

HOUSTON HUMANIST ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER FOR HOUSTON'S HUMANIST AND FREETHOUGHT COMMUNITY

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About the Houston Humanist Alliance:

The *Houston Humanist Alliance* is a collection of local humanist and freethought organizations in Houston which have come together to provide a wider range of services, information, and activities to their members. While still separated in their membership, leadership, and schedules, member-organizations of the *Alliance* share the same newsletter and mailing lists. This allows our organizations to cooperate effectively and enables individual members to be kept informed of virtually all activities of interests to humanists in the Houston area.

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Essays (#1 of 3):

Houston Church of Freethought described for Evangelicals

By Ed Uthman

A very good friend of mine at work is a Methodist divinity student (second career) who has been given the assignment to write an evangelical sermon aimed at non-believers. She has asked me to give her a description of my own non-believer community, HCOF. I thought this may be good fodder for discussion:

The Houston Church of Freethought (HCOF) is an independent organization that has been operating in Houston for about three years. It is not part of any recognized "denomination," but other churches using the term "Freethought" have been established in California and the Dallas area. As far as I know, the Houston and Dallas churches are the only ones currently in operation. I don't know if there's an official roster, but I would estimate there are 30 to 50 active members.

HCOF, which meets once a month in a rented conference room and more informally in social events and coffees, is for those who consider themselves "atheists, humanists, skeptics, agnostics, and other freethought people." In practice, almost all are atheists or agnostics. All reject the notion of an anthropomorphic God and do not pray to or otherwise worship a supreme being. As far as I know, most or all HCOFers reject the notion of any and all supernatural entities and consider all phenomena to be the result of physical processes. None believes in resurrection, reincarnation, "the soul," or any persistence of consciousness independent of a living body.

Demographically, the HCOF congregation is diverse, although African-Americans are far under-represented relative to their number in

See **EVANGELICALS** on Pg 2

Essays (#2 of 3):

War as Massacre

By Leonardo Boff

The greatest danger for humanity and the biosphere is George W. Bush, rather than Saddam Hussein. As a result of the 11 September attacks, as the leader of the only global superpower, a genuine non-territorial empire, he decided to dominate the world by force. He inaugurated "permanent war" and "infinite justice," overriding all international conventions and law. When analyzing his official statements, one can see a dangerous escalation.

The first step was to summon the world for a relentless war against international terrorism. His motto was "those who are not with us are against us". The second was to identify those countries which protect and promote global terrorism. He assessed that there were about 60, calling them "outcasts" and "bandits," amongst which three form the "axis of evil" - Iran, Iraq and North Korea. And finally, he designed a preventive war. In his speech to the nation on 7 October 2002, Bush clearly states: "Considering the evident danger, we cannot await conclusive evidence, we shall make war." It is, of course, a premise of public and international law that any decision is based on conclusive evidence. Until now, international inspectors have brought forward no conclusive evidence, and those listed by Colin Powell were not convincing. However, for Bush, this is no obstacle to unilateral action. Those who threaten the military power of a country should immediately be disarmed. Consequently, Bush threatens to use all available weapons in a preventive military action.

Here lies the risk of Bush. The available arsenal of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons is so huge that only a small percentage could decimate all humankind. George Bush, more moderate than his son,

See **MASSACRE** on Pg 2

From the Editor's desk:

By Ron Titus

Dear Readers,

[1] *By the time this NL goes to press, the US war in Iraq will have come and gone ... well, not exactly. It will have come, but I'm afraid it will not have gone. It won't be gone for many a year to come, if not forever.*

Wars have a way of leaving their mark on history for future generations to ponder, argue over, and use as an excuse to continue hating and making even more war.

But no, war won't last forever. In my naiveté, I believe that our human species will, if it doesn't kill itself off first, eventually rise to the occasion and conclude that war "is not healthy for women and children and other living things".

[2] *Hopefully, Jimmy Dunne's article is the first of a column series. Uthman is a resident of Houston, Boffa is not. The world of the HHA NL is expanding.*

[3] *As mentioned before (and elsewhere), the Chronicle submissions from the AHA (American Humanist Association) are dated (or maybe even outdated), but perhaps serve a useful purpose as material for one's archives.*

[4] *Many of the dates were incorrect in the Calendar section of the April issue's snailmail edition. (Corrections were made before the email copies were sent out.) 'My thanks to the readers who noticed and called them to my attention*

I don't feel great when I make mistakes, so I console myself with "It's a wonder that there aren't more goof-ups!" Anyway, my apologies!

[5] *Peace!*

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Essays (#3 of 3):**HOH President's Sound Off:**

By Jimmy Dunne

Now that our war on Iraq is over, it's time to reflect and ponder on what happened and what needs to happen now. First of all, it was not an even fight. As an Arabic friend said, "This war was between an elephant and an ant."

President Bush first wanted 'regime change' then he wanted to 'remove the weapons of mass destruction' and finally to 'bring democracy to the Iraqi people and help them remove the tyranny of Saddam.'

I was against the war and felt that Bush was obsessed with removing Saddam possibly because Saddam tried to kill Bush's father. But after I saw the PBS Frontline special about the events leading up to this war and Saddam's admiration of Stalin, I switched sides and supported the removing of Saddam and his executions and tortures of anyone suspected of not being 100% loyal.

People should not have to live under such tyranny. It is like we rescued children who were being abused in a neighbor's home from further abuse.

It should be a basic human right that people have the right to vote on their representatives in a democratic setting. All dictators must go hopefully by the end of this century in 2100.

We do need to follow through with rebuilding Afghanistan and Iraq. The looting and plundering must stop. We should have posted guards around the cities to assure the safety of the people and their property.

Hopefully democracy will blossom. If another dictatorship takes root, all will have been for naught.

We should look on the Iraqi and Afghanistan people with the same empathy, humanistic care and concern as we do the American people. They should all have the basic human rights that our constitution guarantees.

Jimmy Dunne is President of the Humanists of Houston, and welcomes comments at jimmydunne@msn.com as well as via this newsletter.

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From EVANGELICALS on Pg 1

the Houston population. All age groups, including young children, are represented. The church directors vary in age from early twenties to early sixties and are of both sexes. Professions I have heard various members indicate include petroleum business, engineering, education, military, law enforcement, clinical psychology, oil field work, health care, biological sciences, drama/theater, and civilian government. There are at least two combat veterans (Korea and Desert Storm, so there ARE atheists in foxholes). The median income of the HCOF membership is probably not too far off that of the city at large, I would guess.

I think the average IQ of HCOFers, even those without college experience, may be considerably higher than that of the general population of similar demographic profile, but this is of course just speculation. They span the spectrum politically, although few are fans of the Republican party and its pet constituency of Christian conservatives. There is a substantial libertarian element in the congregation, as well as through-and-through, one-size-fits-all, classic liberals. I have never heard any HCOFer utter any remark suggesting any type of prejudice against any racial or ethnic group, or against homosexuals.

Freethinkers like to socialize and discuss important issues with each other, often with great passion, both online at social events. Some of the discussions may become sufficiently intense that they would not be welcome at social events in a mainstream church. In short, HCOFers are not big at small talk. Many do come across otherwise as loners. I suspect some have suffered for their beliefs and feel alienated from co-workers and family. I know of one young adult who has not even told his family that he is a nonbeliever. Some are married to believers. Some were themselves believers in the past. I think there may be some parallels between the experiences of early Christians in the Roman Empire and those of modern Freethinkers in our society, where 94% of those around us profess belief in God, and where a recent President (Bush, Sr) said that he did not consider atheists could even be American citizens!

I think that evangelizing Freethinkers would be a very difficult task. These are not unformed minds. All have carefully considered the world around them and have actively rejected all the religious paraphernalia that infuses the society they grew up in. I think the only way any would ever accept Christianity is to have a Pauline type of conversion experience, which other Freethinkers would likely file under the category of "psychotic break."

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From MASSACRES on Pg 1

authorized the use of depleted uranium, as a coating on the bombs against the Iraqi population in 1991. This radioactive substance, a residue from the production of atomic weapons, remains active for 4,500 years; its particles penetrate the soil, contaminate water and food, and produce cancer and genetic deformations. This perversity was also used in former Yugoslavia, Kosovo and Bosnia. Nearly 940,000 missiles were launched, all coated with this lethal weapon. The victims are countless. In the war against Iraq 150,000 children died, and 500,000 as a consequence of the embargo.

The imminent war is not war; it is cowardice; it is massacre. It is not a confrontation between armies; it is the killing of civilians with smart bombs from a height of 16,000 meters. Max Born, Nobel Physics Prize winner in 1954, denounced the prevalence of civilian deaths in modern war. During World War I, only 5% of civilians died; during World War II, 50%; in the Korea and Vietnam wars, 85%. And recent data indicate 98% of the casualties in the wars against Iraq and former Yugoslavia were civilians. It is not enough to be for peace. We have to be against war. There is no holy, just or humane war. All are perverse.

Leonardo Boff is a theologian and writer, author of "Crisis: Development Opportunities", Verus, São Paulo 2003. Email him at: lboff@uol.com.br

[Ed: The above was received via email from F Peter Szafran, 2003 0415]
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Chronicles (#1 of 5):

[Ed: This and the following outdated articles were released before the formal beginning of the US invasion of Iraq.]

Bush's march to war

challenged by Humanists

AHA NEWS RELEASE (2003 0317m1513)

By Roy Speckhardt (202-238-9088)

(Washington, D.C.) The American Humanist Association (AHA) opposes the unprovoked initiation of hostilities in Iraq and urges President George W. Bush to heed the voice of world opinion and the wisdom of friendly nations and step back from the brink of war.

Tony Hileman, American Humanist Association executive director, describes AHA's stance: "We Humanists are not acting hastily. We've held hope that the course of war would be averted, or more would be known about Iraq's capabilities and intentions. We held confidence in the United Nations' efforts at diplomacy. However, with United Nations and congressional debates apparently behind us, having seen the clear demonstration of world opinion, and in light of Bush's steady march toward war, we can no longer remain silent."

AHA president Mel Lipman discusses the issue: "Last October, when Congress abdicated its constitutional responsibility and authority by giving President Bush carte blanche to engage in unprovoked unilateral war, we Humanists shuddered at the thought of such imperial power wielded by one person. Our worst fears are now on the verge of tragic reality. Drawing on our commitment to democratic principles, we urge the U.S. Congress to reassume its constitutional role."

Humanists hold that individuals and cultures have the ability and responsibility to resolve their differences cooperatively, without resorting to violence. Hileman explains, "We recognize this is extraordinarily challenging, but it is in the face of just such challenges that nations rise to the occasion and demonstrate the validity of their founding principles."

With respect for the worth and dignity of the citizens of those states branded as evil, Humanists urge a course of compassion and understanding consistent with the ideals of this country. Hileman continues, "Humanists strive for a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences. We therefore urge that war be avoided, not at any cost but by any humanitarian and effective means—no matter how difficult.

"We're troubled by the unannounced and perhaps unanalyzed cost of this precipitous action. The administration has already invested America's integrity and peaceful reputation while squandering international goodwill and a reputation for fair play. In the eyes of once-friendly, supportive nations the administration has adopted a role of belligerent enforcer of its agenda. With war there will almost certainly be a further

infringement—if not abandonment—of civil liberties in the name of security. And now, on the cusp of war, we are being told that this pre-emptive attack is likely to trigger the exact kind of terrorism it's supposed to prevent.

“We have heard the same unconvincing arguments recited by the administration for months, but repetition is not persuasion. The failure to provide detailed explanation or address the broader implications of war on Iraq implies a frightening simplistic approach to a complex situation. President Bush seems sincere in his conviction, but there is a difference between being convinced you are right and actually being right.

With massive troop deployment to the region and the machinery of war poised, Bush and his few allies have laid down a marker. Bush is saying, ‘we’re ready,’ asking, ‘if not now, when?’ The assembly of the capability of war is no justification for its use.”

Lipman adds, “By making this decision without international agreement, Bush risks initiating a cycle of violence and vengeance not unlike that seen in Israel and Northern Ireland. What kind of precedent will this set for other nations who might wish to impose their wills beyond their borders?”

“It is dangerous to expect that war in Iraq will ‘begin a new stage for Middle Eastern peace.’ It appears that only Bush’s faith and determination led him to that conclusion; it is far more likely that war will further destabilize the region and increase the need for international involvement. We will likely be less safe—not more,” says Lipman.

Hileman sums up, “Coordinated efforts are having an effect. Mr. Bush fails to recognize that the efforts of the United Nations are working! Time to give cooperation a chance remains, as all options have not been explored. By any measure of what might be considered a just war, the situation in Iraq does not rise to the level of the ethical use of force. In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, we opt for peace and cooperation over force and coercion. This is not the time for war.”

The American Humanist Association (www.AmericanHumanist.org) is the oldest and largest Humanist organization in the nation. The AHA is dedicated to ensuring a voice for those with a positive outlook, based on reason and experience, which embraces all of humanity.

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Chronicles (#2 of 5):

Reason and courage

not too late

AHA NEWS RELEASE (2003 0319w1409)

By Roy Speckhardt (202-238-9088)

(This open plea has been delivered to members of the House of Representatives and Senate of the United States, and to the member nations of the Security Council.)

March 18, 2003
Washington, DC

In the harsh light of President George W. Bush’s unilateral pronouncements last evening, and in accord with the positions of the American Humanist Association (AHA), we call upon the Congress of the United States and the Security Council of the United Nations to vigorously intervene and stop this unprovoked aggression against the people of Iraq before it begins. It is not too late for sound reason and genuine courage to prevail.

We call upon the members of the United States Congress, through House Joint Resolution 20 and Senate Resolution 32, to reassume their constitutional responsibility and reassert their just authority in matters of war.

We call upon the member nations of the United Nations Security Council to rescind or negate resolution 1441 and the other resolutions President Bush relies on for legitimization of his unjustifiable war plans.

It is not too late for reinvigorated means of non-violent containment and neutralization of threat to be effective.

It is not too late for people of goodwill to prevail.
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Chronicles (#3 of 5):

Repressive taboos

slammed by Humanists

AHA NEWS RELEASE (2003 0325tu1459)

By Roy Speckhardt (202-238-9088)

(Washington, D.C.) “Tomorrow the U.S. Supreme Court will hear a case of great import to Humanists and others who value the principles of religious liberty, equality, sexual freedom, and privacy,” said Tony Hileman, executive director of the American Humanist Association (AHA).

“The Texas law criminalizing sodomy is an unconstitutional religious intrusion into private life,” continued Hileman, “The word sodomy comes from the biblical reference to Sodom and Gomorra; the legal use of such a term is tantamount to calling acts illegal based on their sinfulness.” The derogatory term

sodomy is not even universally considered a sin from many religious perspectives.

The Texas law that the Court will be questioning tomorrow even specifies that sodomy is only illegal in same sex relationships. AHA president Mel Lipman responds, "Such gender specific anti-sodomy laws fly in the face of our legal system, which is based on equality under the law."

These widely practiced sexual acts are not fairly characterized by the Texas law. Depending on the surveys, between 12 and 25 percent of adult Americans have engaged in anal sex and between 55 and 85 percent of adults engage in oral sex. Government prohibition of these common acts suppresses sexual freedom and our right to pursue happiness as we see fit.

The American Humanist Association has long supported sexual rights and responsibilities. In 1976 the AHA stated, "Repressive taboos should be replaced by a more balanced and objective view of sexuality based upon a sensitive awareness of human behavior and needs."

Lipman adds, "The government has no compelling basis for declaring the practice of anal and oral sex illegal. It's simply wrong for government to intrude in consenting sexual conduct among adults in the privacy of the home." Hileman concluded, "The government is not in the business of deciding who can touch what body parts. Let the Court bring reason to Texas law."

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Chronicles (#4 of 5):

Reason as alternative to prayer proclamation sought by Humanists

AHA NEWS RELEASE (2003 0327th1340)

By Roy Speckhardt (202-238-9088)

(Washington, D.C.) The American Humanist Association joins national and local groups sending a letter and proclamation to President George W. Bush requesting that he proclaim May 1 as the National Day of Reason. Traditionally this day has been recognized as the National Day of Prayer, but the letter requests that the first Thursday of May also be designated as a National Day of Reason. Tony Hileman, executive director of AHA, writes, "While Bush's rhetoric continues to be drenched with religiosity, by honoring the National Day of Reason he can reach out to the forty million Americans excluded by the National Day of Prayer in a symbolic non-threatening way."

While we are not asking Bush to forgo the National Day of Prayer, its governmental observance is unconstitutional, and inconsiderate of a sizable portion of the American population. That any taxpayer dollars fund the National Day of Prayer Taskforce is a blatant violation of church-state separation.

Many denominations pray, but not all Americans are part of a denomination. Their tax money should not be used to fund a day of prayer. A nationalized day of prayer excludes millions on a deeply emotional level, whereas recognizing reason as well as prayer is an inclusive, respectful gesture.

Humanists and other nontheists use reason and experience as guidance for their actions. Reason is not a new concept, yet it is progressive to emphasize it when making choices.

The proclamation calls for America to honor reason as our country's secular foundation and as a method for historically progressive decision-making. While prayer is a source of comfort for many Americans, reason should guide government policy. Hileman goes on, "This year, more so than in previous years, the need to recognize reason is essential. With religion being touted as justification for international action, a reminder is in order that reason is a more methodical and reliable means of reaching decisions."

The National Day of Reason aspires to unite individuals and bring the methods of critical inquiry and human solutions of human problems to national audiences. AHA chapters around the country are planning events to celebrate this day. Visit: <http://www.nationaldayofreason.org>

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Chronicles (#5 of 5):

Humanist honored on U.S. coin

AHA NEWS RELEASE (2003 0327th1603)

By Roy Speckhardt (202-238-9088)

(Washington, D.C.) "The American Humanist Association welcomes the decision to feature famed Humanist Helen Keller on the new Alabama quarter," said Mel Lipman, president of the American Humanist Association (AHA). Helen Keller was an advisory board member of First Humanist Society of New York, led by Charles Francis Potter, a founder of the modern Humanist movement. She was also a personal friend of Freethought Press Association president Joseph Lewis.

As virtually every American schoolchild is taught, Keller was born in Tuscomb, Alabama; a childhood illness left her blind and deaf. She learned to write and read with the help of a teacher, Anne Sullivan, and became the first deaf and blind person to complete college, graduating Radcliffe College with honors in 1904.

"What American schoolchildren are not taught is the depth of her humanistic values, which she never hesitated to express and which were once widely known," Lipman responds, "Helen Keller's full story needs to be told."

In keeping with the Humanist spirit of reform, Keller became a fierce advocate for disabled women and other disadvantaged

minorities. Keller was a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, a loyal supporter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a suffragist, and a staunch supporter of Margaret Sanger's efforts on behalf of reproductive rights. After hearing of the devastation the atomic bomb wrought on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Keller visited the two cities and became a vociferous opponent of nuclear war.

In fact, her outspoken, egalitarian ideals prompted the FBI to keep tabs on her. During the McCarthy era they compiled such a significant file of her "subversive activity" that she felt compelled to write letters disavowing communist sympathies to conservative donors of the American Foundation for the Blind, who were taken aback at her impassioned socialist rhetoric.

Keller shared the Humanist ideals of leading an ethical life and trying to better one's world, writing, "Many persons have no idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." Lipman says, "Her fearless advocacy demonstrated that--as the AHA has long argued--humankind and humankind alone should face its manifold obstacles with conviction and resolution without reliance on supernaturalism."

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Letters:

[1] Hi! Ron.

Sure enjoyed this month's newsletter. I've been wanting to tell you I'd rather you just snail mail mine than e-mail. Thanks! It will help me the next time I have to enlighten the anal retentive creationists. Thank you for explaining that and doing the work, again. You did good.

So they put themselves in the same category with scientific theory, as in Einstein's theory of ... Also, thanks for Kiesling's letter of resignation to Powell. Also the Reproductive health care info from DC. You are becoming more relevant every time.

Do you listen to NPR? This a.m. (4-06) one of their editorial guys talked about the cowboy attitude of America in Iraq and how we use that "loderint dum metuanti" or "Let them hate us just so long as they fear us". I hope we as a country can live him down. The far religious right can talk all they want to about Clinton. He just gave them fodder for their self-righteousness. But he had needs that were probably not being met. George Bush never worked a day in his life and is a dangerous "leader." He is allergic to intellectual pursuits and his years of coke sniffing and drinking made his so-called religious "transformation" a sociopath's way of getting himself into the "born again" political party/club. I hope there is someone who has guts enough and knows what they're talking about to pull the curtain back and let us see his "magic before it's too late.

Dorothy

[2] Dear Ron:

Just wanted to tell you that I read your article concerning the proper use of terms in the evolution debate. I thought it was pretty good and agreed with much of it. The only problem was the conclusion you reached. It was of course in left field (double meaning intended). No, I don't think Darwin's ideas are ready to be called science yet. They're as unproven and unprovable as anything in the Bible.

And while we're on the subject of the meaning of words, it seems to me you ought to be having a problem with pro-choice vs pro-abortion. Your newsletter uses the term "pro-choice", the only one available in left field, when you know as well as I that "pro-abortion" is the more accurate description.

There is also a problem with the exclusive use of the term pedophilia in the clerical scandals (in both the secular and religious press) when the sin is predominantly one being committed by grown men upon adolescents and young men and should rightly be called homosexual acts. Of course that would also be politically incorrect in this age of enlightenment.

Rich

[Ed: (1) Authorship of the article in question should be credited to Mr Irish, although I will claim credit for okaying it for print, ie, not censoring it. [Gee! I never thought I would ever be issuing a "nihil obstat" (nothing is obstructing) and an "imprimatur" (let it be printed!).]

Generally, old scientific evidence is open to re-evaluation when new evidence is introduced. Unfortunately, not all old Biblical interpretations are so open.

"Proof" to me is whatever evidence or amount of evidence that one requires to accept something as "true". Fossils and carbon dating are facts used as evidence. Most Humanists would exclude "divine apparitions" as evidence. The Kansas State Board of Education in recent years rejected a non-Biblical explanation of our universe before it reversed its position. Some people are more gullible than others, others more skeptical. How much evidence do you require for "proof"?

(2) For me, a more accurate description of the issue is not "pro-choice vs pro-abortion" but "pro-choice vs anti-choice". Some people don't want to make a decision, whatever the issue; they want the church or state to decide for them. I suspect that the majority of Humanists believe that people are responsible and accountable for their own choices.

(3) Unfortunately, pedophilia is an equal-opportunity offender; it does not exclude heterosexual conduct. Other than that, I did not understand the point you were trying to make in the last paragraph.]

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Ron's Ramblings:

By Ron Titus

[1] At the April breakfast meeting of the HOH (Humanists of Houston), the main topic of discussion was "world government".

[2] Consistent with my making many changes in my life, I moved from being totally against anything like "world government" to being very much in favor of it. The world has indeed become a global village. My original position was based on the 1950s' ubiquitous fear of "communism". In those days, if people wore pink underwear, they were either communists or at least "pinkos" (had communist leanings).

After World War I, SOME nations were looking for a way out of more wars to solve the world's problems, and came up with the idea of a League of Nations. Nations were now given the option to make talk rather than make war. The US opted not to join because Woodrow Wilson couldn't get the Congress to go along. The US feared that it would lose its sovereignty. When the notion of the United Nations came up, the sovereignty issue was lessened by locating the site on US soil.

[3] If the UN's mission is to end all war, it has certainly failed, even before Iraq. BUT if it's mission is to make talk rather than war, then it has succeeded, not failed. Had it caved in to the unilateral dictates of the US Bush administration's war policy, THEN it would have failed.

[4] Lacking "teeth", the UN is perhaps in need of an executive branch, a law/policy enforcing agency, an international police force. Ouch!

Idealistically, no police force would be necessary. UN members would talk themselves into whatever course of action they choose. Realistically, it may take a police force to muscle members into compliance with what is agreed upon.

[5] The fear of abuse by a UN police force is a legitimate concern. How many people in the US alone are in incarceration right now because of a false arrest made by a local police force, using the old "throw-down-gun" procedure?

Before Iraq War business ceases to appear on our TV sets, I'd wager that the US occupying forces will "find" weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

[6] Police action is supposed to be different from military action. But today it's hard to tell who is doing what: The US military in Iraq are trying to police Iraqi citizens. Many municipal PD "swat" teams are looking more and more like military units.

[7] "The US should not meddle in the affairs of foreign governments."

I disagree. If a foreign government is torturing its own people, I would certainly support doing something to change that government's policies. 'But not via war, ie, more violence!

[8] War is either a win-win, a win-lose, or a lose-lose situation. I know of no win-wins, I suspect that all win-loses are really lose-loses.

I cannot erase from my memory the woeful comment made by one of the very few living US GIs who returned to the site of the allied invasion of Europe at Normandy on D E Day in the latter days of WWII. After viewing what looked like miles and miles of grave marking crosses, he said "The only thing RIGHT about war is what's LEFT". 'Which translates to: the only good thing about war are the people and things that survive (and conversely the bad thing about war is everything that does not).

[9] Who stands to profit most monetarily from this war? "Follow the money trail!" Can anyone prove to me that Dubya's corporate cronies will not pick up a buck or two?

It would cost American taxpayers a helluva lot less to enforce legislation prohibiting wartime profiteering than it would be to run a full time war.

[10] Governments have used religion since at least the time of Constantine (274-337 CE). Wrapping oneself in a religion or in a flag is not unlike using human shields.

[11] "I am still against the war. But since it has already started, I am now FOR finishing it."

"I am against gang rape. But since they already started, I am FOR their completing their gross act of violence."

Since I started stealing from you, should I not continue until I have exhausted all of your other bank holdings?

[12] As an alternate to war with Iraq, some ask rhetorically "What should the US have done? Nothing?"

Slow and tedious diplomacy is not "doing nothing". Investing in the improvement of diplomacy would cost a lot less than waging even a "small sized" war.

[13] At the meeting, Charles Sherburne identified himself as an "irrational pacifist".

I don't know, Charles, but it seems to me that you are pretty rational, and have good reasons for being pacifist. And the only thing crazier to me than an irrational pacifist is a rational hawk. Could it be that a rational hawk is an oxymoron?

Back in anti-Vietnam War days, peaceniks put flowers in the gun barrels of the demonstration-busting militia. The only thing crazier than that behavior is people shooting at one another. How "sane" was the shooting of unarmed students at Kent State University during the Nixon era?

[14] What should be done with Saddam Hussein?

He should not be allowed to retire in a luxurious villa somewhere, UNTIL HE HAS MADE FULL RESITITUTION! Nor should he be killed UNTIL HE HAS MADE RESTITUTION! And if he is already dead, then his estate should inherit the liability! It is disappointing to me that those who have suffered no loss from his cruel regime will get most of his wealth.

[15] The US is a democratic nation. But a case could be made that both its foreign AND ITS DOMESTIC policies are anti-democratic. To wit:

How many times did our US government replace a democratically elected foreign leader with a military dictator of our own choosing? Our foreign policy is to replace old s.o.b.s with "OUR s.o.b.s".

Silencing nonviolent protests at home is no way to run a democracy, in spite of what Patriot Acts I & II say.

[16] France is loathed by many for its opposition to the US's war with Iraq. Dismissing my suspicions that monetary gain is France's true motive, I would like to believe it is its experiences of the consequences of war. One of the reasons frequently cited is because France loses most of its wars. That seemed like a pretty good reason to me. Who in their right mind would want to enter war if one loses all of them?

[17] After the meeting Jim Knierien said that the French fries flap (a US congressman suggested renaming them "Liberty" fries) was misdirected. The fries (called "chips" in Great Britain) are named after a guy named French (as in French's mustard), and not after the country France. I said that we had better get the word out before we start bombing Canada and Louisiana!

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Food for thought and/or thought for indigestion:

By Ron Titus

[1] I feel that Operation Iraqi Freedom, the name the government has given this war, would more appropriately be called "Operation Iraqi Liberation" or O.I.L. for short.

[Robert L Hughlette, Letters, *National Catholic Reporter*, 2003 0418, P. 23]

[2] Last month, a worldwide survey was conducted by the United Nations. The only question asked was "Would you please give your honest opinion about solutions to the food shortage in the rest of the world?"

The survey was a huge failure. In Africa, they didn't know what "food" meant. In Eastern Europe they didn't know what "honest" meant. In Western Europe they didn't know what "shortage" meant. In China, they didn't know what "opinion" meant. In the Middle East, they didn't know what "solution" meant. In South America they didn't know what "please" meant. And in the U.S.A, they didn't know what "the rest of the world" meant.

[email from Jim O'Leary, 2003 0406]

[3] The BBC reports that armed looters have sacked the Al Kindi hospital in Saddam City (Baghdad's equivalent of the Ben Taub Medical Center). The Allies, who have a responsibility under the 4th Geneva Convention to protect the populace and medical facilities, did nothing to protect the facility. U.S. troops have stated that it's 'not their responsibility' to provide policing or to protect the populace. (Indeed, looting has been described as "letting off steam"! Reminds me of the attitude the Los Angeles Police Dept adopted during rioting in South Central) --- If the Bush Administration sent insufficient manpower to police Baghdad, why did they fail to send them? If everything is 'going according to plan' (as alleged in Washington), is allowing the destruction of a hospital 'part of the plan'? Or is it just a case of FAILURE to plan?

[Tom Brucia, HCOF-Talk, 2003 0411, Digest 1032, Message 4]

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Statement of Principles:

The following are the core principles upon which our member-organizations are allied. Individual member-organizations may have missions beyond the scope of the Alliance itself, but any Houston-based group whose mission is compatible with these principles is welcome to join our community of organizations.

We are committed to freedom of thought and expression, as well as human rights and equality.

Our beliefs are based on healthy skepticism, physical evidence, the scientific method, and naturalistic philosophy -- unfettered by faith, mysticism, the supernatural, or any other form of superstition.

We stand for the pursuit of moral excellence, ethical integrity, and social responsibility based on humanity's needs and happiness in *this* world and not in an alleged "after life."

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Membership and Contact Information:

Whether you are a humanist, or seeking to pursue a meaningful life without theism, or simply reexamining your beliefs and exploring the humanist approach to knowledge and moral issues, consider contacting one of our organizations. We will be happy to answer any questions about humanism and/or membership.

Humanists of Houston (HOH): Houston chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA) / Founded 1978 / 281-493-6232 / jimmydunne@msm.com / 1306 W Brooklake Houston TX 77077

Humanist Association of Montgomery County, Isaac Asimov Chapter (HAMCIAC): Montgomery County chapter of the American Humanist Association / 281-288-6064 / rosshenry@mac.com

Freethinkers' Union (FU): Student freethought group at the University of Houston. Member of the Campus Freethought Alliance / 713-743-5180 / freethnk@bayou.uh.edu / www.uh.edu/~freethnk / 4800 Calhoun Rd Campus Activities Box 205 Houston TX 77024-2610

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#13 - Explanation of iih symbol:

The ii of the iih represents two or more people. The h of the iih represents the humanness to which they aspire. A lower case h is used instead of an upper case H to indicate that it is better to become human (as opposed to inhuman) than it is to join a Humanist organization.

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Publisher:

[1] The **HOUSTON HUMANIST ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER** (HHA NL) is published monthly by the Houston Humanist Alliance (HHA). Since 2001 05 (Issue #22), it is compiled, edited, printed, photocopied, and circulated by J Ron Titus (713-680-2880 / jront@juno.com / 5202 Viking Houston TX 77092-4236). Staff: Jim Knierien (Page-Layout Editor) and Nancy & Richard Chancey (Circulation Assistants)

[2] The purpose of the HHA NL is (1) publicizing events, i.e., keeping members informed of regularly and specially scheduled meetings, (2) providing for the public at large information about humanism and humanist thought, and (3) providing a platform for members to express their viewpoints and opinions.

[3] "The only free press is the one you own." How true H L Mencken was! The HHA owns this NL. Current editorial policy is: Readers are the board of directors, the advisory board. And since no meetings are set, it is up to readers to make their views known to the editor.

[4] The HHA and the editor do not necessarily agree with nor endorse the views expressed herein. Many humanists and freethinkers pride themselves with being individuals. Consensus among Humanists is therefore difficult to achieve. No one humanist can speak for all other humanists.

[5] The current editor operates personally from two principles: (1) "People do not make mistakes by knowing too much; they make mistakes by not knowing enough!" and (2) "Better than censorship of views is education of viewers."

[6] Anyone may quote from the newsletter but is asked to please give credit where credit is due, i.e., cite author, newsletter issue (number or date), & page.

[7] All articles, letters, and submissions of interest are welcome if on editor's desk by deadline (12:00 noon on the 15th of each month), postmarks not withstanding. E-mail format required. Name, phone number, & street address required for editorial contact purposes only.

The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions for space or clarity, but never with the intent to alter the thrust of the author.

[8] Snailmail editions are sent gratis to paid members of the HHA. Email editions are sent gratis to anyone else upon request.

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Calendar of Events:

Thursday, May 1 / National Day of Reason / panel discussions / 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm / in Borders Books & Music on 9633 Westheimer (at Gessner) / Contact: Jimmy Dunne*

Thursday, May 1 / National Day of Reason / round table discussion / 12:00 noon / KPFT Pacifica Radio / Contact: Art Fay*

Thursday, May 1 / National Day of Reason / 7:00 pm / in the backyard of KPFT Pacifica Radio studio in the Montrose area / Contact: Art Fay*

Sunday, May 4 / 9:00-11:00 am / *HOH Brunch* / in the coffee shop of the Holiday Inn on I-10 (at Silber) / Buffet breakfasts (available from 9:00) and discussions on topics chosen by the group (beginning at 9:30) are held on first Sundays monthly / Contact: Jimmy Dunne*

May 8 - 11 / *AHA 62nd Annual Conference* / Washington DC / Speakers: Lester Brown, Gloria Feldt, Kate Michelman, Ralph Nader, Helen Thomas, Sherwin Wine / Contact AHA (800-837-3792)

Saturday, May 10 / 1:30 pm / *HAMCIAC Regular Meeting* / Montgomery Co. Library in the Woodlands (2nd floor) [From I-45 go west on Woodland Pkwy to 2nd traffic light; turn north (right) on Six Pines Dr; cross bridge & watch for wavy sculptures in the median; turn west (left) to Lake Robbins Rd; pass Woodlands Pavilion; turn left into Library parking lot] / Regular meetings are held on second Saturdays monthly / Contact: Ross Henry*

Sunday, May 11 / 10:30-11:30 am / *Houston Church Of Freethought (HCOF) Service* / in the Ramada Plaza Hotel on 7611 Katy Fwy (I-10 at Silber) / Services (including song, humor, lectures & discussion with children's classes & baby sitting available) are held on second Sundays monthly / Contact: Art Fay*

Saturday, May 15 / 12:00 noon / *Newsletter Deadline* / All articles, letters, and submissions of interest are welcome if on editor's desk, postmarks not withstanding (e-mail format required), / Contact: Ron Titus*

Saturday, May 17 / 2:30 - 4:30 pm / *HOH Regular meeting* / in the Unitarian Fellowship hall, 1504 Wirt Rd / Business meetings followed by presentations are held on third Saturdays monthly / Contact: Jimmy Dunne*

Sunday, May 18 / 10:30 am / *Freethinkers Coffee Social* / at Borders Books & Music in Meyerland Plaza (I-610 W Loop S at Beechnut) / Spontaneous informal discussions are held on third Sundays monthly / Contact: Art Fay*

Sunday, May 25 / 10:30 - 12:00 noon / *Ideas Club* / in Borders Books & Music on 9633 Westheimer (at Gessner) / Book reviews by members are held on fourth Sundays monthly. Contact: Bob Finch*

Sunday, June 1 / 9:00-11:00 am / *HOH Brunch* / in the coffee shop of the Holiday Inn on I-10 (at Silber) / Buffet breakfasts (available from 9:00) and discussions on topics chosen by the group (beginning at 9:30) are held on first Sundays monthly / Contact: Jimmy Dunne*

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