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Briefs

AHA holds annual meeting in Charleston, SC in June

The 2017 American Humanist Association (AHA) celebrated its 76th Annual Conference June 8 – 11 in Charleston, SC.

Several awards were presented during the event, including the following:

- Herb Silverman, Lifetime Achievement Award – Silverman founded the Secular Coalition for America and Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry in Charleston. He also ran for governor of South Carolina in 1990 to challenge a state law prohibiting atheists from holding public office. After an 8-year battle, he won a unanimous decision in the South Carolina Supreme Court. The ruling nullified the antiatheist clause in the South Carolina Constitution. He is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the College of Charleston and author of *Candidate without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt*.
- Adam Savage, Humanist of the Year – Savage grew up with his father in the movie industry and specializes in special effects, teaching, and art. He is described as someone who has spent his life gathering skills that allow him to take what is in his brain and make it real. He is a sculptor, glassblower, and painter, and his special effects were used in more than a dozen feature films, including like *Star Wars: Episode 1* and *The Matrix*.
- Susie Bright, Feminist Humanist Award – Author of six best-selling books, Bright wrote *The Sexual State of the Union* and *Full Exposure*. A progressive activist, she has been profiled on CNN, BBC, and HBO, and the History Channel.

UNTHSC optimistic about 2018 in the face of budget tightening

by Wanda Foster

Storm clouds in the form of research funding cuts for biomedical and public health research may have dissipated through September 2017, leaving University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC) optimistic for the moment. While the organization has weathered many budget tightening storms, 2018 looks as if cuts could be more precarious than usual.

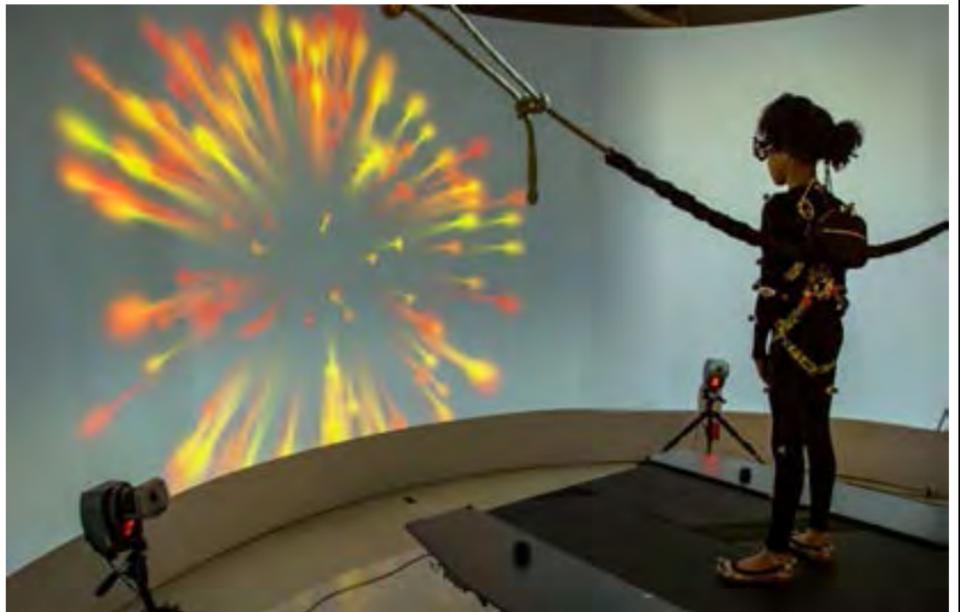
The national budget first presented by the Trump Administration in May called for \$6 billion in cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the government agency that funds biomedical and public health research. This slash-and-burn approach would have reduced the dollar value of the agency's national research budget by 20 percent.

The omnibus bill finally passed to cover the government through September appeared to ignore the original White House request. The initial proposal drew harsh opposition from major research institutions, like the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute, which collectively faced more than \$2.2 billion in cuts. Shrinking the budget would particularly have affected the CDC, which faces growing threats in its battle to combat global diseases.

Other criticisms also came from the public and were well-voiced through protests conducted by the March for Science in cities across the U.S. Locally, HoFW members marched among the 1,000 people who protested science funding cuts on Earth Day, April 22 near UNTHSC's campus.

After these events, Congress actually increased the 2017 budget by 5 percent, and the final bill passed in May. But the increase may simply reflect timing required to avoid a government shutdown more than a desire to appease opponents or save science.

As focus has turned to 2018 funding, we find that \$5.7 billion in NIH budget cuts remain in the new request as documented in the 2018 Department



A robot in the UNTHSC Human Movement Performance Laboratory simulates how people with autism spectrum disorder visualize the world. (photo courtesy of UNTHSC)

of Health and Human Services. NIH Overview. The document suggests that much of the savings will come from a major reorganization of the agency and from cuts in overhead for specific research projects. The devil remains in the details.

UNTHSC has a broad range of research in progress today, ranging from hormones and genetics to eye research and Alzheimer's, but operating a large research organization is expensive. The NIH budget's published intent is to continue to fund research like this, but to cut the overhead cap from 30 percent to 10 percent. While 30 percent is a high cap under the term overhead, a deep discussion is required before it will be possible to ferret out exactly how much overhead is too much. For example, some faculty may represent overhead in that they direct and oversee research, but others may be central to research processes.

Research organizations like UNTHSC by nature have high expenses in terms of hiring and managing top-notch research scientists, building and maintaining state-of-the-art facilities, and buying expensive robotic and laboratory equipment necessary to build and sustain research functions.

Since December 2016, UNTHSC has won some \$9.5 million in new and continuing awards for 21 NIH-funded programs (page 5), as reported in the NIH funding database. Research and education center operating expenses usually considered in an overhead budget reflect the high cost of buying, housing, and maintaining major infrastructure. UNTHSC, for example, has undergone a major infrastructure transformation since its meager beginnings as a stand-alone medical college, the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine (TCOM), which first held classes in a bowling alley in 1970. Today it is a multimillion dollar complex and an expanding organization housed in some 15 buildings.

The evolution has been costly and includes current construction of a new \$121 million building, which will contain 150,000 square feet of research and teaching laboratories, classrooms, multimedia educational areas, and administrative and faculty offices. The building will house the College of Pharmacy and the new joint venture, the Texas Christian University (TCU) and North Texas State University School of Medicine, which will start

(continued on page 5)

TCU political science professor says U.S. democracy challenged by under-representation and global issues

by Wanda Foster

Texas Christian University (TCU) political science Professor James W. Riddlesperger pointed out an array of internal representation and governing challenges and world problems facing American democracy in the post-Donald Trump election era as he spoke to HoFW on May 10.

An honors professor since 1982, Riddlesperger is well-published, having written and presented many books, journal studies, and symposia regarding a range of Texas, national, and international politics. Examples include *Lone Star Leaders: Power and Personality in the Texas Congressional Delegation*, which was selected as a featured book in the Texas Book Festival in 2011; symposia, such as

"Special Focus: Balance of Power between Congress and the President" in 2012; and a journal paper, "The 2012–2013 Transition to the New Administration," produced for the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Conference in Herzliya, Israel for the organization's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy, and Strategy.

His speech tackled issues such as the poor state of democratic representation in America, the deep partisan divide, problems with the Electoral College, low voter participation, and seemingly intractable international conflicts in the Middle East and North Korea.

Riddlesperger opened by asking how well Americans are represented by their government, and he pointed to

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James W. Riddlesperger, TCU political science professor, offers perspectives for U.S. citizens trying to engage in democracy during the Trump era.

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Book Review

Listen, Liberal: Or, What Ever Happened to the Party of the People? by Thomas Frank

by John Fisher

Civil rights attorney and antiwar activist Bill Simpich wrote in *Reader Supported News* in May 2017 that “the Republicans are few in number and can’t even outspend the Democrats much of the time. But they know how to organize and attract people who have widely divergent interests. The Democrats are greater in numbers and can’t even attract a majority of the people who are their natural base: the working poor and the struggling middle class.

“The Republicans,” Simpich concludes, “are the only effective political party.”¹

A harrowing account of how this state of affairs came to be is found in *Listen, Liberal: Or, What Ever Happened to the Party of the People?* by Thomas Frank (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2016).

Using meticulous documentation, Frank describes the devastating effects of the past four decades of Democratic economic policy on the middle class and particularly on young people “just out of school and starting to feel the burden of now-inescapable student loans” for whom “this reversal of the traditional American trajectory is acutely painful: they know that no amount of labor will ever catapult them into the ranks of the winners”² because “beginning in 1997 — from the beginning of the New Economy boom to the present — . . . you find that this same group, the American people, the lower 90 percent of the population . . . has pocketed none of America’s income growth at all.”³

What forces produced both the Democratic Party’s estrangement from its traditional base and a household-income landscape in which, in July and August 2014, “72 percent of the

people polled said the economy was still in recession at the same moment that the Dow hit 17,000?”⁴

The answer to that question includes the history of the manner in which Democrats such as Bill Clinton chose to respond to the Reagan revolution, which was to concede several of its major points, namely, determination to decimate the welfare state and institute draconian, get-tough-on-crime measures (“the pillars of the disciplinary state that has made life so miserable for Americans in the lower reaches of society”⁵) and to continue deregulation of Wall Street banking and speculation using measures such as the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act. This legislation invariably was tagged with the sniffing pejorative New Deal Era in pro-Wall Street propaganda, while enforcing increasingly stringent economic austerity measures for everyone else.

As a result, Frank writes “today, the American class divide is starker than at any time in my memory, and yet Congress doesn’t seem to know it. Today, the House of Representatives is dedicated obsessively to the concerns of the rich—to cutting their taxes, to chastising their foes, to holding the tissue box as they cry about the mean names people call them.”⁶

He points to defining Democratic collusion with the American Corporate State through abandonment of the traditional, working-class base. Instead, he said the party now favors professionals and advanced-degreed licensed experts in deference to the time-honored hierarchies of money and perceived merit, as evidenced by the reverence toward complexity and obscure technical language for their own sake, the elevation of the well-graduated, and the quasi-racket of grants and subsidies in the name of

innovation. Other threads contribute to these themes as well.

Frank narrates how the post-mortem on Hubert Humphrey’s loss to Richard Nixon in the 1968 presidential election provoked a major Democratic identity crisis and brought about important reforms. These changes delegitimized party machines in favor of open primaries and helped create a consensus that the New Deal coalition was dead or ought to be.

“In those days, when American prosperity looked like it would never end, the old economic issues felt to many like they had lost their vitality,”⁷ he said, adding that white-collar, high-technology-economy professionals were now the allies who mattered to Democratic prospects of governing.

This pivotal shift in Democratic Party self-identity meant two things: first, organized labor was effectively kicked out of its constituency; and second, the view developed that New-Deal-age strictures on the financial sector responding to the 1929 Wall Street Crash were obsolete interferences that needed to be eliminated. This position, dear to many new party elites, became prevailing Democratic dogma directly contributing to the financial crisis of 2007 – 2008.

Identity issues, including women’s, minority, and LGBTQ rights, have been righteously and rightly embraced. Meanwhile, no matter how glaring the continuing need for a societal safety net, the prevailing Democratic policy-making approach continues to assert that anyone who isn’t succeeding in the New Global Economy with its digitalization, deindustrialization, and disappearance of traditional blue-collar, living-wage jobs has no one to blame but themselves.

Democrats have increasingly assumed



these things as reality since the late 1960s.

As Frank aptly describes, the country is left with an ingrown, tone-deaf liberal class possessing an elevated sense of its own virtue (as exhibited by the worthy-cause-fund-raising, high-living summer denizens of present-day Martha’s Vineyard) and an ever-more-struggling and resentful working class, whose eagerness for scapegoats has rendered them eager to hear and vote for demagogues, such as Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and Donald J. Trump.

Bill Simpich correctly assesses the GOP’s corner on effectiveness.

Footnotes

¹Bill Simpich, *Reader Supported News*, “Inside-Outside: A Strategy for the Coming Elections,” 16 May 2017, available at <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion/277-75/43597-focus-inside-outside-a-strategy-for-the-coming-elections>

²*Listen, Liberal: or, Whatever Happened to the Party of the People?*, Thomas Frank (Henry Holt & Company, New York: 2016), Kindle Edition, Introduction.

³Ibid., and for all subsequent quotations, Introduction.

⁴Introduction, Footnote 2.

⁵Chapter 4, “Agents of Change.”

⁶Chapter 1, “Theory of the Liberal Class.”

⁷Chapter 2, “How Capitalism Got Its Groove Back.”

	July 2017	August 2017	September 2017
Key HoFW Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, July 12, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX; Fort Worth Community Outreach Specialist Virginia Braly of Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas will speak about the mission of Planned Parenthood and the challenges the organization faces Coffee and Conversations, Saturday, July 22, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Location to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events Regular Dinner Social, Thursday, July 27, 6:30 p.m. Location to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, August 9, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX; topic, “Stoicism and Deism: Forerunners of Humanism;” http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events Regular Dinner Social, Thursday, August 24, 6:30 p.m. Location to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events Coffee and Conversations, Saturday, August 26, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Location to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, September 13, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX, to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events Coffee and Conversations, Saturday, September 23, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Location to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events Regular Dinner Social, Thursday, September 28, 6:30 p.m. Location to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events
Other Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metroplex Atheists Fourth of July Parade, Tuesday, July 4, 7:30 a.m.; Cooper and Mitchell Streets, Arlington, TX; https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/241053917/ Metroplex Atheists, Wednesday Social, 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, July 5 - 26, J. Gilligan’s Bar, 400 E Abram St., Arlington, TX. Check the schedule at the following link: https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/ Dinner Across Fort Worth, Fridays, July 7 and 21, 7 p.m. Check the link for details: Calendar - Freethinkers of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX) Meetup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metroplex Atheists, Wednesday Social, 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, August 2 - 30, J. Gilligan’s Bar, 400 E Abram St., Arlington, TX. Check the schedule at the link: https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/ Dinner Across Fort Worth, Fridays, August 4 and 18, 7 p.m. Check the link for details: Calendar - Freethinkers of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX) Meetup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metroplex Atheists, Wednesday Social, 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, September 6 - 27, J. Gilligan’s Bar, 400 E Abram St., Arlington, TX. Check the schedule at the following link: https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/ Dinner Across Fort Worth, Fridays, September 1, 15, and 29, 7 p.m. Check the following link for details: Calendar - Freethinkers of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX) Meetup

Letters to the Editor

All HoFW members and other readers who wish to write Letters to the Editor responding to articles that appear in this publication are invited to express their own views and provide feedback.

Our newsletter policy requires letters to reference a specific article that has appeared in one of the two most recent issues. We do not publish open letters or third-party letters.

Responders should limit their letters

to 150 or 175 words and provide the writer’s email address. In addition, for those who require anonymity, please provide the name you would like published with the letter.

All letters should be exclusive to the *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* and should not be published in any other publication.

Anyone who would like to submit a letter can do so by emailing the editor

at the following address: vice-chair@hofw.org.

Space is limited, so we make no guarantee that all letters will be published. Letters may be edited or shortened to fit the space.

We request that all content show a respectful tone, even when the viewpoints expressed differ from those of the *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* or any other party.

FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY

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Editor and Vice Chair: Wanda Foster
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<http://www.hofw.org/>

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Humanists of Fort Worth

Opinion

HoFW Humanist Perspectives

by Wanda Foster

Claudia Cansler Zaunbrecher has blue eyes, dark hair, a soft voice, and a purposeful demeanor. Her measured, but open social interactions give her a sort of unassuming presence combined with a clarity of approach. She appears to say what she means and mean what she says. Committed to whatever life throws her way, she adapts while keeping her friends for 50 years and more.

Without asking, no one would ever know she is one of HoFW's various world travelers. Yet, among all of us, she may well have the most experience with the world of international diplomacy, long-term life abroad, and, yes, even international intrigue.

As the child of a U.S. Department of State foreign service officer in the diplomatic corps, Zaunbrecher was conceived by her mother in the Philippines while her parents lived there on assignment. When her mother discovered she was pregnant, she did what many diplomatic mothers did at the time. She took an ocean liner back to Washington, DC to give birth. Her father stayed in the Philippines, finished his time there, and then joined them back in the capital in preparation for his next assignment.

After she was born, her family moved to a consulate in a Mexico border town for 3 years, where two of her three brothers were born. Then they moved to Greece for 3 years.

She lived in Thessaloniki during her early school levels and attended the American Foreign School, which continues operations today as Pinewood American International School for kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2.

Zaunbrecher quickly learned fluent Greek and at the time was able to translate for her parents. While early language skills often fade over time, she feels she could still regain Greek easily, given enough time there.

Social life in Greece was rich and fun. She fondly remembers visiting the ancient ruins of civilization. As a child these images became just another just part of her landscape.

"You drive through ancient ruins on the way to the beach and stuff like that. You have all of these people you read about in history in later years, and you've already been there, done that, you know, because Greece is the home of democracy and the philosophers, and the Greeks are cool people," she said during our rainy-day June interview at Istanbul Grill in Fort Worth, where she knows the Turkish owner of the restaurant.

South Africa

At some point in second grade, she moved to Port Elizabeth, South Africa for about 2 1/2 years and learned to speak Afrikaans. A major port on Algoa Bay in the country's Eastern Province, Port Elizabeth was steeped in the staunch Apartheid of the mid-to-late 1950s.

Zaunbrecher attended a local school run by the Dutch Reformed Church. The church notoriously was the source of much of the Apartheid, segregationist sentiment, the belief that blacks were cursed by God for murdering Abel and needed to be punished. This

religious belief enabled the Dutch in South Africa to hold blacks in a lower, segregated, subservient class in their own native country. This period finally ended in 1991, although vestiges of these beliefs remain in South Africa and in the Southern U.S. today.

Zaunbrecher recalls feeling safe taking a bus across town to school alone and thinking nothing of it. At 8 years old she also remembers some scary events, which were normal in South Africa at the time.

"You know I would wake up in the morning and see blood on the sidewalk in front of the house where someone had the crap beaten out of him because he was out past curfew. There were terrible things going on," she said. "You know, I was just young enough not to understand a lot of the ramifications of it, but I did understand what was happening."

Zaunbrecher says she never felt insecure because her parents and her new friends were there. At school, she never attended mass, because her parents were not Dutch Reformists. They were not religious at all, although they participated in secular events, such as Easter parties or Christmas parties without the religious aspects. She said both parents are in their 90s now, and still neither ascribes to any religion.

When masses were held, she was sent to recreation break, study hall, or an alternate activity. She was curious about church activities and found the building interesting.

"It was a cathedral, and it was kind of cool. They had holy water, and there was stuff going on that I was just curious about," she said, but she was never interested enough to adopt religion.

Zaunbrecher had a circle of school friends and still knows some of them.

"I could walk across the valley," she recalls, "but I couldn't go into the woods because they were full of black mamba and green mamba snakes and other African wild animals you don't want to come across."

At the beach, monkeys roamed all over the place and there were many shark attacks. Still, she went to the beach without thinking about it. They went to safari parks, including Kruger National Park, to visit elephants, ostrich farms, and all kinds of animals, which were just part of the landscape.

After that, she and her family returned to Washington, DC for her middle school. She studied ballet, which took most of her time. Also, her youngest brother was born there.

Argentina

For her high school years, the family went back on assignment, this time to Buenos Aires, Argentina when she turned 14. She learned to speak Spanish and still speaks it fluently.

Chemistry was her favorite class. She attended another international school, but she admits skipping school was one of her favorite activities. At 14 she met her husband-to-be, Mickey Zaunbrecher, for the first time. He was 16 when they met. Argentina-born, he was the son of the Argentinian president of John Deere and was a dual citizen of the U.S. He sometimes skipped school with her. Some of

those days they went to the train station, closed their eyes, picked a destination, went there, bought a soda, and then went right back to Buenos Aires.

Her husband finished school ahead of her and went to college in the U.S. He was drafted by U.S. and Argentine armies, but avoided serving in both.

A series of dictators ruled Argentina, and times were difficult. Many Nazis and German Jews had fled there. She recalls that Josef Mengele, an infamous German Schutzstaffel (SS) officer and physician from Auschwitz, was a pediatrician they knew.

Mengele had been part of a notorious medical team who selected victims to be killed in German gas chambers.

When she completed high school, she went to Washington, DC, attended college for a year, and later worked in finance at American University. Zaunbrecher joined her there, and they eventually married. When they held their wedding, her parents had to come in from Tokyo and his from South Africa. They honeymooned in South Africa to see friends.

The couple lived a while in Baton Rouge, where she worked in accounting at Allied Chemical. When her husband took an international business position with Interfinancial in Houston, she transferred to Allied Chemical there and later worked for Southern National. Her daughter was born, followed by the first of her two sons.

Eventually they moved to Iowa because her husband took a position with John Deere. He was supposed to train and then transfer overseas, but they had to stay for what she remembers as 5 long years. She took care of two babies living alone, while he traveled from hotel to hotel in the Caribbean. The children kept her busy. She made friends and played a lot of bridge. Since life was in limbo, she did not try to work again.

Venezuelan Intrigue

Their third child, the second son, was born after John Deere transferred them to Caracas, Venezuela. They were supposed to be there 2 years, but the time stretched to 3, 4, 5, and 8 years because times were tough and no one else wanted to go to Venezuela to take her husband's place.

Politically, Venezuela was difficult and very full of corruption. If you went to prison, she said you might spend many years or you might die.

Many international business people from the U.S. left under pressure, but his company would not move them out despite growing dangers.

It was a very difficult life with a lot of crime and worrying about kidnapping all of the time. They had a huge 7,000-square foot house, but they could not step outside the compound unaccompanied. They had body guards.

"You know, you have blonde children. You have to worry about kidnapping all of the time," she said.

Many American business people were charged with corruption to get them to leave, and their companies helped them, but not John Deere, she said. Her husband stayed because his company wanted him to stay. Eventually though, he was informed he would be

From the Editor:

Most HoFW members favor science and rationalism over religion, magic, and dogma. Within the realms of secularism and nontheism, we remain very diverse with different perspectives and ways of arriving at our beliefs. A commonality we share is the sense of exclusion and unfriendliness we often experience from those who oppose our right to freedom of and from religion. This column presents our stories. Some of the names have been changed or limited to first names to protect the innocent.

sent to jail if he did not leave. He stayed and responded to charges in court, but after one court date he saw his opponent, a Chinese mafia guy, propping his feet on the judge's desk and talking to him. He knew he could not win in court in that situation, and then he learned that this person had a hit out on him. The family fled to Miami under cover of darkness, leaving their home and everything they owned to escape. She said her husband kissed the purple carpet when they landed.

"That it what it means. When you see purple like that, that is Miami airport safety," she laughed.

Return to the U.S.: Culture Shock

Zaunbrecher describes the culture shock of returning to the U.S. after living so long abroad. She is proud of her country, but does not believe in blind American exceptionalism. Yet when she is abroad, she always feels the weight of representing the nation, despite never having held a paid government position. She speaks of the nation's weaknesses and how we can improve it—with the fervor of a committed friend willing to tell the truth, even when that truth is not pleasant.

She was shocked by the materialism and class differences here. In Argentina, she always felt everyone was equally accepted.

Here she said white privilege "goes way far. I came back to the States and found out that we hate Jews, we hate Muslims, we hate black or brown people. They're kind of looked down on sometimes. I mean it was just so strange to me to have these guidelines I was supposed to go by."

Nowadays she is retired. She and her husband have lived in Arlington, TX for a few years. She sometimes cruises abroad with foreign friends. Eventually they were able to recover their belongings from Venezuela, but most of them are in storage.

She is 15 months into battling cancer, yet the battle she worries about still is the battle for the nation.

"We are going down a very, very scary path, and I know exactly what is going to happen. Donald Trump is saying I hired only billionaires because billionaires already have all of the money they need. But billionaires, almost by definition, never have enough money. They will take as much and set up as many conditions as they possibly can to make themselves richer and richer and richer and richer. You have a billionaire running something, and he is out for himself. That is how it is. That is the way Venezuela got to be where it was. They had billionaires. It's just awful."

President elected by minority of voters fails to fulfill duties or understand global complexity

(continued from page 1)

three elections that demonstrated the majority is not always well-represented in America, including the elections of 1888, 2000, and 2016 when the candidate with the most votes lost the election.

A good democracy usually is based on majority rule, Riddlesperger said, but the current president won with 2.86 million fewer votes than Hillary Clinton. Despite having fewer votes, Candidate Trump somehow enjoyed an Electoral College landslide of 306 to 232 electoral votes, revealing a disconnect between voter representation and the electoral college. This outcome makes it clear that the majority sometimes is not well-represented in American politics, a fact which he said feeds into our poor voter participation record.

“The simple reality is that a lot of Americans do not feel as if they have a stake in the game. We are unusual in comparison to many other western civilizations, all of which have higher voting levels, in most cases significantly higher voting levels, than we do.

“We love to be critical of the Soviet Union. They have much higher voting levels than we do. There is a problem. Usually they have only one name on the ballot,” he said, as the audience laughed.

“Our turnout rate? Mexico has a higher turnout rate than we do.”

Riddlesperger said U.S. voter participation first began flagging in 1968.

“Nineteen sixty-eight was a watershed year in American national politics,” he said. “It was a watershed year in the sense that before that time, we saw confidence in government building.”

Just before 1968, the government had begun enacting dramatic new legislation, including the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which Riddlesperger describes as, “really, really if you think about it, dramatic bills in terms of what they aspired to make of the United States.”

Despite lifting restrictions and expanding voting rights for all citizens, voter participation started declining. He said the decline appeared to be accompanied by a corresponding downturn in public confidence in government and in institutions in general, including Universities.

“You know people think of universities as a scam now. By the way, I think there is more information you need to know. Right? Churches, banks, other corporate institutions all have been on a direct downward slide since that time,” he said.

The problem with nonparticipation was never more obvious than during the 1996 election between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. Riddlesperger said that election proved the U.S. Government is not a good reflection of the will of the people.

“In 1996, more Americans did not vote than voted for Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, and all other candidates combined,” he said.

Since the Founding Fathers established the Electoral College method of casting ballots in different states, Riddlesperger said it has never functioned as originally intended. When the

Electoral College was first created, it served as a sort of intermediary between the people and election of the president.

The Founding Fathers believed this intermediary role was needed because they feared two things which were written about over and over again in the Federalist Papers and other Electoral College discussions of the time: fear of tyranny and fear of demagoguery. He said specifically they were afraid of “a candidate who would say whatever he could to win regardless of whether or not what he said had any relationship with the truth.”

At the time, no one ran for the office openly because the belief was that the office should simply be bestowed on the most deserving person. No political parties existed yet, and the nation had no method for nominating people for the post. Instead, the plan was to have members of the Electoral College vote without a public election.

“They thought the electors in the 13 states would nominate two people. Every elector would have two votes, not differentiated [not varying in number based on representation],” Riddlesperger said. The two votes provided for a person to serve as president and one to serve as vice president, as specified in Constitutional Amendment 12.

As the country matured, political parties and the method of voting evolved, but the Electoral College remained as a vestige of the past that continues to be the final decider of our elections.

Riddlesperger said the Electoral College has become problematic as a result of apportionment among the states. He said the Electoral College might work fine if all of the states had roughly equal populations, but they do not. So while Hillary Clinton was widely expected to win she did not.

Riddlesperger said on election night Donald Trump was “the most shocked person in the United States” when he won the presidency. When he took office, he said Trump was not prepared to be president. That is, he had not begun to vet people to serve in the many different offices that had to be filled right away, ranging from 5,000 to 12,000, who represent the institutions governed by the White House.

“The presidency is an institution. It’s not a man or a woman. It is an institution. There are 533 presidential appointees who have to be confirmed by the United States Senate. Today the president has nominated fewer than 50 of those 533,” he said.

Many of those 50 heads of offices “are flying without a net underneath them because they simply don’t have the staffing to help guide them through the decisions they are required to make.”

Riddlesperger said that and Trump’s personality are “parts of the reason we see one stumble after another after another after another in the Trump presidency because, simply speaking, they don’t have the staffing in place to do the job the constitution requires them to do.”

The \$3.5 trillion budget proposal also reflects a leader who is a complete amateur, he said. The biggest elements are defense spending and health care spending.



A turret stands on Mount Bental in Israel and looks down over the Golan Heights in Syria. (photo courtesy of YourWay.com.)

“Somehow he thought he could find a trillion dollars in the next 10 years by cutting health-care spending, which he could then reallocate as tax cuts for people in the highest income categories in the United States.

“Almost a third of the tax cuts would go to 400 families in the United States. The average tax cut for the 400 richest families in the United States will be between 7 and 8 million dollars a year if the American Health Care Act as it is currently configured takes place,” he said.

Challenges in the Middle East

While President Trump has suggested resolving problems between Israel and the Palestinians, Riddlesperger describes the Israeli - Palestinian conflict as a conundrum.

“It isn’t just a little conundrum. It is a conundrum of preposterous proportions. The notion that we are going to go in there and just fix it is something I think is crazy. These are conflicts that have gone on for millennia.

“Old City Jerusalem is the most amazing place in the world. You have the wailing Wall, which of course is the holiest place in all of Judaism. You’ve got the mosque that is sitting at the top of the Wailing Wall on the side of King Solomon’s temple. That is a mixed metaphor, and then you have the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which four or five different Christian groups fight over all of the time, so a Muslim has the key. You can’t make these things up.”

During a trip to Old City Jerusalem, his Jewish guide told him he was in the safest place in the world because all parties consider it one of the holiest places, and there is a sense that all three major religions have to coexist.

Walking with the guide, he viewed the Golan Heights in Syria from an Israeli vantage point. A mosque stands outside of a town the guide pointed to below. He explained that no one wants to hurt the mosque, so it is pristine, but every 2 weeks Syrian regime forces and ISIS change hands in the mosque.

“The area around it is a combat zone, literally,” he said. “The mosque is fine. But they end up almost in hand-to-hand combat outside the mosque.”

They have developed a demilitarized zone with a fence between fighting forces. Al Qaeda and ISIS hate each other, but often work together against the regime. If a bullet comes through

the fence and hits Israeli soil, the Israelis automatically triangulate where the bullet came from and blow up the source of the bullet, which they do regularly, he said, “so you have Israel ending up as an unwitting ally of ISIS and Al Qaeda in theory.”

Palestinians in Bethlehem largely work by day in Israel and live in Palestine at night. Every morning thousands of people go through a gate that uses thumb recognition software to let them into Israel. At night, they go back through the same gate.

President Trump proposed moving the American Embassy from Tel Aviv, which is part of Israel, to East Jerusalem, which is claimed by Jordan, but Riddlesperger said that is unlikely to happen. He said doing that would offend our allies, the Jordanians, as well as Palestinians and Syrians.

Israel settlements continue expanding into Syrian territory, making Israeli-Palestinian peace even more illusive. Because we are such close allies with Israel, he said the U.S. has no true credibility as the arbiter of peace in the Middle East.

Challenge in North Korea

North Korea has threatened the West, South Korea, and its neighbors since the Korean War, but each year they come closer to having nuclear capabilities. Most of the 20 nuclear warheads they do have appear to be from the former Soviet Union, and they have conventional scuds.

The problem is similar to the Israeli situation in that an artificial line was drawn at the end of World War II between people sharing a cultural heritage and deep divisions. There is no military solution, he said. Seoul is 15 miles from the North Korean border, and the North Koreans have thousands of conventional, nonnuclear missiles pointed at Seoul.

“The essential problem is that any war that begins in that part of the world blows Seoul up...They could literally make Seoul glow in the dark overnight with conventional weapons. That isn’t to say we accept anything Kim John Un does,” he said.

But he applauds current South Korean emphasis on diplomacy to prevent a war that immediately would impact 25 million South Koreans. As a result of these facts and lack of South Korean military capability, he said President Trump’s approach to North Korean military diplomacy is “scary as hell.”

Overall funding has grown, and research funding for UNTHSC has more than doubled since 2004

(continued from page 1)

in 2019. The new college will offer Doctorates of Medicine (MD) degrees together with TCU. Currently, UNTHSC only awards Doctor of Osteopathy (DO) medical degrees. Funding for buildings and education comes from the State of Texas and many private donors. What remains unclear is whether or not federal cuts will impact state funds also.

Since 1970 the expensive UNTHSC evolution has included construction of TCOM and then reconstruction that replaced the first site with the current Medical and Education Training Building. Today, it houses robotics education, including a simulation laboratory with robots used in teaching. “They have heartbeats, and you can listen to them. They can have heart attacks, high blood pressure, and mimic the symptoms of a stroke,” said Jeff Carlton, UNTHSC director of media, in an interview in June.

Some floors have exam rooms with one-way mirrors. UNTHSC hires actors and provides them with health histories. Students examine and interview the actors, diagnose them, and offer treatment plans as if in a doctor’s office. The one-way mirrors enable instructors to give students feedback on their performance.

TCOM has moved to a separate, larger facility, the Patient Care Center, that continues to serve patients, many of them on Medicare or Medicaid.

A Research and Education Building also has been constructed and is devoted to research projects the students participate in. Research listed in the table below represents only those projects awarded since December 2016. Some of the projects may represent multiyear awards and ongoing research, while others represent new research.

Carlton said the organization remains optimistic about 2018 funding largely because UNTHSC has fared well during budget cuts over the past decade. The organization’s overall research portfolio far exceeds those projects listed in the table. Total research dollars awarded to UNTHSC have more than doubled from \$22 million in 2004 to \$47.2 million in 2016.

When asked why he thinks the school is able to sustain growth in a budget-cutting environment Carlton said, “Just smart science. We have a pretty deep bench of first-rate people.”

They use a train-the-trainer approach in which successful grant managers teach new principal investigators to pursue and sustain grant money. He also admits that having so much infrastructure in place helps substantially.



HoFW members Wendy and Mike Cykana protest at UNTHSC on Earth Day.

While faculty oversees research, medical students are integrated into the research environment to help perform operations while learning. More than 230 students received medical degrees from TCOM in 2016.

They also offer a Physician’s Assistant program, which Carlton describes as a “hot career.” The University receives some 1,000 applications for only 90 spots.

“A physician’s assistant usually has more regular hours than a physician does,” he said. “When you graduate, it has an attractive salary.”

Carter said the State of Texas is No. 45 in the nation in per capita physicians. In an effort to increase the number of doctors in Texas, the State has increased funding to the organization. To comply with state legal requirements, UNTHSC must ensure that 90 percent of students reside in Texas.

UNTHSC also has implemented the Rural Osteopathic Medical Education of Texas (ROME) program to help the state retain physicians and move them into rural areas where medical professionals are few and far between. Students enrolled in the program are sent into the field to shadow rural doctors and learn how they manage care.

“Level I trauma centers are sometimes hundreds of miles away from patients,” said Carlton.

State funding and federal law enforcement funding also may help UNTHSC maintain its strong financial base. Part of the organization, the UNT Center for Human Identification, is known nationwide as a major center of forensics and anthropology DNA testing.

Carlton says UNTHSC is the largest contributor of DNA information in the country to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database for unidentified people in missing persons cases. It also serves law enforcement in many other states in the northeast, the Pacific northwest, the southwest, and Wisconsin.

Starting in 1993, the UNTHSC Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences began conferring masters and doctors degrees in biomedicine, which is a major focus of UNTHSC efforts.

The School of Public health offers doctorates, masters, and other specialized, related degrees, including doctorates and master’s in public health. This includes offering a dual degree in Masters of Public Health and Masters of Science in Anthropology or Geography and graduate certificates in public health, food security, biostatistics, and global health and geographic information systems; and physical therapy masters and doctorate degrees.

The UNT System College of Pharmacy also offers doctorates in pharmacy and dual pharmaceutical degrees.

NIH Ref No.	Principal Investigator	Project Title	Department Name	Funding
9357485	Jung, Marianna E	A Novel Mouse Model to Study Motoric Aging Induced by Benzodiazepine Abuse	Pharmacology and Neuroscience	\$65,700
9185279	Luedtke, Robert R	D3 Receptor Compounds for the Treatment of Psychostimulant Abuse	Pharmacology and Neuroscience	\$636,340
9344521	O'Bryant, Sid E	A Proinflammatory Endophenotype to Predict NSAID Treatment Response Alzheimer's Disease Clinical Trials	Internal Medicine	\$613,294
9204664	Park, In-Woo	Role of HIV-1 Nef in Acceleration of HCV (Hepatitis C-Mediated Liver Disease)	Cell Biology and Immunology	\$300,201
9236207	Vishwanatha, Jamboor K	UNTHSC Summer Multicultural Advanced Research Training Program "SMART"	None	\$140,184
9256535	Ghospade, Anuja	Neuronal Survival, HIV-1 and Astrocyte-TIMP-1	Cell Biology and Immunology	\$414,368
9264598	Jin, Kunlin	Impacts of the Systemic Milieu on Stroke Outcome	Pharmacology and Neuroscience	\$182,500
9288470	Prokai, Laszlo	Brain-Selective Therapy to Alleviate Hot Flushes of Prostate Cancer Patients	None	\$355,055
9300344	Mathew, Porunelloor Abraham	Molecular Characterization of NKp44 Ligand on Astrocytes	Cell Biology and Immunology	\$73,000
9350661	Ghospade, Anuja	Targeting Latent HIV Astroglial (term related to astrologiosis, an increase in the number of astrocytes) Reservoirs without Reactivation	Molecular and Medical Genetics	\$219,000
9274093	Vishwanatha, Jamboor K	Promoting Diversity in Research Training for Health Professionals	Institute for Cancer Research	\$206,280
9210033	Singh, Meharvan	Novel Mechanistic Targets of Steroid Hormones in the Brain	Pharmacology and Neuroscience	\$1,027,245
9242065	Cunningham, J Thomas	Homeostatic Regulation of Supraoptic Neurons: Role of Bone Derived Neurotrophic Factor	Integrative Physiology and Anatomy	\$365,000
9257469	Yang, Shaohua	Neuroglobin: Cell Metabolism and Neuroprotection	Pharmacology and Neuroscience	\$319,375
9268542	Singh, Meharvan	Training in the Neurobiology of Aging	Pharmacology and Neuroscience	\$302,964
9185928	Su, Dong-Ming	Balance of Thymic Negative Selection vs. Treg Cell Generation in the Elderly	Cell Biology and Immunology	\$328,500
9240669	Yan, Liang-Jun	Dietary Targeting of Dihydropyrimidine Dehydrogenase for Stroke Tolerance	Pharmacology and Neuroscience	\$253,750
9253086	Mifflin, Steven W	Neurohumoral Adaptations to Chronic Intermittent Hypoxia: Insights into the Pathophysiology of Sleep Apnea	Integrative Physiology and Anatomy	\$1,875,512
9252568	Burgard, Daniel Eric	Creating Solutions for a Healthier Community: A Proposal to Host National Network of Libraries of Medicine South Central Region Regional Medical Library	None	\$1,258,088
9229022	McDowell, Colleen Mary	Crosstalk of Transforming Growth Factor-Beta and Toll-Like Receptor 4 Pathways in the Trabecular Meshwork	Cell Biology and Immunology	\$328,500
9229023	Zode, Gulab	Crosstalk between Unfolded Protein Response and Autophagy for the Treatment of Glaucoma	Cell Biology and Immunology	\$295,650
		Total Value		\$9,560,506

Overall UNTHSC conducts some \$47.2 million in research. These projects are NIH-funded research awarded to UNTHSC since December 2016. Some projects represent new research, others continuing research. (Source: National Institutes of Health)

HoFW continues Cowtown Adopt-a-Street cleanup tradition by picking up litter on a long stretch of our adopted highway

Thanks to the treasurer, Adam, each spring we continue to organize and conduct our Spring cleanup of a stretch of Granbury road we adopted years ago.



Rick and his two daughters, Layna and Cora, don their orange shirts and help with the cleanup. They love outings with dad. (photo by Zachary Moore)

The sign on the street is quite old and still reflects the original name of our organization: Cowtown Humanists.

This has been an HoFW volunteer project ongoing for possibly as much as a decade.

Attendance was higher than normal this year, and many younger and newer faces were on the scene to begin the new cycle for a new generation of able-bodied volunteers. At the same time, some older members are graduating into new phases of their retirement and will need to rest more and pick up trash less, so HoFW's key goal is to encourage the able-bodied to join us and help us grow to continue this tradition and others into the future.

Adam said about 20 people showed up for this year's event.

"We picked up trash from 9 to 11 a.m. We covered more ground than we have in recent years," he said. "We cleaned Granbury Road from the 4400 block at Foster Park to the 3800 block at University Drive."

Wackiest Trash

"The wackiest piece of trash we found was a box labeled 'fetish urine.' Fortunately it was empty. Apparently this is synthetic urine sold to people looking to beat a drug test. I dropped off a truckload of trash and recycling at the local trash drop-off that afternoon," he said. "The weather was great."

Memorable Year

This year was memorable in that it may be the last year that one of our senior members, Jay Lotven, will be able to participate as he has done most years. His wife, Suzie, also has undergone a major surgery, so she also is not likely to be at as many of our meetings or at this event. Both of them have served HoFW very well ever since they discovered the organization and joined around 2007. So many thanks to them for their long years of service.

They also have volunteered for many years for many other charities, Good Samaritans, Meals on Wheels, and the South Central Alliance of Churches (SCAC), a Christian group that helps the needy in the community without proselytizing or imposing religious requirements.

His son, David Lotven, also volunteers and was present at this event, along with Rick and his family, Adam and his family, Morris Meador, Mick Zaunbrecher, and many others.

Impact of Ground and Street Litter

Land and street litter is more than unsightly. Cigarette butts, plastic bags, fast food wrappers, glass bottles, old tires, and all kinds of things can contribute to vehicle accidents and injuries, smother plants, start fires, and harm or kill animals. It attracts vermin and contributes to harmful bacteria that can contaminate ground water.

A study performed by Texans for Clean Water shows that litter and illegal dumping across Texas cost the state some \$50 million, which includes abatement, prevention, and enforcement of antilittering laws.

The study says the cost of litter alone in Fort Worth is \$822,200, and the cost of illegal dumping adds a whopping \$1.1 million in costs funded by Texas and Fort Worth taxpayers.



Jay Lotven, still hanging tough in his 80s, helps HoFW clean a stretch of Granbury Road in April. (photo by Zachary Moore)

In honor of World Humanist Day, June 21, we say thank you to all of our volunteers!

Our volunteers, including our participants in cleanups and marches supporting the environment and human rights, help make HoFW a vital organization with a voice in local, state, and world communities, thereby reflecting true values of the American humanist.

Summer solstice, June 21, the longest day in the year, is set aside annually as World Humanist Day. The day is defined as "a coming together of organizations and individuals who value

science and rationalism over divinity and the supernatural."

The American Humanist Association, with which HoFW is affiliated, created the day in the 1980s. Humanists believe people must use reason and perseverance to improve the world, rather than deferring to gods or devils.

As Kurt Vonnegut Jr. said, "Being a humanist means trying to behave decently without expectation of rewards or punishment after you are dead."

Officer Re-Election, Treasury Report, and Meeting Minutes, May 10

By Reed K. Bilz, Secretary

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Sam, at Westside Unitarian-Universalist Church.

Attendance. Twenty-four people attended. A quorum was established.

Treasurer's Report. We have \$487.66 in the checking account after paying a donation to Westside of \$300 for use of the building. We also have \$133.87 in our PayPal account for a total of \$621.53.

Membership Report. We currently have 31 on our dues-paying membership roster.

Dinner Social. Wanda announced our May dinner social at Righteous Foods on Seventh Street East of Chicotsky's, May 25 at 6:30 p.m.

Elections. Sam announced the slate of nominees for office and called for nominations from the floor. There being none, Louanne Rice moved to elect the slate as presented. The motion was seconded and carried. Elected officers are Sam, chairman; Wanda Foster, vice chairwoman; Reed Bilz,

secretary, and Adam, treasurer.

Speaker. The vice chairwoman introduced Jim Riddlesperger, ph.d., professor of political science at TCU since 1982. The subject of his talk was the Trump presidency.

He asked "how well does the November election reflect the majority will?" The popular vote has exceeded the electoral college vote only three times in our history: 1888, 2000, and 2016. The founding fathers did not anticipate parties and instead had confidence that the best man would be elected. The Electoral College was intended to serve as a nominating committee responsible for electing the president. This process changed in 1800 when parties were introduced.

Polls did not accurately predict the 2016 outcome, which was skewed by males over 50 voting in the race. Riddlesperger said that responses to polls need to be weighted better. There was an abundance of "undecideds" who swung to Trump at the last minute.

Trump's first act as president-elect was to fire Chris Christie as head of

his transition team. To date only 50 positions in the administration have been filled, Riddlesperger said, so the administration is lacking staff. The appointments that have been made are from business rather than government, which has led to missteps.

Riddlesperger said Trump is good at negotiating. He starts with an impossible offer even he does not support and goes from there. The major parties differ over core values which leads to polarization. The Republicans want the America of the 1950s making it great again, he said, and the Democrats recognize we are a nation of immigrants with wide diversity and we are stronger together.

Fifty years ago we had only one news source. Now we have selective news that differs in content based on the interests of the viewer.

An amateur president is having to prepare a very complicated budget. In his proposal, he said one-third of tax cuts will go to 400 wealthy families. Before going to the House for a vote the American Healthcare Act was neither considered in committee nor debated

in the House. The act came out of the Speaker's office.

Regarding the Middle East, Riddlesperger said three major religions coexist in Old Jerusalem, which he visited last summer. This coexistence serves as a metaphor for the Middle East with Israel acting as a deterrent to ISIS and Al Qaeda conflicts in Syria. Large numbers live in Palestine and work in Israel.

He pointed out how the plan to move the embassy to East Jerusalem, which is in Jordan, will offend everyone. A solution will probably not be found by the U.S. because our first concern is Israeli security, he said.

In discussing Korea, Riddlesperger told us artificial lines separate people of the same culture. Seoul is only 15 miles from North Korea. There is no military solution to conflicts as South Korea has no resources, so the new South Korean president favors negotiations, he said.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A session.

The meeting was adjourned.