to satisfy some basic needs,” Rosner opined.

Rosner was a self-described wuss growing up. He was not interested in sports and a lot of manly things. When he was five, he sewed a potholder for his mother, which infuriated his stepfather. That Rosner would be sewing and be enjoying it. At various points in his teens, Rosner felt personal surprise for being heterosexual while being such a wuss.

“It was surprising how horny I was for girls considering how much of a sissy-boy I was. Eventually, I realized. With Schwarzenegger being famous, people began to lift weights. I realize that I would have to become more masculine if I wanted to get a girlfriend, at least in the next few years. So, I started lifting weights. I got rid of the glasses and replaced them with contact lenses,” Rosner stated.

He always had a deep voice and began to talk like Barbarino like an East coast guy. It was easy since he was from Colorado. He would put on a rural thing, too. “As this process moved along, I became a stripper and a bouncer. All with the idea of putting myself in places where a manly boy might meet women because that was my objective,” Rosner said.

Long after the pursuit of women ended, as he has been married for 27 years and “is not shopping for women on the side,” he continues to put on masculine drag. He even scarred himself for his masculine drag, manqueen marks – so to speak. He carved about 8 feet of scars into himself. He is 58-years-old and continues to lift weights and goes to the gym five times a day.

He works out at his home set as well. “I haven’t gone to the gym less than 5 times a day for the last year-and-a-half. I haven’t missed a day at the gym since 1991. My body fat is at 5%. All this is crazy lengths to follow this compulsion to continue to try to be masculine,” Rosner said.

“Now that I am in my late 50s, I am starting to look like those grizzly old guys. I am not entirely sad at getting older looking as long as it is this craggy and able to fight on vampires cragginess look,” Rosner joked. He mentioned some of the characters from the *Alien* series and *Westworld*.

This exercise came with eating semi-carefully and was all part of this manqueen image of “trying to look bad-ass.” It has some jokey elements within this particular narrative of Rosner, but also some more serious notes in some of the restricted roles and representations of the masculine, and by implication the feminine, in the 20th and 21st centuries.

According to semi-reputable sources, Rick Rosner has the world’s second-highest IQ. He earned 12 years of college credit in less than a year and graduated with the equivalent of 8 majors. He has received 8 Writer’s Guild Award and Emmy nominations, and was named 2013 North American Genius of the Year by The World Genius Registry.

He has written for Remote Control, Crank Yankers, The Man Show, The Emmy Awards, The Grammy Awards, and Jimmy Kimmel Live!. He has also worked as a stripper, a bouncer, a roller-skating waiter, and a nude model. In a TV commercial, Domino’s Pizza named him the World’s Smartest Man. He was also named Best Bouncer in the Denver Area by Westwood Magazine.

He spent the disco era as an undercover high school student. 25 years as a bar bouncer, American fake ID-catcher, 25+ years as a stripper, and nude art model, and nearly 30 years as a writer for more than 2,500 hours of network television. He lost on Jeopardy!, sued Who Wants to Be a Millionaire over a bad question, and lost the lawsuit. He spent 35+ years on a modified version of Big Bang Theory. Now, he mostly sits around tweeting in a towel. He lives in Los Angeles, California with his wife and daughter.

You can send an email or a direct message via [Twitter](#), or find him on [LinkedIn](#), or see him on [YouTube](#). Here we talk about being manly and, in particular, manqueens.

Loss is Love Suffered: An Ode to Marie Alena Castle

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 28, 2018

What did I know of the late 91-year-old atheist, feminist, writer, and women's rights activist Marie Alena Castle prior to her death on May 25, 2018?

Marie Alena Castle was the communications director for Atheists for Human Rights. She was raised Roman Catholic. She became an atheist later in life.

She has since been an important figure within the atheist movement through her involvement with Minnesota Atheists, The Moral Atheist, National Organization of Women, and in writing Culture Wars: The Threat to Your Family and Your Freedom (2013).

Please read some previous publications, probably her last, between the two of us: Session 1, Session 2, and Session 3.

I have loved and love many people, in different ways and so not simply its romantic or sinewy heartthrob manifestations. Some, as you live some tad longer, become noticed as loved only through their absence, sometimes permanent departure. Marie Alena Castle was born on December 20, 1926 and died on May 25, 2018.

In the tone given in title and prior paragraph, I feel a proper loss today. I only found out about a quarter of a day ago now.

Castle knew lots. She worked from a place of authority. Her work spanned several domains of activism, where most activists focus on a particular issue including children's rights, human rights, Indigenous rights, labor rights, reproductive rights, or women's rights, and so on. In fact, her work spanned several of these areas, which seems impressive in contrast to the monochrome activism prominent in the modern day.

I found the work with her, in her 90s, powerful. She spoke with an authority, which I did not find feigned or ill-conceived. There was a tremendous weight of proper seriousness given from deep time experienced, assiduous work in writing, and real suffering and striving from activism where the stakes were higher than now. Our current era merely experiences the first retraction in different domains in our lifetimes in, for example, women's rights.

We stand atop a pile of bodies, literal and metaphorical – often women, who fought for equality. In my own country, women earned the right to legal rights as persons in a democracy through the right to vote less than a century ago: staggering, true, and unsurprising. Castle knew this. I know this. To give a glimpse, please give a good ol' gander at one question-and-answer banter regarding inculcation of protective critical thinking and education for the young here:

What can be some buffers, or defenses, against these direct attacks on the new media and communications technologies, e.g. to educate and inoculate new generations?

Marie Alena Castle:

No one cares about any social effects so this has to be made personally self-serving. Start with sex/contraceptive education in schools. Impress the girls that they are

NOT a public utility and whether or not to terminate a pregnancy is entirely their business, not the church's, not the state's, not their sexual partner's and not the Roe v. Wade regulations. Impress the boys with the fact that if they get a girl pregnant they are liable for 18 years of child support. Use social media to pass this around so it gets to the students at religious schools.

Try for some social effects by calling to account the "pro-life" propagandists as misogynistic, ignorant liars. (They make outrageously stupid claims about embryos and fetuses.) Put up billboards next to their 6-month-old-white-baby ads showing women (various ethnicities) asking why it is anyone's business but hers and declaring she is not a public utility and asking what the "pro-lifers" have done for real babies lately other than only opposing welfare/child care/educational aid.

Run anti-terrorist ads everywhere pointing out the group that has done and is doing the most damage – the anti-abortion violence prone clinic vandals, death-threateners, bombers, murderers (give the numbers since 1973). Note the clinics' need for excessive security, bullet proof vests, randomized doctor routes to get to clinics, etc.

OK to note the desperate situation women find themselves in and needing an abortion (rape, abusive relationship, health issues, fetal deformity, poverty, etc.) but don't do much of this because the general public doesn't care.

The clarity of thought, the moral authority, the extensive time perspective portrayed, the realism without becoming a cynic, the optimism inherent in the provision of actionable activism items, and the simple straightforward comprehension of progressive change happening from people, from human beings, behaving in coordinated ways to improve their lot over long periods of time.

It does not come from on high. It comes from down low, of those dead, forgotten, and wasted away with a hope for a better tomorrow – for peace between the "races" and "ethnicities," between men and women, between sexual and gender minorities and majorities, and those at war in various ways over territory, ideas, faiths, politics, and resources.

I feel proper loss here.

Even though, 150,000 people or more die every day. Individual human beings become the great source of inspiration, influence, and emotionally salutary components of life. Life becomes process. People become a part of it for one another. Activism is the form in which life and people coalesce to make change together for a shared, positive future.

In personal life, most deep, close, real friends rather than by title, have been elderly women. I do not know why, nor do I figure any solution to this quandary of personal life in the near future either, for me.

In the proper loss, I feel proper love. I loved interviewing her. I loved reading the force of the thinking and the evocative power of the phrasing with the spirit or breathe of life in systematic representation. I have loved many people in a similar way, who left waves in my emotional life of solitude. It becomes both sufferings for the loss and realizations of the loss as underlying love.

I feel a proper love there.

Her obituary statement was as follows:

*I have enjoyed being one of the luckiest people on Earth. Fate gave me a 91-year break from otherwise endless oblivion and a life filled with political skullduggery and social activism for the rights of workers, women, gays, and anti-war efforts. I built a dome home, raised five good kids, built atheist and political organizations, worked as a journalist, and wrote *Divided We Fall: Religion, Sex and Politics, and the Political Blunder That Brought Religion into Public Life and Opened the Door to Trump*. None of this uphill climbing has been especially pleasant, but it has been interesting.*

Women in most societies lose prominence beyond prime reproductive age. Why? Women get seen as vessels for new life alone. As Castle noted from nearly a century of experience, women and girls get seen as public utilities. By implication, and as a testable hypothesis, their value to the public should decline proportionally over time, especially as they become older.

As women age into the darker years and leave into the yonder twilight, societies lose track of them; we stop keeping track of them: “How was your day? How are you feeling? What is new with the cat(s)? (As one stereotype might go.)”

As women enter the deep night of societal perception, I can reflect on the influence of Castle and other elderly women who made a tremendous impact on me. Their loss brings a sense of love left best to individuals influenced by them. There is a strength in the decades-long activism and persistence – a certain hopeful ebullience about life and its positive aspects apart from the negative.

Its hardships and difficulties.

And its losses,

and from there a realization of odes to love.

Freethought and Skepticism in Tanzania in the Midst of Fundamentalism

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 28, 2018

Why does Tanzania have such a small while emergent humanist, atheist, and skeptic movement in its borders?

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa 'sam), who is now 53-years-old male from Tanzania who is leading a community and who, founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". He is the Founder of Jicho Jipya/Think Anew Tanzania. Here we continue the discussion, other conversations [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), and [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Nsajigwa's contact emails: mutazilitesfreethink@gmail.com Also jichojipya@gmail.com

It is rare to speak with someone who founded a movement. I had the privilege to speak with one of the founders of the freethinking movement in Tanzania. I wanted to know some more about the statistics, especially for the young population.

Nsajigwa works for the non-religious movement in he country and so against many of the restrictive roles placed on men and women, the supernaturalist rhetoric, and the fundamentalism found in many pockets of the country.

He talked about only 1% of the population holding non-religious views, even as few as 0.5%. It seems staggering to consider at this moment. However, the numbers, according, to reliable sources note the low numbers.

Whereas the traditionalists comprise 35% tied in numbers with the Muslims, and 30% for the Christians; in other words, religions Abrahamic and traditional dominate the conceptual landscape. People in Tanzania do not hear other views, including and especially the non-religious more often.

Where the very, very few young adults, or those above age 18, are irreligious in Tanzania, it can limit the possibilities as these fundamentalist religious forces can be combined in unhealthy ways.

They can enforce unhealthy gender norms, promote pseudo-science and be anti-science, even work against the progress towards greater gender equality and instantiation of human rights around the country.

Religion can be a positive. However, in many, many places of the world, it can be an extremely negative one, especially for the prevention, as Nsajigwa describes, of "the forces of secularization, modern education, exposure/globalization, dialectic dynamics."

He wants to instantiate a renaissance in a poor country addled with fundamentalist beliefs. Where the emancipation of the population lies with the non-religious structures, the critical thought and scientific orientation and *elenchus* questioning of Socrates, which remains and will remain at odds with fundamentalist beliefs.

Here is to the gallant efforts of those on the ground with hardships such as Nsajigwa starting this wave through Jichojipya.

Religion in Tanzania and the Surrounding Countries from a Leading Tanzanian Freethinker

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 29, 2018

What is the situation regarding religion from a leading male Tanzanian freethinker, which is not an oft-heard voice? Never heard about pastorpreneurs before this.

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa 'sam) founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". We have talked before about freethought in Tanzania. He is a pioneer freethinker in Tanzania and has trained in Tanzania and Japan in farming, cultural tourism, youth development from the grassroots, worked as a tour guide, in teaching, in translation from English to Swahili and vice versa, and in the incubation and mentorship of the youth. Here we continue the discussion, other conversations here, here, here, and here, and here, here, here, here, and here.

When Nsajigwa talks about religion in Tanzania, there is a context. There are surrounding countries. There are rules and roles implied. Rules for the community. Roles for men; roles for women. All people bound by a holy book.

Or more properly, they remain bound by different holy books. I noted the bad parts of religion. He replied, "By religion, we should include African's own traditional beliefs. Now Tanzania borders with 8 countries. Yes, the negatives jump across borders notable witchcraft believe from Zambia in the past, to kill young girls and flay to get the human skin. Albino killing from here got exported to Rwanda, Burundi, and Malawi."

The killing of people without pigment or albinos. The belief in witchcraft and flaying of young girls in order to acquire skin. Think about that.

He talked more about the rather "glamorous flamboyant" preaching pastors. They are called pastorpreneurs. They are all the way from Nigeria, West Africa. It is particularly bad in Uganda. The Pentecostals evolved their influences in Uganda and Nigeria.

Often, these pastors are male. They are highly masculine in traditional ways. In other words, mostly these male pastorpreneurs lead the congregations and hold the highest authority and power in the church community.

Nsajigwa talked about politics and said, "In politics, consulting traditional medicine men during campaigns for election, rampant here got exported elsewhere. President is God's choice, a fallacy that lingers except now in Kenya the high court annulled the results. So that brings contradiction, has God erred this time..?"

Another bad part of politics comes from the enforcement of a religious-based myth and fallacy. That the president is "Rais ni chaguo la mungu" or literally God's choice. You heard it. The Tanzanian president is argued as the choice of the creator of the universe. This is anti-secularism.

An admixture of religion and politics in an unhealthy way. People, according to the UN Charter, have the freedom of belief, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religion. However, the world works towards secularism, where politics and religion are separate.

Where these freedoms to (and from) belief and religion are exercised apart from the legal and political sphere, this is one of the non-secular forces' unhealthy manifestations. Not only this, there is an erasure of history as well.

There is a sense of "historicism" as well. Where people are believing things, things which never happened before. That is, the idea by implication that such changes cannot even happen in the first place.

There is a belief in *kismet*. It is a sense of fatalism. "Fatalism that everything is God's will even to accidents caused by reckless driving. Circles of killings to flay humans for skin, killing the bald-headed all the way to Albino," Nsajigwa explained, "Hitting people on the head and use the iron rod split with blood to hang on butcher's shops to "attract" customers, killing people with disability who are seemingly successful or influential."

Another continuation of the former problem is the gullibility of people with the pastorpreneurs. Followers are raised thinking prayer can cure disease. Some people have prayers in order to pass higher level examinations.

It amounts to wishful thinking: pray more or study more. Some, apparently, will choose prayer. "There are advertisements for a cure to enhance love magical-wise, also by "Doctors" (diviners) about making one get rich quick, in some cases telling clients to bring parts of human bodies to enhance the combinations," Nsajigwa said.

There is a culture of blaming an owl, as a messenger of a bad omen. The Christian faith makes people hate snakes because the snake is seen as a literal form of Satan. Swahili, according to Nsajigwa, is a neo-Islamic culture with the belief in *jinn*s or the Islamic versions of demons.

The reason for the conceptual overlap with Christianity is the largely plagiarized formation of the holy texts of Islam from Christianity and, in turn, of Christianity from Judaism. "Furthermore, people believe literally in the miracle of virgin birth, and in the resurrection (in Swahili "Msukule")," Nsajigwa explained further.

"There is a misinterpretation of recurrence of incidence in a particular area if accidents happen from time to time in a place, there has to be a vampire kind of ghost there. Just recently people believed there was a big tree that cried with a human voice, oozed blood while being cut to make way for road expansion," Nsajigwa described, "The work had to stop to the next day and when eventually it was cut down with many people witnessing afar, its branches suddenly became antidote medicine to cure anything. People believe these things in the 21st century of science, computer, internet, and technology!"

As Kurt Vonnegut said, "So it goes."

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The Daily Lives, Superstitions, and Rituals and Men and Women Believers in Tanzania

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 29, 2018

Like everyone with a faith, there are rituals and superstitions. What are these daily lives, superstitions, and rituals like for those in Tanzania?

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam) founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". We have talked before about freethought in Tanzania. He is a pioneer freethinker in Tanzania and has trained in Tanzania and Japan in farming, cultural tourism, youth development from the grassroots, worked as a tour guide, in teaching, in translation from English to Swahili and vice versa, and in the incubation and mentorship of the youth. Here we continue the discussion, other conversations here, here, here, and here, and here, here, here, here, here, and here.

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam) is a pioneer in the freethought movement in Tanzania. Our conversations spanned a wide set of topics. I wanted to double down on the descriptions of Tanzania.

In particular, the daily lives of the believers in Tanzania. Their rituals and superstitions and the impacts on how they live in the world. It seemed like a non-trivial thing to emerge from our conversations. I am lucky.

Nsajigwa is in essence a founder of freethought in Tanzania, akin to Dr. Leo Igwe in Nigeria or Roslyn Mould and her husband Kwabena in Ghana, or Robert Bwambale with the Kasese Humanist Schools, or Takudzwa Mazwienduna and Gayleen Cornelius with the first progressive publication not only South Africa but potentially Southern Africa (the region of the continent rather than simply on of its countries) with Cornelius Press.

Nsajigwa stated, "Impacts are, believers use sound amplifiers in sermons even at night for the Pentecostals. It causes "noise pollution" tolerated (endured) because it is in the name of God. Even Moslem have adopted that on Fridays and for Muezzins daily."

One of the practices from the fundamentalist religious ideas here. People have the freedoms to believe and practice. However, this conflicts and should, ideally, moderate with others' abilities to live their lives peacefully or more comfortably, e.g. the noise pollution.

Nsajigwa finds the religious self-assured in thinking that God is on their side. That their side, with God, is the sole correct way to lives one's life. "By contradiction, they would insist on maintaining our cultural values yet forget even these modern scruples that we cherish today as "ours" came from outside," Nsajigwa said.

It is the idea of prejudice to say African culture is that which came from outside. That "our very prejudice to say African culture being based on those very holy books from outside Africa, yet still they would be against "western values" meaning secular one's example on dress code, how women should or shouldn't wear," Nsajigwa continued, "this or that being against our (African) ethics, they would argue."

Nsajigwa describes the anti-secularist or non-secularist at a minimum view of the world. That science amounts to a Western thing. Even though, the Tanzanians use the various modern technologies brought about the scientific revolutions.

These include medications, telephones and cell phones, televisions, transportation of various kinds, and so on. There is an overwhelming stance against the theory of evolution as well. According to Nsajigwa, people do not understand it.

Also, they are not prepared to know about it. It becomes a nested problem. “It causes blame game mentality, just looking for someone or something to blame on – be it the devil, snake, women or the West. Some have compartmentalized, they live secular life but becomes religious on Fridays Saturdays and Sundays,” Nsajigwa explained.

They pray at a constant rate, men and women, as individuals and in fellowship. Then if bad things happen in their lives, they blame others for their problems. If women have a problem in with their children, they blame someone else. If men have romantic troubles, they blame the world or women, or something spiritual. That is how I would interpret that playing out.

“It is a witch-hunt mentality. They go around preach threatening people with stories of hellfire, in some cases their prayers ending in ecstatic trances,” Nsajigwa stated, “On Superstitions, they believe in speaking (while in a trance) an unknown language sounding “abracadabra” as if from Congo.”

Furthermore, they believe in the chasing away of the evil spirits and the so-called *jinns*. They pay tithings, pray, and so on, for employment and promotions in work, for someone to marry, and to even win cases in court.

It can create a negative lifecycle for otherwise decent Tanzanians.

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Modern education, modern medicine, modern nutrition, and free water in an area without them before. In other words, it does not mean all bad. It mirrors much of the more developed areas of the world found in, for example, North America.

Canada has these amenities for most Canadians, I think. At the same time, we have the freedom to believe a religion or not. It becomes something Tanzania strives towards in spite of the difficulties. It amounts to the society Nsajigwa fights for too.

“This even today alleviates water supply which is a big problem in cities. Neighbors are assured to get it at the mosque reservoir out of its well once dug,” Nsajigwa continued, “Religion brought fellowship, a sense of “Ummah” for Islam and “Catholicism” loyalty beyond Ethnicity for Christians.”

Many superstitions were dispersed or even eradicated due to the religions. There was discouragement of the practice of female genital mutilation or FGM by the Roman Catholic Church there. This is a good thing.

However, this brought other superstitions as well. At the same time, once more, there is a sense of hopefulness that can come from a religious belief. It provided some hope for women who, if childless, were seen as useless.

Nsajigwa concluded, “Today for those whom the harsh struggle for the survival of the fittest of modern life has not worked well for them.”

Not an easy life by many comparisons.

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The Difficulties in Living in a Minority Population Actively Undermined in Tanzania

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 29, 2018

Why does one half to one percent of a population of Tanzanian non-believers provide such existential angst for the believers in the country according to one of its leading freethinkers?

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam) founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". We have talked before about freethought in Tanzania. He is a pioneer freethinker in Tanzania and has trained in Tanzania and Japan in farming, cultural tourism, youth development from the grassroots, worked as a tour guide, in teaching, in translation from English to Swahili and vice versa, and in the incubation and mentorship of the youth. Here we continue the discussion.

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam) is a pioneer in the freethought movement in Tanzania. Our conversations spanned a wide set of topics.

The nonbelieving community in Tanzania is small. Somewhere between ½ to 1 percent of the total population, it is as much as 16% of the global population. The non-religious dominate the landscape.

When I queried Nsajigwa about the hardships in a small community, he exclaimed, "Yes! Very difficult most of the time. It is hard to reason logically with believers as they have a sense of self-assurance thinking they are right just by using their holy books (however most haven't read the whole of). I developed solitude aspect of life, book reading on philosophy, comparative religions, world history, psychology, sociology, and culture gave me the only company. Libraries became my sanctuary place. A lonely person that became used to this life."

Life in solitude. It pertains to stance in living, of the mind, apart from others out of necessity. He works hard in this solitude, especially with the difficulty in the development and maintenance of relationships in the Tanzanian context.

Hi greatest emotional struggled, which relayed to me, is the endurance in spite of the hardships. He views himself as a Stoic philosopher. He feels misunderstood. He knows some things he cannot change. He understands being born in a particular context, at a point time, in the history of a country.

He feels ostracized as if Spinoza. That he never committed anything against the law or humanity, even until the present, but continues to bear the burden.

"Over years people realized I am just a mentally normal person, possible just more enlightened by book reading, plus a rationalist, ever curious questioning reality to try to seek answers," Nsajigwa explained, "Second going to mid-1990s when multiparty came back to Tanzania, I was rounded by Police just because of the high level of discussion I had with my freethinker brother in a public bus while Tour-guiding a visitor. A plain policeman happened to be on that bus."

Freethought as a public call for a crime. He was in town three days later. He got rounded up and hauled away in a cab and sent to the police station. He was searched and the locked up.

Here is a test for equality: does this happen to the religious in Tanzania? If so, does this happen at the same rate?

Often, as with North America, the situation is imbalanced. Nsajigwa continued, “They didn’t find anything in our bags, even a march box or a piece of cigarette, non-smokers. They found instead books on Philosophy and comparative religions. Nevertheless, they locked us without ourselves knowing what the charges were. When our Guarantor came late he could not believe what they wrote as our crime, theft of shoes!”

If one cannot be charged for a crime, then a crime will be found, whether real or imaginary – in this case real with shoes (though a false claim about a reality). They were held for about a week. Nsajigwa is a victim of being a freethinker, which amounts to an imaginary crime.

He is a criminal in light of thinking apart from the religious authorities. There was another time, where a community would stand together. However, the non-religious in Tanzania are left bereft of deep community due to fear and low numbers.

A lonesome youth, he was interacting with a professor of history. They talked a good long while.

Then Nsajigwa reported, “He told me I am so impressed that you know all these things by your book reading habit but now realize this, just by being that, you have become dangerous, your very knowing will annoy so many people. This bitter truth shocked me innocently, I only came to understand it along the way, a freethinkers life journey, what an odyssey!”

This becomes the life path for many freethinkers around the world. He felt lucky to meet a few fellow likeminded freethinkers in Tanzania. Those moments are times of relief of the trials and tribulations of life for one of Tanzania’s founders of its freethought movement, at least the public one – for its 0.5 to 1 percent.

Other conversations here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, and here. He talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. Nsajigwa’s contact emails: mutazilitesfreethink@gmail.com & jichohipya@gmail.com.

Nsajigwa’s contact emails: mutazilitesfreethink@gmail.com & jichohipya@gmail.com.

On the Future Prospects for Irreligiosity for the Men and Women of Tanzania

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 30, 2018

What is the state for irreligiosity into the future for the Tanzanian population according to a leading Tanzanian freethinker?

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam) founded Jichojipya (meaning with new eye) to "Think Anew". We have talked before about freethought in Tanzania. He is a pioneer freethinker in Tanzania and has trained in Tanzania and Japan in farming, cultural tourism, youth development from the grassroots, worked as a tour guide, in teaching, in translation from English to Swahili and vice versa, and in the incubation and mentorship of the youth. Here we continue the discussion.

Nsajigwa I Mwasokwa (Nsajigwa Nsa'sam) is a pioneer in the freethought movement in Tanzania. Our conversations spanned a wide set of topics.

I asked Nsajigwa about the number of the religious people in Tanzania. He noted about ½ to 1 percent of the population. By comparison, Mensa has about 2% of any population. So, this is a rarefied population in Tanzania.

Not many people, it becomes a small community and, by implication of usual social conventions, the community members will keep quiet for fear of offense or being ousted from the mainstream community.

It becomes a difficult situation. Nsajigwa notes the difficulty in looking ahead for the non-religious population in Tanzania.

Nsajigwa opined, "It is tough to forecast based on the experience that during 1960 – 70s it was thought then that the campaign going on to fight against "enemy ignorance" would, by the year 2000 lead to high level of literacy. It surprises that irrationality and gullibility is still high despite education. Someone said it was free education but also free of knowledge too!"

He says that the prospects, likewise, for the decrease in religiosity will be due to the internet. The fact that an individual Tanzanian can gain access to information on their own. They can become informed on the issues of the day.

The religions over time become questioned from all sides. This questioning weakens the superstructure of religion in general. More properly, the fundamentalist aspects of religion begin to wither compared to their prior 'glory.'

The zeitgeist of the non-religious continues to assert itself in different, and interesting ways over time. "However there must be efforts like ours of Jichojipya to showcase (thus catalyze) the populace to know that even at the local level there are freethinkers individuals," Nsajigwa, explained, "that it's possible to "live clean", ethically good, rationally guided without a religion, any."

The First Half of 2018 for the Humanist Movement in British Columbia

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 30, 2018

What are the updates within the British Columbia Humanist Association community from its executive director?

Ian Bushfield, M.Sc., is the Executive Director of the British Columbia Humanist Association (BCHA). The BCHA has been working to have humanist marriages on the same plane as other marriages in the province. Here we talk about recent updates from the view of the BCHA.

Bushfield and I talked several months ago, but I had not caught up with him. So, I decided to follow up with him on the updates from the non-religious, and the humanist more particularly, the landscape in Canada, especially in British Columbia.

Since he leads one of the more prominent humanist organizations in Canada, I wanted to see what was new, up, and all around in the air for the humanist movement in the province.

I asked about the general trends to open the conversation with Bushfield. He described the lack of regular data, saying, “I can only speak broadly, as we don’t get a lot of regular data on the religious and nonreligious make-up of British Columbia. What we do know is that over the past few decades, BC has become increasingly secular where most metrics show a majority of people in the province identify as having no religion and as few as one-in-ten regularly attend religious services.”

As a secular hotbed of activity, but lack of identifiable and rich data for description and extrapolation, this makes the trend finding difficult for the humanist community here in little ol’ British Columbia.

“Within the BC Humanist Association, we’ve continued to see growth throughout 2017 and 2018. Some of our biggest growths in membership and support have come in the past year and we’re really excited to continue that trend through 2018,” Bushfield continued.

In terms of the recent past, as in 2018 so far or the first five months, he noted some developments. There has been an interaction with the British Columbia Government for several months now.

“Some of it has been promising, like their commitment and consultation around rebuilding the province’s Human Rights Commission, while other issues have been a bit more disappointing,” Bushfield explained, “like the continued funding of religious independent schools, possible expansion of faith-based care facilities in Comox and lack of movement on permitting Humanist marriages.”

It seems like a set of positive developments in a democratic fashion for the non-religious. Bushfield remains optimistic about the progress for the non-religious community in British Columbia in coordination, and in a way negotiation, with the Government of British Columbia.

In terms of the campaigns, prominent ones, ongoing for 2018, Bushfield talked about the Supreme Court Decision around the Trinity Western University law school case.

“We intervened at the Court to argue that organizations shouldn’t be able to claim religious exemptions under Canadian law. If the Court adopts our arguments that will be a big defence in Canadian law against the excesses we’re seeing in the USA following Hobby Lobby,” Bushfield stated, “We are also continuing to follow a number of issues such as access to reproductive healthcare and medical assistance in dying and the pushback by religious fundamentalists to improved sexual and gender education in BC schools.”

In other words, these amount to progressive endeavours for secularism in education, women’s rights, reproductive rights, and the right to die as one wishes. For 2018 and 2019, there are a series of projects and campaigns in particular.

The first Bushfield and company are looking to advance are the approximately CAD0.5 billion handed to the private schools in this province alone. The majority of the schools teach in a faith-based setting, which means a religious context – “faith-based” means “religion” as religion got a bad rap.

They “proudly mix creation in their science classrooms,” many of them. “Overall, these schools segregate students by class and religion, which is antithetical to Humanist values,” Bushfield notes.

He continued, “Second, we’re starting to do some work on looking at how BC municipalities treat religious property tax exemptions. They have some latitude in how they treat these exemptions and we know that not all towns simply give a blanket exemption to all churches.”

The final campaign is to look into the overdose crisis and the government responsiveness to it. That the best available evidence is taken into account while respecting individual citizens’ religious, or non-religious in this context, freedoms and rights.

That is a start.

Bushfield talks here with Scott Douglas Jacobsen who founded In-Sight Publishing and In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal.

The Mayo Clinic Anxiety Checklist

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 31, 2018

Why is mental health and reduction of anxiety a positive for wellbeing right now?

I want to talk to you today about anxiety.

Anxiety can be a restrictor of life quality and general wellbeing. The sense of anxiousness and unwarranted concern through stress can take its toll on mental and physical health.

The *Mayo Clinic*, of the and often rated the foremost medical clinic in the world, talked about anxiety and the feeling of anxious. Imagine the times when you are in traffic, waiting for the light, or caught in the deep of an uncomfortable social situation. No one wants those, normally.

Some people feel this most or all the time. They are anxious, nervous, concerned but not for a specific reason. They feel generally anxious. They have what is quite literally called generalized anxiety disorder.

It is different than a momentary blip in the anxiety radar. Or a sense of urgency about things for a tad, especially around an assignment due or a big job initiative or promotion. This generalized anxiety disorder can develop at most ages. That means childhood and adulthood where this would become a problem.

Some people have obsessive compulsive disorder. Others have major depressive disorder, still others have this generalized anxiety disorder. It does not make the person good or bad, but does make daily living potentially a little or a lot more difficult for the person to manage it.

Since this, like the others, can be a long-term condition, it can be a challenge for the long haul for the person with the disorder. Some preliminary things that have helped those with it: psychotherapy and medications.

However, you may need to look into the signs of the disorder too. The Mayo Clinic recommends looking at the following signs:

Persistent worrying or anxiety about a number of areas that are out of proportion to the impact of the events

Overthinking plans and solutions to all possible worst-case outcomes

Perceiving situations and events as threatening, even when they aren't

Difficulty handling uncertainty

Indecisiveness and fear of making the wrong decision

Inability to set aside or let go of a worry

Inability to relax, feeling restless, and feeling keyed up or on edge

Difficulty concentrating, or the feeling that your mind "goes blank"

If you are concerned about a friend or family member, I would recommend looking at or asking about the physical symptoms. This can include fatigue or difficult sleeping. Ask if they have

muscle tension or even aches in their muscles, they may have a certain trembling or twitchiness to them.

They may also have developed a general nervousness, sweatiness, and nausea along with it. If you know them really well, they may tell about issues with diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome or irritability in general.

The worries, the psychological manifestations, may be gone, but the individual may have anxiousness left in them. It can cause troubles for the individual in work and in social life. The worries, the things located and pinpointed as conscious concerns, can emerge at times.

For the younger population, and so more advice for aunts and uncles, parents and grandparents, the child or teenager may have issues with performance in school and in sports due to the anxiety. They can have excessive worries about safety of a family member, punctuality, and potential catastrophic events involving earthquakes or nuclear catastrophe, and so on.

One checklist in terms of the excessive worry comes from the article:

Feel overly anxious to fit in

Be a perfectionist

Redo tasks because they aren't perfect the first time

Spend excessive time doing homework

Lack confidence

Strive for approval

Require a lot of reassurance about performance

Have frequent stomachaches or other physical complaints

Avoid going to school or avoid social situations

This can lead to some questions for doctors. If the anxiety is moderate as a disorder, then this can interfere with some of the work and friend environment and relations for you. If you are feeling even depressed or irritable, this is important to keep an eye out for, especially if you have other comorbid or co-occurring medical disorders.

If you are having trouble at the extreme end with suicidal thoughts, then you should seek emergency treatment immediately.

Try to catch the issue early to be able to cope earlier, before the more significant issues can, potentially, rear their heads.

Humanism in British Columbia for 2018

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 31, 2018

What else is happening in the humanist world of British Columbia, Canada, for 2018?

Ian Bushfield, M.Sc., is the Executive Director of the British Columbia Humanist Association (BCHA). The BCHA has been working to have humanist marriages on the same plane as other marriages in the province. Here we talk about recent updates from the view of the BCHA.

Bushfield and I talked several months ago, but I had not caught up with him. So, I decided to follow up with him on the updates from the non-religious, and the humanist more particularly, the landscape in Canada, especially in British Columbia.

Bushfield directed attention to the Government of British Columbia needing to tackle the ongoing housing crisis. This means a committed and concerted effort to work with non-profits, faith groups, and others, to develop more affordable housing united.

He noted the developments – the housing crisis kind – have put vulnerable groups at risk of religious coercion. “While we understand the urgency of getting units built, this shouldn’t come at the cost of violating the human rights of the nonreligious, religious minorities or the LGBTQ+ community,” Bushfield opines.

The second thing he noted as an ongoing concern is the need to table a bill for the creation of a new Human Rights Commission in the fall of 2018. Bushfield explained, “This can be an important institution that acts to proactively protect human rights in the province, including secularism. The devil is going to be in the details so we’ll have to keep our eye on what comes forward.”

For the concerns of the non-religious across the nation in 2018, Bushfield talked about the federal government tabling legislation for the repeal of the blasphemy law in Canada. However, the bill continues to be stalled in the Senate. *It has been for several months as of now.*

“We need to continue pressing the government and Senators to move the bill forward and ensure its passage this fall. There’s always a small chance that the government will opt to prorogue Parliament over the summer,” Bushfield stated, “and that could mean we have to start from square one again. While we’re on the Senate, the chamber has also created a committee to study Canadian charity law.”

The BCHA is coordinating with the Canadian Secular Alliance in order to speak out against the privileged position of religious groups in Canadian law. To those in some religious communities, this may as unnoticed as birds in air or fish in calm waters; however, to the non-religious, these tend to be more noticed, as if a mild storm for the birds in the air.

Bushfield noted, “Between this and the government’s expected response to an expert report on loosening the rules around charities’ political activities, we have a rare opportunity to remake Canada’s charity laws.”

Bushfield took part in a debate too. It was extended to Bushfield via Apologetics Canada. The debate was between Dr. Andrew or “Andy” Bannister. It was a “cordial dialogue” about Humanism or Christianity providing a better basis for human rights.

Dr. Bannister talked from the Christian view; Bushfield spoke from the Humanist view.

“While Dr. Bannister has far more academic training than me in philosophy and apologetics, I tried to present a layman case for the understanding that morality and therefore our contemporary human rights are the result of a cultural evolutionary process and something we can continually build upon,” Bushfield stated.

Bushfield emphasized the “simple and largely universal approach of the Golden Rule.” He said that he had a lot of fun and encourages people to take a look into the dialogue or debate – [here](#) and [here](#).

Bushfield wants to focus on the fundamentals of Humanism over 2018 as a big overarching goal. The goal is to make a difference in the lives of the citizens of British Columbia and Canada as well.

Bushfield describes Humanism as pro-human in the sense that it is not anti-religious but stands more for human rights, democracy, and peace.

“I’m increasingly worried that as a movement we’ve possibly spent too much time on the latter and that’s made some of our spaces less welcoming than we’d want. I think there’s an appetite for the secular, inclusive and progressive message that Humanism can offer and I’m eager to talk more about that,” Bushfield concluded.

Good luck, blessings, or whatever works for you.

An Empathy Chasm in Young Men is a Problem

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

May 31, 2018

Dr. Philip Zimbardo comments on young men. What does he have to say about modern young men and boys?

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I want to talk about young men today.

In *Psychology Today*, Professor Philip Zimbardo commented on the state of affairs for young men. He does not have a positive prognosis so far, especially without remedial changes for them, and by them for that matter.

Zimbardo opens the articles with the statement and question, “As our kids and grandkids head back to school for a new semester, we are thinking about more than their grade point average. We are thinking about their safety, their development, and what’s going to happen when they graduate. Are the kids really going to be all right?”

The emphasis is on the concern of the older generations, “parents and grandparents,” regarding their young. In turn, this implies the nation’s young. Though this happens globally, such as some issues for young men, this becomes any nation’s youth.

The boys are not alright, but girls seem to be doing more swimmingly in more ways than the boys who become young men and the girls who become young women.

Zimbardo continued, “Whether we’ll admit it or not, young men as a group are getting left behind amid the shifting economic, social, and technological landscape. Everyone knows a young man who is struggling, either in school or afterward; “failing to launch,” with emotional disturbances, in interactions with the opposite sex, or with drug use and gang activities.”

This produces a problem for the sex dynamics on campuses, for the professional achievement of the young men, and the family formation of the couples. In the United States, where this failure to launch seems more prevalent, the Congressional Office reports one in six men is incarcerated or not working.

It is an increase of 45% since 1980. The mass shootings, perpetrated mostly by men, and suicides have increased drastically as well.

“There is an empathy gap in society when it comes to having compassion for the challenges boys and young men face, the issues that underlie the statistics above,” Zimbardo laments, “Nobody sees investing in boys’ development as “worth it” and as a result boys today are growing up and deciding that it is not worth it for them to invest their time and energy back into their communities.”

What happens as a result in the various cultures? Most prominent phenomena acquire a name with an implied judgment. Many names abound including bamboccioni, diaosi, hikikomori, MGTOW, NEETS, and numerous others.

“The shift into alternative realities disconnects young men further. Asking *what’s wrong with them* or *why aren’t they motivated the same way young men used to be* aren’t the right questions.

Society is not giving the support, guidance, means, or places for young men to be motivated or interested in aspiring to long-term real-life goals,” Zimbardo stated.

Nikita Coulombe and Zimbardo published variations of a book on this topic. In some of their research, they conducted a survey of about 20,000 people. They wanted to know about the motivational problems for the young men around us.

The top answer for men is a conflict of messages. The institutions in their lives. Their media, parents, and peers. They give a set of images and rules. A set of things they should not do. Some in derogatory and demeaning tones. Does this help them?

For one, the conflicting messages set young men – 18-to-35-year-olds – on a path in life with a double bind, in more precise language: damned if they don’t and damned if they do. Young men left without guidance or conflicts in guidance.

Often, it seems targeted, even for good intentions, with a derogation, a tone of derision. Few people react well to this. Masculinity manifests itself in many forms. As Dr. Leonard Sax notes in another commentary, the attempt to create androgynous men and women failed or seems to be a failure.

The gender differences seem to have, in part and in some areas, exaggerated in not-so-healthy ways. With it, the rise of what has been termed “toxic masculinity” or “hypermasculinity” by feminists and social progressives.

Zimbardo perceives this as viewing masculinity as in and of itself a disease. It leaves questions about a role model or role models more generally for young men and boys. Who models hypo-masculinity or salutary masculinity – so to speak? By which I mean, less jocularly, the sense of a healthy, positive, proactive, and assertive sense of a masculine sense of self for boys to want to grow into and young men and men to become.

“Just one out of five (link is external) elementary and middle school teachers is male, and fatherlessness in America remains above 40 percent (link is external),” Zimbardo explains, “Among boys who do have fathers, the amount of time they spend in one-on-one conversation with their dads is only a fraction of the time they spend in front of a TV or on a computer, where they see men represented as emotionless warriors, hapless dads, or losers who can’t get anything right.”

A decline in the role models combines with only the unhealthy – or toxic masculinity or hypermasculinity if you must – masculinity represented. In gangs, in schools, in peers, in media, in video games, the main roles represented are the unhealthy forms of the masculine self.

Boys want to become gangstas, playas, sexual conquistadors, dominating and domineering dads, unemotional robotic achievement-only men, and buff and powerful mentors respected for any of the aforementioned.

What about becoming fathers? What about achievement in school and in being a compassionate person? What about being a slow and steady, tender and passionate lover who embodies romantic ideals, where sex does not become another commodity?

What about love for one another – the Golden Rule rather than, say, the Bronze Rule of all for myself and nothing for anyone else – in spite of the mean, the cruel, the greedy, the stupid, the bigoted, the irascible, the cowardly, the rude, and others in daily life deserving of similar low regard, as a high value?

Zimbardo said, “In other words, many boys are going from male-absent home environments to male-absent school environments back to male-absent home environments where they then watch toxic male role models on a screen; this begs the question: what kind of future are they supposed to envision for themselves?”

What is this future? Approximately 15 years are between kindergarten and university. That spells trouble into 2033, potentially. Any remedial changes will take time, potentially 15 years. If starting in 2018, then the changes will need 15 years to see the changes in the unhealthy patterns.

Unfortunately, I see little done. At the same time, I predict a continuation of the problems, or an exacerbation for more precision, for at least another decade. “In our book, *Man Interrupted* ([link is external](#)),” Zimbardo plugged, “we explore what’s happening with young men and where they are headed by examining the individual, situational and systemic factors that are contributing to these trends. The concluding chapters offer a set of solutions that can be affected by different segments of society including schools, parents and young men themselves.”

His, Zimbardo’s and I assume Coulombe’s, take-home message comes to guidance and compassion for young men in our lives. Young adulthood remains hellish; to add the burden of demonization by the systems around you, including the stated before of media, peers, parents, and the schools, can be worse than hellish.

Zimbardo reflects, touchingly, on personal experience and opines, “Growing up in poverty, I saw the difference a mentor could make. If we alienate our sons we’re going to lose a whole generation, to say nothing of the ripple effects that impact us all.”

The Beginning of the National Healthcare Coverage in Canada

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

June 1, 2018

What was the beginning of national healthcare coverage for Canadians according to one of its top researchers in evidence-based medicine?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the start of national healthcare coverage for Canadians.

The conversation went into the beginning of the national healthcare coverage in Canada. Dr. Gordon Guyatt described how the program was a national hospital insurance program and began in the late 1950s.

He stated the big change came from the bringing in of the physician services under the national program. We call this Medicare. The Premier of Saskatchewan in the early 1960s, Tommy Douglas, made the provincial program cover the physician services.

“The physicians were very unhappy. There was a physician strike. They had to bring in people from England to fill in the gaps, but, eventually, the physicians lost that battle. There was a Medicare program for physicians’ services in Saskatchewan,” Guyatt stated, “It is for this reason that some people see Douglas as the father of Canadian Medicare. A few years later, the Pearson government passed legislation that enabled the national Medicare program that we have. Now, medicine, medical services, in Canada are a provincial responsibility, so that the federal government could not bring in their own program.”

There was a need to persuade the other provinces of the need for the program. That the program meets the federal standards. The incentive was if the program met a minimum standard then 50% of the cost would be paid. It was a “very enticing” carrot for the provinces.

By the late 1960s, legislation was being passed and by 1971/72 the rest of the provinces bought into the deal. “Now, we have effectively national public insurance for physicians as well as hospital services. Canadians have been the beneficiaries,” Guyatt opines.

Healthcare may be less important to young people than to old people because young people tend to be healthier than old people. Young people develop illnesses with, at times and unfortunately, fatal or seriously injurious consequences.

“If you want a picture of the difference, you would only have to look south of the border. You come from a high-income family. Your parents in the States have probably purchased insurance from you, or can pay if you have problems,” Guyatt explained, “If you are low income or middle income, and not fully insured, which would be the case for a lot of young people who say, ‘Okay, I am low-risk. Why should I pay these very high insurance costs?’”

You are in big trouble. That is a worry and a burden that you are free of in Canada. It makes a big difference to our quality of life. The feeling, “If I fall into problems, then I have a system there. That will deal with me. That I will not be constrained from it because of cost.”

When I asked about younger Canadians feeling more precariousness in their sense of security around health without the Canadian national healthcare program, Guyatt said, “I think inevitably. If you had been in the United States, you would either have one of two choices. You pay insurance. There are varying levels of insurance. You pay the basic insurance. That you might be able to afford, but that means if you get sick then you have additional payments that you can’t afford.”

Some people may take the risk. Others may not take the risk. However, if they take the risk and become sick, then they will be in real trouble because underinsurance is the number one cause of United States citizen bankruptcy. It has to do with people getting sick.

“Most people who go bankrupt have some insurance,” Guyatt notes, “But they are underinsured. There is a whole level of insurance, where to be well-insured costs a lot of money. So, the choices facing young people in the United States who are not from very affluent families is not a cheerful one.”

The British Medical Journal or BMJ had a list of 117 nominees in 2010 for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Guyatt was short-listed and came in second-place in the end. He earned the title of an Officer of the Order of Canada based on contributions from evidence-based medicine and its teaching.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2012 and a Member of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame in 2015. He lectured on public vs. private healthcare funding in March of 2017, which seemed like a valuable conversation to publish in order to have this in the internet’s digital repository with one of Canada’s foremost academics.

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The Canadian National Opioid Guideline from 2017

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

June 1, 2018

What does Professor Gordon Guyatt, a leading Canadian researcher in evidence-based medicine, say about the Canadian National Opioid Guidelines?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the start of national opioid guidelines for Canada from late 2017.

Professor Guyatt helped with the national opioid guidelines. He talked about the over-prescription of non-cancer pain alongside an increase in excessive doses of opioids for it. This led to narcotic dependency among the population of these users.

“Everybody knows this is a problem. An earlier Canadian guideline in the days before people were really waking up to this, basically, did not say when to use opioids. It said, ‘If you decide to use opioids, what are the best ways? What are the guides for giving out the opioids?’”

Within the context of the medical community and the patients receiving care, the reasonableness of these prescriptions was within it. People needed care. People were in pain. Opioids reduced the pain.

Problem solved. However, the problem came with unpredicted side effects. It contributed to the opioid overprescribing, which was a problem.

“So, a couple of years ago, and a few months ago produced, a national guideline for opioid use,” Guyatt stated, “It starts out saying, ‘Before you use opioids, try non-steroidal, try drugs like Acetaminophen, try a number of other drugs such as those in the anticonvulsant class that have analgesic properties. Some antidepressants have analgesic properties. Bottom line: do not use opioids as your first, second, or third option. Try other things before you move to opioids.’”

The next finding for the Canadian medical community was the opioids were really great for the short-term but powerful pain, or acute pain. These provided substantially positive effects for the acute pain of patients.

However, there is a point at which the patients become used to the opioids. That means the opioid effects wear off. “When you give opioids chronically, the effect is actually quite limited,” Guyatt said.

If there was a visual analogue of the pain as a scale with 0 as no pain and 10 as the worst pain, chronic opioids only lower pain by about one unit on the scale using whole numbers. A 6 becomes a 5 and a 4 becomes a 3, and so on.

“Very modest effect, it has lots of side effects,” Guyatt explained, “So, the guidelines say, ‘Do not give large doses of opioids. No extra benefits, extra risks, if you are going to give opioids, first try everything else, then when you try this make the dose modest.’”

The guidelines also provided people who are stuck on opioids how to reduce their opioid use and even eliminate opioids as part of their medication set.

Guyatt concluded, “A whole set of recommendations for dealing with the over-prescription of opioids. That will hopefully lead to much better prescribing.”

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National Pharmacare for Everyone in Canada

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

June 2, 2018

What are some issues with pharmacare and income levels for Canada?

Professor Gordon Guyatt, MD, MSc, FRCP, OC is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact and Medicine at McMaster University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Here we talk about the potentials for a national pharmacare program.

Professor Guyatt and I talked about the dynamics between the medicare and pharmacare systems for Canada. The important point, the former exists; the latter does not exist. Why? “Historical accident,” Guyatt said.

The national healthcare program never expanded to a national pharmacare program out of historical accident. Most developed nations have one. It drastically lowers the price for most people, so benefits more of the population.

Other nations of the developed world considered this to a greater extent. The Canadian Finance Minister Bill Morneau not too long ago talked about the formation of a committee and then the development of a national healthcare program in Canada.

At the time of the interview, Guyatt, though things may have changed, stated, “The status of that is, at the moment, unfortunate. So, Eric Hoskins resigned as health minister in Ontario to go and work on this. We thought – it is hard to know – that he was quite progressive. That he would be doing this because it is very exciting to have a real national pharmacare.

Bill Morneau (at the time of the interview) talked about the possibility of a mixed public-private healthcare system akin to the system developed by the Obama Administration prior to the Trump Administration in the United States.

“If it happens that way, it will be extremely unfortunate. Whereas, people who are interested in national pharmacare got very excited about the apparent initiative. The way Morneau has talked about it, subsequently, has considerably dampened the enthusiasm and gotten people much more worried,” Guyatt laments.

For the lower socioeconomic status or SES Canadians, the prices can be big issues. These are people with part-time jobs, poorly paying jobs, and low-skill jobs. This lead some of the conversation into the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

It is about 10-15 years, depending on reportage, in lifespan not to mention healthspan between Indigenous Canadians, as Professor Guyatt has likely read and knew. It is a national concern. According to a colleague Professor Guyatt talked with, apparently, some Indigenous have drug coverage. That spares some the problem.

Other folks, the lower-income Canadians in general, will have a real problem; the ones without drug coverage have a real problem on their hands. When I asked for numbers on the problem,

Guyatt stated, “I have seen different statistics. I think it would be of the order of 15% or 20% who, when asked, would say, ‘I haven’t filled a prescription because of the financial issues.’”

Some activism became part of the conversation as well. Guyatt described how letters to the federal MPs can be a great help. Those letters with group signatures for pharmacare. Guyatt opined, “I think the politicians are more impressed at individual letters, individually written. Anyone who cares about pharmacare and who would like to write an, even brief, individual letter. Those things make a difference.”

The things most appealing, likely, to the poorer Canadians would be the coverage for everyone under 25 in Ontario by Kathleen Wynne, according to Guyatt.

“So, people on social assistance over 65 get coverage. Now, she has extended it to everyone under 25. Here is pharmacare for everyone under 25,” Guyatt explained, “Now, it is a relatively easy population because people under 25 don’t usually need many drugs. So, it is good. It is nice. But a relatively inexpensive group to extend to. In terms of what is required to gain both the equity and the efficiency goals, it is a program that would simply give universal coverage. The way we have for physicians in hospitals.”

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