

# THE FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY

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## Briefs

### Texas Civil Rights Project North Texas legal director to speak October 12

Hani Mirza, North Texas regional legal director of the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP), will speak to HoFW about the project's mission, history, and priorities on Wednesday, October 12, 7 p.m. at Westside Unitarian Church, 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX.

Mirza joined TCRP in December 2015 shortly after the organization opened its North Texas office.

For the past 25 years, the TCRP web site says the organization has used legal advocacy to empower Texas communities and create policy change. The organization's priorities reflect civil rights concerns in Texas.

Key issues TCRP emphasizes include protecting and expanding voter rights, challenging institutional discrimination, reforming criminal justice systems, preserving the first amendment, and empowering communities throughout Texas. The organization

- targets structural barriers to voting, including voter registration systems that exclude voters from exercising their right to vote,
- fights discriminatory, systemic government policies that prevent marginalized communities from achieving social and economic equality,
- challenges mistreatment of incarcerated people, especially those with vulnerabilities, such as lack of due process protection,
- works to preserve First Amendment rights by shielding communities from government overreach and ensuring robust exchange of ideas, and
- provides services to immigrant victims of abuse.

## TDCJ cites Supreme Court cases to limit press access to prisons

by Wanda Foster

Prison systems in Texas appear to be neither the best nor the worst nationwide, and numbers of inmates overall appear to be declining amid campaigns to reduce the number of for-profit prisons in Texas. Despite readily available statistics showing these trends, Texas taxpayers need to remain skeptical regarding whether or not we actually know much about what happens inside Texas prisons.

Much of the dearth of first-hand prison information we owe to none other than the United States Supreme Court, which over the past 50 years has made many declarations limiting free press access to prisons. When the *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* requested a prison facility tour in September, Jason Clark, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) director of public information, used some of these Supreme Court decisions to deny the request and point out that prisons have legal authority to deny any request.

Clark said TDCJ has "discretion regarding where we allow photographs and video to be taken based on safety and security concerns.

"This question has been addressed several times by the U.S. Supreme Court. *Pell vs. Procunier* (1974), *Saxbe vs. Washington Post*, and *Houchins vs. KQED* are overarching cases that essentially say the media does not have a constitutional right to access areas in prisons and that the general public cannot access [them]."

Fundamental freedom of the press was to some degree infringed in these rulings. While these cases are not household topics, Americans receive extensive educational information and public discourse about U.S. Constitution Amendment 1: Freedom of Religion, Speech, and the Press and Amendment 2: the Right to Bear Arms, but the context and significance of the freedoms can become blurred in terms of actual practice, public discourse, and even marketing.

For example, most Americans know a great deal about the existence of the

right to bear arms. This is true because of education and because the National Rifle Association (NRA) has marketed for the gun lobby extensively. Yet less commonly have people read the opening Amendment 2 statement, which says "a well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

As a result, people outside of a well-regulated militia widely argue for the right to publicly carry weapons regardless of who they are or how they are trained. Congress often uses the NRA gun lobby marketing version of the Second Amendment to discourage any gun laws from being legislated.

Amendment 1: Freedom of Religion, Speech, and the Press reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Very few people today outside of the press express issues with free press infringements. Yet the press would argue that a free press, the Fourth Estate, is an essential counterbalance against secret government, excess power, human rights abuses, and infringement of the taxpaying public's right to know.

U.S. Supreme Court cases and arguments limiting free press access to prisons generally fall into these major categories: protecting inmate rights to privacy, preventing inmates from becoming public martyrs, protecting public health and safety, and protecting the public's right to know. These are some of the key topics considered in the specific cases Clark cited.

Information about the cases is readily available from a variety of legal research web sites, but much of the case law information in this report comes from a web site known as Justia at the link <http://www.justia.com>.

- *Pell vs. Procunier*, U.S. 817 417, and *Saxbe vs. Washington Post*, U.S. 843, both were decided on the same day in 1974 when the Court determined that journalists' First Amendment rights were not violated when they were barred from interviewing specific inmates. Instead, justices sided with prison officials who believed press interviews compromised security and discipline. Pell, the petitioner, had challenged the constitutionality of the California code prohibiting press interviews with prison inmates. The State had denied all interview requests.

- *Saxbe vs. Washington Post* was decided in 1974, but it began in 1972 when officials responsible for administering prisons denied a request for access to interview specific inmates in Lewisburg, PA and Danbury, CT prisons. The denial was based on the authority of Policy Statement 1220.1A, which prohibited personal interviews between news personnel and individual inmates in federal prisons.

At the initial District Court level, the court agreed that blanket elimination of all press interviews abridged First Amendment freedom of the press, but produced a more nuanced ruling that access may "be denied only where it is the judgment of the administrator directly concerned based on either the demonstrated behavior of the inmate or special conditions existing at the institution at the time the interview is requested, or both, that the interview presents a serious risk of administrative or disciplinary problems."

The final Supreme Court ruling in the Saxbe case also found that journalists have no constitutional right of access to prisons or their inmates beyond that afforded to the general public, thereby dropping the significance press rights were given by being named in U.S. Constitution Amendment 1.

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## TCU professor presents economics lecture dispelling myths about recessions, employment, and spending

Market income and spending imbalances cause recessions, and excess savings or underspending by any financial sector, including government, actually helps create unnecessary boom-and-bust cycles. Those were key economics messages Texas Christian University (TCU) Professor John Harvey, Ph.D., presented in his lecture at the HoFW September 14th meeting.

Throughout the evening he presented his model for avoiding recessions by using all financial sectors to maintain spending and income equilibrium. An economics professor at TCU since 1987, he describes himself as always fascinated with the business cycle,

including root causes of recessions and expansions and methods of avoiding the challenges these cycles bring.

Born in the United Kingdom, Harvey obtained his doctorate from the University of Tennessee, where he studied international economics, economics history, and macroeconomics. He also is the author of a book, *Contending Perspectives in Economics: A Guide to Contemporary Schools of Thought*, published in 2015. The book explores competing schools of economic thought, including discussions of neo-classical, Marxist, Austrian, Post Keynesian, Institutional, and Femi-

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John T. Harvey, Ph.D., TCU professor of economics since 1987, specializes in international economics, economics history, and macroeconomics. He publishes widely and is World Economic Review lead editor.

## Book Review

### *Grace Without God: The Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Belonging in a Secular Age* by Katherine Ozment

by Kristen M. Ploetz

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*The Humanist* magazine

With ample statistics, concise historical references, and reliance on social research, Katherine Ozment sets the stage in her recently published book, *Grace Without God*, for determining whether secularists who seek connection and an understanding of life can find them in ways that are equally rewarding as for those who rely on religion and faith. But make no mistake: this is not a dry read. Ozment is an astute journalist with a keen ability to draw relevant and revelatory stories out of the like-minded individuals she meets while traveling the United States to research this book. Ozment weaves her own personal journey throughout *Grace Without God*, making it relatable to anyone who once had religion in his or her life and who often feels like something's missing without it.

What set Ozment's inquiry into motion was a simple question from her then 8-year-old son. While watching a religious procession outside their window he asked, "What are we?" Her hurried answer was, "We're nothing."

But to Ozment, the answer was unsatisfactory and nagged her. It didn't take into account the traditional yet secularized holidays and rituals they undertook as a family or the fact that she and her husband were raising their children to be kind, empathic individuals without religion. It also highlighted their lack of any kind of values-based community and connection to others when it came to traditions, rituals, and moral frameworks—a notion that no longer sat well with her.

Like Ozment, for a portion of my childhood I was raised in one of the Christian faiths, became an unwavering nonbeliever along the way to adulthood, and now have a child (Ozment has three.) who wants her own deeper understanding of what life

means and whether it has any purpose. I also sense that we as a family (and I as an individual) are missing some kind of necessary connection with a community that focuses on these themes. This is precisely what drew me to *Grace Without God*, and Ozment's ability to tackle this subject is something I appreciated.

The book is divided into three main sections, each containing intriguing snippets of Ozment's discussions with pertinent secular and religious scholars, experts, leaders, and lay people who are all feeling their way (some further along than others) on the continuum of a more secularized society. In the first section, "Losing It," Ozment describes her own early connection to religion, the growing number of "Nones" in the United States, and the evolution toward more progressive thinking that's already taking place among some religions in order to remain relevant.

The next section, "Goodbye to All That," highlights how religion has long attempted to answer some of life's larger questions (Why are we here? Who made us?), how it creates systems of accountability within communities through sets of moral rules and a regular practice of empathy, and offers a sense of meaning and purpose to individuals. For many, this is the allure of religion and faith, and why it can be difficult to leave.

Ozment also devotes a few pages to the importance of maintaining religious literacy when embarking upon a secular life path, and explains that none of us can ever truly let religion go if we are to understand or interpret the basis and origin of much of our history, culture, art, literature, and so forth. This short chapter could easily be developed into a much longer and separate thesis or book of its own.

In the last chapter of this section, Ozment touches on what is perhaps the biggest void that many secularists encounter (myself included) after dis-

engaging from religion: an unfulfilled sense of deep belonging and attachment to a larger community, one tethered together by time and values. As Ozment notes from her research, greater meaning (and often identity) in our lives is achieved when we feel like we are part of a group that supports us, perhaps especially in the wake of something like birth, marriage, illness, or death. For those with a religious upbringing, problems often arise when religion is no longer the source of that sense of belonging.

For me, the heart and the most formidable portion of the book is in the second half, specifically the final section, "The Path Forward." Here Ozment gets at the nub of her primary inquiry: Are there meaningful ways for secularists to find sources of morality and community, similar to how our religious friends do? In short, the answer seems to be an encouraging maybe. Some of the individuals Ozment interviewed and observed are thriving, if not fulfilled, with alternative and often cobbled-together groups and individual practices they've created to fill the void. We get glimpses of one family's "kitchen table Sunday school" as well as the more organized, community-based approaches used by Unitarian Universalists, Sunday Assembly, Parenting Beyond Religion, Hearth, Ethical Culture Society, secular humanists, and others. Ozment candidly notes her own sense of ambivalence after participating in and observing some of these various approaches, wondering if they are sustainable for the long term or able to truly fill the hole left by the absence of religion as she once knew it.

It is clear that, like for many of us, the practice of meaningful rituals is important to Ozment to the extent that they're often nostalgic and connect us to our childhoods and past generations. But they also help us celebrate milestones during life and at death with the goal of marking time and fostering meaning in our lives. Ozment

deftly contemplates and explores whether these can feasibly take place outside of organized religion and offer an adequate substitute, particularly when a loved one dies. Before closing out the section, she highlights how the natural world and the practice of mindfulness can often induce the kind of profound awe, wonder, and grace that others find through God and religion. In the end we're left with Ozment's honest assessment that despite her research and deep contemplation, she still doesn't have answers to the more profound questions we all ask ourselves.

The author's candor, open-mindedness, and reflection are strengths throughout the entire book. She provides solace to the reader struggling with similar issues in their own lives, respectfully honoring the ghost of religion rather than writing it off. She pays attention to the notion that for so many, religion was once a source of connection and belonging, both within families and the larger community, and that its absence shouldn't be taken lightly.

Understanding that the search for non-religious substitutes will be different for each of us, and perhaps ongoing throughout life, Ozment curates a hefty list of books (including for children), websites, podcasts, and organizations for further exploration. Indeed, by necessity, the author had to pare down what could have been a massive text on this subject. But this is precisely why *Grace Without God* succeeds: it succinctly and thoughtfully jumpstarts the long overdue conversations both with ourselves and with other secularists seeking to connect and belong while we honor the milestones and wonder of our lives.

**Kristen M. Ploetz, a Massachusetts writer and former attorney, publishes articles and essays in *The Humanist*, the *New York Times Motherlode* blog, *Literary Mama*, and other web sites and publications.**

	October 2016	November 2016	December 2016
Key HoFW Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular Meeting, Wednesday, October 12, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX; Hani Mirza, Dallas regional legal director of the Texas Civil Rights Project</li> <li>HoFW Book Club, Saturday, October 22, 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX (<i>Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife</i> by Mary Roach is the book to be discussed.)</li> <li>Regular Dinner Social, Thursday, October 27, 6:30 p.m. Location to be announced at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a>. Please RSVP.</li> <li>New Freethinker - Humanist Breakfast, Friday, October 28, 9:30 a.m., The Egg and I, 6333 Camp Bowie Blvd</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular Meeting, Wednesday, November 9, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX, speaker to be announced at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a></li> <li>Regular Dinner Social, Wednesday, November 30, 6:30 p.m. Location to be announced at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a></li> <li>HoFW Book Club will not meet as a result of the holiday schedule.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winter Party, tentatively slated December 14; to be announced at November meeting and on calendar at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events">http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events</a>.</li> <li>HoFW Book Club will not meet as a result of the holiday schedule.</li> <li>Additional events, if any, will be determined at a future date and will be posted on the Meetup web site.</li> </ul>
Other Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gay Pride Parade and Street Festival, Saturday, October 1, noon to 6 p.m.; Westside UU and Metroplex Atheists will be represented at the event. Use this link to find details on the parade and Pride Week <a href="http://tcgpwa.org/pride-week.html">http://tcgpwa.org/pride-week.html</a></li> <li>Shakespeare Dallas: The Tempest, Freethinkers of Fort Worth, Friday, October 7 at 7 p.m., Addison Circle Park, 4970 Addison Circle Drive, Addison, TX; sign up at <a href="http://www.meetup.com/FWFreethinkers/events/234085150/">http://www.meetup.com/FWFreethinkers/events/234085150/</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metroplex Atheists, Wednesday Social, 6:30 p.m., most Wednesdays, J. Gilligan's Bar, 400 E Abram St., Arlington, TX; check the schedule at the following link: <a href="https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/2016-11/">https://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/events/2016-11/</a></li> <li>Dinner Across Fort Worth, Most Fridays, 7 p.m. Check the following link for details: <a href="http://www.meetup.com/FreeThinkers-of-Fort-Worth-Fort-Worth-TX-Meetup">Calendar - FreeThinkers of Fort Worth (Fort Worth, TX)   Meetup</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various area winter parties and events to be announced throughout the month at our respective Meetup web sites.</li> </ul>

## 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](mailto: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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## Opinion

### *Phony news compromises the public's ability to separate fact and fiction*

by Wanda Foster

No one knows better than a nontheist the impact irrational beliefs can have on human society—especially when everyone is looking to find a belief system matching their own predispositions and desires. People seem to search for those publications spouting factoids in line with their own preferences. Whether we get our news from the internet, a newspaper, a magazine, cable or corporate news, or public broadcasting, we know someone out there will have a story line customized to fit our needs.

Recently, I have been struck by how often the person responding to a television news question can flip the world upside down. While wincing as if they know they sound ridiculous, they stare straight into the big eye, smile slightly, and say the most outlandish things anyone has ever heard.

As a former news reporter decades ago when the profession still had an ounce of public respect, news meant (1) something had actually happened that was new and important to the public's right to know, (2) the reporter had to research to find out what was going on in person and on paper, and (3) at least three reliable sources were required to substantiate findings. Step 3 was especially important when questions existed about whether or not two sides or multiple sides were fairly

represented—even if the situation had the word repugnant written on its face.

Perhaps it was a more innocent time. I recall journalism professors teaching the ethics and the honesty of a good journalist, along with the writing and news-gathering requirements. I will always remember one TCU professor's admonition about avoiding cynicism. After all, practically nothing is as bad or as good as it really seems. The classicist who said truth is beauty, and beauty is truth probably was talking about something that does not really exist. While artistic language is beautiful, often it dances into the realm of the dream—of what we would like something to be.

Never have I been more shocked about the drift of news coverage into the land of the dream than now. Print media have done a better job of holding onto some reality than television news, and the internet has never really been much of an actual news source, since most bloggers have never studied journalism. Many of these content sources have injected themselves into an actual profession important to the health of the nation without ever spending a single day studying the art of finding, substantiating, and presenting newsworthy reality. Also, unlike television, print media call for thought rather than mere watching.

Nothing presents this thought more

obviously than the improvements television stations made to live fireworks shows on July 4, 2016. Stations, including the Public Broadcast System (PBS) at the Washington Mall and Columbia Broadcast System (CBS) in Boston, altered the live scene to make it prettier for those watching. The weather on the east coast was a bit rainy, you see, and they assumed their viewing audiences preferred the better fireworks shows of prior years. Who made that decision, and why does it matter? That is a rhetorical question for all of us to think about for a while and perhaps worry about too, as if we do not already have enough to worry about this election season.

At least PBS admitted to and apologized for editing live content to improve cloudy scenes. CBS felt that, even though the event was live, it was entertainment rather than news. This tendency to walk over the line into entertainment when publishing something live is disturbing to me, and quite a few viewers complained.

Anyone who has read the futuristic *Hunger Games* trilogy well knows the effects that fake live events had in the novel as the government staged and controlled media, using fear, propaganda, and media power to keep the population under control. Ultimately entertainment became a killing arena in which everyone watched young

people die as a form of entertainment. This, of course, is comparing fiction to truth and truth to fiction, but that is where we are in terms of sorting our way through the entertainment, the propaganda, and, if we can find it, the news. Let's just say that when you find news, it has a decidedly different smell and flavor than entertainment, which is full of pleasant scents, flavors, and eye candy, while news is a bit blander, but contains some facts that can be substantiated somewhere.

We tend to like the eye candy better of course, and many of us adopt something interesting or reflective of our emotions faster than we adopt something dull and factual.

Many of us may have forgotten that George W. Bush once was known as the Propaganda President because he was caught using public funds to manipulate news by purchasing positive coverage from fake reporters. News organizations never accept such stock reports without research and editing because they tend to be one-sided.

The fact that news is a profession seems to escape some people. We should look for old-style journalistic traits, such as whether or not each story has two or more sides and whether or not anything in it passes the sniff test. Truth often smells like a newspaper more than like Versace Eros or Hypnotic Poison by Dior.

### *HoFW Humanist Perspectives*

By Rick

Some people are just not built to be religious. I have found that I am one of them. As I reminisce on key events of my childhood, never did religion play any significant role.

My parents did not attend church, nor were they members of one. A King James bible adorned the coffee table, but more as a stately embellishment than a religious how-to guide. They were busy people.

In 1977, my mother graduated from TCU with a nursing degree, which was followed by a very successful 30-plus year career that she is now happily retired from. She is an amazing person and an even better mother. Dad's time was consumed by the constant demands associated with small business ownership. God and Jesus were not household names, but there was the implicit understanding that God did exist.

During my elementary school years, we lived in a quaint 1950s house in Wedgwood. A family of four lived two houses down. The younger son, Kaleb, was about my age, so naturally we became good friends. His sister, Geneva, was in her early teens. Their mother was a soft spoken, petite woman with dark waist-length hair.

One day while I was at their house, I witnessed Geneva's mother mercilessly whipping her with a stick. I can still hear the poor girl begging her mother to stop.

"You will read your bible even if I have to beat you until you bleed," the mother exclaimed in a maniacal tone.

Geneva refused by retorting, "I don't like to read this book, and you'll never

make me believe something I don't want to."

Each clung staunchly to their positions, but in the end the mother won. There was blood, and Geneva read the bible. Witnessing a religious fanatic beat her child opened new doors in my understanding of religion. This was my first impressionable experience with religion. It just happened to be bad, and it is very possible, probably likely, that this experience sowed the seeds of my atheism.

My younger brother was born in 1988. He is my only sibling. Several months after birth it became increasingly clear he was not developing normally. After extensive neurological testing, doctors diagnosed him with cerebral palsy. Now as an adult, he is wheelchair-bound with an approximate IQ of a 5-year-old child. He suffers from a broad array of physical and psychological ailments.

My parents and I will continue to take care of him until an opening is available in a special needs group home that can accommodate his specific needs. I will be his legal guardian for the rest of his life, a familial obligation I must fulfill. It is interesting to hear people try to make sense of my brother's condition from a religious point of view. I've heard, "It's a faith test from God," "everything happens for a reason," and "this is exactly what God intended to do." Of course, all of these statements are completely ludicrous, some even offensive.

My brother's condition removed any personal shred of doubt I might have had about the existence of God. I was 99.99 percent there, but my brother's condition nudged me to 100 percent.

My rationale is that if God does exist, he is an incompetent creator and a much worse caretaker not worthy of any sort of worship from the beings of his failed project.

Soon thereafter I realized the futility of denouncing the character we call god as if he were a physical entity. God is nothing but an idea—an idea that did nothing to prevent my brother from being born with enormous life-long physical and mental challenges.

My wife and I have three children. Two of them are school age. The highly religious community where we reside provides little haven for atheists. My kids are constantly questioned about their faith. It is in our family's best interests to remain clandestine about our beliefs until the kids grow older. The social ramifications would be too costly for them.

We are closeted heretics. My middle child keeps god stowed away in the same mental compartment as Santa Claus for now. My eldest accepted atheism naturally and is a budding secular humanist. Camp Quest is on our agenda for next summer.

Our parenting plan is really simple. We let our kids become who they are and always give honest answers to their questions, especially religious ones. The central theme of our parenting model is promoting empathy because we feel it is the most crucial component for living a happy, fulfilling life, religious or not.

We really owe it to ourselves to better understand why so many people need religion to feel fulfilled. We should, in most cases, empathize with believers. Everyone is a stakeholder in promoting intellectual honesty. We will never

#### From the Editor:

Most HoFW members favor science and rationalism over religion, magic, and dogma. Within that realm, we remain a very diverse group with different thoughts, perspectives, and ways of arriving at our beliefs in a world often unfriendly to secular thought. This column presents our stories. Many of the names have been changed or limited to first names to protect the innocent in a nation claiming to offer freedom for all.

wake up to a world that achieves absolute honesty on all things, but we should strive to be as honest as possible. That process starts with an earnest attempt to examine why our minds are so susceptible to unconditional acceptance of shoddy religious ideas.

Secular humanism seems to have a great hand to play here. As a secular humanist, my heart, mind, and arms are open to anyone. But the example I want to show is that faith in self is a much more robust, durable philosophy for self-improvement than religion could ever possibly be.

I believe that many people mistake their own actions for their God's and in that process end up selling themselves short. It is a sobering fallacy that billions of human beings commit so strongly to regimented servitude, while really they are just engaged in hedonism.

Our need to know that someone loves us is insatiable. We are built to need love. We are built to reciprocate love. To me, being honest about how we fulfill that fundamental human need is what humanism is all about.

## The Modern opens “Art of Espionage” film series with Hitchcock spy film “Foreign Correspondent”

By Wanda Foster

Alfred Hitchcock spy thriller, “Foreign Correspondent,” debuted on opening night for the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth “Art of Espionage” film series, which ran September 1 – 4.

Joan McGettigan, Ph.D., Texas Christian University associate professor of radio, television, film, and digital media, introduced the movie to some 75 attendees. Before the film began, she provided historical context both for Europe and making of the film. After the screening, she also moderated audience discussions.

The timing of the movie coincided with the historic transformation from peacetime to World War II, which already was unfolding in Europe. By the time the movie was released in 1940, Germany had already invaded Poland as the world watched in disbelief. McGettigan said much of Europe still believed war might be averted.

“Even Great Britain was sort of teetering on the edge, not really sure if they were going to get into this war or not,” she said.

The film tells the story of American newspaper reporter, John Jones, played by actor Joel McCrea. At the film’s opening, Jones thinks he is about to be fired, but instead his salty, old-style *New York Globe* editor, known only as Mr. Powers, dubs him with the pen name Huntley Haverstock and ships him off to London to report what was really happening in Europe. Played by Harry Davenport, Powers constantly complains that other foreign correspondents he has sent to Europe reported little actual news.

“Foreign Correspondent” bears almost no resemblance to the modern spy movie. Unlike James Bond genre films, which dazzle viewers with stunts and eye candy, this movie plays on plot, vintage spy craft, Hitchcock-style camera movements and angles, and elaborate, fully controlled, life-like sets. During the making of the movie, some 75 sets were built so Hitchcock could control almost every artistic aspect of the film, including most of the outdoor shots in which he even controlled the rain.

All of this Hitchcock direction appears to accomplish what his films seem to do best: engage the audience. Despite modern dependence on elaborate, computer-integrated imagery to produce fluid flights of fancy today in the modern film world, the audience appeared enthralled by this 1940s era classic, pulled along by Hitchcock’s plot, angular presentation, and rapidly moving scenes.

Jones’ first assignment in London is to attend a luncheon for famous Dutch diplomat Van Meer played by Albert Basserman. His purpose is to get information about a secret clause in an agreement between Russia and Germany. This concept parallels actual events at the time, when a Nazi - Soviet agreement was supposedly struck to delineate spheres of interest between the two countries. The pact, which served as a nonaggression treaty between these aggressor nations also contained a secret clause that divided up countries like Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania.

In the film, Jones accidentally meets

Van Meer shortly before his scheduled peaking engagement and shares a cab with him en route to the meeting. But Van Meer fails to show up at the event and sends an apology and a promise to appear at a political conference in Amsterdam later.

So instead the luncheon shifts to Carol Fisher, played by Laraine Day, who is the beautiful daughter of Stephen Fisher (Herbert Marshall), host of the luncheon and leader of the Universal Peace Party billed as an international peace movement. Most of the first half hour portrays Jones’ almost immediate crush on the daughter and their rapid courtship.

Meanwhile, Jones is reassigned to cover Van Meer in Amsterdam. When he arrives in front of a stately building, rain is falling, and the Capitol-like steps at the entrance are covered with people carrying black umbrellas as they wait in the rain.

Jones steps to one side and watches intently for Van Meer, who eventually emerges from a car and climbs the stairs. As Van Meer draws closer, Jones calls out the diplomat’s name, but before he can reply a dark figure emerges quickly from beneath the umbrellas and shoots Van Meer in the face, apparently killing him. Jones runs after the assassin, first chasing him on foot and eventually commandeering the car of a couple, including another reporter Scott Ffolliott (George Sanders). Ffolliott and his wife (the second Carol in the film) join Jones’ search, which ends on a desolate road near a windmill. The getaway car and the assassin have vanished.

Jones sees the windmill turning against the wind, which he takes as a sign that someone may be inside. He suspects that the turning is a communication with an aircraft flying low overhead. He explores and finds an old car in the garage. At that point, he sends the couple back to fetch the police, and he goes inside where the assassin and his helpers plot.

As Jones hides in the shadows of a stairwell, the music ends and the viewers hear only the whirring windmill and the creaking stairs, raising the intensity and viewer concern that Jones might be detected. Although he makes it upstairs and finds Van Meer alive, Van Meer has been drugged. Jones eventually has to flee after the villains discover him. By the time the local police arrive, the criminals and Van Meer are gone, apparently having flown away in the airplane, and the car is gone. The only person still in the mill is a tramp sleeping on the floor. He looks disheveled, but seems cleaner than expected, raising suspicions.

The rest of the story takes circuitous twists and turns until we eventually realize that Ms. Fisher’s father, Stephen Fisher, is a spy rather than a peace activist. This comes to light after Fisher assigns a bodyguard to Jones (Haverstock), who repeatedly tries to kill him, while trying to appear protective. Ultimately the bodyguard falls from Westminster Cathedral tower to his death after Jones steps aside as the bodyguard lunges toward him near an open window.

Ffolliott follows Fisher and discovers the location where Van Meer is likely held and notifies Jones. While we wait



Actors Joel McCrea, center, George Sanders, left, talk to police. (Photo used by permission from Westchester Films)

for Jones and authorities to arrive, Ffolliott finds Van Meer in a criminal-infested hotel under heavy interrogation enhanced with constant light and sound. Ffolliott is held at gunpoint, but is able to assuage the villains until Jones arrives. Fisher and the spies escape, leaving a comatose Van Meer behind to be hospitalized.

Eventually Jones and Ffolliott leave for America on a transatlantic flight aboard a Clipper 314. Police are waiting at the other end of the flight for Fisher, so he confesses his crimes to his daughter. After Jones and Ffolliott discover the pair on the same flight, a German destroyer shoots it down into the ocean, where everyone survives except Fisher, who sacrifices his life by plunging into the waters to prevent the floating aircraft wing from sinking under the weight of the survivors.

The fact that the movie was made at all was remarkable at the time, especially given its relatively high cost and the fact that it exceeded schedule and budget. During historical discussions before and after the film, Associate Professor McGettigan said most movie makers in Hollywood were not particularly willing to take on a war topic, often preferring to make people feel comfortable when they were watching a movie rather than feeling the whole world might come down around them. Most producers treated the situation in Europe cautiously if at all.

Only Walter Wanger, an independent producer, was willing to take on the topic. For \$10,000, he had purchased a book, *Personal History* (New York, Doubleday, 1935), written by James Vincent Sheean. The political memoir contains a series of observations Sheean made while covering the Spanish Civil War as a reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Having purchased it, Wanger wanted to find a way to profit from it, but the book contained only a series of observations without a plot line. He tossed the book to Hitchcock and his team, including his wife, Alma Reville, who worked with him on almost every film he made, screenwriter Charles Bennett, and Joan Harris, a Hitchcock producer and writer for many years. The team decided to use the same model previously used for two other Hitchcock films, “The Lady Vanishes” and “The 39 Steps.”

As they built the story, events in Europe marched toward war with the invasion of Denmark, the fall of Norway, and finally Great Britain’s decla-

ration of war on Germany. By the end of the movie, the final scene had to be recreated to show a closer link between actual war and events in the story line as initially written.

McGettigan pointed out that Hitchcock was loaned to Wanger by David O. Selznick, famous director of “Gone with the Wind” and other movies. He and Hitchcock had worked together on a movie called “Rebecca” previously, and Hitchcock was under contract to him, but the two had opposing styles and disliked each other. While Selznick preferred taking one wide camera angle and supporting it with smaller shots, Hitchcock liked to keep the camera moving and to make expensive, highly angular shots that provided viewers with clues and insights into things not necessarily seen by the main character. He also liked to use crane shots, which were very costly and disliked by Selznick.

But Wanger was willing to expend the funds and the time to allow Hitchcock artistic license, enabling him to develop and establish his signature film style. During the production, McGettigan said more than 70 sets were constructed, and most of the film was shot on set, not on location. Even when people appeared to be drowning in rough seas and staying alive on a broken aircraft, the work was performed in a studio tank over many hours.

Despite the movie’s intensity, moments of classic Hitchcock humor offer comic relief. One such scene shows a man trying to leave a bar during the first spy chase. As he steps onto the street, a vehicle slams around the corner seeming to barely miss him. The man stops, steps back onto the curb, waits for a moment and, thinking the coast is clear, tries stepping onto the street again. More vehicles lurch around the curve, so he jumps back on the curb and waits longer. Then he tries for a third time, but a vehicle barrage speeds around the corner. The man gives up, walks back into the bar, and stays there.

The Modern hosts many films and supplies commentary and discussion. October films include the Ira Sachs’ family drama, “Little Men,” September 30 – October 2; “Lives Worth Living,” a documentary about the disability rights movement October 13; and “Frankenstein,” October 26 – 29. National Theatre Live productions of “Hamlet,” starring Academy Award nominee Benedict Cumberbatch will screen November 16 and 19.

**Data reveals disparities in prison medical and mental health services**

**Prison problems often come to light from lawsuit filings in court and Freedom of Information Act applications**

(continued from Page 1)

▪ The *Houchins vs. KQED, Inc.* case, 438 U.S. 1 decided in 1978, was broader than a request for interviews with a single person. It also dealt with general facility tours and interviews on behalf of prisoners. In that case, an inmate committed suicide two days after being denied a psychiatric examination at the Santa Rita Rehabilitation Center in Alameda County, CA. Further interest was raised after the jail’s psychiatrist made a public statement that poor conditions inside the Little Greystone section of the prison contributed to the illness of his patients.

KQED sought permission to visit and photograph Little Greystone, but was specifically denied access to that area of the jail. So the broadcast company sued for the right to view the facilities in operation and to visit and talk to inmates. The Supreme Court found that news organizations have no right to access a jail or prison beyond that of the average citizen.

Some argue that the KQED decision was in large part made possible by the precedent set in *Saxbe vs. Washington Post*, a case decided in a split 5-4 decision. The argument is that by eliminating the word “press” from their interpretation and equating press rights with those of any other person, they effectively removed the original significance of the press as defined in the U.S. Constitution.

One example of such arguments is found in a 1975 Cornell Law Review briefing entitled, “Constitutional Law - Freedom of the Press - Prison Regulation Prohibiting Interviews Between Newsmen and Inmates Held Constitutional,” attributed to Mark L. Goldstein. Goldstein said that the Saxbe decision failed to distinguish between a news organization’s right to gather information and the public’s right to be informed.

He concluded that:

In so deciding, a majority of the Supreme Court in *Saxbe* has blocked the flow of news through the most professional of means. Whenever people are incarcerated, the opportunity for human indignities and administrative insensitivity exists. The problems within our prisons are largely invisible to the general public, and it is the press that must bring them to our attention. To keep the public informed to the fullest extent, the in-depth interview is essential. If the problems of our prisons are not to be ignored, the most energetic support compatible with justice must be given to the freedom of the press.

Today the battle continues between news organizations and prison systems. The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, a national free press nonprofit organization since 1970, cites a range of issues with gaining access to prisons nationwide. For example, they point out that policies and the manner in which prison access policies are implemented vary from state to state and even within states depending on the institution, making it difficult to obtain understanding of actual prison operations.

Data is everywhere, but information making it possible to interpret accurately is not. Texas, like most states, provides public information officers (PIOs) and large volumes of statistical data, readily available for public view. News organizations approach PIOs daily and download reams of statistical data showing the overall scope of operations sorted in many different ways, but closer inspection reveals very little about the quality of life of those inside prison facilities or the application of criminal justice in terms of sentencing inequities.

By using difficult, sometimes lengthy Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) access requests, some organizations, such as the *Texas Tribune*, do obtain information about prisons that escapes into the public sphere. But the data is made available largely at the discretion of either the prisons themselves or those administering FOIA materials. Another key source is the inmates themselves who use public court systems to file lawsuits after problems have occurred.

**Prison Problems**

One example of lawsuits and FOIA materials that have entered the public domain relates to the State’s unair-conditioned prisons, such as those in the Wallace Pack Unit between Houston and Austin, where the state has high humidity and outdoor temperatures that can exceed 100 degrees. Indoors, some complaints have said temperatures in packed prisons can reach as high as 120 to 140 degrees. While county jails and federal prisons have some cooling, 79 Texas state prisons still have no air-conditioning, according to National Public Radio reports in September 2016.

Cost is a primary concern given the fact that the state estimates more than \$20 million would be required to install cooling systems. This is true even though, as the *Dallas Observer* noted in 2013 that the State spent a hefty sum to purchase climate-controlled buildings to house some 20,000 pigs raised for prisoner consumption. The reporter said when he asked Clark, the TDCJ director of public information, about the pig air-conditioning, Clark defended the expenditure because the practice of cooling pigs was recommended in requirements for pig raising as published in a Purdue University “Pork Industry Handbook.”

Lawsuits suggest that people have died from the effects of excessive heat in prisons. Most recently in June 2016, the *Dallas Morning News* re-

ported that a wrongful-death lawsuit has been filed in Texas on behalf of eight inmates purported to have died from heat-related conditions. Such deaths have been reported for decades.

Another measure of prison health tends to be suicide and attempted suicide rates inside the facility, another case in which data comes to the forefront after events have occurred.

A *Dallas Morning News* chart published in 2015 shows a recent spike in suicides and attempted suicides in state prisons. During the 8 years between 2007 and 2015, the report says 6,336 inmates attempted suicide, and 209 people succeeded. Yet a search for the word suicide in the TDCJ annual statistical report yields no data for suicides or suicide attempts.

The *Dallas Morning News* report states that “nearly one-third of the 134 suicides from January 2011 to September 2015 happened in administrative segregation, cells designated for solitary confinement. Yet solitary confinement accounts for less than 4 percent of the total prison population, according to the criminal justice department.”

The quality of rehabilitative, medical, and psychiatric services, and the quality of plumbing and facilities also have become sources of public discussion at various times.

The *Abilene Reporter-News* in July 2015 reported that two facilities near Abilene—the Middleton Unit and the Robertson Unit—experienced extended water pressure problems and water restrictions.

When the *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* asked TDCJ about both of those situations, Clark said “that information is not readily available. You can file an open records request to determine if our statistical department can facilitate your request.”

**Disparity of Medical and Mental Health Services**

Using data obtained from the TDCJ web site in tandem with Freedom of Information Act data published in the *Texas Tribune* through June 2016 does permit some mathematical analysis regarding ratios of medical and mental health services possibly allocated at each facility. Whether or not the services actually are provided is unknown and the definition of the terms medical or mental health professional is unclear. In future articles using FOIA rules, the *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* may be able to obtain additional sources of information.

TDCJ does publish data showing the capacity of each facility, whether the facility houses males or females, a contact person, the vendor, if any, and the number of medical and mental health personnel allotted to each site. However, this general data does not say how many people actually are housed in a facility, and the health professional information is neither defined nor current. At this time, the data is marked current as of April 2013. Clark skipped the written question asking for definition of the meaning of the term medical personnel. In addition, when more up-to-date personnel information was requested, Clark said “the web page is updated when there is new information.”

So while we know how many people were budgeted in 2013 for medical and mental health services, we do not know if Clark’s response means no one has changed on site at any facility since August 2013 or if the answer means simply that no new information has been supplied to his office on that subject. Also, it is unclear whether the numbers represent people actually on-site at a facility or just the budget numbers of full-time equivalents.

*Texas Tribune* FOIA data, however, is much more current and extensive than that provided by the TDCJ public information office. Their data, which is current through June 2016, contains total numbers of people inside each facility, their names, their crimes, the lengths of their sentences, and other information such as previous offenses.

Using this information enabled us to deduce mathematically that a large disparity may well exist in terms of ratios of medical care and mental health staff at various institutions. For example, data shown in the table below for a few prisons shows that medical workers at female prisons have potential to see considerably more inmates than would occur at any of the male facilities cited. Also, there were disparities among the male facilities, such as at the Estes Unit, where no mental health workers are allotted.

When Carter was asked to explain these disparities, he said “medical services are contracted through University of Texas Medical Branch and Texas Tech Health Science Center. I would recommend contacting the respective institutions for the latest information.”

The December 2016 issue will continue prison research, including search for a qualified source representing either of these facilities or providing human information in addition to data.

Unit Name	TDCJ Capacity and Gender Data	Texas Tribune Actual Population Data	TDCJ Medical Worker Data	TDCJ Mental Health Workers	Inmates per Health Worker	Inmates per Mental Health Worker
Estes (Johnson County)	1,040 Male	1,039	12	0	86.58	N/A
Hobby (Marlin, TX)	1,384 Female	1,328	10	3	132.8	442.66
Hutchins (Dallas County)	2,276 Male	1,834	24	4	76.42	458.5
Middleton (Abilene Area)	2,128 Male (Transfer Facility)	2,031	29	6	70.03	338.5
Robertson (Abilene Area)	2,984 Male	2,897	49	6	59.12	482.83
Travis County (Austin)	1,161 Male	749	13	2	57.62	374.5

## Economist says U.S. could have paid all bills since 1776, and Chinese debt is insignificant

(continued from page 1)

nist ideas in a nontechnical environment providing an overview of the breadth of economic thought.

He also publishes widely in academic journals, including “Keynes’s Trade Cycle: A System Dynamics Model,” published in the Journal of Post-Keynesian Economics in December 2014. He also produces a blog on the Forbes web site at this link:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnharvey/#35907920498e>

While the topic was serious, the tone of his lecture was entertaining and simplified for general audiences, complete with charts and graphs supporting economic theories.

Harvey opened the session by showing examples of the lack of accurate data on the internet and the wide differences of opinion about the economy even among economists. He describes the economic community as very insular and involving internal discourse among varied economic schools of thought more than with the general public.

“You can’t tell if economics is bad,” he said. “You can tell if engineering is bad because the bridge fell in, but how can I tell which policy caused a financial crisis? You can’t tell. So everyone has this explanation of why my school of thought knew what really was going on, but it is not possible to find out if they are right or not.”

Web sites like Investopedia describe the cause of a recession as inflation, which is nonsensical in that a recession is a contraction, and inflation relates to economic expansion.

One source on the internet referred to the cause of a recession as “irrational exuberance,” but people tend to be pessimistic about spending in a recession, whereas irrational exuberance is more of a state of euphoria. Another web site described recessions as “unexplained shocks to investment,” implying that we have no true understanding of the cause of recessions.

At that point, Harvey suggested looking for economists who know what they are doing. So he turned to explanations supplied by Christina Romer, former chair of the U.S. Council of Economic Advisors, who said there is no evidence that business cycles, including recessions, should exist. Essentially her position is that technically the economy could stay at full employment forever.

Harvey said, “The business cycle really does not exist at all. In fact, there are some very compelling reasons to believe that what happens during expansions causes a recession. We don’t know why. It’s the way we designed the system, so what you do is you redesign the system. There is nothing natural about it,” he said.

He calls the business cycle as it exists “a big deal” because it affects the employment rate. He provided the business cycle chart, lower left, showing periods of expansion and contraction from 1983 through today, including contractions in 1990–1991, 2001–2002, and the Great Recession 2007–2009. The chart illustrates the ebb and flow of employment rates during expansions and contractions, and growth rates during expansions. After each recession, it also shows how GDP growth rates have dropped during expansions, declining from 4.34 percent during the expansion after the 1980 recession to 3.72 percent after the 1990–1991 recession, 2.79 percent after the 2001–2002 recession, and only 2 percent after the Great Recession in 2009.

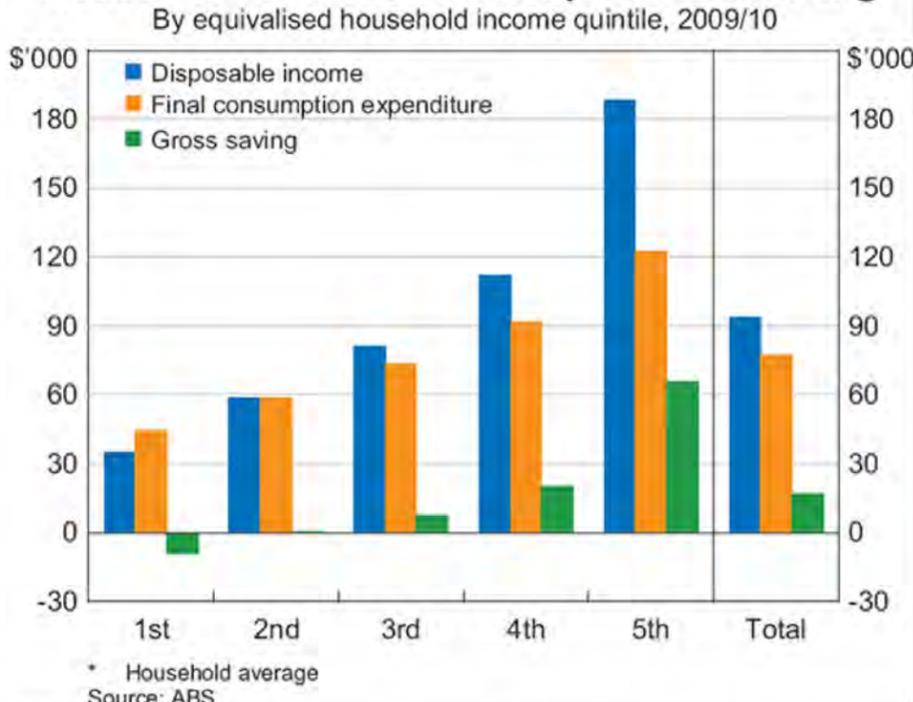
Spending creates new jobs and income, he said, but most people spend only about 80 percent of the income they receive, and incomes have increased very little in recent history. So as spending declines, the number of people with jobs declines unless other spending emerges to maintain incomes.

The U.S. has a GDP of some \$17 to \$18 trillion. So using that figure he explained that total spending would have to reach about \$20 trillion for spending, income, and, therefore, employment to stay on an even keel. He defined full employment as approximately 2 percent unemployment, which accounts for people who will always become temporarily unemployed as a result of shifts in types of goods and services in demand.

Current components of the economy include the following:

- Consumption: Total spending by consumers \$12.268 trillion
- Investment: Total spending by businesses for physical capital \$3.018 trillion (not stocks and bonds)
- Government Spending: Total spending by all levels of government \$3.184 trillion annually
- Net Exports: U.S. sales to foreign-

### Household Income, Consumption and Saving\*



As shown in this household consumption and savings chart, people at the low end of the income scale contribute the largest percentage of their incomes to total consumption spending because they are too poor to save, while people at the highest end of the income scale contribute the lowest percentage of their incomes to the economy because they have excess they do not spend, which creates leakage in total GDP. (chart courtesy of John Harvey)

ers minus foreign sales to the U.S. (\$2.253 - \$2.785 = -\$532 billion, which represents a small net loss)

He compared each of these spending types to hoses pouring water into a bucket designed to hold the \$20 trillion needed to achieve unemployment goals and prevent future recessions. While high consumption rates support jobs, consumers will not spend all of their income, except at the lower end of the income scale where they have too little money to save. Since the average household saves about 20 percent of their income, they create leakage in the economy that cannot be converted into jobs.

Consumers will not spend all they earn, except at the lower end of the earnings scale shown above. Only the poorest people spend everything, while everyone else saves depending on their wealth levels between third and fifth quintiles in the chart. Since incomes have fallen on average, consumers are not the complete answer for driving growth. In addition, while private business capital investments theoretically could be encouraged, the total percentage they represent in the economy is far less than that of consumers, and businesses cannot be relied on or expected to increase risk to take on the shortfall in spending.

During late stages of expansions, Harvey said businesses become disheartened by earnings and uncertain about employment. Panic sets in. So as the chart, left, shows, employment starts declining at the end of every expansion even before contraction starts.

While some of the money could be made up by stopping imports from China, Harvey said that represents much too small a source of leakage to maintain level employment, leaving only the option of additional government spending as much as needed to achieve full employment.

Despite all of the hype about government spending excesses, he said additional government spending actually is more likely to be the best source of new spending to offset leakages required to keep people employed and prevent recessions from recurring.

While Harvey said it is important to spend government money correctly, the U.S. Government will never default on its debt.

“The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, as the sole manufacturer of dollars in the U.S. Government, can never become insolvent or unable to pay its bills. It is not dependent on credit markets to stay operational. So yes, we can be in debt forever, and it doesn’t matter,” he said

“But how do we deficit spend? At what point do you know you have spent enough of a deficit? When unemployment is greater than 2 percent. The dollar value is irrelevant because the dollar value is not a problem, so you spend until you achieve the actual real goal.”

Harvey also described how general concern about debt to the Chinese is overblown.

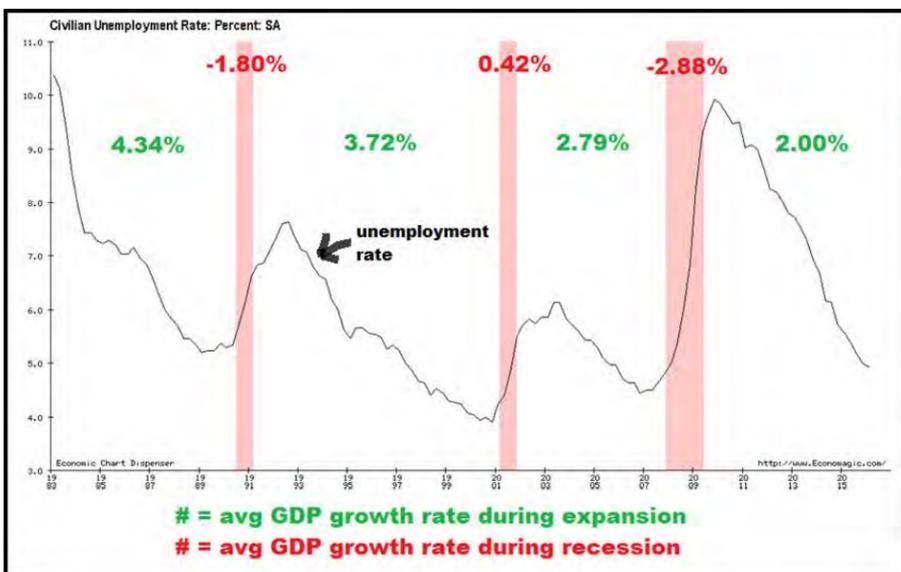
“Do you know why the U.S. owes any money to China whatsoever? It’s because we buy more from them than we sell to them,” he said.

“This is something I do when I am talking about the debt and deficit. I ask people at the beginning how much of the total U.S. debt and deficit the U.S. owes to China, and I get all of these estimates. People start with 100 and go to 89 and 80 and so on. I am proud when my economics students always go for the very bottom. It’s about 7 percent. It is very little of the debt and deficit.”

China lacks the consumption levels we have and they desperately need the U.S. to help them grow their economy. He said if the Chinese ever ask for full payment, all we have to do is pay them by manufacturing bills.

“The U.S. Government could have been within budget every year since 1776,” he said.

Harvey has served as TCU Economics Department chair, and he is International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics executive director and on the board of directors of the Association for Evolutionary Economics and the American Review of Political Economy.



This chart shows unemployment rates and rates of growth and contraction experienced in the U.S. economy since 1983. (chart courtesy of John Harvey)