

NEWS INTERVENTION: ASSEMBLAGE 5

SCOTT DOUGLAS JACOBSEN



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Scott

NEWS INTERVENTION

Covfefe-19 Conspiracy, Deary, A Tilt-a-Whirl to Unfurl

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 19, 2020

Humanists International is kicking behinds again, doing great work, taking names, and building membership, and a unified global movement for science and human rights. This time, they've been working on an important educational campaign to counter misinformation and to provide appropriate information about the Covid-19 crisis emergent from SARS-CoV-2. Something “probably” (there you go, Andrew! – “likely,” ugh) coming from bats, where many types of coronaviruses fester, and then transmitted across species into a human being, i.e., from a non-human animal to a human animal. Now, here we are, with all the clumsy conspiracy theorizing, racist navel-gazing to ignore the plight of those less well-equipped to deal with the virus, End Times fearmongering as a form of collective infantile escapism, scripturally inadequate pulpit mouth-foaming, and run-of-the-mill dismissal of expert analysis and scientific information for comprehension of an international emergency – not to mention Alex Jones’ epic repetitive rant of eating his neighbour's “ass” (we got the point the first time, Mr. Jones, thanks - now known as someone who would shout bombastic flummeries to entice his neighbour’s reluctant anal cavity), this educational campaign is incredibly important in this context.

Not only has this pandemic shown the standard structural inadequacies of several international networks, but it also exacerbates or makes bold the profoundly ignorant, and then highlights some of the extent and influence of the stupefying blank mental cartridges active throughout the globe when it’s not a drill. All grounded in low-tide respect for science across nations and regions, insufficient educational standards in critical thinking and the base theoretical frameworks from the sciences to know the natural world, and inequitable distribution of the quality curricula materials with intersects in religious dogma/fundamentalism and sexist blockading of educational progress.

That’s why the work of global democratic Humanism becomes a necessity rather than an option moving forward because the problems facing the world require international solutions rather than individualist-nationalist ones. The philosophical system may evolve to meet future problems, but this is precisely the required system at this moment in time. One in which the Amsterdam Declaration 2002 becomes part of the global democratic Humanist discourse and the international efforts for greater justice. The Board - Andrew Copson (President), Anne-France Ketelaer (Vice-President), Boris van der Ham (Treasurer), Rebecca Hale (Board Member), Gulalai Ismail (Board Member), Kristin Mile (Board Member), Roslyn Mould (Board Member), Uttam Niraula (Board Member, and David Pineda (Board Member) – and the staff - Gary McLelland (Chief Executive), Elizabeth O’Casey (Director of Advocacy), Jean Zong (Financial Administrator), Giovanni Gaetani (Membership Engagement Manager), and Mahalet Tadesse (Intern), Emma Wadsworth-Jones (Humanists at Risk Coordinator), and Lillie Ashworth (Advocacy Officer) – and volunteer representatives - Kacem El Ghazzali, Margaretha Jones, John Wagner, and Renate Bauer - of Humanists International have been doing amazing work in their countries, in their institutions, and globally through the global democratic collective voice of Humanists International. Everybody has a place; each person has a part.

Members and Associates around the world of global democratic Humanism have been working intensely to spread the word about several ongoing cases, whether the important work of Gulalai Ismail of Pakistan with Saba Ismail through Aware Girls on the empowerment of women and girls, the international campaign to free Mubarak Bala in northern Nigeria, working on the erasure of witchcraft allegations from Africa by 2030 under leadership of Dr. Leo Igwe, reporting on the scrapping of the death penalty in Sudan, bringing attention to the abolition of the blasphemy law from Scotland, calling for the release of Iranian prisoners of conscience, working to protect Mohammed Ismail in Pakistan, and so much more only in early 2020. To the particular focus of this coverage, the issue is the cross-section of politics, science, international relations, and critical thinking. We have seen a failure of politics, a denial of science, a rejection of internationalism, and a lack of critical thought about issues of existential concern to ordinary citizens world-round. Covid-19 was the hammer striking the cracked church bell called global order. All the while, global warming and nuclear catastrophe as potential looming tragedies to befall the human species. I do not deny all the positive aspects of modern life compared to decades ago. However, problems are problems for a reason and require more urgent and rapid responses than solved problems, which, by definition, are not problems anymore and can be put on the backburner of appreciation, gratitude, and the checked-off portions of the bucket list.

With a variety of multilingual memes, coloured and well-designed for presentation to the public, the languages are extremely diverse and represent a great effort of the international humanist community's work in the development of the memes for different nationalities' consumption. Some of the listed examples had languages of Bangla, English, French, Hindi, Ki-Swahili, Persian, Portuguese, Sinhala, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, and Urdu. Thank you to the nearly 200 members and associates of Humanists International for the work in the development of the members and in such a wide array of languages, too, the reported targeted objective is millions of people reached around the world.

While the targeted objective remains for the individuals who believe in conspiracy theories, superstitions, and fake news, as this becomes an educational campaign, it becomes part of a consistent increased effort in the education in the public through the global information and communication networks. One of the foundations of the efforts comes from targeting irrational beliefs and the application of skepticism towards particulars with the empiricist and modernist lens on them. Misinformation can lead to bad outcomes. Individuals who have the privilege and the opportunity to ignore the plight of the coronavirus may, and in fact often do, neglect the inability of others to isolate, physically distance, have access to emergency funds, acquire respirators, and have adequate medical attention. Resources in abundance to some not considered "resources" inasmuch as rights, as if the water one swims. As several others have noted, we can note the exaggerated health disparities in the cessation of life in the critical/severe cases for African Americans compared to European Americans. Even in spite of this, incompetent and inadequate response to the crisis is leading to disproportionate American deaths compared to much of the rest of the globe. It is driven by the conscious and automated spread of 'knowledge' or false information designed to misinform, or simply grounded in a deep lack of scientific understanding.

Thus, as Dr. Leo Igwe noted in an interview in the #GlobalHumanismNow series, the misinformation "virus" can make the spreading of the coronavirus worse. In a manner of speaking, if one knowingly spreads false information, and if demographic outcomes exist in these contexts, then one not only harms the general population, but, also, vulnerable populations

disproportionately – making known disparities even worse. Humanists International – and its Board, staff, and representatives – are doing a fantastic job in ramping up international efforts to reduce the spread of lies and misinformation, and countering medically dubious and scientifically questionable treatments amounting to the unsupportable to the dangerously farcical.

This comes, mainly, in the form of the COVID-19 #MythBusters, i.e., memes displaying evidence-based messages in some of the aforementioned languages to improve the efficacy of the work. As Giovanni Gaetani, Humanists International's Membership Engagement Manager, states:

Our goal is to... reach out to a wider global audience, on a larger scale than we have ever done so before...

...The amount of coordination and support coming from our Members and Associates is astonishing. In just one week we managed to translate the memes into 15 languages, including some of the most spoken languages around the world like Hindi, Spanish, French, Bengali, Portuguese, etc. We are literally talking about potentially reaching millions of people...

...As I speak, we keep receiving new translations and we are working to create further series of memes. Members and Associates all around the world are sharing the memes everywhere. Not only on social media, but also on Whatsapp groups, newsletters, etc. It's hard to estimate accurately how many people we are reaching worldwide, but the feedback we are receiving is great.

...This is a great example of global humanist cooperation in the name of reason, science and solidarity.

Global Humanism can assist in the endeavour to reduce some of the issues inherent in the developments of the modern communications networks, including the first global telephone system called The Internet. We feel as if this becomes an insurmountable challenge. However, as we should remain diligent and conscious, we have larger looming issues apart from rights abuse, international humanitarian law violations, and the re-rise of an ignorant sub-culture with some modicum of prominence only appearing large-and-looming; we have the issues of anthropogenic climate change, or human-induced global warming, and the threat of nuclear catastrophe.

Once we begin to overcome, as many are, this cavalcade of a clown parade, we have the more serious issues needing intense work. Our ancestors have overcome their own challenges; we can overcome ours. It merely requires proportionate proactive, assertive, and constructive counter-response, as per the work of Humanists International.

LGBTI - International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 22, 2020

Homosexuality is a normal sexual orientation among numerous species in the animal kingdom, including in primates with homo sapiens or human beings as one of them. In proportion to the natural and normal, and healthy, sexual orientation of males of the species to other males or females to other females as minority sexual orientations or innate and organically-developed psychophysiological arousals to the same sex, human societies developed the capacity for hatred, prejudice, bigotry, and straight-forward bias against this minority sexual orientation, whether for males or females in the species.

Some of which garner divine mandate. Leviticus 18:22 speaks to a man not sleeping with another man as a woman because it amounts to an abomination in the Hebrew scriptures or the Torah. Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism take accepting terms on homosexuality, as they, more or less, provide a wider liberalism for people in the community with minority sexual orientations. Within the large number of Christian sects, there can be outright condemnation or disapproval on a number of levels. At the same time, we can see the acceptance of homosexuality. It depends on the grouping.

Mormons consider it morally wrong. The Catholics see it as a violation of the marital sacrament, where this calls upon homosexuals under the doctrine of Catholicism to live a chaste life – to remain virgins or to cease homosexual sexual activity henceforth. All major sects' teachings of Islam condemn homosexuality as unnatural. Bahá'í limits sexual relations between a man and a woman in marriage, but, more liberally, does not impose its moral standards on those outside of the faith. Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism have more mixed views on homosexuality as a sexual orientation and homosexual acts, i.e., a range of liberal to conservative orientations on the matter. Zoroastrianism points to the male homosexual act as something demonic. For Confucianism or Taoism, there's little or no single position on it. In short, this is the wisdom of the ages. As the brilliant Professor Francesca Stavrakopoulou has noted, many of the contexts, for example, of the Bible represent the tales and stories of men, written by males, who have daddy issues. As a consequence, others suffer.

This 'wisdom' has led, by the nature of exclusion and condemnation of individual members of a social species, to untold suffering, humiliation, abuse, ostracism, and relegation to secondary status in societies. More recent incarnations of viewpoints include Satanism, Humanism, Unitarian Universalism, Ethical Culture, and Wicca, with more acceptance of members of the LGBTI communities. We can ignore the cult-bigotry of the Unification Church. The Yogyakarta Principles from November 2006 with supplements from 2017 have been an important advancement for the development of rights and acceptance for LGBTI members of the global community. The United Nations has an LGBTI Core Group now. All for the betterment of the lives of the sexual and gender minorities around the world.

A few days ago was the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. A day garnering international attention, providing insight to the rights and lives of others, and giving a spotlight of individual sub-populations in the world known to endure disproportionate

violence against them. If you were homosexual, or if I was a lesbian, what would you, or I, like to see in the international and local scene? One might be awareness. Another might be concrete action in order to reduce the amount of violence against you (or others like you), or me. When we think of abuse, it can mean many things, but it can mean the outcomes of the violence too. In that, those who experience violence or trauma in some manner. They tend to suffer from mental illness more than the baseline.

LGBTI individuals face discrimination and abuse. Mental illness follows from this. The International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia commemorates this population as well as providing an awareness platform. 70 countries in the world criminalize same-sex relationships with 6 incorporating the death penalty into it. Brunei enacted an Islamic law making the stoning of LGBTI citizens to death legal. Kenya upheld another law criminalizing same-sex relations while Gabon passed one and Indonesia and Uganda are considering the identical matters now. In Hungary under Orban, there are explicit attempts to end the legal recognition of transgender people.

On the pseudoscience flames being fanned, we have the therapy entitled “Conversion Therapy” or a theological or pseudoscientific doctrine to change an individual LGBTI member’s sexual orientation or gender identity, as far as I know from LGBTI to straight or heterosexual. It has failed in most cases and, therefore, shows something closer to the null effect, which makes the therapy non-scientific. Conversion Therapy is practiced in China, Colombia, and the United States, as the major areas. Rights, as grounded in universalistic ethics, deserve universal application. Taiwan became a bright spot as a place legalizing same-sex marriage while Northern Ireland followed suit to do the same.

As with most contexts for rights in times of crisis, authoritarian regimes, self-appointed fundamentalist religious hierarchs, and hate-based groups utilize the chaos to ram through various forms of bigotry and policy intended to not raise people, build them up in a healthy manner, but, rather, to put the pedestal on them, to crush them by law, by social mores, by communal norms, and divine mandate. And it pains me to see it. More could be done, and isn’t, lives could flourish more and aren’t, and bigots, racists, and inconsiderate personalities grasp for power in a time of their dying gasps, of the death of the “Dinosaur Age,” as Robert Anton Wilson, called it.

Within intimate settings, Covid-19 can create a context in which extant domestic violence (DV) situations become more pronounced than before with homelessness and DV as a natural fallout of it, not to mention ordinary healthcare needs of LGBTI peoples that may require more special attention than others of the population not in categories (and, hence, not with these issues). Humanists around the world came together and approved the Reykjavik Declaration on the Family and Human Rights. It is a declaration inclusively incorporating the rights and respect for LGBTI people and all gender identities with an inclusive definition of family.

The fight for equal rights isn’t a day or decade battle. It is a continual process of the development of a vision as to what comprises a just and equitable global society comprised of individual regions, and regional alliances or international organizations including League of Arab States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Gulf Cooperation Council, OPEC, NATIO, ASEAN, PLO, UN, Commonwealth of Independent States, Commonwealth of Nations, Arab Maghreb Union, OECD, WTO, Arctic Council, ANZUS, FAO, SAARC, and the European Union, or the G20, MERCOSUR, Interpol, IMF, and the Colombo Plan. All bound to notions of solidarity, how ever

limited at times, with more distinct representations in the individual Member States in the UN. It's all the same species fighting for plots of land, of resources, of the time of minds, and control over others paths in life at times. Days of commemoration and recognition represent the larger vision, in part a scientific vision, and in many ways a world still in discovery, in ever-continuous transition, based much on human choices. When it comes to the equality and dignity of others, what choice will you make?

With some sources and information by Humanists International.

Humanist Canada Essay Contest is Live

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 27, 2020

Humanist Canada^[1] is hosting an essay contest through its Humanist Canada Essay Contest Committee in collaboration with the Association humaniste du Québec is working to provide a voice for high school level humanist students or pupils with humanistic tendencies. The essay contest was rebooted in 2019 as a joint adventure too. The theme for 2020, as a consensus decision of the Humanist Canada Essay Contest Committee, is “Religion and Humanism in Education” in a Canadian context.

As with 2019, the prize money will be \$8,000 (CAD), which, in essence, funds two competitions under one contest with an English competition and a French competition. The first place prize will be \$1,000 for students with the most outstanding submissions. Within the theme, there are no predefined topics for the students. However, the content would preferably be in alignment with the values of Humanism and the humanist community throughout Canada.

As the Vice-President of Humanist Canada said, “We are once again pleased to be able to host this forum for young writers interested in humanist themes. This forum promotes a defence of science and reason from those who would attack it.”

Humanism, if you do not know, is a non-theistic view of life and the world. Its means of understanding the world are critical thinking, logical reasoning, and science. It affirms the worth and dignity of every individual human being while striving for the ethical principles of compassion, fairness, and truth. These guide a worldview aiming for the maintenance of the good in the world and working to make things even better in material and human terms. Some of the topics students may want to entertain are abortion, discrimination based on sexual orientation, concerns over the environment, freedom of thought and expression, medically assisted dying, and poverty.

As a Board Member of Humanist Canada representing British Columbia and as the Chair of the Humanist Canada Essay Contest Committee, this is a rare opportunity for the presentation of the best and brightest young freethought minds the country's high schools have to offer, in a formal academic-based competition with written essays. Any inculcation of values comes from the passing of them and providing a space for the next generations to evaluate, present, and live them. The Humanist Canada Essay Contest is one opportunity for young freethinkers to shine, as I noted in the press release entitled “Student Essay Contest, Hosted By Humanist Canada, Call for Submissions.” The full information for the essay contest can be found here: <https://www.humanistcanada.ca/programs/essay-contest/>.

About Humanist Canada

Humanist Canada (HC) promotes education and awareness of humanism. We are a resource for secular groups and causes across Canada. We support the advancement of scientific, academic, medical, and human rights efforts.

[1] Humanist Canada is connected directly or indirectly to a number of humanist and freethought organizations including: British Columbia Humanist Association, Humanist Association of

Ottawa, Humanist Association of Toronto, Toronto Oasis, Grey Bruce Humanists, Ontario Humanist Society, Central Ontario Humanist Association, Association humaniste du Québec, Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics of Manitoba, Comox Valley Humanists, Toronto Oasis, Grey Bruce Humanists, Ontario Humanist Society, Halton-Peel Humanist Community, Thunder Bay Humanists, Humanist International, American Humanist Association, Humanists UK, Humanist Society of Scotland, Humanist Association of Ireland, Humanist Association of Germany, and European Humanist Federation, Secular Humanists in Calgary, Victoria Secular Humanist Association, Humanist Association of London, Society of Free Thinkers (Kitchener-Waterloo/Cambridge/Guelph), Dying with Dignity, Secular Connexion Séculière, Centre for Inquiry, Canadian Secular Alliance, Humanist International, American Humanist Association, Humanists UK, Humanist Society of Scotland, Humanist Association of Ireland, Humanist Association of Germany, and European Humanist Federation.

Conversation with Daniel Lomax on Topical Magazine

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 27, 2020

Daniel Lomax is an Editor for Topical Magazine. Here we talk about some of the contexts, history, and aims of it.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Topical Magazine has been slowly developing for a couple of years. What are its origins?

Daniel Lomax: Topical Magazine was founded by Benjamin David, whose previous project, Conatus News, branched out in two directions. Others ran with political activism while Topical Magazine emphasizes philosophical reflection. As the name of the magazine implies, we turn the microscope on contemporary events. But we look through it from the other side, aiming to put these issues into a wider historical and intellectual context.

Jacobsen: With academics, activists, and commentators as part of the team, there will be a wide range of views in addition to style of commentary. I have contributed to the publication too. Let's take a shift into some discussion on the story for you, how did you become involved in Topical Magazine?

Lomax: The gift of nepotism brought me here. Benjamin, our editor-in-chief and founder, is an old friend of mine. He was looking for some fresh input for the magazine and so he got in touch, perhaps on account of my tendency to get into debates online (sorry/not sorry - I am one of those people).

As a contributing editor I think it's important to allow each writer their own voice. A good editor is often a hands-off one. The magazine has a broadly left-libertarian perspective but the wide range of approaches is our virtue. It's important for a magazine to be a magazine and not a church.

Jacobsen: What has been the writing and intellectual background for you, e.g., the influences and formal education?

Lomax: My formal education is actually in music and sound technology. During those years, I found my interests turning to philosophy, and returned to my childhood aspiration to write. I've run a lively philosophy forum online for some years and spent more time engaging with philosophy, politics and literature than with my formal area of study.

But my real education was a brief spell of homelessness followed by years of poverty. As a pure intellectual it can be difficult to make your mind up - Marx (for example) is persuasive, and so is Hayek. But with these sorts of experiences you go through the looking glass. For better and for worse you get a real glimpse of society, and individuals, and the government, and the economy, and yourself: and at the end of it you find you've developed a new clarity and confidence in your values and principles. If this sounds like I'm saying I studied at the University of Life, shoot me.

Jacobsen: The current team includes Benjamin David (Senior Editor), Daniel Lomax (Editor), Raghen Lucy (Editor), Tom Adamson, Ian Bellis, Jude Bernard, Ryan Faulkner-Hogg, Bryce Harper, Race Huchdorf, Dino Jelčić, Khadija Khan Eleanor Paisley, Benjamin Studebaker, Jeremiah Tabb, Emile Yusupoff, and myself. When we look at the team, what is the first thing that comes to mind for you?

Lomax: We have a strong international team of independent thinkers and fierce intellectuals, each with different areas of interest and different approaches to writing and analysis. It's always interesting to see the different takes these contributors give on an issue, and they're a pleasure to work with. We're always open for further recruitment of course, and we hope to continue to grow and build on our foundations.

Jacobsen: What is the importance of the individuals at the helm now? Those who take particular editorial stances, orient themselves within a specific frame, and provide coverage on a variety of topics for the readership.

Lomax: Benjamin's a gifted promoter, organizer and people-manager, with a good work rate, and he's sort of the spine that holds the pages together. Raghen's a strikingly intelligent young editor with a keen eye for detail. I'm extremely awkward and pedantic which, I like to think, keeps the others on their toes. The importance of that can't be underestimated, of course.

Jacobsen: Knowing the social and intellectual circles, and networks, many publications arose in a similar manner with different emphases and orientation while having some core values around "Freedom of Speech"/freedom of expression. For example, the team at Areo Magazine began under Malhar Mali in November, 2016 (until June, 2018) with the current editorial team as Helen Pluckrose (Editor), Iona Italia (Sub-Editor), and Gauri Hopkins (Administrator), and some others who I know stipulating particular positions for themselves within the publication. They have expanded into LetterWiki. However, I remain unsure as to the current full roster. Quillette only a short time before in 2015 without much notoriety, except in the last, maybe, two or two-and-a-half years. Its team consists of Claire Lehmann (Editor-in-Chief), Jamie Palmer (Senior Editor), Paulina Neuding (European Editor), Jonathan Kay (Canadian Editor), Toby Young (Associate Editor), Andy Ngo (Sub-Editor), Greg Ellis (Voice of Quillette Narrated), Asher Honickman (Legal Advisor), Carol Horton, Jeffrey Taylor, Matthew Blackwell, Debra W. Soh, Michael Shellenberger, Spencer Case, Terry Newman, Chloe Valdary, Imran Shamsunahar, Bradley Campbell, Brad Cran, Coleman Hughes, Bo Winegard, Jonathan Anomaly, Rosalind Arden, John R. Wood, Jr., Neema Parvini, Clay Routledge, Helen Dale, and Sumantra Maitra. So, each covering some different facets of modern culture and emergent within a couple of years of one another. There are others. What is the importance of publications like these?

Lomax: We're not the first publication to have noted with concern that freedom of expression has declined as a value among "Western" society. I'm accustomed by now to seeing and hearing historically ignorant arguments for this new authoritarianism, posed by people who should know better. Our demand is not just to protect a thing which is valuable in itself - although it is - but to preserve the liberty upon which all other liberties are built.

Jacobsen: Following from the previous question, how has Topical Magazine filled out a niche for itself?

Lomax: It's edifying to watch the growing resistance to the authoritarian trend, but it risks being monopolized by people who obsess over gender and Islam. The civil rights movement in the US couldn't have happened without the First Amendment and the Ottoman Empire's ban on the printing press is one of the reasons most of the region is strangled by hierarchical and reactionary regimes. Our position is that a seat must be kept warm for free speech on the political Left of the house.

Jacobsen: What are the goals of Topical Magazine?

Lomax: We hope to inform, educate and reason - and in an age in which so many disenfranchised people think of politics as Something For Other People, associating it with dispatches from boring men in anoraks, standing in the rain looking dour outside the halls of Westminster or sitting in a bland studio offering dry, meaningless PowerPoint infographics on “the economy”: make it interesting.

Jacobsen: What is the ethos of Topical Magazine?

Lomax: We write with clarity so as not to exclude. Integrity and strictness about the facts are not negotiable: the public's trust in the journalistic profession is at a low point, and it's incumbent on every writer to take some responsibility for that. With that said: don't believe this piffle about “unbiased journalism.” Bias is ineradicable. The key thing is that your readers know from the outset what your biases are. We treat our readership like grown-ups.

Jacobsen: What are some of the main topics covered in Topical Magazine?

Lomax: We've written repeatedly about freedom of speech issues and technology (both of which topics you've made insightful contributions to yourself). We have pieces on the environment, nuclear energy, political rifts, feminism, mental health, combat sports, social media and much more. There isn't a topic we're afraid to touch.

Lomax: Thanks for having me, Scott.

Jacobsen: You're very welcome, Daniel.

Book Review: "Humanists in the Hood," by Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

May 31, 2020

What a time to be alive watching the United States of America have NASA and SpaceX (of Elon Musk) jointly launch the first astronauts to the International Space Station since 2011, where some of the largest protests in American history for women's rights and protection of civilian people of colour's lives in recent years happen and then followed by massive and nation-wide protests over the murder of George Floyd and others, and all the while over 40,000,000 Americans are unemployed, and more than 100,000 are dead from the coronavirus, an interesting dichotomy marking much of the thematic interplays of American history harkening back to the first Black president sketch of the late Richard Pryor, "I feel it's time Black people went to space. White people have been going to space for years, and spacing out on us, as you might say." [Emphasis added.]

Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson is a brilliant writer and a decent human being, who writes articulately with moral force while working in and supporting underserved communities in which she lives in South Los Angeles. Hutchinson is a black woman sexual violence survivor (as a girl at the time) and a parent of a non-binary child, granddaughter of Earl Hutchinson Sr., and daughter of Yvonne Divans Hutchinson and Earl Ofari Hutchinson. She earned a Ph.D. in Performance Studies in 1999 from New York University.

She founded the Women's Leadership Project (WLP) as "a feminist service learning program designed to educate and train young middle and high school age women in South Los Angeles to take ownership of their school-communities." Also, she founded Black Skeptics Los Angeles (BSLA), which became part of the 501(c)3 organization Black Skeptics Group (BSG – founded in 2010) in 2012. She is a co-founder of the Women of Colour Beyond Belief Conference with Bridgett "Bria" Crutchfield (Minority Atheists of MI, Detroit affiliate of Black Nonbelievers, and Operation Water For Flint) and Mandisa Thomas (Black Nonbelievers), which featured speakers as wide-ranging as Liz Ross, Candace Gorham, Deanna Adams, Cecilia Pagan, Ingrid Mitchell, Lilandra Ra, Marquita Tucker, Mashariki Lawson-Cook, Rajani Gudlavaletti, Sonjiah Davis, and Sadia Hameed.

Her work and speaking have crossed paths with several prominent African American and Black freethinkers, including Desiree Kane, Anthony Pinn, Bobby Joe Champion, Sikivu Hutchinson, Andrea Jenkins, Charone Pagett, Diane Burkholder, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, Heina Dadabhoy, Sincere Kirabo, Candace Gorham, Liz Ross, and many others. Her previous works include Imagining Transit: Race, Gender, and Transportation Politics in Los Angeles (Travel Writing Across the Disciplines) (2003), Moral Combat: Black Atheists, Gender Politics, and the Values Wars (2011), Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels (2013), and White Nights, Black Paradise (2015). As well, she released a short film on White Nights, Black Paradise in 2016, which was made into a stage production in 2018.

As seems implicit in the works, any social, economic, and political progress for the godless will come in ethical form, as immoral acts in attempts to force or coerce an overarching ethical movement will provide ammunition for demagogues who wish to – so to speak - crush a neck

with a knee or silence citizens who wish to protest by taking a knee. In short, she reads not only what comes in the academic volumes in intellectual interests for her, but she acts as a positive humanist agent in South Los Angeles, in particular, and America, in general, with a number of initiatives, including the First in the Family Humanist scholarship. Both personal attributes of intellectual rigour and community work come together in the written works for her. Humanists in the Hood becomes another manifestation of the universalist ink of Hutchinson.

In many ways, Hutchinson stands intellectually alone, as happens with many Black humanists in the global diaspora of Humanism. This is not to deny or neglect the reality of organizational and media buttresses, at times, for, or by, Black humanists. Certainly, supports have begun to grow, in part. However, in the cases of supports developed externally to the Black humanist community, how much sentiment is not overweening, affected, and simply nakedly fake? A woman in interviews having to define for the public even the meaning of atheism or agnosticism, as when on the “On The 7 With Dr. Sean” show. Chavonne Taylor and Hutchinson spent a not-insignificant amount of time on the basic definitions of agnosticism and atheism followed by further clarification. If you’re wondering, this was aired in 2020. However, there exists a history of writings with, for example, A. Philip Randolph who sponsored an essay contest entitled “Is Christianity a Menace to the Negro?” Naturally, Hutchinson loved the title.

Our first interaction occurred on December 20, 2016 with the publication of “Interview with Sikivu Hutchinson - Feminist, Humanist, Novelist, Author” in Conatus News. Someone with identities disliked by racists as a Black or an African American citizen of the United States of America, by misogynists for feminist writings, women’s leadership organizational work, and lived egalitarian values, and by religious fundamentalists for rejections of supernatural claims of sacred texts and disbelief in the authority of purported holy figures, i.e., as a humanist or, naturally, a ‘heretic.’ Hence, the reason for the full title of Humanists in the Hood: Unapologetically Black, Feminist, and Heretical (2020). To add icing to the cake, Hutchinson advocates for socialist economic policy, which, in the United States, is heard as or translated by the culture into “antidemocratic” or “communistic,” as she notes.

The “Humanists” in the main title comes from fundamental humanist values lived out in ‘hoods’ in South L.A. while engraved with the flavors, the sounds, the emotions, and the patois, and the pains and the tragedies and the triumphs as humanists in hoods. Also, “Hood” comes from lived experience for Hutchinson. She grew up at the tail-end of COINTELPRO (COunter INTELligence PROgram) in which a program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was destroying or decimating African American communities and political organizations. Hutchinson understands the contexts of state violence and its organized manifestations. One of her earliest moments of political protest was in hearing about the murder of Eulia Love/Eulia Mae Love/Eula Love by two LAPD officers in her own residence in 1979.

It was a first moment, even as a child for Hutchinson, of the issues around “use of force” by police. Or the Darrel Gates argument of African Americans responding differently to chokeholds. Similar forms of violence and subsequent political and social protests seen with the case of George Floyd and others to this day, where protests have been breaking out in Boston, New York City, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago, D.C., Minneapolis/St. Paul, Louisville, Dallas, Sacramento, Bakersfield, and San Jose, and probably elsewhere. Both come to a context in which home is neither “safe space” nor “private sanctuary.” A deep history where African American bodies are not theirs except in service to White slaveholders with Black women in America as

sub-human and not really women. These cultural bigotries rooted in a proper definition of White supremacy, as domination of Black bodies and lives.

Certainly, progress has been made, but legacies live into the present with African American, Native American, Latin American, Asian American, and working class European American women getting the shit end of the shorter stick more often. Even with prominent African American figures such as Steve Harvey, Hutchinson was correct in identifying the core issue in the blanket statements by Harvey making the argument of the amorality of African Americans who become atheists and the treasonous relation to the 'race' when non-religious. In other words, if you leave religion while Black, you have become a traitor to the ethnicity and lack morals, especially condemnable and criminal to community for Black women who leave communal faith.

The text covers some of these contexts, but the book represents a larger intellectual environment for Hutchinson. Don't take this second-hand from a young Canadian humanist, the reviews on the book represent similar sentiments and thoughts, and praise, of the book. Bridgette Crutchfield of Black Nonbelievers of Detroit said, "Humanists in the Hood is an acute reminder of the struggle we as Black women have and still experience. It has documented in one place, our travels and travails." Crutchfield makes the concise and insightful point of the amnesiac nature of American memory of the crimes of old wreaking havoc on the lives of the present generations and planting seeds of potential disproportionate despair for the generations who come after us. Humanists can act in such a manner so as to provide a space to air grievances for compassionate understanding, strategize on solutions, organize relevant resources, and mobilize for the better chances of the next generations.

"Humanists in the Hood is a must read for everyone, but especially anyone who considers themselves progressive and supportive of marginalized people," Mandisa Thomas, Founder and President, Black Nonbelievers, Inc., stated, "With her in-depth analysis, Sikivu has issued yet another challenge -- to take a long, hard look historically, institutionally, and, most important, internally, into the often complex world of feminism and how humanist/secular values have and must continue to inform our fight for equality." Thomas is right. The book represents a fundamental challenge to the humanist community in America, at least, on its various constituencies and the differentiated needs of them, which seems like a good thing because a humanist message is a universalistic message. One in which fundamental principles yield an infinite while bounded variety of potential tools for covering the needs of humanist communities in South L.A., in America, and throughout the humanist diaspora.

"The time is now for Humanists in the Hood. With compassionate, razor-sharp clarity, Sikivu Hutchinson provides a courageously bold Black, feminist, and atheist road map to liberating ourselves, our communities, and U.S. society." Producer/Director of NO! The Rape Documentary, Aishash Shahidah Simmons, said, "She invites and challenges readers to step outside of comfort zones to consider different possibilities in response to the oppressive systems that silence and annihilate all of us on the margins. Hutchinson's words are a clarion call for radical, tangible actions for these perilous times."

The purpose of the book is to provide a challenge to the mainstream humanist community and to provide a "road map" for the construction of institutions devoted to the specified concerns mentioned earlier within the philosophical framework of Humanism. A "razor-sharp clarity" did not happen in a vacuum. Pressure makes diamonds. Why isn't Hutchinson more prominent and

well-known than now? Although, she has been gaining a loyal following and readership. As we know, diamonds take time to find, and tend to remain buried for a long time. Humanists in the Hood divides into five main sections in alignment with Simmons' aforementioned "atheist road map" with "Introduction: The Stone Cold Here and Now," "Unapologetically Black, Feminist, and Humanist," "Culturally Relevant Humanism and Economic Justice," "The Black Humanist Heathen Gaze," and "Gen Secular and People and Colour."

In the introduction or "Introduction: The Stone Cold Here and Now," she opens with a quote from Alice Walker, who said, "In my own work, I write not only what I want to read – understanding fully and indelibly that if I don't do it, no one else is so vitally interested, or capable of doing it to my satisfaction – I will write all the things I should have been able to read." Walker's statement acts as a coda or thematic ground zero for the entirety of the text because, as per the Eulia Love example, Hutchinson lacked the language, the concepts, and the crystallized imagery, not the experience, to describe the happenings of the world as a child or adolescent. Even though, she sensed something was wrong in early years.

Not only for more unheard voices with Black women victims of violence, Hutchinson covers the LGBTQI community in the context of the United States. As the United Nations founded its LGBTI Core Group, an extension of the similar stream of rights activism and thought comes in the initialism "LGBTQI" to make "Queer" as an identity more explicit. Hutchinson takes a difficult stance in America and in community. A life and worldview brewed in early "dreary religion classes run by sanctimonious white male teachers" full of "moral hypocrisies" and a sacred text full of "violent woman-hating language."

The books Hutchinson deserved to read did not exist, by and large, and the only text considered central to community came in the form of ancient mythological collections of sacred texts entitled The Bible. One gathers the sense of a lifelong individual struggle against structures and persons in American society searching for one's story to be told articulately, honestly, and forthrightly without filter. Out of this, a feeling of the tragic dignity of the work of Hutchinson can set over the reader.

Somebody articulating a clearly wider or more inclusive humanist vision dealing with the problems of the everyday against seemingly overwhelmingly odds with the vitriol from the Black church and the dismissal by the largely White movement atheism of American culture. Professor Anthony Pinn made an important point with the descriptive phrase "people of colour" assuming the otherness of black people, etc., compared to White people with the more appropriate change into "people of a despised colour," as both inclusive of every person as coloured in some manner and the relative struggles in the burden of greater negative stereotypes.

While, at the same time, the Black church can be a place of refuge and civil rights organizing in one generation. It can become a place of limitations, ostracization, and control and domination and illegitimate hierarchy. However, illegitimate hierarchies prop men to the heights of dizzying unquestioned authority in African American church communities with the expected negative effects on communities, especially with the burdens placed on women of colour in those church communities.

"For years, the rap on feminism among most Black folks was that it was a White woman's thing. White feminists, from first-wave nineteenth-century White suffragists, to second-wave stalwarts in the postwar 'feminine mystique' era, routinely ignored, erased, and misrepresented Black women's experiences and social history," Hutchinson wrote, "While white women at the height

of the so-called Baby Boom decried their ‘enslavement’ to patriarchy, domesticity, and motherhood in Ozzie and Harriet-style homes, Black women were mopping their floors, washing their laundry, and wiping the butts of their children.”

This is the language of history and the life of the everyday. This is the rooted Black Humanism articulated throughout the text by Hutchinson. Right into the present, the political consciousness of the nation becomes infused with the narrative of god-talk and religion with Senator Kamala Harris during the 2020 presidential race stipulating a “faith in god,” so as to secure proper status as a Black and god-fearing American politician. Without such an endorsement, Harris’ career would have been exploded by a cross-shaped torpedo in the United States political scene. Hutchinson notes Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were mentored by Ernestine Rose. Rose is one who said religions have been built on the backs of women. Hutchinson covers the splits or historical divides between White feminists and Black feminists in America. For example, the Fifteenth Amendment permitting Black men the equality in voting rights or the right to vote. Some White feminists saw this as a hindrance to women’s rights. As has been said before, rights aren’t a pie.

She contrasts the educated middle-class White feminism with the backbreaking working-class feminism of the lives of Black women. Hutchinson delves into or references the Combahee River Collective, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Michele Wallace, Brittney Cooper, Anna Julia Cooper, Fannie Barrier Williams, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Angela Davis, bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins), Patricia Hill Collins, Barbara Christian, and, of course, Alice Walker. She remarked on an interview conducted with Thandisizwe Chimurenga, where Chimurenga noted that class differences are a source of a lot of separation between feminisms. This continues right into the current political context of the Trump Administration and the Republicans.

The median wealth rates of White families, Latino families, and Black families in the United States are \$147,000, \$6,600, and \$3,600, respectively. The unemployment rate of Black college graduates under the age of 25 is 15.4% and for White college graduates is 7.9%. There can be a visceral fear around the academic term “White supremacy,” as this seems to imply Euro-Americans with tiki torches and white hoods walking menacingly in lockstep in the dark of night. In the history of America, this has been a physically violent and ideological extreme manifestation of it. Then there are generally applicable principles behind the use of the term in wealth and employment rates, as above. At an intersection with this comes the era of Covid-19 emergent from SARS-CoV-2, these manifestations become worse. In these conditions, one can see the socialist economic orientation of Hutchinson.

Hutchinson describes the Trumpian-Republican backlash against the rights of women while noting African Americans as the most religious population in the United States. Noting how, even though, Ariana Grande and Beyoncé may identify as feminists, most young women struggle with such a label. She provides an alternative to the common notions of feminism. “I argue that Black feminist humanism is a vibrant alternative to the woo-woo spiritualism, Jesus fetishism, and goddess worship that characterizes progressive feminist belief systems that revolve around theism,” Hutchinson writes, “...the stakes for a secularist, feminist, queer, pro-social Justice, and anti-capitalist ethos of American values are perhaps greater than ever before.”

In Chapter 1 or “Unapologetically Black, Feminist, and Humanist,” Hutchinson opens, “In 2010, a seven-year-old African American girl named Aiyana Jones was murdered in her sleep by the Detroit police during a military-style raid on her home. In the wake of the shooting, neighbours

and loved ones placed stuffed animals in front of the house in memoriam. Rows of stuffed animals stated out from Associated Press photographs of the executions scene in dark-eyed innocence, grieving the barbaric theft of her life and light.”

She reflects on the recency of the murder of Aiyana after her (Hutchinson’s) attendance at the African Americans for Humanism conference. A point of reflection on the separation between mostly European descent or White-dominated movement atheism without much of a voice or place for African descent or Black atheists. Hutchinson brings forth the towering work of Professor Anthony Pinn, the good Methodist who became a better atheist, to argue the indices behind science and reason as taught in the classroom can be (and are) shaped by cultural conditions and subjective categories with the European American or White American students having histories and cultural traditions affirmed throughout the classroom. She uses W.E.B. DuBois’ phrase “wages of whiteness” in this context.

Hutchinson references the execution of Michael Brown, the Youth Justice Coalition, Dignity and Power Now (of Patrisse Cullors Khan), and Black Lives Matter, and Tarana Burke’s #MeToo movement as part of various points of contact for social commentary on systemic inequities manifested in livelihood outcomes in American society. Views rooted in a history of slave-era racism and sexism where Black women are “‘unrapeable,’ hypersexual Jezebels” based on the “ideal of pure, virginal, chaste ‘Christian’ white womanhood.” She highlights the lack of people of colour in the leadership positions of leading secular organizations including the American Humanist Association, Center for Inquiry, Foundation Beyond Belief, and the Secular Student Alliance. She highlights the work of Candace Gorham and Karen Garst bringing forth a more pluralized image of people of colour in the secular movements.

There is reflection on the content of the Huffington Post piece entitled “Ten Fierce Atheists: Unapologetically Black Women Beyond Belief” and the legislation of Michigan Congresswoman Ayanna Presley to “end the punitive pushout of girls of color from schools and disrupt the school-to-confinement pathway.” Hutchinson describes how this builds on the work of Monique Morris, author of *Pushout*. She touches on the sexual violence as portrayed in *Surviving R. Kelly*, and the helpful text of Iris Jacobs in *My Sisters’ Voices* in the mentoring of young Black girls. Here, she pivots into her Women’s Leadership Project, and the Black Feminist and Feminist of Color conferences.

Hutchinson remarks on Audre Lorde’s observation of Black women’s self-care as something political because Black women rarely have such an opportunity based on the stressors and communal demands upon them. Michele Wallace and the ‘blasting’ of the 1965 “Moynihan Report” are part and parcel of critiques set forth here. As Hutchinson continually frames, Black women in America find deaf ears in the White-dominated secular communities and absolute rejection & condemnation, if non-religious, in the Black church community. Thus, Euro-centric individualist Humanism is important, but not does land well with the collective boot on Black women as a category. Principles of solidarity become more dominant rather than the abstracted sovereign individual, how ever important in environments in which other fundamental needs and challenges have been mostly overcome.

It hits the Supreme Court too. Hutchinson describes how the consequential case of Anita Hill gave significance to awareness of sexual violence against Black women in particular and women in general; whereas, at the same time, the exposure of abusers like Roger Ailes and Harvey Weinstein brought forth White women’s voices who deserved to be heard, but were heard

without a historical context of earlier prominent cases like Anita Hill. Even in the secular communities, "...American Atheists(AA), the largest nonbeliever advocacy organization in the nation. After former president David Silverman was terminated in April 2018 following sexual assault allegations, the organization had a signal opportunity to make a bold change in leadership by hiring Mandisa Thomas," Hutchinson states, "Thomas, who has a solid record of secular organizing, outreach, and management across intersectional communities, would have been the AA's first woman of color executive and the only Black woman to head a mainstream secular organization. Instead, AA opted for a white male insider..."

Hutchinson highlights some of the work by Amy Davis Roth of SkepChick in 2014 to highlight atheist women who have been stalked and harassed, which effectuated some change. However, the "thrall" with global figures – Richard Dawkins, Lawrence Krauss, Sam Harris, and Michael Shermer – of the mainstream secular communities will need reduction for more space and voice for secular Black women and women of colour.

In Chapter 2 or "Culturally Relevant Humanism and Economic Justice," Hutchinson states, "In my community, churches of every size, architectural style, and denomination sit totemically between daycare centers, liquor stores, dry cleaners, dollar stores, and beauty shops." 'Totem,' what is a totem? Sacred, symbolic objects representative of clan, family, or ancestry. This is important. Not only spatial-geographic waste and economic drags on communities needing it, many African Americans in particular and Black Americans in general feel a connection to Christianity as a whole and its manifestation in the Black Church.

She comments on the work of Paula Giddings and the exploitation of Black women slaves as "breeders," etc., as Black women in the slave era of America were chattel for the use and abuse by slave owners. She touches on the controversy surrounding Linda Sarsour and her (Sarsour's) support for Minister Louis Farrakhan, known for anti-Semitic and misogynist views.

Hutchinson roots such injustice in the economic context for Black Americans, as noted earlier about these median wealth disparities and unemployment inequities. The tax-free status of places of worship is a unified concern for Black and White secularists in America. One of the more unique concerns of Black atheists is the reflection of the Jim Crow era and the Great Migration in their connection with the Black church. More generally, she remarks on the inordinate wealth handed to the individual pastors in Africa, Nigeria particularly, and in America with the two most prominent cases in David Oyedepo, in Nigeria, and T.D. Jakes, in America.

How these ultra-wealthy Black male pastors suck the economic lifeblood out of community is a travesty, the ways in which Black women's labour makes these religious communities possible in the first place too. This is where ideas of social and economic redistribution become inherent in the form of humanist discourse espoused by Hutchinson. She reflects on "How the Humanist Movement Fosters Economic Injustice" by David Hoelscher with reference to Helen Keller and Albert Einstein and some of the fundamental socialistic structures endorsed by them. Even, as Hutchinson states, the first major humanist document published in 1933 was devoted explicitly to racial equality and economic justice.

Indeed, the fourteenth affirmation in the 1933 Humanist Manifesto I stated, "The humanists are firmly convinced that existing acquisitive and profit-motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooperative economic order must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. The goal of humanism is a free and universal society

in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.” [Emphasis added.]

Leading humanists Paul Kurtz and Edwin Wilson in the Humanist Manifesto II emphasized addressing economic injustices as core to Humanism and, thus, to humanist discourse. Modern Humanism, Hutchinson correctly observes, fails to deal with these realities affecting more of its non-mainstream communities, where there could be concretized humanist activism at the most fundamental level drawing back to the roots of the philosophical worldview and life stance with addressing economic injustice and social inequities.

As another great boss at The Good Men Project, Councilwoman Emily LaDouceur, has stated, “Never underestimate the power of community leaders speaking out against discrimination, injustice, and harassment... We need city council members who will unapologetically stand up against any policy, procedure, or practice, that may perpetuate bias or discrimination.”

The core of the movements has merely shifted the ratios of its currency into the big basket of combatting “religious attacks on secular freedom.” That’s it. The diversified vision of 1933 has been truncated. One where individuals “who question humanist, atheist, or skeptical orthodoxies are trashed, branded snowflakes, social justice warriors, feminazis, or religious apologists.”

She remarked on the clash between Bakari Chavanu, of Black Humanists and Nonbelievers of Sacramento, and a libertarian, exemplifying a differential vision of “Humanism” as a concept based on the August 2018 piece entitled “Why Five Fierce Humanists.” Concomitant with this, Hutchinson reflects on the “majority of forerunning early-twentieth-century Black freethinkers (with the notable exception of figures like Zora Neale Hurston and Black conservative intellectual George Schuyler) were socialist and communist aligned, and actively condemned the way capitalism and White supremacy harm Black communities.”

She notes the holes in the presentation of Roy Speckhardt, the executive director of the American Humanist Association, about Thomas Jefferson in the book *Creating Change Through Humanism*. He was a secularist and freethinker. Also, he believed in the inherent inferiority of Blacks and committed an ethical atrocity in the form of a slaveholding empire. Similarly, one can think of the skeptic views of H.L. Mencken while reflecting on the racist views about Blacks and imaginary crimes seen in ‘miscegenation.’ Hutchinson quotes Paul Finkelman in “The Monster of Monticello” to describe the atrocious behaviour of Jefferson. Historian Christopher Deaton reflects much the same withering critique.

Many of these economic realities come in the form of billionaire listings with a White face, Black male ultra-rich pastors bilking Black communities and taking up needed community space, and the policy and legal decisions giving economic privileges to corporations and religious institutions, e.g., the Johnson Amendment and Citizens United, which may be bolstered by appointments of people like Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, or Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas. American slavery sapped the economic productivity of Black slaves in America for White Americans’ benefit; thus, in the reference to Thomas Paine and Ernestine Rose by Hutchinson, the “Original Sin” of America was an economic one.

“And even though White abolitionists and deist freethinkers like Thomas Paine and feminist suffragist Ernestine Rose decried the “original sin” of American slavery,” Hutchinson wrote, “the eighteenth-century narrative of colonial bondage to the British continues to reverberate in

the toxic myth of American exceptionalism. In many regards, the myth that the United States is fundamentally better and more just or exceptional than any other country in the world is the lie that allows structural inequity to persist.”

Hutchinson speaks more to the 2014 article by James Croft “Beyond Secularism” and Croft’s important focus on a wider vision of the possibilities of Humanism. Something important Hutchinson pivots into this point is Pinn’s emphasis on the everyday little facets and facts of reality, the rooted Humanism of Hutchinson, for the proper knitting together of the grand figures and narratives of mainstream Humanism with the highly neglected communities of colour who deserve a voice at the table and a choice in programs from the wider humanist community. This can be done. Why not?

Hutchinson describes the way in which the material view of the universe does not limit her perspective on the operations of consciousness. She does not believe in the spirit or soul. Hutchinson affirms the conscious and unconscious connected to thoughts and feelings from a material brain. She looks at the indefinite nature of the findings of the scientific method’s actual discovery of the natural world. The fundamental issue is one affirming the freedom of individual choice.

She also spoke about how Stacey Abrams in the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial statement said “faith, service, education, responsibility” set forth the values for Abrams. This was similar to the Kamala Harris statement before. In that, if you state a non-religious and non-faith-based view of the world, and if you state that you do not adhere to a deity, then you have committed political suicide. In a manner of speaking, African Americans as highly religious constituents only feel comfortable and encouraged by religious male hierarchs to vote for politicians who are firm in faith in order to be seen as properly Black, or to have any semblance of a moral compass or an ethical system guiding one’s life, which harkens back to the Steve Harvey commentary earlier.

“Before Humanism can be concretely relevant to the everyday lives of Black women and women of color steeped in faith and religious practice there must be space for them to exist in discomfort of the unknown.” In many ways, Hutchinson’s every day realities rooted Humanism aligns deeply with the depictions described by Hutchinson in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.

Hutchinson talked about the rape of Desiree Washington by Mike Tyson. Washington was Miss Black America in 1991. Farrakhan condemned Washington, essentially, as a Jezebel. An experience common in many communities with rape survivors tossed to the lions by community leaders, including religious leaders, as was the case with Farrakhan. Occasionally, there’s justice, as with sexual assaulters Daniel Holtzclaw, Bill Cosby, and R. Kelly. All this is simply marginal justice for raped Black American women, not even taking into account LGBTQI members of communities. Voices rarely heard. Victims barely sought.

Even institutionally, Hutchinson puts the Southern Baptist Convention on blast over its illustrative compiled crimes. Yet, with the spotty coverage of rapes and sexual violence, the violence of bullying and harassment can acquire coverage, especially around teen suicides, if a White face. This can be impacted by portrayals and commentary intended as jokes by some of the most prominent comedians of the day, e.g., Kevin Hart. Hutchinson reflects in some cultural positives in the cases of Barry Jenkins’ *Moonlight*, or in the deconstructionist *Other People’s Children* by Lisa Delpit, or the essay “What’s Home Got to do With It? Unsheltered Queer Youth” by Reed Christian and Anjali Mukarji-Connolly.

Hutchinson reported on Center for American Progress' work by Aisha Moodle-Mills and Jerome Hunt about the great risks to life and livelihood of LGBTQI youth, whether teen pregnancy, school dropout, homelessness, drug abuse, stress, and more. A rooted Humanism, or a more radical Humanism compared to the present (not as much to the 1933 vision), has a moral stake in this wider fight for equality and justice.

In Chapter 3 or "The Black Humanist Heathen Gaze," Hutchinson describes not seeing herself in the media of Judy Blume and others presented to her. As per the Cooperative Children's Book Center, 3,700 books published in 2017 featured mostly White protagonists. Even Charlie and the Chocolate Factory's Charlie Bucket was intended as a Black protagonist, but became White in the final production. It's the same for non-religious film and television. There has been a decline in Christian movie audiences. However, it's still garnering a significant pull and has an audience.

She notes the only real secular studies professor in academia as Professor Phil Zuckerman with only two major exceptions who focus on Black secular Humanism in particular, who build an academic series of works devoted to critical consciousness: Dr. Christopher Cameron at the University of North Carolina and Dr. Anthony Pinn at Rice University. Hutchinson is the only one to have developed a course about humanist women of colour in the world through the Humanist Institute entitled "Women of Color Beyond Faith." Her interest in Black humanist cultural production is seminal as well. Maureen Mahoney and Jeffrey Othello are "among the few in the White-dominated field of rock and roll musicology and music history." Critical works by White writers have been Jack Hamilton and Gayle Wald. While, at the same time, August Wilson notes the operations of Black Americans exists within a preconfigured cultural structure by White Americans. It all feeds into cultural tropes of "Tyler Perry-esque evangelicalism" condemned by a smug atheist, etc.

When Hutchinson reviewed lists of secular films challenging religion, it was mostly White secular driven film and television making direct attacks. Black Americans in religious enclaves have to trade in a different and hidden-from-popular-culture currency. There is some questioning of faith in Black media productions, as in August Wilson, James Baldwin, and Lorraine Hansberry with further "radical aesthetic and ideological possibility" seen in the works of Richard Wright and Nella Larsen. Hutchinson's own White Nights, Black Paradise "features perhaps the first narrative film portrayal of a Black atheist lesbian protagonist." There is a yearning for a magical return to some long-gone past state apart from the hellish nature of many Black American lives now relative to many White and other Americans, which may come in the form of "a sentiment reflected in both the Great Migration and the Back to Africa movements." A commentary of the state of idolatry found in Black Americans becoming involved in Jonestown in hypocritical worship of the Marxist atheist, Jim Jones, as a Christian god.

As per usual in many contexts, and in the environs of Jonestown, Black women were the pseudo-chattel of subservience and obeisance to Jones as "ever-faithful, self-sacrificing" servants, as if without autonomy of conscience and self-determination of body, i.e., as subhuman. Black women suffering from Stockholm Syndrome in identification with Jones. To quote late humanist Kurt Vonnegut, "So it goes."

In Chapter 4 or "Gen Secular and People and Colour," Hutchinson remarks on the treatment of children with atheist and humanist parents. They (Hutchinson's nonbinary 11-year-old daughter), earlier in life, had to hear in second grade, "You're going to hell and to the devil, because you don't go to church." This is the context for a not-insignificant number of nonbelievers in the

United States. We can see this in White professional class women of tenure in self-identified Liberal Theology and progressive churches in Canada under the banner of the United Church of Canada with Rev. Gretta Vosper who was raked through the coals in national media for several years.

In South L.A. where Sikivu and they live, in 1965, there was the Watts Rebellion resulting in White “flight” from the neighbourhoods. Now, with changes in economic disparities in the ultra-wealthy and the stagnation and decline for much of the rest of the United States, Hutchinson notes the ironic return of White Americans and the subsequent gentrification following from this. “God’s plan” is an empty cliché taken as an aphorism of wisdom and assumed as a framework for comprehension of the world and relative misery around African American religious communities. She speaks to the historian Ibram Kendi’s call to recognize 1 in 4 Black American households have zero wealth compared to 1 in 10 White Americans, which builds on the work of Ta Nehisi-Coates.

These thoughts and movements aren’t new. Hutchinson brings back the historical memory of the pioneering and first Black freethinker who defied both White slavers and the “Black faith police,” where she quotes, particularly in response to censure by Black Methodist ministers, Frederick Douglass, “I bow to no priests, either of faith or unfaith, I claim as against all sorts of people, simply perfect freedom of thought.” Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth would have experienced far more backlash if they spoke so directly and forthrightly against established dogma’s guardians. They may make it pinch and sting with a Black man; however, they will make it cut in the case of a Black woman.

Clashes exist in the current incarnations of the American freethought movements, as we see in the history with Ernestine Rose, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. Nonetheless, we live in a globalizing world and the ex-Muslim movement is a unique one. It is working to detach religious identity from ethnic heritage. As well, it is bringing forth the concerns of the men and the women who have left Islam and endured severe censure, ostracism, abuse, and even death threats. Sadia Hameed, a spokesperson for the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain, and Zara Kay, the founder of Faithless Hijabi, writer Hibah Ch, and Taslima Nasreen, Bangladeshi activist, author, and physician, are all referenced as important examples in this work.

Heina Dadabhoy is given space to make the point about coming out as an atheist for her. In that, when she renounced Islam, her parents described the action as Dadabhoy wanting to be like White people. Freethought in some contexts is seen as a White cultural phenomenon, i.e., the god concept becomes self-imposed mental prison as a form of community identity and inverse ethnic identification (as in not being White, thus making the false linkage, in another manner, between ethnicity and religion). There is a change in the landscape, though.

Millennials, and younger generations, continue to lose religion as a core identity, even in connection with perceptions of some amorphous, invisible unity between belief in the god concept and actuality of morality. Moral movements, including Black Lives Matter of Patrisse Cullors Khan, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza, are manifestations of this in some ways. Three Black queer women who founded a movement different than the historical civil rights movement of Martin Luther King, Jr. and others steeped in “heterosexist, homophobic, patriarchal Black-church traditions [that] stifled any semblance of affirmation of queer voices (much less nonbelieving ones).” A. Philip Randolph, Hutchinson notes, was “frequently gay-baited and forced to suppress his identity in the movement.”

A Humanism embracing more gender fluid notions while rejecting gods and the supernatural can match more of the universalistic sensibilities espoused since the 1933 Humanist Manifesto I and remove false dichotomies between feeling and thinking with the feelings as feminine, etc., as Hutchinson notes in quoting Soraya Chemaly from *Rage Becomes Her*. One theoretical work or hypothesis Hutchinson describes is Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) from *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (PTSS) (2005) by Joy DeGruy, which is a hypothesis about intergenerational stressors passed from one cohort to the next as a result of slavery and its aftereffects. This then leads into the concluding statements of the text.

Hutchinson remarks on the Black Skeptics Los Angeles First in the Family Humanist youth recipients as profiled in the Humanist magazine and the Huffington Post. One touching story is Mike Grimes who established firm humanist roots after the death of a father to a car crash. Grimes did not rely on the gods or the supernatural. In trying to get a settlement from the trucking company with “so-called Christian family values on its website,” the experience was hellish. This is America, for humanists – so stand tall. Hutchinson concludes with a quote from Audre Lorde on self-determination of Black women and women of colour in the humanist movements. Hutchinson adds, “Lorde’s words are a testament to the enduring power of self-representation as art, agency, and self-determination. They resonate deeply as we move further into a century where secular Black feminist and feminist of color resistance will be definitive in shaping humanist politics and consciousness.” She’s right.

If humanist institutions do not cover the wider range of the concerns of its broad base of communities or constituencies, then the humanist movement will, in part, become obsolete to the needs of its communities and constituencies, i.e., human beings enacting humanist values and searching for humanist organizations and media speaking to their human concerns. As Hutchinson observes, “If humanism is reframed as working through struggle; being silent in one’s body; being alone in one’s body; being partnered; being skeptical; being engaged in art, literature, music, and the full scope of Black creativity in the sublime and the every day – then it would have more relevance to traditions of Black women’s resistance.”

In this sense, to become “obsolete” means to lose sight of the human needs of Black humanists’ Humanism, in a manner of speaking, it becomes revolutionary to the historical trends in American society with the view of people of colour, African Americans, or Black citizens of the United States as sub-human (and Black women as not really women), because the personhood, dignity, and autonomy of each individual human being gets affirmed in Humanism. That’s the fundamental revolutionary act at this time, *causa mentale*: a revolution in how we see ourselves and how we see one another, as members of the same species with the same inherent dignity and value. That’s the “acute reminder” or, rather, “challenge” with “razor-sharp clarity” one finds in *Humanists in the Hood: Unapologetically Black, Feminist, and Heretical*. To this “must read” book, I will conclude on a favourite Black feminist poet of Hutchinson, Lucille Clifton, who is an icon to Hutchinson. Clifton wrote “won’t you celebrate with me” from *Book of Light* (1993):

*won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon*

*both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.*

Women Writing History: A Coronavirus Journaling Project

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 1, 2020

The National Women's Museum is launching a Women Writing History: A Coronavirus Journaling Project. Reported from Alexandria, Vermont, the Women Writing History: A Coronavirus Journaling Project is a project to ensure women's voices are not left out of the Covid-19 melodrama seen all around the world.

It is a project featuring women from all over the world. There are women and girls from all over who can participate in this initiative. The main goal would be the recording of daily thoughts and experiences of women during the coronavirus pandemic. Here we come to women's lives as assumed excluded from the historical record, it depends on the era, but this has happened in the past if we take into account the farther back in history moments in time.

Holly Hotchner, the President and CEO of the National Women's History Museum, stated, "Despite being more than 50% of the population, women have largely been left out of the history books. When they're included at all, their stories are often episodic components woven into a larger narrative centered on the experience and accomplishments of men... Sociologists and economists warn us that the COVID-19 pandemic is and will disproportionately affect women's lives more so than men, and we want to ensure that women's stories are recorded and shared, so that future history books are informed by women's experiences during this global health crisis. This project really speaks to who we are as an institution. There's an urgency to record women's history as it unfolds."

Women Writing History: A Coronavirus Journaling Project is a project not confined to particular demographics or people. It is intended for and will include women from all backgrounds, cultures, ages, and social and economic circumstances as a living history for including in keeping a journal. The increments for the journaling have been listed as 30, 60, 90, and 120-day increments, while "any longer or shorter increments" being fine as well. In this, we can see the importance of the journalistic efforts of women and the importance of maintaining historical records from a once in a century event.

"Journals can be written, orally recorded, video recorded, a series of photographs, or original artworks—the primary goal of this project is to capture the female voice and how the pandemic has impacted daily lives and perspectives." The National Women's Museum said, "Journal entries might provide a summary of one's day, descriptions of the 'new normal,' coping techniques, explorations of challenges or even moments of joy, or inside views of how learning and working routines have altered."

The particularly important and seminal aspects of this history for the future generations will be the essential and healthcare workers who have been encouraged to contribute their journal entries for future generations. These journals are intended to be used as part of a living archive of the Covid-19 lives of women for presentation "online and physical exhibits, articles, publications, and scholarly research."

Those interested in participating in Women Writing History: A Coronavirus Journaling Project should begin by [filling out the participation form by clicking here](#). There is an FAQ [here](#).

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The National Women's History Museum was founded in 1996 as the only women's history museum in the United States devoted to the diverse contributions of women to the history of America ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)).

Conversation with Christian Sorenson on Advice For and About the Gifted

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 2, 2020

Christian is a Philosopher that comes from Belgium. What identifies him the most and above all is simplicity, for everything is better with “vanilla flavour.” Perhaps, for this reason, his intellectual passion is criticism and irony, in the sense of trying to reveal what “hides behind the mask,” and give birth to the true. For him, ignorance and knowledge never “cross paths.” What he likes the most in his leisure time, is to go for a walk with his wife.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is a proper definition of gifted?

Christian Sorenson: I feel that “gifted,” is “someone with different and superior cognitive capacities,” that leads him to “see and interpret” the “surrounding world,”

including itself, and the “problems” that these offer, from a “unique perspective,” and therefore formulates “creative” and “simple irreducible responses,” in front of “complexities of any nature.”

Jacobsen: What are the levels of gifted?

Sorenson: In my opinion the “levels” are respectively of moderate, high, very high, exceptional, profound, and incommensurably gifted.

Jacobsen: What should one expect in each level of giftedness?

Sorenson: I believe, there is a “turning point” with “profound giftedness,” since up to that level only exists the ability to solve “increasingly complex problems.” Therefore, from this last, besides that it is also possible to solve them in their “maximum depth,” and in a “more integrative-related way,” it is factible to arrive to “levels of consciousness” that are beyond “three dimensions.”

Jacobsen: What are the types of issues of the various levels of gifted?

Sorenson: In general, up to the level of the “exceptionally gifted,” they are “highly successful” academically and occupationally speaking, and for that reason, they are also “socially valued.”

The problem begins with the “profound,” since they are socially “very discriminated and rejected,” for being seen usually as “strange individuals.” They tend to have “low academic performance,” normally are “undervalued” in their abilities, almost “never integrate” normally into the world of work, and used to be also “unsuccessful” in their personal lives.

Jacobsen: What are the most accurate, reliable measurements of intelligence now?

Sorenson: I think that those “measurements” that are carried out by “professionals,” psychologists and psychiatrists through “mainstream test” such as Wechsler and Stanford-Binet scales, which in other arrive to valid, reliable and “realistic IQ scores.” The rest are “games,” without any “professional psychometric basis,” that yield “fanciful and inflated results,” which apart from creating “false expectations and parallel realities,” are far above “mainstream tests,” and “rather closer to god.”

Jacobsen: How can parents provide for the advanced intellectual needs of the gifted?

Sorenson: I feel that first of all “not being scared,” and giving a family environment of “much affection and understanding” to them. And secondly, worrying about “integrating them” into an means of children with “similar capacities,” since in that way they will able to develop at their own rhythm their “full cognitive potential” and thus mature emotionally in “freedom and harmony.”

Jacobsen: What happens when needs of the gifted aren't met?

Sorenson: “Failure” occurs, a feeling of “frustration arises,” and “low self-esteem” is reached.

Jacobsen: What are stellar programs and organizations that parents can look towards?

Sorenson: I think it is a good idea to look for “special schools” for gifted children, “conservatories” of music and art, and psychological therapy of “family systemic orientation.”

Jacobsen: Mensa International, Intertel, Triple Nine Society, Prometheus Society, and Mega Society are listed as the most reliable high-IQ societies. What other communities can exist for the gifted and talented?

Sorenson: Schools that promote fine arts, literature, and science, and organizations with specific sports disciplines.

Jacobsen: Any recommended books on the subject from beginner to advanced?

Sorenson: From my point of view, rather they would be two movies “Good Will Hunting” with Matt Damon and “Rebel Without a Cause” with James Dean, and the book “The Name of the Rose” of Umberto Eco.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Christian.

Sorenson: You are very welcome.

Interview with Adeline Sede Kamga - CEO, FabAfric Media Group

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 3, 2020

Adeline Sede Kamga is the Founder/CEO of FabAfric Media Group, a Creative and Innovative Marketing and communication agency with offices in the UK and Cameroon operating both in Europe and Africa. A change leader and inspirational speaker with over fifteen years of experience. She has expertise working across different areas in the corporate, business and community world. She is committed to delivering quality projects in Corporate PR and Communications, Change management, Executive Coaching. She has a BA in Corporate Communications, MA in Human Resource Management at Coventry University UK and professional qualifications such as CIPD, PRINCE2 & Dip in Business Administration.

Adeline is an expert in Corporate communications and PR, including digital communication and eventing. As a trained executive coach, she has worked with blue chip companies from varied sectors, helping them gain visibility across Africa and the rest of the world. Her previous experience in HR, gave her hands-on experience working in different HR projects with one of the largest employers in Europe (Birmingham City Council) & subsequently as a consultant. Amongst some of her expertise are change management, People Management, T & D and Strategic HR. She has led on many strategic and restructuring projects, leading to successful change management system & implementations.

Adeline is also a founding member of FEPPSAC (Women editors of Central Africa), a UN Central Africa Office initiative to work with women in the print magazine industry. This group seeks to help drive the United Nations mandate of women, peace and security in Central Africa. She is dynamic, innovative, and tenacious. Gifted with a sharp mind and innate ability to connect with others and an insatiable thirst for excellence.

In 2016, Adeline launched a Pan Excellence In People Management initiative for change called The Corporate Awards & The Corporate Women in Leadership program. Adeline invests in inspiring and empowering young leaders through speaking engagements and mentoring programs.

She is married to a very supportive husband and has 3 kids. adeline.sede@fabafriq.com

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What have been some of the things that you've done to raise awareness about coronavirus?

Adeline Sede Kamga: The coronavirus pandemic has taken a huge toll on the whole world and I must say this has caused lots of mishaps, losses, panic, fear, anxiety, depression and you can name it. One of the things I do on a daily base is communication, so I used this skill to raise awareness via social media. Due to the sensitive nature of COVID-19, I had to be very accurate in providing such information, so I sourced from reliable institutions such as WHO, CDC, Medical News Today, and others.

As the Founder of Corporate Women in Leadership (CWILS), an initiative that seeks to increase the presence of women in the boardroom through inspirational career development projects. I started an online series for personal development amidst the lockdown. Our speakers are

corporate experts in different fields from different countries. Through these sessions, we have touched more than 50,000 viewers and 12,000 participants.

My team and I launched “How I Stay Safe Campaign,” geared towards implementing the different measures to help curb the spread of COVID-19. Participants shared videos and key messages, which were shared on our social media platforms.

Through Fabafriq Media Group, we ran numerous campaigns for our clients and managed Corporate Social Responsibility projects. This of course involved using influencers and local communities to drive key messages.

FabAfriq Magazine, also launched a sensitization campaign whereby celebrities and high profile personalities in our communities sent images and messages of encouragement to our editorial team. These are used to design very attractive digital banners and are shared amongst their platforms.

Jacobsen: What are some organizations individuals can garner some assistance from now?

Kamga: It is no news that COVID-19 has affected most people, either psychologically or physically. As individuals, nonprofits and businesses grapple with the economic impact, many funders are stepping up to provide support through microgrants, hardship relief, and loan programs. It is truly amazing to see that many such organizations have adapted their giving policies to include people affected by COVID-19. We cannot give an exhaustive list but the following could be explored by people looking for funds. GlobalGiving, International Women’s Media Foundation, United Way, Candid, Prudential Beneficial Insurance, Ecobank Africa, and many others.

Jacobsen: How can ordinary citizens work together to deal with the coronavirus?

Kamga: Scott, it is remarkably interesting that you asked. Through FabAfriq Media Group, we have taken on initiatives that call on everyone’s participation towards dealing with Coronavirus. We have been lucky to have our national celebrities join us in a national sensitization campaign through our social media platforms. We need to continue encouraging people to observe preventive measures like social distancing, wearing masks, etc. Without the right information, this virus is only going to keep spreading. Together, we have to educate as many people as possible about staying safe. I also encourage individuals, companies & leaders to facilitate the less privileged by donating what they can to help ensure safety. Coronavirus is our fight, and together we all can beat it!

Jacobsen: What have been some of the more important areas of empowering women across Africa through the work of FabAfriq Media Group?

Kamga: We started the group as an initiative to help share the stories of African Women in Africa and the diaspora. We launched our online platform in 2009, where we have interviewed and published inspirational, educative and innovative stories. Our print magazine, launched one year after the website has also featured some of the most amazing women making a difference in the African community. We believe through our storytelling, we have empowered and impacted more lives around the world.

Six years ago, FabAfriq Media Group started a Pan African movement called The Corporate Women In Leadership. Over the last 6 years, we have hosted Conferences and summits in different African countries, Gabon, Senegal & Cameroon, and Cote d’Ivoire. Through this

summit, we create a stage for women in the boardroom to share their experiences and provide mentorship to aspiring leaders. Moving forward, I see a bigger network of women empowering girls, women empowering women & women empowering the next generation

At a much lower level, we work with underprivileged women in the communities. FabAfriq Media Group has partnered with some NGOs dealing in domestic violence, incest, women with Albinism conditions, videos, and teenage mothers. We support these set of women to adapt and achieve their full potential in life.

Jacobsen: What are the more vulnerable populations of women, i.e., the sectors of the population and specific nations underperforming on the empowerment of women?

Kamga: This may get me in trouble, but I'm just going to say it [Laughing]. In my honest opinion, I think the Muslim community is still very shy about gender equality & female empowerment. We have Muslim communities in every part of the world, but the heavily concentrated communities are in North Africa, Middle East & Asia, and in some of these parts women still can't dress freely, speak freely, study freely, talk less of practice in careers of their choice. There has been a change, but it takes time, of course. In terms of sectors, I would say the architectural market continues to see few practicing women, aviation & why not women at the highest position of power in a country, i.e., Presidency.

Jacobsen: What will be the programs and initiatives rolled out in the second half of 2020?

Kamga: Scott like every other company in the world right now, we are just re-strategizing while fighting COVID-19 together. However, the plan is to continue hosting our on-site conference and mentorship programs. We had planned to host our annual Corporate Awards in London. This is an HR initiative we launched to celebrate excellence in people management and to help create a benchmark for companies. This year, FabAfriq Media group celebrates its 10th Anniversary, so we are currently working on the anniversary issue and plan. We are, however, skeptical, as mentioned above.

Jacobsen: FabAfriq Magazine relaunched on June 8th, 2020. What happened to the magazine before?

Kamga: To be honest, with the rise of digitalization, many magazines saw a decline in sales across the world. The last decade has seen the world evolve more into a global village forcing print to fade away while tablets, phones & the internet blossomed. This made most of the print magazines, including FabAfriq management team, put a stop to its print version and focus on the digital version.

Now, it feels like the perfect time to come back with FabAfriq Magazine print because there is a high demand for quality lifestyle information. We have also grown a huge client/readership network and truth be told; there's nothing like that glossy feeling when you turn a page after an amazing read.

Jacobsen: Why relaunch in June of 2020?

Kamga: Well, the idea was to release this edition on the 29th of May, coinciding with my birthday...but unfortunately, COVID-19 did not make that happen, pushing it one week apart. The reason I set this date was because I wanted to combine and celebrate the things that matter in life for me - offering a platform to share real and inspiring stories. FabAfriq Magazine print was launched at my prime, and seeing this vision growing bigger each day, simply means there is a

need for this to stay. The entire team at FabAfriq Media Group joined the business because they believed in the dream, part of this dream is the print magazine and this is exactly one of the reasons they are with the business. We cannot sell a lie; we have to make sure whatever we sell is what we give. I am glad everyone is excited about this relaunch. I truly think this will create a great sensation in the office

Jacobsen: What is its vision and set of targeted objectives for the rest of 2020 and 2021?

Kamga: Our vision is to provide results-oriented media and communication services to clients. Being a growth-oriented company, we are looking at growing our client base, extending our service offerings and providing more employment opportunities.

In 2020 & 2021, We would focus on sharing more corporate stories through videos and images. We believe our expertise in sharing corporate stories has a valid objective. We hope to attract more businesses looking at using this service.

One of our objectives at the beginning of the year was to celebrate our 10th anniversary. This plan is not really set because of the outbreak of COVID-19. This activity has to happen. So if we do not achieve it this year, we will do it next year.

As mentioned above, we have a flagship program called The Corporate Award. The corporate awards, research and recognize companies who invest in their staff. Our intention in 2021 was to invite past participants for a 3-day program in the UK. The objective of this is to exchange knowledge with UK based corporations and gain other skills where needed.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Adeline.

Kamga: The pleasure was all mine, Scott, thank you for talking with me. Please do not forget to check out our work via our website www.fabafriq.com.

Interview with Ryan Faulkner-Hogg of Atlas Geographica

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 5, 2020

Ryan Faulkner-Hogg is the Founder of Atlas Geographica and a member of the team at Topical Magazine. Here we talk about the Atlas Geographica in the context of the other projects and work for Douglas.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Let's start on the first major project, which is Atlas Geographica, the tag is "A Curiosity Blog." What was the inspiration for the title Atlas Geographica and the tag with the title?

Ryan Faulkner-Hogg: The name Atlas Geographica is quite uninspiring, unfortunately. I wanted to call it WhatAboutWhen.Com, but the URL was taken. I was sitting in a room. It was Norway in a place called Hoddevik. It was along the countryside along the West Fjords. There was an atlas. It was written in Norwegian called Geographica. I put in Atlas Geographica in the URL finder. It worked. I always loved atlases. Also, Atlas Geographica gives a little whiff of international scope. That's the foundation of the title. I am happy that this became the title because I consider this better than What About When. I am realizing more, and more, as I write more online blogs. The URL isn't so important. It is the branding of the name. People can associate Atlas Geographica with the statue of Atlas, which is the logo of the site and the random curiosity-driven content.

The reason for starting it. Initially, I had the idea to commercialize online writing for affiliate income, affiliate-marketed income, for tour agents. I work for a software company, which empowers tour agents all across the world. I thought, "The way affiliate marketing is so synonymous with pushing Amazon's books or various articles through online marketing. Nothing like this operates for tour operators." I was in Finland sitting in a meeting with the CEO of a company, who do everything from a 50 Euro day-trip to a 5,000 Euro package. They don't market nearly as effectively - no one in tourism does - as simple goods. So, I thought while sitting in this meeting, "Why doesn't somebody write an article about this amazing trip through this company, put affiliate links throughout, then it is free marketing for the company and an income for everyone based on the links on the other end?"

I had this lofty goal to do that. It could still totally be a profitable business idea if someone wants to take it on. However, I quickly realized. For this to be functional, I required the company to code in an affiliate link specific to me. Just using them as one example, they were not interested in doing. This would have to be replicated across the board. All of the affiliate links would need to come from TripAdvisor. I have a sour relation with them. They are a pretty bad company. We realized this from where I am working now. You would be doing this marketing for TripAdvisor rather than the end-user, which would be the other company. This is a roundabout way of introducing it. After I took out the URL and started to write for it, I, originally, wrote three food tour blogs, which are no longer on the site. They were for Amsterdam, San Sebastian, and Rome. They give different images of food tours in these countries. I thought, "This doesn't excite me at all. It may make a few dollars of income."

I thought, “I have this URL. I have written content, which I have done in the past. Because I have always enjoyed writing.” I have always found if I enjoy something. The best way to have this in my head and articulate this is to formulate and write it down. I have drafts and written pieces, so I could start uploading them.

Jacobsen: Is the end goal to have a multimedia platform?

Faulkner-Hogg: Yes, it is. Again, it is an end goal, but purely out of interest. I’ve completely steered away from trying to make these media issues a monetizable thing, moved out of financial interest. It is out of interest. A media platform where I have a blog, an email list, and a YouTube channel. It is a way to put all creativity out there and to further legitimize myself if I look back on someday. I can show my parents or if I go into a job interview, “Look, here is my stuff, here is who I am.” Rather than storing it on a hard drive, storing it on the internet, I have romanticized knowing there is the chance of someone to stumble across this article and have it mean something for them. I am sure. You’re familiar with Tim Ferriss. He is an inspiring role model when I think about where I want to take media arms for me. Also, it is a very lofty goal. You will see the latest video put out was on the Tim Ferriss empire. All media arms are multimillion-dollar enterprises. I’m not bothered whether it makes \$10 or \$0. It is a place where all of my creativity can exist online.

Jacobsen: What do you think makes Tim Ferriss’ different arms of his octopus so functional and profitable? All of the branches built by him.

Faulkner-Hogg: I think the Tim Ferriss phenomenon is genius marketing by him. Before he does anything, he leverages his extensive network to create hype. He has SEO optimized all of the different legs. Also, it is the flywheel. All additional legs complement the others. Since he started the podcast with extremely famous and successful guests, who are people he met in a previous life as a venture capitalist and an author, he had a really good starting block. Also, he was one of the first movers in the podcast game. He quickly created one of the biggest business podcasts in the world, which boosted the blog and the email list. This reinforced authorship when he continues to publish books. His success is really outlier stuff because he has one of the highest-selling books of all time, one of the most listened to podcasts of in the world, one of the biggest email lists in the world, and one of the most read blogs in the world. He is winning on all fronts and an exceptional person.

There is not one thing to point out for success in all his media arms. But I can give an example. During the week, he released a “Tools of Titans” podcast. It is him piggybacking on one of the books that he has already written. He is probably not going to create any original new content. He is going to reformat from the content of the book. He will create a new podcast and have a new revenue stream through ad revenue and introduce new people who find the “Tools of Titan” podcast into the Tim Ferriss brand. They will become subscribers on the email list. They might subscribe to the “The Tim Ferriss Show.” Potentially, they might buy the books as well. He has this huge, huge network, which they can leverage as well.

Jacobsen: When you’re having the different platforms for yourself, as a multimedia startup, are you intending something similar to that, where you have mutually reinforcing programs and initiatives?

Faulkner-Hogg: Yes, it is definitely something that I am actively trying to create. This is why you see the different tabs of Atlas Geographica, which can take you to the YouTube channel, to the podcast channel, and also to a subscription list.

Jacobsen: If you're looking at 2020/2021, what are your actionables? What are you looking at as targeted objectives?

Faulkner-Hogg: I shouldn't shy away from saying this publicly. However, once you say this publicly, you are subject to ridicule if you do not reach the goals. I launched the YouTube channel. End of 2020, I want the channel monetized, which is 1,000 subscribers and 4,000 hours of watch time. It is not like you monetize this immediately into a lot of money. Once it gets the tick of approval from YouTube, it will become recommended to non-subscribers more. For the blog, I would like to see – a very lofty goal – 100 unique visitors per day. I would like 100 subscribers to the email list. That's 6 months from now.

Jacobsen: Have you looked into Patreon account, donations, grants, in Australia for startup projects, especially during coronavirus times?

Douglas: I haven't looked at any of it. The main reason is; I wouldn't feel comfortable having people donating for the stuff produced by me. I am stoked if people get a kick out of reading the articles. There is no expectation for a monetary reward for it. In terms of grants, I do not consider the media enterprises as a business of mine. That's why I haven't considered that route. I haven't looked at any of that. More for personal business, totally independent of media and looking like things like grants.

Jacobsen: Some areas of focus, they will be individually driven based on what is an interest at a given time for you. Some of the main areas have been on the environment, economics, and travel. What are some of the reasons for some of the touchpoints of the interest for you?

Faulkner-Hogg: Because it comes back to the point of the blog being something going to compliment personal interest rather than something targeted as a niche blog site to get more organic traffic. It is because these things happen to capture attention for me. I want to find out more about them. That's why there is such a wide variety of unrelated content. If you take vagabonding, I really like Rolf Potts and the book Vagabonding. I wanted to expand on it. I found Tim Ferriss. I wanted to expand on that as well.

Jacobsen: Also, we are involved with some other projects with Topical Magazine. How are you looking to adapt some of the content and interests to a publication like Topical Magazine, and vice versa? Obviously, there will be a Venn diagram of overlapping interest in Atlas Geographica content produced there, and then future stuff coming out of Topical Magazine.

Faulkner-Hogg: Yes, I think Topical Magazine has a much more event-driven side to its content. So, I think Topical Magazine has more sophisticated takes on the events compared to Atlas Geographica. If we look at Ben David's recent post of Nietzsche and the New Atheists, For instance, also, his recent Covid-19 and the enemy conspiracy theory one too. It is "Topical" "Magazine." So, they want to touch on relevant time-stamped content. Whereas, Atlas Geographica is more than likely going to be time-specific and a little bit more ever-green as an introduction or a take on something that is an ongoing discussion or an ongoing theme/mood within society. For instance, if I look at the Christopher Hitchens and mortality post, which Atlas

Geographica put out, recently, it is a piece of evergreen content. Whoever is interested in Christopher Hitchens, whether the beginning or the end of the relationship with Hitchens, it is there. What Ben did with Covid-19, the sophisticated part becomes the fact that he's also breaking down what makes the conspiracy. Again, Scott, I'm sorry if I answered the question so indirectly.

Jacobsen: Any other areas to explore today?

Faulkner-Hogg: Not specifically, Topical Magazine and Ben, and being introduced to you, too, it is a compliment to Ben David to publish a piece in Topical Magazine and took an interest in Atlas Geographica. I think the story is quite funny how I met Ben David, Benji.

Jacobsen: Did you meet him in Norway?

Faulkner-Hogg: In Amsterdam.

Jacobsen: Of course, yes.

Faulkner-Hogg: I am working for this company. We have a bunch of people coming in for interviews. A lot of them coming into the interviews with who my manager likes. He asks, "What do you think about this guy?" I will give a shallow commentary on it. I never got to interview Ben. I gave an opinion from a quick look at him and the things the manager said. I saw. He was editor of Topical Magazine. Usually, we don't get people with non-relevant experience.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Faulkner-Hogg: [Laughing] I was like, "That's fantastic." I went on the site and read an article on the Zizek and Peterson debate. I thought, "This guy is cool. I hope we hire him." Ben and I had some business, I introduced the fact of writing for a small blog called Atlas Geographica. He taught a lot about the WordPress side of things, to make sure the site looks good. He invited me to publish some material on Topical Magazine. It is entitled "Forget Chernobyl and Don't Listen to the Hippies." We retitled for Topical Magazine to get more clicks. The story was about the fact that it boggles the mind that the left is so anti-nuclear power, when it is the greenest form of technology available to us. The article debunks the extreme outlier events like Chernobyl. It is a fun story about meeting Ben. I want to leave that as a compliment about Topical Magazine.

Jacobsen: Ryan, thanks so much.

Jehovah's Witnesses Reject Plasma Injections for COVID-19

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 5, 2020

Updated June 8, 2020.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have issues with modern medical information because this is seen as against the tenets of the religious faith. In particular, they, for the most part or by theology, have an issue with blood transfusions.

As per the attempts to reduce the negative effects of Covid-19 to medical patients affected by Covid-19, the FDA or the Food and Drug Administration of the United States of America issued recommendations or guidelines for healthcare investigators and providers. It is based on some studies into convalescent plasma collected from Covid-19 patients who have recovered from the ill-effects of the virus.

Even with the experimental nature of the treatment, there are some circumstances under which the treatment can be considered well-advised based on some scientists and doctors using it. However, the ones for this treatment would be serious or critical cases along with the symptomatology of Covid-19.

For those with critical case symptomatology themselves or individuals with family members who are, unfortunately, suffering under the suffocating ravages of Covid-19 (coming from SARS-CoV-2), these kinds of potential treatments could – literally – save your life or the life of a loved one, or just save a life of another human being. It becomes incumbent upon us to support science, medicine, and the appropriate application in order to “do no harm.” It's both a principle of medical professionals and civilized society, i.e., reflective of a common drive of human beings when not driven into insane circumstances.

Unfortunately, while many religious principles reflect some universal sentiments in human beings, at the time, others come out as pre-scientific understandings or rejection of modern medicine capable of helping individuals who may be suffering. One particular group, the Jehovah's Witnesses, have been known to reject blood transfusions, as these stand against their stipulated principles of The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is the governing or legislating body of the Jehovah's Witnesses. This has been a strict policy since 1945.

The basis for the claim is that blood transfusions go against some divine law or ethical precepts derived from their understanding of the oughts of the world through their religious lens. Now, with the recent possibilities for critical or severe cases to be helped by the experimental treatments, the Jehovah's Witnesses have been directed (or commanded by the legislative body) to not use them. More directly, they're strictly forbidden, as this is Convalescent Plasma Therapy or a treatment using transfusion.

The directive from the Jehovah's Witnesses stated:

The Blood Issue: There's talk about the FDA allowing doctors to treat critically ill COVID-19 patients with “convalescent plasma therapy.” It would be wise to advise the

publishers that it's understood that this is giving the patient the whole plasma of the person who has developed the antibodies which would be unacceptable for Jehovah's Witnesses.

However if the antibodies were extracted from the plasma (fractions/immunoglobulins) and then given to the patient, it would be a conscience matter for Jehovah's Witnesses. Some doctors may view plasma as a fraction. Therefore the publisher may need to explain their personal decision not to accept any of the blood's four main components, one of them being plasma. (Source: JWsurvey, based on work of Mark O'Donnell in "Jehovah's Witnesses Denied Plasma Treatment Amid Coronavirus Pandemic" - click for article title for link)

This is a serious public health issue for which the lives of some members of the public religion becomes a public health hazard. As we see with the prevention within the directives (theological and faith-based in character), individuals cannot use the treatments, as they are forbidden, without consequence. If they use it, then the fear of the wrath of the legislative body, as representative of God, can come down like a ton of bricks. It is, as James Randi noted to me, based on fear. If an individual uses the blood or plasma, then they will become "Disassociated" from the community and will not be permitted contact from their own families.

Theology trumps medicine here.

National Center for Science Education, Role in Promoting Race Equity

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 5, 2020

Two of my favourite people in the world, Ann Reid and Kenneth R. Miller/Ken Miller/Kenneth Miller, have issued a statement on behalf of the National Center for Science Education. Ann Reid is the Executive Director and Kenneth Miller is the Board Chair. Both have been doing, and are part of, a noble tradition for the proper education of the public on matters of science.

As the late and beloved Dr. Carl Sagan noted, we live in a world built on science and technology, where the discoveries of science build the frameworks for comprehension of the natural world from which the engineering and technology can emerge in the first place. Technology is science applied for some purpose or function, typically relevant to a human need or want – for frivolity or necessity.

The note from Reid and Miller opened:

Today, in all corners of our nation, attention has been focused on a long-standing problem that pervades all of American society, including its educational and scientific institutions — the problem of embedded, structural racism. Our nation is gripped by protests against the latest in a long and shameful history of incidents of racist violence against black Americans. We grieve with our fellow citizens who have had to live with fear, oppression, and injustice for centuries. All of us at NCSE are inspired by the tens of thousands of Americans putting their bodies at risk to raise their voices in protest.

I am inspired by the level of solidarity expressed by several organizations on the educational front with a forthright statement as to the facts of the matter and the expression of the core issue in a cogent presentation. The purpose of the National Center for Science Education is the provision of real education and information on the sciences to the public. Indeed, one of the main areas of emphasis has been the evolution versus creationism sociopolitical, not educational, controversy over the development of life.

“The overriding goal of the National Center for Science Education is to ensure that every student in every American school has access to an effective, accurate, and inspiring education in the sciences. Many obstacles have stood in the way of this goal,” Reid and Miller said, “including unreasoning and doctrinaire opposition to the findings of many branches of science. Throughout its history, NCSE has fought to remove these obstacles and ensure that all students learn to think critically about evidence and reject flawed and misleading arguments.”

As has been said in many contexts by others and myself, and not original to me, but to the scientists and the science educators, previous eras of science support the idea of race while modern science advanced to state “racism is based on a lie — the lie that there are meaningful biological differences among humans that correspond to the color of our skin. While we acknowledge that there are real biological consequences to the lived experience of race, evolution reminds us that the genetic variation within groups we designate as races is significantly larger than the variation between those groups. Evolution tells us that we are 99.9% the same at the level of our DNA.”

In short, the proper framing of a lot of the issues facing us: species. We are an evolved product of a naturalistic process and a natural universe. Science has been used, at times, for divisive purposes. However, the full arsenal of science would seem to support a more unifying framework to plug modern human rights notions into them. In that, we can build a more equitable and just society as we deem fit rather than not – and one of the bases for this is the modern theory of evolution and, therefore, the work of the National Center for Science Education, as they conclude:

Science education can be a force for good; for unifying rather than dividing. Towards that end, we at NCSE resolve to support educational and scientific professionals fighting racism and educational inequality at every level of our society. Specifically, we commit to expanding our efforts to provide science teachers with the resources and learning opportunities needed to help their students dismantle misconceptions about race. Our common future depends upon it.

Nisar Ahmad on Pakistan, Afghanistan, War, Displacement, Rzgar Hama

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 6, 2020

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How was family life growing up for you?

Nisar Ahmad: After migrating to Pakistan due to civil war in Afghanistan, life was hard for all Afghans in general. My father started working for an NGO far from our home, and would come only once a week. My mother took care of me and my other siblings. Life became very hard when my mom passed away when I was about 9 years old. My father working far away from home and with no mother, my older siblings were taking care of me. My father couldn't find a job nearby, and it was hard for Afghans to find jobs. So he had no option. We couldn't move to the place he worked because the city we lived in was cheaper. It was really hard to grow up like that. Though everyone was showing love and care to me, I felt like being pitied. I felt inferior and eager for real love and care, and not just receiving care and love for not having a mother. I felt lonely and started to avoid people even from childhood. I went to school in Pakistan, and due to being reserved, I passed my time reading books. So I was a bright introvert student since my childhood. I remained topper in almost all years of my academic life.

Jacobsen: What has been the impact of war and displacement for you?

Ahmad: I was born in war. Like literally in war, in falling RPGs and bullets! So the effect of war is in my sub-conscious whether I like it or not. We lived in Pakistan as refugees far from our home and place of birth. I never felt at home at any time of my life. In Pakistan showing the identity as an Afghan meant inviting many kinds of hate, racism and discrimination. I felt like I had done a sin that was unforgivable. Being displaced meant that I lacked something very important that would make me human.

Jacobsen: How has education been a consistent story for you? Something stable in spite of all the instability?

Ahmad: As explained in the first paragraph, I felt very lonely and started avoiding people. Though I studied in government schools in Pakistan where the education standard is negligible, I was taking interest in every book that I came across. I read books, watched TV and kind of self-educate myself. As a refugee, I was a hard worker like other refugees. The difference was, they started selling shopping bags in the bazaar, and became good business people with time, and I put my efforts in academia.

Jacobsen: How did you come to meet Rzgar Hama?

Ahmad: When I lived in the shelter, near Vancouver Public Library in downtown Vancouver, I saw an advertisement on the library notice board while searching for job vacancies. It was about storytelling. So it attracted my interest and I emailed Rzgar.

Jacobsen: Why did you accept to take part in "My Home is a Suitcase"?

Ahmad: I took interest in "My Home is a Suitcase" because I wanted my story to be heard as my story is the story of millions of refugees that the world doesn't know about. At first, telling my

story, I felt like I was self-pitying, but then it became a goal of my life to raising my voice for all the refugees in the world.

Jacobsen: Thanks so much, Nisar.

WEF-Reuters: Systemic Racism as a Global Problem

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 6, 2020

The World Economic Forum and the Thomson Reuters Foundation published an article by Lola-Rose Avery entitled "[Why systemic racism is not just an American problem.](#)"

In it, there is reasonable argumentation around and coverage of the murder or death of George Floyd due to asphyxiation after several minutes with, at least, half of the weight of a police officer pressed on his neck. Subsequent to this, there have been massive numbers of protests against the individuals who suffer under disproportionate police brutality.

Avery said, "As Brits have taken to the streets in protest, many have been vocally disdainful about it because, in their eyes, we don't have the problem with racism that America has. Ironically, a lot of people have been angry about the anger. Others have likely acknowledged the injustices quietly to themselves but decided not to speak out at all."

Even as there are proper claims as to a massive decline in violence and in racist sentiment and actions, it can be tone deaf to a particular moment with some of the largest protests of the modern era arguing for criminal justice reform and a direct addressing of grievances as such. Thus, the basis for immediate social actions build on long-term trends with both the inertia of history – not as some inexorable or mystical force – and the ramping up of change in some systemic areas disproportionately impacting blacks is important, especially as modern technology permits open cataloging of the incidents.

The bar should not be set to what was yesterday, while the bars of prior generations can stand as a point of appreciation as to the hard work, dedication, and moral striving of prior generations because of the civilizing effects upon the societies of the social and civil rights revolutions and movements. Indeed, when we look at the assessments coming from some feminist circles about the need to curb male violence, the arguments by some activists across ethnic groups looking for justice for the murder of black men and women out of proportion to the general population, and the Steven Pinker-Humanist vision of a long-term trend of Enlightenment values infusing the society for the better, we come to the, at a minimum, triplet foundation of mutual disagreement belying a common theme. The disagreement is superficial while the common theme unites them.

When we look at the long-term historical trends, certainly, things have been improving over these periods due to technology, science, and values emergent from Humanism and the Enlightenment and a decline in fundamentalist religion. As well, we continue to see the disproportionate treatment of women in a number of domains, as the brilliant Rebecca Traister shows; in addition, we continue to see, as the illustrious Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson has noted, the disproportionate impacts of black bodies, especially black men's bodies, by authorities. I will go out on a limb and state, "All three are mutually supportive of one another and integrate to a more coherent framework for comprehension of the issues facing us now, because all three frames of analysis matter and have validity."

Now, as per the lead of Avery on this, I do not mean to make the argument of the weighing of different negatives, as in the least racist option of several is the best, i.e., no racism is ideal and best, but these arguments require buttressing with a mutual reinforcing tripartite framework

provided above, in abridged conceptual presentation, and the facts before us with the possibility with further change now.

“A study published in 2019 in the journal *Frontiers in Sociology* suggested that Britain is one of the least racist countries in Europe,” Avery said, “But as the rapper Dave said during his performance at the Brit Awards in February 2020, referencing the study: ‘the least racist is still racist.’ He received widespread backlash from furious viewers who said he was wrong and ungrateful.”

As Avery continues to note, the issue isn’t the improving trends; it is the low bars relative to yesterday held. We can be grateful for all advancements for a civilizing effects upon the populations while taking into account the bar should be as high as possible within the context of now. Otherwise, we’re daydreaming, while recognizing the negative effects upon people, by accident of birth, are being discriminated against based on skin colour by racists, whether racist slurs hurled at an individual, racist violence, or discrimination in police brutality in the “use of force” or in hiring.

Avery is very candid about personal experience too, “The truth is that I have experienced racism at every stage of my life. My earliest memories of this are from as young as three years old. This continued into my school years, where increased vocabulary meant that the name-calling ramped up a gear and I was called things such as “Lola the black cola” as well as being kicked and punched on the playground and around my neighbourhood at home.”

Here, we have a country far less racist than its past while still racist by improved standards with verbal and physical violence inflicted upon an innocent and bright woman working hard to find her way into society; indeed, she’s working into one of the most coveted positions in the society, as she notes. For individuals in societies around the world, even those amongst the least racist by historical and current standards, there should be a focus on not only focusing on a rhetoric and social set of action against the least worst mentality and the idea of simply being silent on racism. In that, “silence is complicity,” as Avery affirms.

In many ways, this is true; context is important and discerning meaning & intent in borderline cases is extremely important, but, in general, I would endorse this statement.

“There is a long history of black people being compared to dark-coloured animals. I had my turn when I was compared to a horse on multiple occasions by a group of people whilst I was at university,” Avery stated, “Social media was established by that point and this meant people could also create fake accounts, anonymously messaging me more extreme racial abuse.”

She experienced a series of more covert racism, by her recollection, with comments considered offensive due to direction at specific minorities. Therefore, Avery notes this is not an isolated-to-America issue, but, rather, a larger one. The fact of the conversation happening publicly and open calls for the change in some of the sociocultural, and institutional, contexts for this to happen is a strong positive.

Avery concluded:

My experiences are a microcosm of the racism we have here in Britain: the blatant, yes, but also the more subtle, which insidiously infiltrates every aspect of our society and which can go unseen by anyone who is not on the receiving end, anyone who is not a black or minority ethnic person.

The systemic racism that lead to George Floyd's death is also at our doorstep. It's not an American problem. It's not isolated incidents.

Being quietly 'not racist' is not enough. White people, who are the beneficiaries of this system, must educate themselves as to how and to call it out with the same vehemence as black and minority ethnic people if it is to be dismantled. Silence is complicity.

In these contexts of gratitude for the progress made, with a realization of the overt and covert forms of racism and sexism, and the ways in which to capitalize on positive trends, social movements, and the advancement of the morality of human rights, we can make a better world for all. And why not? So it goes.

Nonviolent Protests Continue Over Killing of George Floyd

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 7, 2020

The largely nonviolent protests have continued onwards for over a week in the United States of America now.

These have been some of the largest protests in the history of the United States with an enormous amount of pressure put on public officials, law enforcement, and fellow citizens in America and then around the world with a cascade of largely nonviolent protests in reaction to the murder of African American George Floyd. Within 8 to 9 minutes, one can watch Floyd murdered, undeniable brutality.

Many African Americans have been considered lesser-than for a long time by the nature of ethnic heritage and tint of skin colour. It shows up in the educational statistics, in the criminal justice system, in the average wealth disparities between ethnic groups in the United States, and in disproportionate use of excessive force by police officers against black Americans with an emphasis on black men. By implication, the internal narrative of the United States is black bodies mean less, equal less, and become more disposable than others.

On May 25, it may have been the largest single-day mobilization of protests in the entire history of the United States while the coronavirus pandemic still rages, which every well-informed citizen is knowledgeable about here. In that, the masks were worn, sure, but the risks would be high for anyone taking part in large protests with implied close proximity with other protestors or even police officers. People braved the pandemic to make a point - to have a more just society.

There have been some spats of arson, assault, and various smash-and-grab raids. However, this is neither a trend nor the majority of protests. In fact, these are more the outliers based on more authoritative reportage. Some of the protests, in fact, included police officers and protestors marching together in solidarity.

As has been some of the complaints, recently, some trends have arisen out of a common response woodwork with #AllLivesMatter and #BlueLivesMatter as an ill-considered attempt to respond to the #BlackLivesMatter movement founded by three black queer women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi.

When reading #BlackLivesMatter, some can read this as #OnlyBlackLivesMatter, which can be one reading, though incorrect, of the movement; however, with some more thought, we can see the rejection of the “only” as part of the hashtag because of the emphasis on black lives rather than the exclusion of other lives. In that, we come to the straightforward “aha!” of the movement meaning an emphasis on black lives due to the disproportionate violence, state and otherwise, against black bodies, African American citizens.

If there was a movement of every life mattering, what would be the traction? Of course, this ground zero for standard ethics without a Divine Right of Kings, slaves and slave masters/owners, and grounded in a modern day ethic with international (secular) human rights. Everyone acquires equal human rights, in theory, based on birth as a human being, not some God-given or asserted divine rights. They don't exist universally as human rights exist

universally. In this sense, modern ethical guidelines exist more generally in human cultures and international institutions than the purported God-given rights from the faiths of the world, including the major faiths covering about half of the population of the Earth in Christianity and Islam. Thus, it seems a straightforward observation that “transcendent” or “God-given” rights are, in fact, human constructed, human-given, and more parochial (and less justifiable) than international human rights. All life matters; and, we’ve known this for a long time, especially institutionally and with the formalization of universal rights with international secular human rights applicable to everyone, in principle.

The other misunderstanding or improper response comes from #BlueLivesMatter. As someone cut from the same cloth as me, Dave Chappelle, pointed out, it’s a blue suit, neither an ethnic heritage nor a skin colour. If you don’t like the situation, then you can change the job and can get a new suit.

With some of these clarifications, I am heartened to see protestors and police alike using masks to keep safe during protests over the murder of George Floyd and in making a modern global movement for criminal justice reform.

In spite of the largely peaceful protests, some of the violent incidents have been with clashes in London and in Marseille, France, even flash bang devices and pepper spray used to disperse protestors, while the protestors were hurling bottles and rocks with some “improvised explosives” too.

Some of the largest protests have taken part in Washington with protestors pouring into the streets closed off to traffic. Some turned the area into a dance floor. Pamela Reynolds, a 37-year-old African American teacher said that she wants a federal ban on chokeholds and body cameras as mandatory on police officers while on duty.

At the White House, new fencing and security measures were put into place, while President Donald Trump argued for a crackdown on the unrest, or the protestors, all the time downplaying the demonstrations themselves.

In Virginia, a Confederate statue was toppled. It was up since 1891. There is some reportage of urination on the statue after being toppled. It was on its pedestal in Monroe Park and was of Gen. Williams Carter Wickham. Descendants of Wickham argued for taking down the statue in 2017.

As The Associated Press stated, “Tens of thousands of protesters marched worldwide in what could be the biggest one-day mobilization against racial injustice since a white Minneapolis police officer pressed a knee into Floyd’s neck for several minutes. Even after a week of the most significant protests the U.S. has seen in a generation, Saturday’s crowds stood out. Protesters held signs with slogans saying “Black Lives Matter” and “No Justice No Peace” during marches that were peaceful, sometimes even festive, after previous days had devolved in chaos. Police sometimes joined protesters, kneeling in a show of solidarity.”

So it goes.

With files from The Associated Press.

The Decline and Fall of the Southern Baptists

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 7, 2020

The largest Protestant denomination in the United States is 2% smaller than in 2018. The South Baptists believe “that the Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to mankind, with His ultimate revelation being the Gospel message of redemption through Jesus Christ,” i.e., a fundamentalist religious denomination one can find in the United States.

With the release of the 2019 membership rolls of the Southern Baptist Convention last Thursday, there has been a decline by as many as 287,000 members of the South Baptists. Their total membership went from 14.8 million to about 14.5 million. This amounts to the thirteenth year of continuous decline in the numbers. This matches many trends on many, many faiths or religions in the richer societies, even in the highly religious outliers seen almost uniquely in the United States.

A professor at Duke University and a director of the National Congregations Study, Mark Chaves, said, “...consistent with national trends we’ve been seeing for a while now, mainly driven by generational differences... Younger people are less likely than older people to attend religious services and to be religious. That’s true across the board.”

With a strong commitment to evangelism, other important things for the measurement of commitment to the fundamentalist faith is baptism. They have noted an 11,000 baptism decrease with only 235,748 performed in 2019. In many ways, the clear trend for more than a decade will mean either a death of the faith or a significant decline followed by some stoppage or an asymptote.

Southern Baptist Executive Committee President Ronnie Floyd stated, “...it is clear that change is imperative. ... We have to prioritize reaching every person with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state, and every nation.”

In an attempt to pivot on the recent numbers coming out of the data, Floyd “criticized the way the church data is collected,” according to The Associated Press.

Floyd continued, “We cannot possibly know how best to meet the needs of our 47,500 churches when we only receive needed data from just 75 percent of them.”

The overarching trends for the Southern Baptists would appear to be plural - from data coming out to leadership. The director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, Ed Stetzer, remarked that the decline might be slowed in the Southern Baptists if they stopped the consistent fighting within the leadership and the churches that can be a driver of the decline in the numbers.

The executive committee of the denomination stated that a formation of a task force in order to examine some of the policies of the Southern Baptist Convention and the speaking roster with some inclusion of “non-Southern Baptists and a female teaching pastor.”

The Associated Press stated, “Stetzer formerly presided over the SBC’s annual church reporting. More than a decade ago, when he first started warning that the denomination’s membership was going to decline year after year, many Southern Baptists dismissed his numbers. Once the trend became irrefutable, they were alarmed. Now, he said, ‘I do think Southern Baptists are becoming used to decline. That should not be normal. It should be cause for great concern and change.’”

With files from The Associated Press.

Reflections on the Online Campaign Against Mubarak Bala

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 7, 2020

The President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, Mubarak Bala, used the freedom of expression enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution in addition to the freedom of religion and belief, as represented in the same constitution and, in fact, in the United Nations foundational rights document.

On April 27, a complaint was filed against some Facebook or social media posts by Bala. It was filed by S.S. Umar & Co. The claim was that Mubarak was making provocative and annoying statements to Muslims. In short, the firm and barristers made the explicit and, rather blasphemous mind us, statement that they can speak for both God and all Muslims on the matter of what is and is not blasphemous or offensive to the creator and sustainer of the universe (if seeing things within the framework of the believers).

Rather rapidly, Bala was hauled off to jail to make an example of him, as so many others have been made examples of before with the death penalty applied to them or the social reprisal murders by a public mob. Following some of the reactions to the protests online about the statements of Bala, as claiming a deceased religious figure was a “terrorist,” there was an online petition by Halima Sa’adiya Umar. I am uncertain if a relation to “S.S. Umar...”

In the online campaign through Change.Org, H. Umar’s campaign of protest stated:

Mubarak is blaspheming against the religion of Islam. He should practice his atheism and let Muslims be! “For you is your religion and for me is my religion”

His utterances are capable of causing unrest which could cause religious and social upheaval in the country.

Facebook is meant to promote & encourage relationships, allowing his kind to be on the platform is catastrophic. Freedom of expression is not synonymous to hate speech that can cause mayhem in Nigeria.

I find these assumptions and statements dehumanizing of the ordinary Muslim believers all over Nigeria because the use of the freedom of expression becomes the basis to argue Muslims en masse in Nigeria can’t but help themselves in ‘causing mayhem in Nigeria’ or “causing unrest” and even the simple “allowing his kind to be on the platform is catastrophic.” The statements are both overblown to the point of comical and declaring a want for unequal access to the use of platforms and the freedom of expression. Shall we begin to unequally apply this to the practicing of religion, as he has struggled to attain equal status in practicing Humanism and non-religion in life, i.e., simply not partaking of the religious contexts and practices?

Mubarak Bala’s context or location is still unknown. He may be alive and imprisoned with human rights violate, including the inability to see a lawyer. Or he could be dead. We truly don’t know the exact whereabouts or condition of Bala. This is both a human rights travesty and a fundamental crime. No matter the framing, the religious fundamentalist groups in Kaduna, Kano,

and often in Northern Nigeria have messed this one up big time. It will be a PR nightmare no matter the path moving forward.

With some international complaints from a variety of humanist organizations, the petition, which aimed for 25,000 signatures against Bala and had rapidly garnered almost 20,000, was taken down from the Change.Org website. There has continued to be international pressure on Nigerian authorities to do something about this. On the rights front, freethinkers are losing, as Bala is in unknown condition without any justice; on the media, national and international, the Freethought community is winning. Keep up the pressure.

Free Mubarak Bala.

Cardinal Pell Case Overturned in Australian High Court

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 7, 2020

The longstanding controversy over Cardinal George Pell took a turn with an overturn based on the High Court decision. One of the fathers of an alleged victim stated that he is “struggling to comprehend” the decision of the High Court to overturn the convictions, recently.

With the overturn decision of the High Court, Pell was released as a free man. The High Court earlier overturned the former treasurer of the Vatican’s convictions for both sexual assault and indecent assault against Pell, acquitting him unanimously. In Australia, thousands of sexual abuse claims have come forward over recent years from alleged survivors at the hands of Catholic priests or religious brothers while in Catholic institutions for many of the alleged assault incidents.

Phil Nagle claims Christian brother Stephen Frances Farrell assaulted him at the age of 9-years-old. Nagle is a known personality in the media on some of these issues in Australia. The Christian Brothers are a religious community within the Catholic Church. It has been wrapped up in sexual abuse scandals as an organizational community within Catholicism. Whether priests or Christian brothers, the sex abuse scandals have continued to rock much of the Catholic Church for years and years now.

When Nagle heard the verdict on Pell, he said, “Absolute shock first, then disbelief and then confusion about the court system... The Catholic Church will always defend the brand - it's a very damaged brand now, as we know - but that's the way they do it... You look at how much money they've thrown behind this Cardinal Pell thing and every court case.”

A father of an alleged victim, who died in 2014, of Pell issued a statement that he no longer maintains faith in the criminal justice system in the country. Tony Abbot, former prime minister and a supporter of Pell, stated that the verdict should speak for itself. Other supports of Pell include high-profile politicians, including former prime minister John Howard.

Pell stated, “I have consistently maintained my innocence while suffering from a serious injustice... This has been remedied today with the high court's unanimous decision... My trial was not a referendum on the Catholic Church; nor a referendum on how church authorities in Australia dealt with the crime of paedophilia in the church.”

Some senior Catholics in Australia welcomed the decision of the High Court. Archbishop of Melbourne, Peter Comensoli, said, “The dramatic development was welcomed by Australia's senior Catholics... The court system has gone through that now very thoroughly and has come to the conclusion that it has come to and I accept that decision... This outcome of the court will be received well by some who will be comforted. It will be distressing for others to hear.”

Lawyer David Baran has represented the Catholic Church and victims in his legal work. He said Pell's lawyers expected this decision, as the lawyers for Pell pointed out gaps in the prosecution’s case.

Baran said, "The ultimate test is: was there a reasonable doubt? Just to put it in pre-acclaimed, simple English, if there was then you can't have a conviction... Which has nothing whatsoever to do with the integrity of the victim... But, basically there are a number of strands in the cable that have to be put together to create a very solid rope to then secure a conviction. They just weren't there."

With the High Court ruling in Australia, this does legally make way for the royal commission on child abuse to release previously redacted findings, which can show some of the church leader handling of the allegations.

"The sooner that gets unredacted in the royal commission report we'll see what's going on," Nagle stated, "You just don't know how far the Catholics' tentacles go."

Second Sexual Abuse Allegation Against Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 7, 2020

A Roman Catholic Church bishop in Brooklyn, New York has been under investigation for allegations of sexual abuse. A second man has come forward with an allegation of abuse from the 1970s, where the priest, at the time in the 70s, was a parish priest in New Jersey.

Samier Tadros claims bishop Nicholas DiMarzio “repeatedly sexually abused” Tadros when he was 6-years-old, approximately. A March 9 letter from the lawyer for Tadros claimed this when sent to the attorney representative of the Archbishop of Newark.

The Associated Press reported, “DiMarzio has previously denied the accusations made by the first accuser. In a statement to The Associated Press, he also denied the accusation leveled by Tadros. ‘There is absolutely no truth to this allegation,’ he said. ‘This is clearly another attempt to destroy my name and discredit what I have accomplished in my service to God and His people.’

The attorney for DiMarzio is Joseph Hayden. Hayden, in an email, stated that they have uncovered “conclusive evidence” of the innocence of DiMarzio. However, The Associated Press was not permitted to see the evidence declared by Hayden, which leaves this as a strong claim without definite confirmation by independent journalists.

Pope Francis set forth new procedural guidelines in dealing with some cases under church law since last June, which has brought this particular case to the fore of the conversation around child sexual abuse and the Roman Catholic Church.

This is a powerful context for Americans. Because Roman Catholicism is the religion of Mel Gibson, Alexis Bledel, George Clooney, Nicole Kidman, Al Pacino, Leonardo DiCaprio, Martin Scorsese, Mickey Rourke, Michael Moore, Bono, Alfred Hitchcock, Mark Wahlberg, Elijah Wood, Ennio Morricone, Abel Ferrara, Jessica Rey, Andy Warhol, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, and Adolphe Menjou, and so many others in Hollywood and other areas of prominence and influence in the United States of America.

“The procedures — known in Latin as Vos Estis Lux Mundi, or You are the Light of the World — were issued in an apostolic letter that addresses how the church will handle claims against bishops and other ranking church officials accused of abuse or covering it up,” The Associated Press stated, “The rules direct archbishops to lead the investigation of an accused bishop in his jurisdiction. In this case the archbishop of New York is Cardinal Timothy Dolan.”

One of the attorneys for the accusers of DiMarzio, Mitchell Garabedian, stated that Tadros decided to step forward and make his case after another now-57-year-old man named Mark Matzek came forward. Matzek made the same claim of sexual abuse as a youngster in the middle of the 1970s.

As of June 4, DiMarzio has denied the accusations against him. Now, the two men who are making the accusations, Matzek and Tadros, live in separate states and have never met, which can strengthen the claims against the bishop because of the independence of the evidence and the

claims. Tadros is requesting \$20 million in compensation with DiMarzio, according to Hayden, being firm of never accepting a settlement of the claims.

“Dolan has retained New York attorney John O’Donnell and the law firm of Herbert Smith Freehills to conduct the investigation. The firm in turn has hired a risk management company founded by former FBI director Louis Freeh to assist in the inquiry. Freeh was named in 2011 to lead an investigation into Pennsylvania State University and its handling of sex abuse claims against former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky, which led to a report critical of university officials,” The Associated Press reported.

With the new procedures of the Vatican, the investigation of Dolan will be submitted for review of the evidence and then there will be a recommendation to the current leader, Pope Francis. Dolan will not conduct the investigation himself, but will submit the investigation plus a vote in accordance with the new Vatican procedures. No conflicts of interest and impartial acting are required for the archbishop.

Dolan said, “Bishop DiMarzio, I mean, I love the guy. He’s a good friend... He’s never had an accusation against him in his whole life. But in November, somebody made an accusation from way, way, way, way, way, way back, 48 years or so ago. And as much as Bishop DiMarzio said, ‘This is preposterous, this is ridiculous, this is unjust,’ darn it, we have to take it seriously.”

With files from The Associated Press.

On the Highest Levels of General Intelligence with Christian Sorenson

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 8, 2020

Christian is a Philosopher that comes from Belgium. What identifies him the most and above all is simplicity, for everything is better with “vanilla flavour.” Perhaps, for this reason, his intellectual passion is criticism and irony, in the sense of trying to reveal what “hides behind the mask,” and give birth to the true. For him, ignorance and knowledge never “cross paths.” What he likes the most in his leisure time, is to go for a walk with his wife.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In the last session, we covered some of the basic definitions and metrics of intelligence. Let's touch some more on some of these things, also, for those who do not know, as of only a 2 or 3 years ago, you score 185+ S.D. 15 on one of the two most reliable and valid mainstream general intelligence tests in the world. First, what was the test? Only one other person on a mainstream test with a listed score at 185 S.D. 15 on the World Genius Directory is Kirk Kirkpatrick. So, alternative tests are the norm rather than the exception, which should raise caution for the general public too. Never believe a claim as to the highest IQ score in the world; however, certainly, one can keep in mind the highest measured on this or that test, or among the highest at some cut-off. The Titan Test of Dr. Ronald Hoeflin has been considered the or among the most rigorous high-range tests in existence. Kevin Langdon is respected by Dr. Hoeflin based on statements to me, in a public interview. Rick Rosner earned a perfect score on it. However, there are far more other real-world proxies for high-intelligence with more practical or pragmatic use, of course.

Christian Sorenson: I have never been interested in intelligence measurements since I feel that I have more important things to spend my time on, nor do I need to prove something to myself, neither anything to anyone else. Besides, I have heard enough from my childhood regarding that “I am great genius.” In fact this last, “is a phrase” that my mother was very scared of, because she was already told about it, from the pediatrician and my nursery school teachers, onwards. Indeed, I was tested a couple of years ago, for circumstantial reasons, with David Wechsler's Intelligence Scale of General Intelligence for Adults Form R (WAIS-R). For example, Evangelos Katsioulis was also tested with exactly the same test (WAIS-R), and earned on it 180+ sd15 [Ed. This is true, thus two names with Katsioulis and Kirkpatrick. I have interviewed both.]. Regarding me, I earned “a perfect score,” of 185+ sd15, which means that my IQ in function to this standard deviation is above 185, that's to say without knowing exactly “how much above” of it, it is.

Jacobsen: What was the context of prior test scores and this test score?

Sorenson: Prior, it was in school during 3rd grade, and also with Wechsler's Scale, but for children (WISC). I earned also “a perfect score” with 180 sd15. The context at that time, was because the school headmaster talked with my parents, since they wanted that I finish high school before being ten years old. Regarding my last evaluation a couple of years ago, it was because my wife asked me to.

Jacobsen: What is the statistical rarity of this score?

Sorenson: For over 185 sd15, is at least about one each two hundred three million persons.

Jacobsen: What are some comparable statistical rarities for such a score?

Sorenson: For example, profound mental retardation with an IQ score less than 20 sd15.

Jacobsen: If we take into account this rarity, we can add a plus (“+”) sign after it, as you hit the ceiling of the test, i.e., any reliable measurement beyond that point is mere extrapolative uncertainty about the general intelligence score for you. However, with this sense of outlier in the extreme nature on a mainstream test, what has this meant in academic and personal life for you? Also, the coming to terms with the world, which will think slower and less comprehensively and, more often, come to incorrect conclusions about the nature of the world within relevant expertise. While, at the same time, high-IQ can lead to particular forms of irrationality based on some more recent research, which can come with more robust or elaborate justifications for bizarre theoretical frameworks. Based on personal observation, one can see this in some Jesuit intellectuals with abstract theological hypothesizing based on ancient storybooks called The Bible.

Sorenson: Being straight with my “personal appreciation,” what I would first of all dare to say, is that “academic and intellectualoid” environments or settings, are not pleasant to me, since “I get bored with them,” and “they give me a big headache,” with “their simpleton mental approaches” to the world of knowledge, and with “their bragging and childish competitiveness,” for trying to show off “academic degrees and clumsy levels of basic brilliant intelligence.” In life in general, my extreme intelligence, has brought me more problems than anything else, among other reasons, because usually others perceive me as someone strange, and my supposed “scathing and ironic attitudes” makes them pissed off. Jesuit intellectuals actually don’t surprise me at all, since I believe that “instead of writing something reasonable,” they are more concerned to write things “for not being understood by anyone.”

Jacobsen: There is a longstanding tradition of wanting to catalogue and mark out genius and high intelligence in history and in the present. There are many, dead and alive, individuals acknowledged as highly bright if not unassailably brilliant, including the late technology giant Paul Allen, the late hybrid and perseverant cripple Stephen Hawking, the late forced prodigy John Stuart Mill, the late Francis Galton, the eccentric Rick Rosner/Richard Rosner, Judit Polgar or the Polgar sisters altogether, model-chess grandmaster Magnus Carlsen or his teacher the great Garry Kasparov, the practical and reasonable advice-giving greatest living philosopher of the everyday Marilyn vos Savant, the Greek former wunderkind with the formerly super long hair Evangelos Katsioulis, the isolationist mathematician Andrew Wiles, the former prodigy Edith Stern, the heir to Einstein Edward Witten, the scientific skeptic Tim Roberts, the prodigy Jacob Barnett, the titan – so to speak – of the high-range test creator world Ron Hoeflin/Ronald Hoeflin or another person who earned respect with tests Kevin Langdon, the tragically anti-Semitic Bobby Fischer, the high-range high-scorer Mislav Predavec, the dual-Nobel Prize-winning Marie Curie, the only other mainstream 185 S.D. score on the World Genius Directory American Kirk Kirkpatrick, the Republican Mega Society member John H. Sununu, Kevin Langdon, the polymath Steven Pinker, the brilliant author Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, the late ancient heavy-hitter critic of religion Hypatia, the awkward and ultra-bright mainstream physicist Christopher Hirata, the late polymath Leonardo da Vinci, the great potentially arrogant composer Mozart, the greatest architect of sound (Glenn Gould

assessment) Bach, the degree-based prodigy Michael Kearney, the tragic William James Sidis, the late Solomon Golomb, the multi-certified former prodigy Sho Yano and his sister Sayuri Yano, the unpleasant math-mind plugged into the mechanics of the universe Isaac Newton, or the more pleasant Einstein, the stratospheric Goethe, etc., and a wide range of others of some prominence or not. There is a common sentiment of wanting to catalogue. When I worked with Manahel Thabet on a variety of projects, it was a similar sentiment. Her colleague in Dubai who, in fact, originally came from British Columbia, where I live, was working on and developed his own listing of the brightest in the world. Why is this such a robust trend?

Sorenson: This “strong tendency” to “catalog and study geniuses,” brings in mind the image of “hominumlogics,” similar to the zoo, that existed in times of Leopold III, during early nineteenth century in Brussels. At that time, they brought “specimens” of Congo “for placing them in cages,” in order to be visited by “Victorian public, who was avid to browse” the behavior of “these exotic animals in captivity.” Leaving aside “bars and cages,” it seems to me that it is quite familiar to “morbid feelings” that exists toward geniuses.

Jacobsen: What is the point of counting a point here or a point there at the upper limits of human intelligence to differentiate in a micro fashion at the hardest to differentiate levels?

Sorenson: In my opinion, this “measuronditic syndrome” or tendency, does not make any sense, except that of many evaluated individuals “to exhibiting their superior micro-intelligence differences “in relation to others.” In “qualitative and methodological terms,” the fundamental theme in order “to differentiate intelligence degrees,” is regarding “its range,” and not in relation to their “discrete values.” Actually I believe, that this “exhibitionist-voyeurist phenomenon” that is expressed by many, is attributable in its etiology to “a penis neid.”

Jacobsen: Obviously, with more cognitive horsepower, there is more mental room to carve out unique mental landscapes. So, we will have more eccentric and strange outcomes or outputs, behaviourally and mentally, from the minds at the highest levels. What are typical ways of these minds going awry?”

Sorenson: I feel they are “mental rides” that go in “a simple opposite direction of logic” and in addition through an “unexpected way,” but that nevertheless “makes sense,” and for that reason “surprises.”

Jacobsen: How can societies foster excellence at the highest levels?

Sorenson: Improving “genetic crosses.”

Jacobsen: What would a future society incorporating all manner of genius require to flourish?

Sorenson: That kind of “Sanhedrin,” would be “a unique society,” since it should be the closest thing to “an empty set.”

Jacobsen: As noted before, for those who want a community, Mensa International, Intertel, Triple Nine Society, Prometheus Society, and Mega Society are listed as the most reliable high-IQ societies via Wikipedia filtration. Yet, most of societies’ talented never go well-used or even flourish in some minimal level – let alone self-actualize, whether individually or in some larger sense noted before within a larger communal context. Many have noted the mostly failure of the high-IQ societies and most acting as a form of social club (nothing

wrong with that!). What can the public keep in mind in being cautious with fake, disingenuous, inflated, and cult-like or outright cult genius?

Sorenson: I think that first of all is necessary “to put an eye” in those communities that have “extremely high” cut-offs, and numerous members with “stratospheric scores.” Secondly with ones that do “shameless business” with fees and others, and thirdly in some that are sustained by presidents who are “amateur psychometrists” or psychometrist due “to infused science” and therefore publish high-range tests as if they were “spores.”

Jacobsen: What is the future of genius in a high-technology, advanced app/software, and artificial intelligence-infused world in which genius and high-intelligence becomes externalized and enhanced, i.e., becomes cheap and commonplace in some sense?

Sorenson: With regard to individuals with “high intelligence” I think that with the development of technology, in fact they will be transformed into “cheaper and more expendable or replaceable resources.” Maybe this “moderately gifted” could “be up-graded” thanks to artificial intelligence, and therefore become in what “they crave the most,” that is to say into “geniuses.” Anyhow, in relation to “geniuses,” and leaving aside what could be a “romantic pink novel,” I do not believe that the situation will change much in function “to what history has been up to now.” In this way, they will continue to be “socially marginalized,” and probably will keep on going through this world “without leaving any trace.” Society since human being decided “to be gregarious” and live “in community,” has transformed itself into “a closed system,” and for this reason, like any other system with “hermetic characteristics,” will always perceive “change in depth” as “a threat,” and therefore “will resist to accept it,” by developing “compensatory mechanisms” and through “removing” what puts “its stability at risk.” “Geniuses” for their part, regarding society, do not know how to do anything other, but to “constructively criticize” it mediating “unique innovative contributive solutions.” In consequence in my opinion, it is “logically” and “metaphysically” impossible, that they could reach now or in the future, other else than “a virtual space,” and to be “reasonably valued” in society, since both of them “operate with diametrically opposed dynamics,” and for that reason are “incompatibles” between each other.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Christian.

Sorenson: Thanks to you for your “acoustic tolerance.”

Acoustic Spiritual Sensibilities and the Spirit of Time: Christian Sorenson

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 13, 2020

Christian is a Philosopher that comes from Belgium. What identifies him the most and above all is simplicity, for everything is better with “vanilla flavour.” Perhaps, for this reason, his intellectual passion is criticism and irony, in the sense of trying to reveal what “hides behind the mask,” and give birth to the true. For him, ignorance and knowledge never “cross paths.” What he likes the most in his leisure time, is to go for a walk with his wife.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Speaking of acoustic tolerance, or, rather, acoustics, if we’re looking at the output of human beings, we’re auditory in terms of direct communication, more so in terms of, hopefully, conscious intent. Whereas, there can be a first-level superficial non-verbal language with the body, probably. But at the level of the spoken word, there is a sense in which the quality of speech is a great indicator of the quality of the mind. Not in all cases, but it’s a good heuristic, I’ve found. Have you found the same?

Christian Sorenson: In fact, I would distinguish “three levels” of communication in relation to language, respectively one “non-verbal or corporal,” and two others that I will denominate as “analog and digital verbal.” In my opinion, although the three of them will be given simultaneously, the “non-verbal and analog” ones, would provide an “implicit formal symbolic” message regarding to the latter, while the “digital” is going to contribute with a content that at the same time, is “symbolically explicit” in its “significativity” and “symbolically implicit” within its “significativeness.”

Jacobsen: Back to acoustics, a good mind is often referred to as a sound mind, as in, “He is of sound mind.” It is the use of an auditory term to describe a balanced intelligence. If anything, the world needs far more balanced intelligence and, as Evangelos Katsioulis correctly notes in an interview with also another smart person, Erik Haereid, humility. My sensibility is such that the world appears off-kilter with exaggerations in both some narrow applications of intelligence and in the ego. A sort of pseudo-Asperger’s Syndrome unhealthily combined with borderline narcissism (not formal NPD) en masse. What do you think the world needs?

Sorenson: First of all I believe that it is necessary to refer “more precisely” to “narcissistic personality disorder,” since this is a “diagnostic category” that as such, exists in the “Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” (DSM-IV) of the “American Psychiatric Society,” which requires the “objective presence” of at least five symptoms within a series of other ten, in order to determine “its effective clinical existence.” In this sense, one of these would be the appearance of “overrated ideas about oneself,” which alone in itself is not a sufficient element to establish categorically this “diagnosis.” What follows from the above, therefore is that when speaking of “narcissism,” it must be distinguished beforehand what “are traits” from what is actually a true “personality disorder” of this nature. In relation to Katsioulis premise regarding “balanced intelligences,” it seems to me that it’s an “attractive and apollonian” proposal, though at the same time it is “not sensibly grounded” to reality, due to the fact that in its deep meaning it is an “absolutely fallacious explanation” in relation to what “exceptionally high intelligences” should

be. Indeed, the vast majority of problems in the world lay on some kind “of imbalance,” but this has little to do with what “intelligence” is, because in itself “exists no function regarding any balance.” In other words, its “only and exclusive” property has to do with “knowing objectives” and behalf to “beings reality.” Then “homeostatic resources,” must be sought somewhere else, as for example may occur within “personality and characterological” factors. Another is the situation related to “correlations,” between “intelligence” and the two aforementioned, since in that case is possible to talk about the so-called “harmful imbalances.” In reason of this last, it’s factible to found an almost “perfect correspondence,” but “inversely proportional” due that its value is minus one. Using other terms, “When higher is the balance lack, then lower is the degree of intelligence found.” By this way, within “extremely high intelligences,” there is in fact an “implicit prevalence imbalance,” yet has to do with an “opposite co-valence” in its value, because “geniuses” in their most “original and proper essence,” are “rupturist” and therefore “misunderstood” socially speaking, cause they usually “live out of canons” and “ahead of their time.” Consequently and even though the latter leads to what I will name as an “auto-hetero miscomprehension,” which is obviously linked to “disagreement arising” within themselves and with society, as ultimately “destabilization” also arrives, in some manner “anyway and anyhow,” they always reach “valuable results,” which “sooner or later” in time, will be “socially rescued” as “unique and necessary contributions,” since lastly “nobody, but except themselves” have been capable to arrive there, to that point. In another sense, it could also be said that “geniuses” unlike the rest of humanity, “acoustically speaking,” not only “are able to hear,” but besides also “are skillful for listening” other “registers of reality” that shouldn’t be accessible not even for highly intelligent ones. In my opinion, by striving to understand this last, and perhaps by trying “to socially harmonize” each other, yet nevertheless without “de-profiling” or “turning-off” their “alma mater,” we may arrive to something “substantially” speaking more relevant, and less absurd for the world. That is instead of pushing efforts towards “to fit them” into “Gaussian Bells,” in function of “self-complacency” and “self-recognition” complexes of some, in which they “sell cough syrups without being aware that they are made of herbs.”

Jacobsen: You mentioned Mozart in another interview. He simply sounds joyful to hear, often. What do you think is behind that phenomenon?

Sorenson: I would say that at the base of Mozarts compositions, there is a “free and creative spontaneity” that “goes beyond all establishments,” and leads to “harmonious melodies,” since when they’re transmitted into “musical scores,” they produce afterwards a “joyful and pleasant” circulation of energy.

Jacobsen: What do you believe is behind Mozart as a genius?

Sorenson: I feel there is an “irreverent and vitalist spirit” that ironizes with “canons status quo maxims,” and “mocks of enlightened minds.”

Jacobsen: If Mozart lived on into old age and died of more slow natural causes, what do you think would be a culmination of the works for him? In other words, what do you think that we missed out?

Sorenson: I “do not believe” that “he or his work,” would have been very different, and therefore I feel that “rather than having lack of something” that we did not see, what we actually lost “was the continuity of what he showed and taught.” In this sense, it could be said that Mozart always lived like “an eternal child,” who played and enjoyed “turning the world upside down.”

Jacobsen: When dealing with someone “evil” or “bad,” etc., we can feel a sense of disharmony, of something not quite right. Do you think there could be an analogous application of auditory metaphors to the forms of disunity of mind and behaviour leading to bad people in addition to the sense that we have about those people?

Sorenson: I will denominate that sensation of “dis-harmony” and “dis-unity” as “evils aesthetic defects.” The “metaphor” of when listened would be similar to “rape feelings” as if it was “an imaginary phallus,” that in turn is “invested” by some kind of “implicit aggressive knowledge,” since in its meaning “does not distinguish” “the border” that exists between “knowledge and truth,” due to the fact that both “appear identified,” within the message. Therefore also, “unlike someone else” or rather said “better than anyone else,” “leaves no room for reasonable or methodological doubts,” and in consequence by being the only one “who knows that knows,” and “actually is knowing what is truly good for somebody,” uses language as a “seduction tool” for its own benefits, and with the sole purpose “of perverting through conviction,” as if it was “a flipping” or somehow as if “a tapestry was put on its back.”

Jacobsen: Maybe, this is a general sentiment. When things exist autonomously through time, progress as if by nature herself, it’s a signal of things being set right rather than being built to fail. I suppose this could be a survival advantage. In fact, there might be some clues. Most people who have formal Narcissistic Personality Disorder a) leave a trail destruction behind them and b) tend to live life alone or end up alone if they haven’t ended up that way already. And people feel something is off about them (rightly). This seems like an embodied consciousness thing. Do you think this will make reconstruction in an artificial intelligence more difficult when it comes to intuition, sensibilities, and sentiments about disharmonies in all sorts of ways?

Sorenson: I believe that such forms “of consciousness” certainly are going to be more difficult to be reconstructed as “artificial intelligence.” At the same time, however I feel that by this it would be an excellent way to test if whether human beings actually “possess any spirit or not,” since strictly speaking almost everything, including “consciousness,” could theoretically be “symbolically encoded” and eventually “translated” into “artificial intelligence,” that yes, except if this “insight capacity” is of “a spiritual nature.”

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Christian.

Sorenson: You are welcome, and I hope that “the spirit of time” continues accompanying us.

Transsexuality, Transgenderism, Men and Women with Sorenson

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 15, 2020

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: With some of the preliminary thoughts setting the groundwork, let's delve into transgenderism and transsexuality, how would transsexuality be a fourth category in itself?

Christian Sorenson: Since in my opinion "transsexuals" have a "fe-male sexual orientation" regarding their "sexual self-identification outcomes," and in relation to their "secondary sexual characteristics" that are "completely feminine-masculine," as well as to their "sexual object elections" that are "markedly one or the other." By analyzing them "comprehensively," it is possible to sustain "functionally" speaking, that they are "exactly identical" to "men or women," except for the fact that in their "primary sexual characteristics," and "sexual karyotype" are "inverted." If we place the "sexual characteristics set" on "a balance," encompassing both, "biological and physical," as well as "psychological" aspects, it's possible "to deduce" and clearly "demonstrate," in my opinion that "they definitely lean towards the opposite," though strictly speaking "they are not what they seem to be." Nevertheless, by "identifying transsexuality" to "man-woman categories" as "original genders," "an absolute injustice" and "complete reality denial" are induced.

Jacobsen: How would transsexuality become part of transgenderism?

Sorenson: Through "a conversion factor" analogous to that used for "transgenders," that is to say as these last in my opinion become a gender of "special woman" and of "special man," more commonly known as "transgender women" and "transgender men," since they are "transformed" through "an externally intervened" process, it could be possible to "extrapolate" that logic regarding "transsexuals," due to the reason that with them it would occurred exactly the same, except for the fact that their "conversion process" does not regards "to any external intervention" which could consist of "cutting something over their bodies."

Jacobsen: Why do some religious traditions mentioned – Christianity and Islam – impose concepts so strongly on community?

Sorenson: Because they are "so sexually attracted" and "tempted" by transsexuals and transgenders that "they can't hold back."

Jacobsen: What is a man?

Sorenson: From my point of view, is somebody who "always" carries "an Y chromosome," and who regarding its "sexual orientation," and its "sexual object election," is "behaviorally" speaking at some point along "a continuum" between two "extreme tendencies" that I will denominate respectively as "absolutely heterosexual pole" and "absolutely homosexual pole." Additionally in my opinion, due to "its simplistic nature," it could be said that excepting "sexual functions," usually man tends "not to be able" to relate with "woman."

Jacobsen: What is a woman?

Sorenson: Is someone who “never” carries “an Y chromosome,” and that “behaviorally” speaking, in relation to “sexual orientation” and “sexual object election,” is somewhere between two “extreme tendencies” that I will denominate respectively as “absolutely homosexual pole” and “absolutely heterosexual pole.” From my point of view, due to “its complex nature” and to the fact that woman is similar to “a paper sheet, since use to tolerates everything,” it could be said that excepting “reproductive functions,” generally its relationship with “man,” tends to “be incompatible.”

Jacobsen: What is a “pseudo-man”?

Sorenson: It is a “genetically biploid” man in relation to “chromosome X,” and its “primary and secondary sexual” characteristics are “feminine” in appearance.

Jacobsen: What is a “pseudo-woman”?

Sorenson: It is a “genetically monoploid” woman in relation to “chromosome X,” who does not have its “primary and secondary sexual” characteristics well developed, and therefore has “a childlike” appearance.

Jacobsen: What integrates the primary sex characteristics, secondary sex characteristics, and “psychological sexual orientation”?

Sorenson: In my opinion, the “sexual appetite intensity,” associated with the “unconscious sexual object election,” and “its triggering function,” as “a sexual desire object.”

Jehovah's Witnesses' Human Rights Continue to be Violated

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 16, 2020

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), akin to one supportive of Jehovah's Witnesses argument in "Rights and Science: Persecution of and by Jehovah's Witnesses" on the rights violations against the Jehovah's Witnesses by the Russian Federation, "condemned" the increase in harsh prison sentences handed to the members of the "Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia." The USCIRF is a bipartisan, independent federal government entity. It was established by the Congress in the United States for the analyzing, monitoring, and reporting of threats to religious freedom outside of the United States.

This does not negate the issues of the rejection of some medical treatments grounded in non-science or theological reasoning and premises, i.e., quoting scripture as the basis for rejection of a series of medical treatments, or the cover-up of child abuse for decades as in many other religious sects or denominations. It's a mixed bag, as with many religions and religious groups. I know believers and non-believers alike realize this based on correspondence. However, one side wants only to condemn the religious believers' poor blood transfusion policy and cover-up of child abuse; while, another only wants to focus on rights violations against the Jehovah's Witnesses. Both matter and reflect the complicated nature of many of these affairs.

To the right to freedom of belief, freedom of religion, and freedom of expression, Jehovah's Witnesses have full rights to these, as with other Christians, or Hindus, Muslims, Jewish peoples, Native American spiritualists, and atheist, agnostics, Unitarian Universalists, and the like. Thus, the violation of the human rights of the Jehovah's Witnesses is an important thing to stop in order for the free practice of religion for them.

The USCIRF focused on the harsh prison sentences, but this follows a long series of negative impacts on Jehovah's Witnesses all over the Russian Federation. Take the case of Artem Gerasimov, who is a resident of occupied Crimea, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment based on personal faith. Is this not unjust and unfair? It is based on fundamental rights to freedom of religion and belief. Yet, he is imprisoned because of it.

A few days after the last one on June 4 with Gerasimov; there was the June 9 case of a 61-year-old man named Gennady Shpakovsky to even more time at 6.5 years based on religious views and sharing religious views of others. Could this be applied to other religions, say the Russian Orthodox Church? It is unjust and unfair in and of itself. It should stop, as it should stop for others all around the world.

Commissioner Gary Bauer said, "Russia's vicious targeting of the Jehovah's Witnesses, guilty only of practicing their peaceful religious beliefs, clearly illustrates the government's contempt for the international human rights treaties to which it is a party."

The 2020 Annual Report from the USCIRF listed a recommendation to the State Department of the United States for the Russian Federation as a country of concern based on the repression – rights violations – of the Jehovah's Witnesses and other minority religious belief systems' adherents.

Vice Chair Gayle Manchin stated, “The ongoing campaign against the peaceful Jehovah’s Witnesses is one of the many reasons why USCIRF considers Russia worthy of being designated a ‘country of particular concern’ for systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations... We sincerely hope that the State Department will reach the same conclusion later this year.”

With files from the USCIRF

Right Now, Mubarak Bala: Let Him Go, or Have a Fair Trial (Right Now)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 17, 2020

Mubarak Bala is one of the most articulate and intelligent humanists in the world today. Not heard of much in the mainstream of some of the secular discourses for several reasons, as Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson has been noting for years, Humanism remains Euro-centric, as in Caucasian and Western culture; nothing wrong with either the ethnic groupings or the culture, but the over-emphasis can exclude other voices deserving a platform, due respect and dignity, and a presentation of a different side of problems, experiences, and, thus, manifestations of Humanism in order to make Humanism true to the universalist visions and aims of Humanism and humanists. Here's the catch if you're not aware: Bala is in jail.

Or so we think, he could be dead. We really don't know. And that's another reason for considering this a crime and a human right injustice (violation). As the innovator and freethinking leader of Nigeria, Dr. Leo Igwe, has noted repeatedly, there is a long-term trend of persecution of atheists and humanists throughout Nigerian society with one of the biggest manifestations in the northern parts of Nigeria, especially places like Kano because of the strong adherence to fundamentalist versions of Islam. Igwe and Bala are brilliant people. They're extremely well-known and articulate, in life and word, humanists. There's no doubt some fundamentalist believers are relishing this persecution of Bala. Many humanists, around the world mind you, are not enjoying this one bit.

As this is part of an ongoing series of opinion pieces, as with Igwe and several others, we won't stop until there is justice for Bala. We've won the media war on a number of fronts. Don't doubt international humanists' resolve in this matter, the religious fundamentalist have messed up on all fronts in handling this case; if they want even a semblance of ass-covering, then one way in which to do this would be the release or fair trial in a secular court of Bala. Even in those cases, there would be failure on their parts. There's only damage control left for this fundamental mistake on the part religious fundamentalists to try to subvert proper law and order, and international human rights, and the rights due to the President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria as stipulated in the Nigerian constitution.

We didn't want this campaign; we didn't want this fight. It was thrust on the community based on the bigotry, fear, prejudice, and superiority complex inherent in some religious minds, usually fundamentalist, about the non-religious. For this post, I want to focus the penal code of Kano in brief. Because this was part of the longer article the day of the arrest of Bala, unjustly. S.S. Umar & Co. were the ones filing the complaint to the police from Kano about a Facebook post by Bala in Kaduna. Bala was dragged out of his own place of residence by two out of uniform cops and then placed in jail. This entire situation is unfair and should be openly condemned from the outset. I know moderate and ordinary Christians in southern Nigeria and moderate and ordinary Muslims in northern Nigeria know the justice due to Bala because of the outrageous acts being demanded in order to appease religious fundamentalists in northern Nigeria.

We have international humanist support. We have ordinary religious believers' support. It is only a small minority of religious fundamentalist believers who have proclaimed themselves the

arbiters of the faith for all Muslims, which, in and of itself, should be seen as, and probably is perceived as, a blasphemous act or behaviour within the conceptualization of the ordinary Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria and southern Nigeria, respectively. Nigeria, technically, has a secular constitution; as a fundamental tenet of Humanism, in some regards, is a separation between religion and state, or faith and governance.

The Penal Code of Kano State has a subtext of being a Sharia law-based legal code in which religion becomes imposed on the entirety of the population of Kano while within a larger context of Nigeria's secular or humanistic constitution. How is this not wrong? How is this not unfair and unjust, and illegal in some manner? Because it has a larger secular law for all and then a secondary religious law precisely for the religious only; a religious or faith-based law that many want to impose on Mubarak Bala in which a humanist, an atheist, and a former Muslim would be subject to the death penalty because of the religious zealots who a) cannot handle open criticism, b) cannot handle an open and extremely intelligent and articulate humanist, c) cannot handle a prominent leader within the humanist communities, and d) cannot handle a individual who uses freedom of expression guaranteed within the constitutional setup of Nigeria. This is, fundamentally, unjust and shall be challenged by humanists, whether Humanists International, or the Humanist Association of Nigeria, or individual activists like Dr. Sikivu Hutchison, Mandisa Thomas, and others.

There are towering figures like the aforementioned and Professor Anthony Pinn who have provided an in-depth and rich intellectual analysis and contextualization for comprehension of the issues facing us as humanists. It is useful here. And to all humanists young and old, how ever much they may make you feel unwelcome and as if you're not deserving of and granted the same human rights as them, these are your societies and your global community and, therefore, your identical rights too.

As per the complaint from S.S. Umar & Co., they stated, Bala "publically [insulted] Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on his Facebook page contrary to Section 210 of the Penal Code of Kano State ad Section 26(1)(c) of the Cybercrimes (Prohibitions, Prevention, Etc.) Act of 2015."

Cybercrimes (Prohibitions, Prevention, Etc.) Act of 2015 Section 26(1)(c) states:

26. (1) Any person who with intent –

(c) insults publicly through a computer system or network–

(i) persons for the reason that they belong to a group distinguished by race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion, if used as a pretext for any of these factors; or

(ii) a group of persons which is distinguished by any of these characteristics;

What does this complaint mean? It implies a dead man, a man six feet under (or purportedly in heaven), has been insulted. How can someone know this? By principle of parsimony, a more pragmatic interpretation is a select group of Muslims claiming to speak for all Muslims feel insulted over a Facebook post and, thus, declare this an insult to a dead man – leaving aside the idea of a religion being insulted.

I have seen on social media numerous death threats against Bala because he is an atheist (or a humanist and a former Muslim). In this, the real crime radar should be utilized to focus more rightly on real individuals making more than insulting claims and, in fact, declarations of public

intent to murder against an individual because of a set of beliefs and a particular rejection of a systematized religious series of beliefs. Who is this justice system kidding? Bala should be released without question or given a fair trial in a secular court; otherwise, the logical implication, by the penal code and the cybercrimes bill would imply a far more grievous and larger set of open charges, by their own stipulations, of the need to jail and potentially charge numerous individuals proclaiming open harm against a living individual, Mubarak Bala.

Free Mubarak Bala.

Freemasonry, Mozart, Love, and Romance with Christian Sorensen

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 19, 2020

Christian is a Philosopher that comes from Belgium. What identifies him the most and above all is simplicity, for everything is better with “vanilla flavour.” Perhaps, for this reason, his intellectual passion is criticism and irony, in the sense of trying to reveal what “hides behind the mask,” and give birth to the true. For him, ignorance and knowledge never “cross paths.” What he likes the most in his leisure time, is to go for a walk with his wife.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Mozart or Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart was a prolific composer of music. You love him, or the performances of the music. You mentioned Die Zauberflöte or “The Magic Flute.” Any further commentary on it?

Christian Sorensen: In my opinion, it is a musical composition loaded with “esoteric symbolism,” about which much can be speculated, but can hardly be deciphered.

Jacobsen: Now, there was some Freemasonic influence on the music. Is there any freemasonry background for you? I cannot shake the hand to be sure with the peculiar handshakes.

Sorensen: Depends on who asks...

Jacobsen: Are there any particularly trashy Mozart pieces? He couldn't have made everything perfect with the music.

Sorensen: I estimate Mozart “did nothing perfect,” and in that sense it is necessary to distinguish between “mediocrity and perfection,” since “not being mediocre,” does not means unconditionally “something less perfect.” In relation to “Requiem,” which is its last composition, and to “Allegro Molto,” I feel there's “something lacking.” Regarding the former, the reason was evident since it was left unfinished due to his death, but in relation to the last one, in my opinion there's “a talent lack,” because both, the “musical notes wealth,” and “musical harmony,” are not evident as well as in the rest of the body of its musical work.

Jacobsen: Love and romance go hand-in-hand with music. We're an auditory species for many emotions. Mozart, in fact, had trouble finding himself a partner, even Constanze was clumsily courted. As Seinfeld would say, “What's the deal?” Why did he suck at this? It is one of those baffling aspects of highly intelligent people, even geniuses. There can be an attainment of the height of creative productions and the devilish failures in amour. It is as if the gods made a Faustian bargain with most of the great geniuses of ye olde worlde order. I could list a long scroll of names who admit to utter failures in romance while being amongst the most highly intelligent.

Sorensen: Indeed, “love and romanticism” go hand in hand with music, since these “are emotions,” and this last can “ignite and feed” them. Nevertheless, I believe that “romanticism and love” usually “don't go hand in hand,” as occurred to Mozart and generally happens to geniuses, due to the fact that many times, though they are people “in love with love,” they instead “approach awkwardly” towards “the beloved” one, perhaps because they lack emotional

and social skills, and therefore “fail in their attempt.” From my point of view, “romanticism is risky” in reason that “exacerbates love desire,” and this last brings as consequence the “evidence sign” of “love object non-existence.” If I could summarize it in one simple sentence, I would say that “to find love you better not talk about it.”

Jacobsen: Mozart’s music, it is almost a synesthetic experience. Why?

Sorenson: Because Mozart was a genius, and as geniuses we are able “to experience synesthetic experience,” and to produce in others that kind “of experiences,” since “our perceptions” are not always “fixed,” regarding to “perceptual organs” and to “supposed sensible objects” related to these.

Jacobsen: If we take music, live classical music, as a form of art, let’s say of Mozart, it’s a mix of three things. One of them is sound in minute ways in the manipulation of waves in air. Another is the visual presentation of the community of experts who play instruments – almost miraculous a primate species has been adapted to this purpose for the species enjoyment qua species enjoyment. A last is the, if close enough to the stage, the second acoustic resonance; the powerful resonance from the reverberations of the instruments on one’s body – truly remarkable. It is visual. It is auditory, primary and secondary forms. It is triggering for emotions. Emotions triggering certain memories, as keys unlocking feelings for emoting’s sake or for bringing forth, calling forward, buried moments of awareness. What are some other elements of the musical experience? How do the live performance and the recorded experience differ from one another?

Sorenson: The difference between both kinds of music, is similar to what occurs “when sucking a candy with or without its paper,” due to the way of approaching to it, and though it’s the same object, it leads to sensations that rather “oppose each other.” By listening to live music, what is lived is an “experience of real experience,” while doing it with recorded one, what arrives is the “experience of an inexistent experience.” In consequence, strictly speaking within the last “nothing is there” and our conscience is aware of it, meanwhile the former unlike this, possesses the “unpredictable and unexpected,” through which “uncertainty” of outcome is faced, in order to “increase emotionality” and to “trigger a pleasure chain,” associated with the “sensible experience” of “feeling nothingness.”

Jacobsen: For the unmeasurably gifted, such as yourself, what is the importance of intense emotionality to balance out the intense cognitive life?

Sorenson: “Emotional intensity” is an “intrinsic constitutive condition,” of being an “unmeasurable genius,” linked to the fact of possessing a very low “stimulus threshold” that leads in turn to be “hyperreactive” and “emotionally susceptible.” Therefore, this last “is necessary” as part of our life, but it “is not enough,” in itself for allowing us to achieve an adequate personal balance. Indeed, the latter will depend on the consequence fundamentally on the “quality and connotation” that “intensity within emotion” and “nature of emotions” adopt in order to achieve a “harmonic” and “stable balance.” Anyhow, we “are not balanced” precisely because everything “is balanced.”

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Christian.

Sorenson: Thanks to you, and I hope I have “silenced the noise of the stones carried by the river.”

The Zuck Treatment: Religious Versus Secular Responses to C-19

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 21, 2020

Secularism seems rife with popularizers, dilettantes, ‘keyboard warriors,’ and scientists. However, regarding formal researchers into the world of secularism and the divides and two-storey buildings of seculars and the religious, Dr. Phil Zuckerman is a rare individual who takes part in some extensive research into the worldviews and worlds of the “seculars,” the “Nones,” or those without a formal religious affiliation, which can be amorphous – gooey and vague – definitions of the non-religious. When he examined some of the results of the research, something noted within the research was the degrees to which, during a pandemic, faith-based belief systems and, thus, responses utterly failed to deliver on the divine promises. In fact, they worsened the circumstances.

“Back in mid-March, nearly 40 percent of congregants who attended services at a small church in rural Arkansas came down with COVID-19, and a few subsequently died. In April,” Zuckerman stated, “at least 70 people who attended a church in Sacramento caught the virus, and a pastor in Virginia who piously defied social distancing orders within his flock died from COVID-19.”

Amazing - God did not help the most dependent upon his succour. (Many turn out as suckers.) The most devoted, most devout, most dedicated, and the most likely to demise based on a formal belief in the saving grace of God Almighty and the power of prayer. Zuckerman went from Idaho Falls to Frankfurt to Cameroon to South Korea to Cameroon to Israel speaking on the devastation of religion and its ill-equipped worldviews in response to a once-in-a-century pandemic, especially in an era of high-tide science relative to prior history and the tools – and knowledge of in general terms – of the reasons for the disease and death: a virus; not demonic possession, for example.

“While most religious people, communities, and congregations have taken COVID-19 seriously and have followed recommended social distancing practices, many of those pushing hardest to denounce or limit social distancing are strongly religious,” Zuckerman explained, “The fact is, this pandemic has brought into stark relief the underlying differences between a staunchly secular worldview and a fundamentally religious worldview.”

A god who helps those who help themselves is a god who either does not exist or cares not to help those most giving in worship to this god, i.e., the god is either a sadist or an insensate. Your pick. In this, the naturally naturalists, or those who adhere to Naturalism – as in natural events following from prior natural events (on the macro scale), deny the supernatural and the ideas of the religious. The religions claim and the religious believe in a supernatural, otherworldly, order to the constituent portions of life, the universe, and everything.

If a pandemic happens, then the, almost, natural follow-through from a naturalist perspective is to look for functional, scientific procedures and empirically-informed policies to mobilizer actions against the proliferation of a, for instance, virus. In a supernaturalist framework, one can pray for help; angels may assist one; and, God may intervene in the affairs of the believer for the protection, for example, one’s flock and oneself, though this didn’t happen in rural Arkansas.

Zuckerman said, “The results of these different orientations can, sometimes, literally be matters of life and death. We see this in terms of the current COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the strongly secular are more likely to accept the findings and dictates of science while the strongly religious are more likely to ignore or distrust such empiricism, favoring instead faith”

He referenced by Brett Pelham, where, as per an obvious prediction from the data on religion & faith-based thinking versus secularism & scientific-based thinking, the highly religious parts of the United States were “markedly less likely to look up scientific advice regarding best-practices for staying safe...” Religious people aren’t stupid; religion enforces or motivates a worldview of ignorance, motivated not-knowing. The correlation held with education, so the mediating factor is religion.

“According to a recent report, those states that are providing the best support systems to protect their at-risk populations from COVID-19 tend to be the more secular states with lower rates of church attendance and faith in God—states such as Vermont, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Maine—while those states with the worst support systems are nearly all states with highly religious cultures, such as Tennessee, Mississippi, and South Carolina,” Zuckerman said.

And yes, religious exemptions for social distancing furthered the poor outcomes of public health too. It held internationally too. Those more “secular populations and secular leaders” were more likely to “on average” perform better in terms of public health of their respective populations. This is not to deny the positive benefits of community and mental wellness coming from religion in the guise of community involvement and a feeling of solidarity and love with those around oneself. However, why do we need supernaturalism for this?

“To be sure, being religiously-involved has been correlated with many health benefits, especially in societies lacking a well-functioning welfare state that provides free and excellent health care to all citizens,” Zuckerman said, “For example, here in the U.S., people who attend church regularly tend to live longer and report lower stress levels. But what we see today is that the strongly religious appear to not be faring as well as the strongly secular in the face of this global pandemic.”

So, the real culprit is religion in general with hyper-religiosity, specifically; the issue is the extremes of religious belief leading to a denial of the obvious aspects of reality and hoping for some magical cure.

You Can Tell Them I Said It: Don't Start None, Won't Be None

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 22, 2020

One of the dumbest possible ways to conduct oneself as a group in a society, or as the leadership or a collective within a culture, is to start problems or act insensibly where no problems exist or sense would reason otherwise; within the context of the young life and times of Mubarak, this has happened precisely two major times against him. One time in 2014 with even the idiotic grandstanding psychopathy of Abubakar Shekau making open statements against Bala. This is an individual so far beyond the horror of the contexts described and the inequitable difficulties delineated around the world, by Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson, Bridgett Crutchfield/Bria Crutchfield, Mandisa Thomas, Liz Ross, Candace Gorham, Deanna Adams, Cecilia Pagan, Ingrid Mitchell, Lilandra Ra, Marquita Tucker, Mashariki Lawson-Cook, Rajani Gudlavaletti, Sonjiah Davis, and Sadia Hameed, and a number of other exceptional secular women deserving far more media coverage, interviews, references to professional work, and republication of materials (in part or whole) making their individual marks. Many who have supported him in international efforts.

Here's Abubakar Shekau's rap sheet: Through Boko Haram, he has displaced more than 2,000,000 people, killed 1,000s, while hundreds have been raped under the ideological banner of fundamentalist, militant Islam of Shekau, or Abu Mohammed Abubakar bin Mohammad al-Sheikawi. This excludes the massive decline from the Nigerian economy based on the transfer of resources to combat the militant group, the lives destroyed in the process through joining, being raped, killed, or displaced, or as dross in the midst of war, mayhem, and hiring for fighting religious fundamentalist lunatics (an extremely foolish or eccentric person).

The second time for Bala was in 2020. He and I were communicating on April 27, and were supposed to conducted several interviews on April 28, as we were talking on April 28. Then the communication went dead on the morning of the 28th. Obviously, he had been apprehended at that time. I went through the relevant documentation. It was clear. They had concocted a crock reason and then to make a lesson and a show of Bala gathered him and dragged him to Kaduna. Why? Probably, it is to appease religious fundamentalists in various parts of northern Nigeria with some emphasis on Kano.

We still don't know the whereabouts of Bala; we still do not understand the formal process for the reasoning; we do not see the reason for apprehension by two non-uniformed police officers, dragging away to jail in under 24 hours, jailed in Kaduna, and then presumably jailed in Kano to an unknown location without a formal ability to see a lawyer. This was between April 28 and 29 for the 'apprehension' and jailing followed by the transfer to Kano. Bala could be dead or alive. Because, the Nigerian authorities and to some extent the media have been silent on these issues. Even when not silent, they've been conspicuously silent on the truth on these matters.

In that, they've simply lied. It makes one wonder. Why lie? On the religious proclaimed ethics, it is a sin to lie. On the journalism side, it is unethical to lie. In both contexts, it is a quotidian of untruth, falsity, every time Bala is not provided freedom or a fair, secular trial. Why not give him a fair trial? Why not let the public know the truth about his whereabouts and case? Why keep

silent on this most important of issues of the life of a modern pillar of Humanism in Africa? If they wanted a fight (the one we didn't want), they've got it; and, we're not going to give up.

It has been 55 days since the illegitimate and unconstitutional (in Nigeria) apprehension of Bala. 55 days of a human rights violation for a prominent and known person in Nigeria and made notorious in 2014 because of atheist status, former Muslim, and humanist status. Why is this injustice being permitted in the hallowed halls of the police authorities, the coverage of the Nigerian media, and the legal and human rights mechanisms of Nigeria? Because he is prominent and rejects the common superstitions, denies the veracity of the storybooks in most Nigerian homes, and, the most recognizable social crime, being open about the lack of belief in them, even cutting and direct with the language. That's why? It's the reason for the charges against him by S.S. Umar & Co. It was the reason for the Change.Org campaign looking for 25,000 signatures. It was the reason for apprehension to make an example of him. And it could be the difference that makes or breaks the story of him here, because he believed, differently.

I ask Nigerian the faithful. If this is the context in which Nigerians live and remain willing to be silent and complicit on this matter, then the identical charge and actions could be made against Muslims in Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Osun, Ilorin and Sokoto or Christians in Abuja, Benin City, Calabar, Ibadan, Jos, Kaduna, Lagos, Onitsha, Owerri. If not for the sake of another human being endowed with the same human rights as everyone else, then why not for the sake of others throughout Nigeria who believe differently than you, or even the same as you? Bala's case could become a long-term and large-scale precedent because of his prominence as a non-believer. What if this became the case for every single prominent believer who said something offensive to another believer from a different religion? What would happen to these individuals?

That's the context in which Bala found himself. It is the environs in which the international humanist community finds itself in regards to the life or death, freedom or imprisonment, situation for Bala. It's unfair, ungrounded, and a total violation of the Nigerian constitution and of the international human rights of Bala. We have support from ordinary, moderate believers of all stripes – just read social media – and from the international freethought collectives, including the national and local ones in Nigeria. Even in believers' homes, there will be dissenters, just ask any parent. The fundamental issue is the freedom for Bala, as in the justice for Bala, and some recompense for him, too, because of the travails endured for almost two months of illegitimate, illegal actions and blatant human rights violations in the face of the pressure of religious fundamentalists in spite of the protestations of non-believers around the world and ordinary believers all over Nigeria.

Free Mubarak Bala.

Interview with Sam Vaknin and Christian Sorensen on Narcissism

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 23, 2020

***Sam Vaknin** is Visiting Professor of Psychology, Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia and Professor of Finance and Psychology in SIAS-CIAPS (Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies), as well as a writer and the author of Malignant Self Love: Narcissism Revisited. **Christian Sorensen** is an independent philosopher from Belgium. Both have scored profoundly high on the most reliable general intelligence tests, i.e., mainstream tests. In both cases, they have devoted themselves to wide-ranging and deep foci of study throughout life. Vaknin on narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Sorensen on philosophy, metaphysics, and ethics. Here they talk about the central focus for Vaknin, narcissism.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Within the DSM-V, of those criteria for formal diagnosis of an individual with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), what ones seem the most reliable, valid, and powerful as predictors of NPD to each of you?

Sam Vaknin: The DSM V is a vast improvement over the DSM IV-TR in that it includes an alternate model with criteria which are dimensional, not categorical; dynamic, not static; and descriptive rather than taxonomic (concerned with lists of symptoms).

The DSM V re-defines personality disorders thus:

"The essential features of a personality disorder are impairments in personality (self and interpersonal) functioning and the presence of pathological personality traits."

According to the Alternative DSM V Model for Personality Disorders (p.767), the following criteria must be met to diagnose Narcissistic Personality Disorder (in parentheses my comments):

Moderate or greater impairment in personality functioning in either identity, or self-direction (should be: in both.)

Identity

The narcissist keeps referring to others excessively in order to regulate his self-esteem (really, sense of self-worth) and for "self-definition" (to define his identity.) His self-appraisal is exaggerated, whether it is inflated, deflated, or fluctuating between these two poles and his emotional regulation reflects these vacillations.

(Finally, the DSM V accepted what I have been saying for decades: that narcissists can have an "inferiority complex" and feel worthless and bad; that they go through cycles of ups and downs in their self-evaluation; and that this cycling influences their mood and affect).

Self-direction

The narcissist sets goals in order to gain approval from others (narcissistic supply; the DSM V ignores the fact that the narcissist finds disapproval equally rewarding as long as it places him firmly in the limelight.) The narcissist lacks self-awareness as far as his motivation goes (and as far as everything else besides.)

The narcissist's personal standards and benchmarks are either too high (which supports his grandiosity), or too low (buttresses his sense of entitlement, which is incommensurate with his real-life performance.)

Impairments in interpersonal functioning in either empathy or intimacy (should be: in both.)

Empathy

The narcissist finds it difficult to identify with the emotions and needs of others, but is very attuned to their reactions when they are relevant to himself (cold empathy.) Consequently, he overestimates the effect he has on others or underestimates it (the classic narcissist never underestimates the effect he has on others - but the inverted narcissist does.)

Intimacy

The narcissist's relationships are self-serving and, therefore shallow and superficial. They are centred around and geared at the regulation of his self-esteem (obtaining narcissistic supply for the regulation of his labile sense of self-worth.)

The narcissist is not "genuinely" interested in his intimate partner's experiences (implying that he does fake such interest convincingly.) The narcissist emphasizes his need for personal gain (by using the word "need", the DSM V acknowledges the compulsive and addictive nature of narcissistic supply). These twin fixtures of the narcissist's relationships render them one-sided: no mutuality or reciprocity (no intimacy).

Pathological personality traits

Antagonism characterized by grandiosity and attention-seeking

Grandiosity

The aforementioned feeling of entitlement. The DSM V adds that it can be either overt or covert (which corresponds to my taxonomy of classic and inverted narcissist.)

Grandiosity is characterized by self-centredness; a firmly-held conviction of superiority (arrogance or haughtiness); and condescending or patronizing attitudes.

Attention-seeking

The narcissist puts inordinate effort, time, and resources into attracting others (sources of narcissistic supply) and placing himself at the focus and centre of attention. He seeks admiration (the DSM V gets it completely wrong here: the narcissist does prefer to be admired and adulated, but, failing that, any kind of attention would do, even if it is negative.)

The diagnostic criteria end with disclaimers and differential diagnoses, which reflect years of accumulated research and newly-gained knowledge:

The above enumerated impairments should be "stable across time and consistent across situations ... not better understood as normative for the individual's developmental stage or socio-cultural environment ... are not solely due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., severe head trauma)."

Christian Sorensen: *I will do so briefly, and in relation to Sam's expansive responses, its expertise on Narcissistic Personality Disorder, its labor for helping people who are victims of individuals with this disorder, or individuals who suffer from it, and regarding to part of the*

responses provided by me on this interview. For doing so, I am going to based my explanation on psychodynamically and psychoanalytically oriented psychiatry, and on Otto Kernberg's contributions that respectively from a historical and etymological point of view, have developed the concepts of personality disorder, and narcissistic and narcissistic malignant personality disorders.

If Sam, has a confirmed diagnosis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder, and this type of disorder is in turn associated with primitive defense mechanisms, and a low personality structure... Then from a clinical and logical perspective, and following a formal reasoning, he would not be able not even ethically, to offer any kind of guidance or therapeutic aid, nor could he claims to possess an expertise in relation to this topic. This last, since its theorizations, excepting those that may be bibliographically referred to other authors, are strictly and synthetically speaking invalids.

The predominant defense mechanism of this type of personality disorders is projective identification, which from a clinical sight, needs to be detected and analyzed, through countertransference by the therapist and therapeutic assistant, in order to offer an effective aid in this context, and in other words to avoid any counterproductive or harmful outcomes. At the same time, to achieve this objective, the person who offers or pretends to offer such help, needs imperatively to possess advanced defense mechanisms, and therefore, a high structure of personality. With respect to Sam's supposed expertise to refer theoretically on such a subject, it is essential to have a sufficient capacity of insight, in order to be able to actually arrive at meaningful conceptual deductions, and to original contributions, which in consequence could be considered as logically valid, nevertheless individuals diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder, due to their secondary narcissism, lack such skill, and for that reason can hardly be denominated as, or invested with any theoretical authority to speak on this matter.

On to the main question, it is the feelings of greatness and superiority, lack of empathy and exploitation of interpersonal relationships.

Jacobsen: There's a whole mythology built into the idea of narcissism, NPD, etc. One idea is the story of Narcissus. What are some of the mythologies in history and in folk psychology related to or building towards the idea of a more formal psychological diagnosis of NPD or the observation, at least, of someone appearing on the narcissism spectrum?

Sorensen: *From the historical point of view, there are some less recent examples such as Hitler, although there was a cocktail of other pathologies within him, and historically current could be Donald Trump, Kim Jong Un and Nicolas Maduro. From a popular perspective, in my opinion, it is very well represented in movies like "The Silence of the Lambs".*

Jacobsen: In correspondence, Christian, you noted three fundamental axes of identity self-concept, defense mechanisms, and type of object relationship. Christian, can you elaborate on these three axes, please? Sam, can you reflect on these proposed axes from within the professional literature and as a leading expert on NPD?

Vaknin: Pathological narcissism is a reaction to prolonged abuse and trauma in early childhood or early adolescence. The source of the abuse or trauma is immaterial - the perpetrators could be parents, teachers, other adults, or peers. Pampering, smothering, spoiling, and "engulfing" the child are also forms of abuse.

Pathological narcissism has been conceptualized successively as an infantile defense mechanism and a disturbance in object relations. Later, it metamorphosed into a personality disorder. I regard it as a post-traumatic condition coupled with arrested development (puer aeternus, Peter pan). Inevitably, such early childhood traumas render attachment in later adult life very dysfunctional, of course. It also gives rise to cognitive deficits such as grandiosity and to the overuse of defense mechanisms such as fantasy. But these are secondary features and not universal.

Sorensen: It is important to point out that these three axes, are given from a perspective of what means psychic structure. In relation to the self-concept, it refers to a phenomenon that I will denominate as diffusion of identity, that's caused by difficulties in maintaining an objectal constancy. Regarding defense mechanisms, it is relevant since there is a preponderant presence of what is called projective identification. Concerning object relation, alludes to the fact that bonding relationships that should be significant are not really, because they lack of deep and stable feelings, are viewed for utilitarian and profitable purposes, and are constantly loaded with feelings of idealization and devaluation.

Jacobsen: Christian, also, you remarked on psychiatry and the phenomenological approach, existentialism, and vitalism. So, Christian, what are the reasons for these intersections with respect to a philosophical approach to analyzing narcissism? Sam, how does philosophy play a fundamental role, or simply a role if at all, in orienting and defining the diagnosis of NPD or simply narcissism with psychology?

Vaknin: It doesn't. The members of the DSM Committee have no training in philosophy. Psychology pretends counterfactually to be an exact science, at least as much as medicine is. Philosophers are not welcome. Freud was a neurologist and tried to create a physics of the mind ("analysis"). The tradition of experimental psychology now dominates and lab coats are everywhere. There is a very strong strand of anti-intellectualism and anti-philosophy in psychology.

Sorensen: *Due to the fact that existentialist philosophical point of view, contributes to psychiatry by introducing the ability to achieve a descriptive observation of phenomenon, while the vitalism allows that psychiatry reaches a deeper understanding, in the sense of going beyond a purely biological approach in regards to the problematics of mental disorders or illnesses.*

Jacobsen: Some still view mental disorders as some otherworldly phenomenon, as in something spiritual grounded in sin or a disorder of the soul. Why do these supernaturalistic propositions and (non-)explanations continue to persist over time?

Vaknin: Because people are ignorant and feeble-minded, befuddled and fearful, disoriented and at the mercy of psychopathic con artist masquerading as religious leaders, public intellectuals, gurus, mystics, and life coaches with the definitive answers to all their questions immersed in the syrups of love and universal harmony, whatever this nonsense may mean.

Sorensen: *Since for some reason, the notion of evil and inclination towards it, is at the base of everything, and therefore the necessary consequence of fear, guilt and punishment.*

Jacobsen: Gentlemen, thanks so much for your time.

Sorensen: You are very welcome.

With Christian Sorensen, The Responsibility of Intellectuals

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 24, 2020

Christian is a Philosopher that comes from Belgium. What identifies him the most and above all is simplicity, for everything is better with “vanilla flavour.” Perhaps, for this reason, his intellectual passion is criticism and irony, in the sense of trying to reveal what “hides behind the mask,” and give birth to the true. For him, ignorance and knowledge never “cross paths.” What he likes the most in his leisure time, is to go for a walk with his wife.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is the responsibility of intellectuals?

Christian Sorensen: “None.” That question presupposes that “intellectuals” should have a “greater responsibility degree” or a “particular type” of it in relation to “non-intellectuals,” which in turn implies to believe that “intelligence’s degree” would determine “act’s moral assessment” and therefore the fact of accepting “intellectual’s superiority,” since if “moral non-imputability” and therefore its “responsibility absence or decrease” are determined by “diminished intelligence,” then the aforementioned, is equivalent to express that this “determination,” is given by “reason’s absence,” and in consequence this last would imply to “be almost a beast” or straightly said “to be a beast.”

Jacobsen: How do public intellectuals fail and succeed at this?

Sorensen: “Public intellectuals,” fail insofar as they “self-argue” with “dead superiority,” utilizing for “discriminatory purposes,” contributions that somehow generally are “self-centered,” and by losing any kind of sight regarding “equality sense,” in relation to what should be an “expected awareness” of “fundamental rights.” As a counterpart if “intelligentsia,” provides them with a “differential factor,” which in itself is neither “better nor worse,” but that nevertheless, if it is assumed as a “social duty role” that should visualize a “synergistic achievement” towards what for me is an “enthalpic social integration,” and then if the last becomes a tangible outcome, it can “be inferred,” that “public intellectuals” as such, have been successful in “their task.”

Jacobsen: What public intellectuals and intellectuals impress you?

Sorensen: Stephen Hawking, Albert Camus, and Luc Montagnier.

Jacobsen: Why do they impress you?

Sorensen: “S. Hawking” for not having contributed with anything, “A. Camus” because he learned all morality playing soccer, and “L. Montagnier” for considering that the COVID-19 virus has genetic traces of HIV virus.

Jacobsen: How does a better life decrease god belief?

Sorensen: Because when there “is a need,” god “is resorted,” since “it feels” that it “is not possible” to be satisfied naturally, and due to the fact that “for asking,” god first has “to be believed,” due to the reason that it “is not possible” to ask something of someone, who “does not exist,” and because god “is not going” to grant something to anyone who “does not believes,”

nor “venerates” and “does not makes” any merit, so when “a better life” arrives, needs “are fewer” and therefore as it is necessary “to ask for less,” and to “not deserve,” then “god’s belief” doesn’t make much sense anymore.

Jacobsen: Will Africa extricate itself from its bondage of superstition and colonial history? If so, how? If not, why not?

Sorensen: It depends because “Africa” has always found itself in a “systemic vicious circle” that I will denominate as “helplessness-misery’s positive feedback” between “misery and colonialism” on the one hand, and “superstition” on the other, where the first two have “historically determined” the latter, at the same time that while the formers “further intensify,” then the last one on its part, gets “even stronger.” Therefore it would be possible “to get out” of “this circularity,” as long as this Continent manages to go from “being a closed” to “being an open system,” necessarily through the intervention of what for me an “external non-iatrogenic” agent, that allows to modify “independent variables” and in consequence its “deterministic chains,” in order to finally “make permeable” the access to “dependent variables,” by in this case “replacing it,” with what I will name as a “non-entropic ecosystemic” outcome within “Africa.”

Jacobsen: What makes a virtuous person? What makes a non-virtuous person?

Sorensen: A “virtuous person,” is one who is able to maintain the “right homeostatic balance between two extremes,” while a “non-virtuous” one is the one who actually “does not have good and evil notions” sufficiently well “introjected,” and besides is unable to recognize any “dynamic dimension and balance” between “two polarities.”

Jacobsen: What are the trends active in less developed parts of the world, e.g., Africa, that public intellectuals should focus more on?

Sorensen: If I could summarize it in one sentence, I would say that it is the fact of recognizing, that places such as “Africa,” are “the backyard” and “the garbage dump” of the rest of the world.

Jacobsen: Will Africa decrease in its overwhelming religiosity over time if so?

Sorensen: I am sure of this, since that “overwhelming religiosity” is somehow closely linked to a “need and meaning,” that I will denominate as “over-compensatory sense,” which in turn fulfills “a function” as “defence mechanism” because if this is simply “removed,” they will remain “completely defenceless,” in other words analogously speaking, is what occurs with “phobic dynamic,” since if “phobic object” is abruptly withdrawn, that is to say if this is done with what produces an “irrational fear,” then a huge “anguish and anxiety” wave will be triggered until “surpassing” completely them.

Jacobsen: What are the virtues in behaviour and thought required for African societies? How will good governance assist in guiding and inculcating such virtues?

Sorensen: If I could summarize in one word what are “the virtues” in behaviours and thoughts that “African societies” require, I would say...”Resilience.” Before “governments” assist societies, by guiding and inculcating “these virtues” on them, it is first of all necessary, to “reach good” ones, and due to this purpose, “democracy” values must be put in advance, which in turn leads to require within these societies “quality and accessible education” as “pre-position” for everyone, that in consequence lastly “will promote” this sort of “virtues,” since if both “citizens and the political class” are pushed to, in my opinion towards what should be an “intersection central point,” then an “encounter” between them might be reached, and therefore by the fact “of

sharing” a “meaningful universe,” development is going to be driven “in behalf” of “desirables virtues.”

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Christian, as usual.

Sorensen: Thanks to you.

NSS: Greek Mandatory Declaration of Religion is Human Rights Violation

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

June 29, 2020

A mandatory declaration of religion is being challenged by the National Secular Society as a breach of human rights.

In Greece, there is a claimed requirement for parents having to declare religion on the child's birth certificate. This has been challenged by the National Secular Society (NSS) at the European Court of Human Rights.

NSS reported, "In *Papanikolaou v Greece*, the ECHR is considering whether the obligation violates article nine of the European Convention on Human Rights, which protects the right to freedom of religion and belief."

Based on the submission to the ECHR, it has been argued by the NSS the obligation goes against Article 8 and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. They deal with the right to respect for private and family life and the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and state:

ARTICLE 8

Right to respect for private and family life

1. *Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.*
2. *There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*

ARTICLE 9

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.*
2. *Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*

The NSS submission complained the obligation stands as contrary to the convention and unnecessarily divulges sensitive personal data in violation of the rights of the child and of the rights of the parent.

The complaint continued to remark on the nature of treating members of a particular faith as somehow a bloc or a “cohesive group”; whereas, the reality with every belief or social attitudinal group remains statistical and distributed more than anything. People differ.

With the freedom of religion or belief, as per the European Convention on Human Rights and the complaint from the NSS, it is an individual right, not a group right and, therefore, cannot be treated as a singular right of a group.

“The [NSS] argued that the requirement goes against both the plain words of the relevant articles of the ECHR and relevant case law. In previous cases the ECHR has ruled that requiring individuals to reveal their personal beliefs violates article nine,” the NSS reported, “It has also established that disclosure of information about personal religious and philosophical convictions may engage article eight, as such convictions concern some of the most intimate aspects of private life.”

Panayote Dimitras of the Greek Helsinki Monitor “greatly appreciated” the efforts of intervention of the NSS at the ECHR. The issues raised by the NSS will be ‘adding crucial arguments’ to the points raised by the Greek Helsinki Monitor too.

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans stated:

We've intervened in this case to uphold the principle that nobody should be required to reveal their personal beliefs, which can often be a very sensitive issue, without very good reason.

There's no good reason why the Greek state should need to know the religion of a newborn child's parents, so the court should ensure it upholds the right to freedom of belief and the right to privacy.

With files from the National Secular Society.

NCSE: New Jersey Revising Educational Standards

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 1, 2020

Some more positive work coming out of the National Center for Science Education or the NCSE with its Deputy Director, Glenn Branch, pointing out the situation in New Jersey.

With some of the issues in a poverty of critical thinking, at times, within the United States, some good events are more than welcome. The state board of education of New Jersey adopted the revisions of some education standards for the entire state.

These will be incorporating climate change in “a systematic and coordinated way.” Branch explained how every teacher within the public school system of New Jersey would be “encouraged” to discuss climate change in a proper context, educational environment.

Branch said, “...New Jersey's climate is already changing... and it is to the state's credit that its education standards are changing in response. But it will be necessary for the state to ensure that these latter changes have their intended effect by funding education appropriately: meeting the greenhouse effect with the greenback dollar.”

These kinds of educational advances can help work on the unfortunate scientific illiteracy in the United States as a leading scientific nation, as with other nations harbour large swathes of scientific illiteracy.

Whether consequential knowledge such as evolution via natural selection for biological sciences and medical sciences, or climate change for actionables on an urgent problem, or not, scientific illiteracy is an ongoing issue and state-by-state changes to educational curricula as a service to the next generations is greatly appreciated.

With files from the National Center for Science Education.

NCSE - Improvements on Evolution Via Natural Selection Education

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 1, 2020

Evolution via natural selection remains the singular foundation for the biological sciences and, presumably, the medical sciences by extension. Without an appropriate education in these matters and full comprehension and complete acceptance of its implications, a pupil or an aspiring biology or medical sciences student will be left worse off than educational peers.

With an NCSE/Penn State national survey, they have been looking into the “pedagogically appropriate treatment of evolution in state science standards,” according to the National Center for Science Education’s (NCSE) Glenn Branch, deputy director.

With the want of improvement in the standards of education across the United States of America, as we speak, three states are beginning to revise the state science standards: Texas, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.

Branch stated, “More than half a million students take a biology course in the public schools of Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas every year, to say nothing of the millions of students across the country whose textbooks might be affected by the content of the Texas standards.”

In “Teaching evolution in U.S. public schools: A continuing challenge,” by Eric Plutzer, Glenn Branch, and Ann Reid, one can find further details on the particular survey in question. With the low rates of adherence to the foundations of the life sciences, the United States will continue to punch below its weight and remain a powerful while less than possible nation in terms of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

With files from the National Center for Science Education.

CFI - Cash Prize Increase to Show Magical Powers

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 1, 2020

Center for Inquiry has been a consistent and powerful bulwark against pseudoscience and supernatural powers claims in the history of the United States in particular and some other parts of the world in general. Many in the humanist, generally, and the secular humanist, particularly, community owe them a great debt and, in fact, are a part of the organizations in its orbit if not directly with it.

One extended grouping of the Center for Inquiry is the Center for Inquiry Investigations Group. An interesting cash prize proposal building off the legacy of the James Randi Educational Foundation. The prize comes to an astonishing \$250,000. I believe in USD. The prize money, previously, was \$100,000. So, certainly, this ups the ante on the entire endeavour.

It is a financial backing to a challenge to prove occult, paranormal, and supernatural abilities or powers. Based on the reportage of the Center for Inquiry Investigations Group, akin to the findings of the James Randi Educational Foundation, zero challengers have succeeded in passing the challenge of the group. Yet, we find an astonishing number continuing to proclaim superpowers, special powers, supernatural powers, and the like. Others have never been properly tested in a modern scientific setting to provide sufficient proof of the concept. No empirical evidence on this level.

James Underdown, the Executive Director and the Founder of the Center for Inquiry West (Los Angeles) stated, “We’ve been waiting for twenty years now for someone to come along and blow our minds, and while many have tried, no one has proven they can actually do what they say they can do... Maybe all the real superpowered folks were just waiting for us to raise the stakes. Hopefully a quarter million bucks will do it.”

Granted, it is a lot of money. It can raise some questions as to why so few takers/testers to earn such money. In addition to the quarter of a million dollars for an individual who can provide evidence of the paranormal or supernatural claims, there is, as well, a \$5,000 prize money for the individual who can make the referral of an individual who can show the magical powers. (I believe “magical” is the appropriate colloquial term here.)

With files from Center for Inquiry.

Christian Sorensen: WAIS Unmeasurable Intelligence, William James Sidis

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 2, 2020

Christian is a Philosopher that comes from Belgium. What identifies him the most and above all is simplicity, for everything is better with “vanilla flavour.” Perhaps, for this reason, his intellectual passion is criticism and irony, in the sense of trying to reveal what “hides behind the mask,” and give birth to the true. For him, ignorance and knowledge never “cross paths.” What he likes the most in his leisure time, is to go for a walk with his wife.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How did the 185+ (S.D. 15) get calculated for the IQ score for you, as most will assume only reliable scores on mainstream IQ tests sitting between 40 and 160 (S.D. 15)?

Christian Sorensen: It was calculated “in the same way,” and with the same test: “WAIS-R,” as it was calculated the IQ score of “Evangelos Katsioulis,” when he earned “180+ (S.D. 15).” With the only difference, that I earned “at least” five points higher than him. Therefore, on account “of pears and apples,” of justice, and according to “one of the two” most reliable tests, for measurements of general intelligence in the world, the one who should be at “the first place,” on the list of World Genius Directory, “is me and not him.”

Since the question is on the mat, and for responding to “eventual ripping of clothes.” I want to take advantage, and to be clear, that I do not need to justify my IQ with any “silly games,” within the “almost infinite” that are in circulation, as if they were “candy businesses,” pretending to be high range IQ test, nor with the mainstream test that measures general intelligence. First of all, because I find them “silly, pedantic, absurd and misleading,” since at least the former ones, sell “false intelligence,” for making people believe, that they have an “IQ that is not real” or that does not belong to them, so ultimately they only serve to “inflate their ego,” as if they were “aero-static balloon.” And additionally, due to the fact, that my numerous interviews with you Scott, show actually and clearly, as a “fact of evidence,” who is who, since besides not being Wikipedia’s responses, they don’t have any support of bibliography. “Who ever likes it or bothers,” they have been elaborated, arisen and flowed naturally from my own “black box,” which lastly, is an issue that has brought me more displeasure than anything else... In synthesis, and to conclude, the point and “obvious fact” here, is that my general intelligence, is well above 185 (S.D.15), and “period.”

At the same time, I take the opportunity, to communicate that this is the last time I respond to something of this nature, since I feel that has “neither feet nor head,” and to which I have been forced to respond dizzily, throughout my life.

Jacobsen: Speaking of intellectual competitions, but in the realm of history rather than the present, what do you think of the case of Bill Sidis, in general terms?

Sorensen: Apart from the fact, that Sidis fulfills, what I will denominate as the “golden rule of three,” I think that regarding its capacities, is clearly represented “the universality” of these, which ultimately should be expected in relation to us, the unmeasurable geniuses, in other words, the fact that these abilities are “multifocally prodigious.”

Jacobsen: Of all of the people who have been mentioned with a sense of awe to some, semi-mystery to others, tragedy and pity to others, worship to still others, wonder and curiosity to yet another group, etc., what emotions or thoughts come to mind about the overarching narrative of the life of Sidis for you?

Sorensen: That of a man “committed to noble causes,” who was able to make his extraordinary capacities, available to the “most disadvantaged” and “for peace.”

Jacobsen: Any particular points of interest in his life for you, personally?

Sorensen: Sidis’s “atheism and communism.”

Jacobsen: Any points of appreciation and/or general commentary on the historical work on the Americas, on the intelligence level claims, on his ethical principles, or on his cosmology?

Sorensen: I agree with Sidis’s “cosmological” point of view, in relation to that the universe is “infinite and eternal,” and also with its application of “the first thermodynamics” law, which means that energy within the universe, is “neither created nor destroyed.” I personally would add, to its “cosmology,” and regarding “universe energy,” that this energy “does transform” as such.

Jacobsen: Any thoughts on Dr. Boris Sidis’s ideas about upbringing and making an experiment, more or less, of young Billy?

Sorensen: Sidis’s father, implicitly sought to experiment with his son, since he put into practice his knowledge of “abnormal psychology,” and also combined three elements, “affection, knowledge and precocity,” respectively, within the upbringing, which in his time and also currently, arouses “much controversy,” especially regarding the third of them.

Jacobsen: Why do so many in the gifted community look to the Sidis story?

Sorensen: I suppose that because Sidis, is seen as a sort “of oracle,” that arouses “ambivalent feelings” of admiration, in the sense of pretending to identify with him, as well of envy.

Jacobsen: Any lessons that can be drawn from this Sidis narrative?

Sorensen: The capacity of Sidis’s mind, despite its enormous “amplitude and variability,” to “be structured” in an orderly way, and without getting confused. In other words, its ability to mentally organize everything, by “napoleonically placing” each thing in its correct box, without mixing these last between each other.

Jacobsen: Who seems comparable in history to him?

Sorensen: From the point of view of its universalism and extraordinary capacity, “Leonardo Da Vinci.”

Jacobsen: Personally, what parts of the story seem, more or less, factual and extraordinary to you?

Sorensen: Sidis’s extraordinary “earliness,” “humanism,” and regardless of the fact that there is no documented evidence of its intelligence evaluations, the presence of objective facts, that give proof of his unmeasurable genius.

Jacobsen: If he lived longer than 46, what do you think he would have done with his gifts and talents?

Sorensen: I think Sidis would have formed, a “philanthropic intellectual society.”

Jacobsen: If he lived longer than 46, what do you think he would have done with his personal and professional life outside of general uses of gifts and talents?

Sorensen: Probably would have continued to live with his parents or sister, and would have been professionally associated with a university for academic and research purposes.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Christian.

Sorensen: Thank you for the opportunity, Scott.

USCIRF - Nations Pledge Finances for Sudanese Democratic Transition

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 3, 2020

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom or the USCIRF commended the \$356.2 million commitment to Sudan for “development aid and democratic transition programs.”

It was a pledged announced on June 25, 2020 at the Berlin Donor Conference. The purpose of the convening at the conference was to ensure the economic situation in Sudan does not harm its democratic aims.

“We are encouraged by the United States’ decision to provide such robust financial support to a government that is committed to reforming its political system and ensuring all Sudanese people are free to practice their faiths,” a Vice Chair of the USCIRF, Tony Perkins, said, “USCIRF urges the U.S. government to allocate a portion of this funding to programs that support comprehensive curricular improvements, legal and constitutional reform, and other transitional justice measures.”

With such a pledge, one can note the increase in the development assistance compared to Sudan from 2019 based on reportage by the USCIRF about the USAID administrator, as the source, John Barsa.

From a visit to Washington, D.C., in December of 2019, Abdalla Hamdok, Prime Minister of Sudan, emphasized the international support as completely important for the ‘advancement of civil liberties and political freedoms.

The USCIRF Vice Chair, Anurima Bhargava, explained the importance of international partnership alongside the support of the United States for a democratic transition. The funds are expected to “institutional, legal, and educational reforms to enhance religious freedom, and the processes necessary to ensure proper implementation of these (and earlier) reforms in every region of the country.”

Both vice chairs travelled to Sudan in February, 2020, to see the conditions for religious freedom in Sudan. Even with the significant progress of the Sudanese government, there was still work needing doing to appropriately attend to the religious freedom abuses of the former regime.

The USCIRF concluded, “USCIRF recommended in its 2020 Annual Report that the Department of State maintain Sudan on its Special Watch List (SWL). This was the first time since 2000 that USCIRF had not recommended Sudan for designation as a ‘country of particular concern’ for systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.”

With files from the USCIRF.

Foundation Beyond Belief - Kasese School Fundraiser Success

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

July 3, 2020

The Foundation Beyond Belief for the Kasese Humanist School (KHS) reported on the closing of the fundraiser for the Kasese Humanist School in Uganda. Its purpose was to help the community recover from the floods that had come through its community. With some permission from the authorities in Kasese, the KHS used funds to support the families in need affected by the disaster.

In June, KHS had rationed food to 35 families in Kahendoro, 45 families in Muhokya, and 40 families in Rukoki. 110 families were helped given the numbers reported by the Foundation Beyond Belief. The exchange rate is pretty terrible for a Ugandan shilling to an American dollar with 1 dollar in American currency coming to 3,728 Ugandan shillings. However, KHS has made each shilling count.

The purchases included “large quantities of matoke (a banana used for cooking), cassava flour, bar soap, cooking oil, salt, masks, and packets of biscuits. They also dispensed 150 free masks to all the parents who came for the relief items.”

The KHS Director, Bwambale Robert, has been doing outreach work to the relevant officials at the governments of Kahendoro and Muhokya. The purpose is to give food to a contingent of orphans. Robert has been a humanist at the forefront of activism in Kasese.

He has been providing monetary assistance to the educators who are struggling with the floods and COVID-19 coming into Uganda.

KHS’s Director Bwambale Robert has also been reaching out with government officials to the Muhokya and Kahendoro areas of Kasese to give food to a large population of orphans, and has been providing financial support to teachers facing financial hardship due to the floods and COVID-19.

Members and contributors to the flood fundraiser were able to raise \$6,000 to help individuals in need in Kasese.

With files from the Foundation Beyond Belief.

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