

# AWARE ONES OF THE TREASURE COAST

## JOURNAL



## BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

"We are Progressive Humanists  
We are the Soul of the Coffee House  
We are Love and Laughter"

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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

# INTRODUCTION

Ed Zillioux

And so we evolve. A consensus of our membership agreed that the term "Newsletter" no longer accurately described this publication. First, there has been very little news: like, the sunbirds go North and the sunbirds come back home, can be reported just so many times; and, second, our lives are just not all that interesting. Ya gotta rejoice that our minds are still keen and active! Thus this Vol.3, No.2 issue is the first bearing the new name of the AOTC Journal. It will continue to be circulated to all members and friends listed below, each of whom are free to pass it along to others at their discretion.

The other big addition is the newly-minted AO Forum. Forum has been defined as follows:

*Forum: [fawr-uh m, fohr-uh m] Noun, an assembly or meeting-place, for the discussion of questions of public interest.*

And that about covers it!

The AO Forum was envisioned as a vehicle to advertise ourselves, where members can post upbeat messages apropos to that purpose. Now that we have the Forum, we need to meet to define strategies to make it appealing to our intended audience of potential and worthy members, and how best to reach out to people sympathetic to the ideals of the AOTC.

Although the posting of discussion items or responses to discussions requires current membership registration, it is designed as an open-access read-only forum for any non-member interested in learning more about what motivates the AOTC membership. A link to the AO Forum is provided at our website, [www.AwareOnesoftheTreasureCoast.com](http://www.AwareOnesoftheTreasureCoast.com).

This has been kicked around for a long time at Sunday Coffee and elsewhere, so what is this Forum all about? Simple: we need to grow our tribe. This tribe already consists of active participants in e-mail blasts that are mostly spontaneous, erudite, tolerant, political or not, angry or not, profane at times, supportive, empathetic, but

always bonding. True, the ideal is not always realized; but then, we are human after all. And there's our Sunday Coffees that brings these spontaneous exchanges to an in-your-face level. And the best damn writer's group on the Treasure Coast. So with all this communication, why another?

The simple answer is that every communicative instrument we have is totally directed to our existing members, of which there are only ten. We needed an outlet, the sole purpose of which would be to advertise, and yes, proselytize outside of our core group. As it is, we're not doing a good job of recruiting. We have not even convinced our Friends that they should become members.

The sustainability of the AOTC has been discussed on numerous occasions, particularly after the death of a member. We have then asked ourselves, "Is this how the Aware Ones shall end?" (and to quote T.S. Elliot, "...Not with a bang, but a whimper." Our members consist of an eclectic group of humanists having one thing in common. We are fervently independent yet thrive on the interchange of ideas. Respectful conversation that illuminates and debates these ideas is our most defining characteristic, where nothing is out of bounds and all opinions are valid, *whether we agree or disagree*.

Now let's get on with it.

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## AOTC MEMBERS & FRIENDS

### Members

Joan Auerbach  
Ernie Breud  
Barbara Lange  
Jim Longo  
Bert Mautz  
Yashi Nozawa

### Friends

Amar Almasude  
Joanna Almasude  
Marsha Banks  
Rick Burkhart  
Sandra Burkhart  
Paul Carlos

Virgil Thorp  
Dan Vignau  
Pat Winchild  
Ed Zillioux

Gloria Cosgrove  
Stretch Graton  
Marilyn Graton  
Bob Haskins  
Roberta Synal  
Charlie Thompson  
Marilynn Thompson

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## MEETINGS & EVENTS

### Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, Stuart, 10 a.m.ish outside when weather is tolerable, i.e., no snow.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 pm; March 8 & 22; April 5 & 19.

### Events

#### Monthly Potlucks

March 20, Stretch & Marilyn's annual Spring equinox extravaganza;  
April no potluck scheduled.

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## MEMBER NEWS

No news of moment. Arn'tcha glad?

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## COMMENTARY

"The time has come," the Walrus said, "To talk of many things..."

### Why Don't Churches Pay Taxes?

Dan Vignau

Why don't churches pay taxes? We are told to believe that it is because they are religious in nature, and that religion trumps any legal requirements due to the of the Constitution's separation of church and state clause, but is this really the reason? Churches claim they have sovereignty because of their special place in the inculcation of morality into the citizenry. Is this true? Better still, is it enough?

What does constitute a religion? Wikipedia cites Emile Durkheim's definition of a religion: An organized collection of beliefs and rituals, which are given names the group learns as a part of members' indoctrination into learning the order of their nature of things, as relating the nature of existence to humanity, with rituals and beliefs shared by its members in a place of worship. Of course, Durkheim was largely trying to distinguish between religion and magic.

American culture says we should tolerate religions other than our own. Religious people say we should respect their religion. Which is it: Toleration or Respect?

Hobbes proposed that the reason we tolerate various religions is not because we respect them, but because we cannot really do anything about changing the minds of the true believers. Guns, hangings, and burnings have never worked very well at making a person really decide that his religion is wrong. Besides, if we really wanted to do away with those who hold divergent beliefs, we could not get away with it. No culture ever has. (Leitner, "Why Tolerate Religion?")

Churches claim they have a duty to inculcate people with a sense of morality, but whose morality? Is it the morality of their various books of fables? According to Nietzsche, the selective application of moral rules for everyone to live by, from the conscience of only certain religious groups, is not morally defensible. Does that mean that we need to ask whether Humanists, Buddhists, and other non-Deist quasi-religious groups have any more or less right to determine what is right and wrong, or to dictate morality? Is any group excepted? Hobbes adds, "Even the threat of death will not change deeply held beliefs." In fact, current research shows that deeply held beliefs are not only immune to facts, but that people who hold these beliefs will dig in deeper, and more strongly discount facts, before they give up deeply held beliefs.

Religious writer Paul Tillich states that Faith is "the state of being ultimately concerned." That sounds pretty lofty to me, but do not scientists, abortionists, racists, and genocidal maniacs also share the belief that ultimately, they are quite concerned, as well as considering themselves to be correct in their beliefs?

So, what exactly does religion have to justify its special legal status? Should faith based philosophies be allowed to be above the law, such as being tax exempt, being allowed to wear or not wear certain items of clothing in inappropriate places? Why can they do things that others cannot do?

Consider a Sikh boy in Canada who is allowed to wear a kirpan to school in Canada, but only because this knife is important to his family's religious identity, and for no other reason? How does this differ from the practices in a rural society that sees its boys become men by the passing of a knife, or even a shotgun, from the father to the son? (Leitner, "Why Tolerate Religion" p.2) What is the difference between the religion and customs of this Sikh boy and the rural young man? It is simple: One is called a religion. But, why do we make

exceptions to our laws for religions, or more specifically, for certain government approved religions?

How do we decide what legally or morally defines a religion? Leiter proposes a four-tier explanation:

First: There is a categorization of demands: If you are of a certain religion, there are rules to follow.

Second: There is an isolation from evidence and reason: This is nothing new to Christians and Muslims. Beginning with the Garden of Eden story, humans were told to avoid knowledge, maybe a bit metaphorically with the apple, but the apple did indeed grow on The Tree Of Knowledge. Religious beliefs are not required to be updated by newly found evidence that contradicts their ancient tales; neither, are they required to presuppose any form of logical reasoning. Each religion must ignore and fight against any changes in knowledge due to new scientific evidence, from logical reasoning, from contradictions, and especially from the tenets of other religions. Otherwise, it would not be called a religion. Even the founder of Protestantism, Martin Luther, who is soon to be Sainted by the Pope, claimed that Reason is the enemy of faith.

Third: What does constitute a religion? According to Durkheim (From "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life"), religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things... which unite in one single moral community called a church... and all devout members adhere to these beliefs. (Thanks Ed.) Each church, or moral community, is organized collection of beliefs and rituals, of a special nature of things, which are given names the group learns as a part of indoctrination into learning the order of the nature of things, as relating the nature of existence to humanity. Following Durkheim, Religion is ritual, belief, and special definitions for the believers. If you want to be a part of a religion, there are rules, special terms, and especially, rituals.

Fourth: There is existential consolation: Each religion has its own beliefs and dogma as to not only the ultimate answers to human existence, but to what questions are allowed to be pondered as to our fate. This belief is indoctrinated into children, beginning with, "Now I lay me down to sleep... And if I die... My soul to take...." This simple children's prayer is the beginning of the indoctrination and the inculcation of the fear of their particular god. The message is, "Worship him or die!" Whichever holy book is

used is the one and only God's Word! To believers, their fables and spirituality remain insulated from the evidence of truth and reason, all the while touting that it provides the solution to death and pain. What could be better than that?

What about the cults which are based on religious personality? Do not the words and beliefs of David Koresh, Jim Jones, Mao Tse Tung, and even Adolph Hitler meet most of the criteria to be called religions. Should these tyrants have gotten special benefits because they had true beliefs, rituals including uniforms, the suppression of evidence, and the absolute belief that their way was the only way? They all certainly proffered the categorical demands espoused above by Leitner. Do not both scientists and mad men feel the same way, while offering their own constructs and paradigms to use and to follow?

Here is the dilemma: Religion is singled out for special blessings from our lawmakers? What does religion have that dictatorships, humanists, scientists, and philosophers are missing? Why would Humanists, Buddhists, and other non-Deist quasi-religious groups have any more or less right to determine what is right and wrong or to dictate morality and laws?

Simply put, religion is mysticism!

Only mysterious and organized groups are allowed to claim religious exemption from legality. They claim the legitimacy of their particular religion is based on a certain set of unknown universal truths that only they can comprehend, and that they comprehend these facts through some inner faith in spirits and demons, despite the evidence to the contrary concerning the veracity of their ancient tales. They magically believe that spirits in the sky, or elsewhere depending on the religion, have magically given them the ultimate truth about the universe and man's place in it. These beliefs are deemed false by other religions as well as by scientists and philosophers, but they persist in presenting the chosen truths and fantasies they were taught, solely on the basis of the location of their birth: Christianity in the Western World. Islam in the middle East. Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Pacific Islander, and Aboriginal religions each has its set of doctrine. You believe what you are taught wherever you are born, at least if you ignore facts and reason, including the contradictions in their tales.

Proponents of these religions use their mystical beliefs to



persecute, kill, make laws, fight wars, have slaves, and shun outsiders and members who stray from each set of proper constructs and rituals. We won't even get into the educational levels of the goat herders and nomads, who formulated and altered these stories for thousands of years before they were saved. Traders traveled for centuries, going from culture to culture, changing oral versions to meet each new audience. Stories were edited through elaboration and exaggeration, and through their spread between cultures. As the story tellers traveled in their caravans and on their ships, they constantly exchanged ideas that became their historical record and the basis for each religion. Eventually, with the invention of writing, fables were saved. Next, translations and additions for various royalty became dogma, at least for the moment. Finally, political forces determined which stories, and which versions to put into a more permanent book of dogma.

Why would Humanists, Buddhists, and other non-Deist quasi-religious groups have any more or less right to determine what is right and wrong or to dictate morality and laws?

Leitner states that religion is based on the incorrect establishment of cause and effect. It is misinterpreted mythology, or as my bumper sticker says, "Atheism is myth understood". Religious tenets have no business proclaiming to be our guide to ethics. Humanists, Free Thinkers, Scientists, and Educators can all claim to live quite ethical lives without the superstitious morality of ancient goat herders and psychotic rulers. That we might indeed lead more moral lives is certainly supported by the relative numbers of believers and non-believers in our prisons. Besides, our ethics and sense of fairness does not allow us to simply become religious serial sinners, like the majority of church goers.

The philosophy of, "Sin. Pray. Sin. Pray. Sin. Pray. Repeat as needed" does nothing to make us look upon deity worshipers as legitimate purveyors of moral laws. After all, they are the very people who are not even good because of their morality and ethics. They are only good because they have been told that their god is such an evil, murderous, and jealous tyrant that he will punish them forever with pain and fire unless they abide by his ancient rules.

They fear god more than anything. This ambivalence creates severe cognitive dissonance, instilling fear in their hearts. To compensate, they must rationalize the myriad of absurdities and contradictions in their holy books. They must learn to love their god in

order to keep from dying with sin and being eternally damned. They justify their fears by learning to repress them. How? By learning to love the one they fear most, just like Patty Hearst... like battered women... like psychologically tortured, Christian children taught to they recite their bedtime prayer, followed by The Lord's Prayer as they mature.

We are talking about serial sinners who have prayed and beckoned for their god to continue to forgive them, over and over and over again. A deity must forgive them so that they can learn to love their oppressor, love him with their new-found Religious Stockholm Syndrome. They must rationalize their fears, either love or perish, and justify and explain to themselves that their horrible acts are caused by external forces, such as demons.

Sin, Pray, Sin, Pray, Sin Pray.

Most of us Humanists and Atheists live quite ethical lives. Religion had no special claim on morality, and should have no special status in our legal system. By giving special benefits to religious groups, solely based on their mysterious rituals and their faith based suspension of evidence and false beliefs about the cosmos, we are not merely tolerating religion, nor are we respecting religion, but we are abetting in the obfuscation of scientific knowledge, in the obstruction of education and the search for knowledge, due solely to our complacency, because we have given up on eradicating ignorance and superstition from our culture.

We must not only refrain from pretending to respect someone's religious beliefs, but we must not tolerate religions that insist on preaching their rules to other people. These groups are happier when they comply with the ancient ramblings of completely ignorant, nomadic herding tribes from so long ago, tribes that understood nothing about the cosmos, evolution, or any other facts of the modern world, facts that totally contradict their ancient fables. We must never say we respect their religion. That only abets in their evangelicalism, or jihadism, or whatever you want to call it, as they kill, maim, torture, and spread their psychotic disease.

Demand your rights as secular citizens. Demand the right to teach science, and not fables, in our schools. Leave religion to those who enjoy the trip of wallowing in stone aged knowledge. Tell anyone who wants religion to be taught in our schools that if they don't preach in our schools, we won't think in their churches. Humanists, Buddhists,

and non-deist, quasi-religious groups have as much a right to seek political representation, to determine what is right and wrong, and to provide a framework for morality and laws? America was founded on these principles.

It is time to demand that churches stay out of politics and pay their fair share of taxes. Hell, we could settle for having them choose sides for now, pay taxes or stay out of politics, just like the Constitution says, or rather demands. It is the law!

Remember the words of Nietzsche: "Faith is for those who do not wish to know!"

By the way. Florida just passed the law to decorate our schools with, "In God We Trust," the Constitution be damned.

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## The Case for a New Eugenics

Ed Zillioux  
4/10/18

The following is a difficult subject for discussion. I expect push back on my conclusions and would welcome your comments as I am not comfortable with my interpretation of the evidence. Therefore, I ask for your comments by return e-mail and will publish all responses to this commentary in the next issue of this journal.

The British [House of Lords Select Committee](#) on [Medical Ethics](#) defines euthanasia as "a deliberate intervention undertaken with the express intention of ending a life, to relieve intractable suffering." This definition varies from country to country. Distinction is made between voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia; the latter being currently illegal in all countries, and generally referred to as "murder."

Today, euthanasia, when it is allowed at all, is restricted to the British definition, "to relieve intractable suffering." However, there is much evidence that our world is heading in the not distant future to "intractable suffering" among much, if not all, of the global population. This will be brought about by the uncontrolled exponential expansion of the human population.

Eugenics may provide a more humane alternative to euthanasia. Eugenics, of course, got a bad name during and before WWII when the Nazis followed through with the eugenic ideas that Adolf Hitler praised and incorporated in *Mein Kampf* in 1925. Later, China's one-child policy, initiated in 1980 as a way to combat over-population, is widely referred to as "Chinese eugenics."

The Oxford dictionary includes this definition of eugenics: "of or pertaining to eugenesis, favorable to the production of healthy offspring." In practice, any manipulation of natural human reproduction is eugenic. This essay endeavors to make the point that, if human life on Earth is to continue, we will eventually reach a point where some form of eugenics must be made mandatory.

The present global population is 7.6 billion people and climbing at an alarming rate. This is not a new concept. In 1798, the economist Thomas Malthus published the first edition of *Essay on the Principle of Population*. He recognized that while normal population increases exponentially, food production increases only step by step in arithmetic progression. This simple fact presages a future when humans will exhaust the resources necessary for survival. Thus he reasoned that population control would be the only way that humanity could avoid this catastrophe. Unfortunately, he did not suggest a workable solution. Nevertheless, it is to our lasting detriment, and shame, that we have largely ignored Malthus' warning.

Another scientist to sound the clarion call for population control who must be mentioned here is Paul Ehrlich. Probably most readers of this essay will recognize Ehrlich's name, since he achieved lasting notoriety through the publication of the best-selling book, which he authored with his wife Anne, *The Population Bomb*, 50 years ago. In every major way except one, Ehrlich's predictions were correct. He recognized, as Thomas Malthus did before him, that the exponential increase in population would eventually exceed any effort, necessarily operating on an arithmetic scale, to provide the resources needed to sustain the human population. His only error came from his prediction of when mass starvation would commence. This he predicted would

occur in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1968, the year *The Population Bomb* was published, this was a reasonable prediction based on all available evidence. But for the efforts of one man, he might have been correct on all counts.

That man was Norman Borlaug, a plant scientist whose work on the genetics of wheat, begun in the 1950s and ironically coming to amazing fruition in averting the expected mass starvation on the Indian subcontinent in the very year that Ehrlich's book became available. What Borlaug accomplished was phenomenal. Through genetic modification he produced a sturdy strain of dwarf plants, capable of supporting as much as a 6-fold increase in yield when combined with high fertilizer levels of mostly nitrogen. His work, which was awarded the Nobel Prize, was credited in saving millions of lives from starvation. His breeding success with wheat he later applied with similar success to rice, the staple crop for nearly half of the world's population. Besides India and Pakistan, his methods achieved similar results first in Mexico, and later, most notably, in Colombia, Ecuador, Chile and Brazil. But Borlaug realized that he could only delay what was inevitable. After accepting the Nobel Prize, he recognized that his efforts, however monumental, had not solved the real problem of runaway population growth and declared, "If the world population continues to increase at the same rate, we will destroy the species."

As with climate change deniers, and other anti-science pseudo-pundits, the *Breitbart Connect* newsletter, in an article titled *Fifty Years on from Paul Ehrlich's 'The Population Bomb': so How Come We're Not All Dead Yet?* recently demeaned Ehrlich's book as "essentially junk" and labeled Malthus' 1798 *Essay* a failure. Breitbart also incredibly cherry-picked Borlaug's work so as to support its fallacious conclusions. That article was the impetus which caused me to consider compiling this essay.

"*The Wizard and the Prophet*," by Charles Mann and published this year, takes a hard and balanced look at both sides of this argument by highlighting the work and considerable accomplishments of a crusader for population control and aggressive restraints on human consumption, the zoologist and ornithologist William Vogt, who shared eugenicist tendencies with Julian Huxley and Aldo Leopold, and Norman Borlaug, introduced above, who believed that the application of science and technology could, at least temporarily, liberate humans from the shackles of nature. Mann's book was reviewed in *Science* by Tyler Priest who finishes his review by quoting Mann, who muses that

we “have the imagination to see our potential end, but [do] not have the cultural resources to avoid it.”

More recently, numerous scientists have calculated that Earth has a human-oriented carrying capacity of 9 to 10 billion people. If humans are to survive, we must reach a replacement level of 2.1 children per woman before the global population reaches 10 billion. At the present doubling rate, that level will be reached by the year 2050. Without meeting that replacement level, the current doubling rate projects a population of one trillion by 2453. If we allow that to occur, human life on Earth would end in mass starvation.

These dates, of course, are calculations based on present data. It is reasonable to assume that science and technological advances, perhaps even as effective as those that earned Norman Borlaug his Nobel prize, will be discovered or developed that will postpone the inevitable. But such advances would be arithmetic solutions to the exponential population increase that will reach critical mass short of effective global population control.

Can the entire population of Earth be reasonably expected to stabilize, i.e., to reach no more than 2.1 children per woman in every single culture of Earth’s population? That point is coming too fast, too soon, to even hope to educate all populations of the direness of what may well be the end of times. Even applying the simple concept of carrying capacity to humans would be beyond the grasp of many, perhaps most of Earth’s inhabitants. Short of that understanding, much of humanity could be doomed.

Before we cross that line, the more advanced nations of the world would be reduced, indeed forced, to evoking a virtually exclusionist approach to immigration policies.

Food wars, including cannibalism, would erupt among the less advanced tribes of the world and there would be no useful effort on the part of more advanced nation states to stem the carnage. They simply would not be able to afford such global altruism. Total isolationism and militarized borders would replace any notion of global assimilation. Absolute populist nationalism would be the only feasible politics, nothing else would make any sense.

Consider the U.S. as an example of an advanced nation. Assuming we could achieve the total isolationism suggested above, itself a very questionable goal particularly in this nuclear-armed world,

there are steps that could be taken that may, conceivably, achieve our individual survival. First, all livestock must be eliminated and virtually everyone must commit to a vegetarian diet. Maximum efficiency in the conversion of plant energy into food energy must be met, which would preclude the consumption of meat, a very inefficient pathway of energy conversion, not to mention the waste of limited water resources. But most important, a new eugenic approach to human reproduction must mandate compliance with an average replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. And, any cheating on the natural sexual outcome of pregnancies, as happened many times under China's one-child policy, would be forbidden, as might any procedure that could enable fore-knowledge of the sex of a fetus. Agricultural methods, including but not limited to vertically-deployed hydroponics and continued advancement in applied genomics, must also achieve maximum efficiency, all available land committed to plant production, and all grains produced dedicated to feeding humans alone. And all of this must be accomplished while maintaining a viable environment to support balanced populations of wild species, both plant and animal. In short, it would achieve nothing to protect ourselves if we do not also protect our natural world.

Other factors that influence Earth's carrying capacity, such as the nitrogen cycle, available phosphorous, and atmospheric carbon concentrations, owing to their effect on plant production, should be optimized, but these are, in part, global issues, particularly atmospheric carbon, and largely out of our control.

If the U.S. and other advanced nations could individually achieve all the forced strictures described above, or some equivalence of their efficacy through other approaches, our peoples may escape the need for euthanasia, but we would live in an isolated collection of police states with our current social norms permanently changed. And nations that could not achieve these restrictions? They may choose forced euthanasia if it could be enacted in time, but, more likely, it would be accomplished for them through mass starvation.

Nevertheless, there is a ray of hope for the survival of our species. If the pockets of police states described above actually escape the mass starvation of billions, indeed, the majority of Earth's humanity, the vegetarian and reproductively conscious survivors may rise again in full awareness of what the continuation of our species will require.

We can hope.

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## Wal-Mart's Community Values

Vergil Thorp

Back in the early 50's, right after WWII and when all the technology gained from that struggle produced the blessing or curse we consider the most significant mass communications appliance ever devised, television, a small grocer with a distinctly right-wing attitude (he considered The John Birch Society to be left of him) complained to the fledgling television networks that many of the writers and artists they employed were traitorous commie sympathizers who were actively attempting to seditiously undermine American morals and values.

He told them that he had an organization which would boycott the products of any company sponsoring the shows which associated with any of these accused pinkos and he would personally remove the products from his store's shelves. More importantly, he let broadcasters know that he'd persuade the other grocers he knew to do the same.

Incredibly, he was listened to and the result was the infamous blacklist that spread throughout the artistic community, the halls of congress and Hollywood studios. It caused a moral crisis among artists who were being forced, in order to keep their jobs, to name names of people who had left-ward leanings. For awhile, all arts suffered and many talented people whose philosophies did not conform to blind dogma were forced to find someone to act as a front, a person who submitted a blacklisted writer's scripts under the front's name. For actors and performers, life got really lean. For many, their careers shattered, the only recourse was to commit suicide.

Of course, another unfortunate side effect was that television became so neutered and bland that Newton Minnow described it as "a vast wasteland."



Today, the enemy has changed. It is no longer communists hiding in every closet and lurking under every bed. Since the fall of the Soviet Union the enemy has become sex and the adult industry. But, the charges remain the same – seditiously undermining American morals and values.

To combat the perceived threat, a pattern of censorship has spread across the country. In every community that they could, censors have forced through ordinances that effectively make it impossible to operate any adult orientated businesses.

Not content with that, the censors have tried, with mixed results, to remove some of the lesser objectionable books and magazines from newsstands, convenience stores and military post exchanges. Some merchants, fearful of being closed and labeled as pornographers, complied. A chilling message had been sent and, instead of the public deciding what they would buy, that decision was taken from their hands by the simple process of eliminating the product from retail sales shelves.

But, the most insidious means of censorship is that which is used by the largest department store chain in America, Wal-Mart. In an eerily similar threat made by that grocer in the 50's, Wal-Mart has told major record producers that if an artist's album contained anything Wal-Mart might find objectionable, on the jacket or inside, that album would not have any space allotted on Wal-Mart's shelves. Faced with Wal-Mart's incredible economic clout, record executives, just like the network executives in the 50's, quickly caved in and changed lyrics, album covers, left off entire songs Wal-Mart despised from the albums and even dumped some artists.

How did this company which started out with a single location in northern Arkansas get to be so powerful? Some of Wal-Mart's critics say the company did it by ruthlessly undercutting prices in each little town they expanded to, smashing the competition and then, being the only store left in town, raising their prices. Of course, closing the town's existing independent businesses also, eventually, closed the town and Wal-Mart, which critics also say never constructed a permanent building, realizing that the town was sucked dry, would close their store, take a big tax write-off and move on to the next community (kind of like the intention of the aliens in last summer's smash hit movie, Independence Day).

Wal-Mart would, certainly, counter that by saying what they practice is just good, hard-nosed capitalistic business and they have every right to decide which products will be on their shelves and that they have a moral obligation not to sell a product which (they feel) would be offensive to community values. In a free society, who can argue against that? Of course, since they've run any other merchant out of town, the artists whose creations Wal-Mart objects to are effectively locked out of the market place.

And, that's the danger here. What has suffered is diversity which is healthy for any society or any community. By eliminating so much of the independent competition, suddenly Wal-Mart becomes the arbitrary censor and that means that society becomes homogenized to the point where the only flavor you can find is vanilla – apparently Wal-Mart's favorite. Somehow, I don't think a community would put up with that if it was ice cream Wal-Mart was censoring.

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## YOU TALKIN TO ME? (Conversation is everything)

Bert Mautz

Is "polite conversation," a residue of another generation? It has been argued, "good manners," are inherently false, lying to avoid hurting someone's feelings, not to offend. A muscular vocabulary replete with concrete nouns and verbs makes for great listening, comprehension, and replying in kind. Have mentioned elsewhere that Jim Longo's Writers' Group invites candor, bold language, and if that were not clear enough, the group meets in the back room of a beer joint and closes the door. Ain't no Sunday school class, for damn sure!

I got in trouble acknowledging her reminder, I said, "Fuck!" totally in context, "Are you kidding? You're reminding me to remind?" indicative of frustration with assumption I couldn't remember. Nothing unusual here. I was frustrated. I reacted spontaneously, not having observed self-censorship since I lived with my mother. Okay, Mormons were not too keen on the well-placed expletive for emphasis, or

damnation. Writers' Group was a place of "R" rated conversation. Can't handle it? Don't have to attend. Adults here.

So now, a question; should other Aware Ones' functions like our much-loved Sunday coffee, or a pot luck gathering, have another set of rules, or "guidelines?"

The "guidelines" reference recalls the result of that fateful Thursday. The HUMTC board of directors suggested rules/guidelines be created to give direction to the unfettered Writers' Group. Going so far as to suggest topics to further the growth of the parent organization. No more reveries on high school prom nights, being chased from a likely romantic experience by a swarm of bats.

We are nothing, if not "aware ones," informed, intelligent, sophisticated, and tolerant. Who is, "gonna put a cork in it"? Do I always curse with good taste? Fervently believe in the power of the well-placed expletive. And sometimes, that is just how friends talk to each other, no harm, good natured camaraderie, a backhanded term of endearment.

Yet at coffee, in the excitement of good conversation with good friends, my extensive vocabulary is in full bloom, and I get censorship from more senior women, the head shaking scold, the school teacher look of disapproval. Come on, we're having a great conversation here, and you don't approve of a salty noun form of "stuff"?

The universal expletive, as heard on the construction site, or in working man's bars, is too often a vocabulary crutch, the universal modifier. When writing about such social strata, their vocabulary is entirely appropriate. David Ortiz, designated hitter of home runs, when addressing the Boston Red Sox, Fenway Park crowd, days after the Marathon bombing, shouted, "No one fucks with Boston," to hysterical approval.

Back to fundamentals, what about language guidelines applied to Sunday morning coffee, to potluck dinner tables? The same people attend Writers' and suppers. I want to use the same vocabulary everywhere; from the Publix checkout line to laughing along with Bill Maher, Friday night. Is that uncivilized, or worse yet, rude? Some say that most "talk nice etiquette," is lying.

Recall our much-missed Bob Schilling's, teacher, pianist, philosopher, and grandfather, fervent belief that censorship interfered with inter-generational communication and more particularly candor.

Outright encouraged his grand kids to cuss along with grandpa, and they loved it.

Another favorite as reported by my son Robert when he was teaching sailing at the Belmont Yacht Club. On the water with his boss in an inflatable, they saw one of their kid's boat go over, capsize. So off they roared to assist the kids. Anticipating needing a line/rope with which to tow the capsized sail boat, boss shouted to Robert, "Unfuck that line." How utterly perfect? Nothing could be clearer. The rope is tangled and needs to be made ready to use.

Never intend to hurt, or foul, but want to be free to get excited, involved, to give a damn!

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## THE WAY WE WERE

No submittals

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## ARTICLES

No submittals

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## LETTERS

No submittals

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## POETRY

### We Need a God who Bleeds Now

By Ntozake Shange

(Recommended by Marsha Banks)

we need a god who bleeds now  
a god whose wounds are not  
some small male vengeance  
some pitiful concession to humility  
a desert swept with dryin marrow in honor of the lord

we need a god who bleeds  
spreads her lunar vulva & showers us in shades of scarlet  
thick & warm like the breath of her  
our mothers tearing to let us in  
this place breaks open  
like our mothers bleeding  
the planet is heaving mourning our ignorance

the moon tugs the seas  
to hold her/ to hold her  
embrace swelling hills/ i am  
not wounded i am bleeding to life

we need a god who bleeds now  
whose wounds are not the end of anything

*From: Wild Beauty by Ntozake Shange, Simon & Schuster,  
Inc., New York, NY, 2017*

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## COMEDIC CORNER



Stolen from the Woman's March

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## Happiness and the Pathetic Bachelor (no particular hierarchy, incomplete)

Bert Mautz

dresser drawer full of clean briefs  
empty recycling dumpster  
pretty girl sharing a bottle of French red, her smile when she likes the  
    wine, so refill  
topped off gas tank  
critically acclaimed cinema  
Hermes after shave balm  
Sunday breakfast with Aware Ones-rambunctious conversations  
no dirty dishes in sink  
close hauled knifing to windward  
falling asleep to west coast Cubs' game  
tall perspiring Beefeaters & tonic with lime at Bonefish bar with friends  
north bound on Indian River Drive, without goddamn Ford pick up  
    filling rear view mirror  
grand kids' photos  
long handled back brush in the shower  
*nytimes* on line, *New Yorker*, *Road n Track*,  
Macanudo Maduro Ascot, contemplative moments



writers' group Thursday with the boys, better when girls join us  
screen porch sunset conversation before summer heat  
original art, fine design, visual delights  
floors mopped  
crushed ice thru-the-door  
Importico's eggs/bacon/swiss/veggies/mayo on Tuscan toast,  
    cranberry scone, good coffee  
wines chilling 24/7  
4pm Tuesday gathering at a salubrious bar  
RAM facilitating cut-n-paste editing  
jazz, blues, Mozart, grand opera, Jimmy Buffet lyrics  
shared candor, going deep with friends;  
double limit over Roosevelt  
salmon/shrimp/scallops with wild rice, broccoli - "seduction supper"  
blue heron on the dock, otter sightings, tropic wild life in yard, bird  
    bath busy  
x-rated stuff; drugs, sex, rock n roll (formerly wine, women, n song)