

THE HUMANIST SOCIOLOGIST

Newsletter of the Association for Humanist Sociology

Summer, 2011

An Introduction to This Issue

Jim Wolfe, THS Editor

This issue begins with Kathie Gaianguest's article on the importance of the constitutional review and how you can provide feedback about it followed by a summary, by me and Kathie, of proposed constitutional revisions offered after three years work by the Constitutional Review Committee to the AHS Board at its mid-year meeting in June. For more detail and reasons, you are strongly encouraged to look at the full report of that committee and the whole Constitution with revisions on our AHS website: uhaweb.hartford.edu/doane/ahsweb1.htm Next comes a report on other discussions and decisions at the mid-year Board meeting, including AHS Foundation, *Humanity & Society*, graduate student reception, Frank Lindenfeld and Book awards, guest registration at meetings, VP vacancies, AHS website, and referenda. For minutes of that meeting, visit our website. Finally, as we prepare for an annual meeting on the theme of dangerous sociology, I share some examples of risk-taking in my life. I imagine we will hear many such stories as people present the contexts for their presentations at the annual meeting in Evanston this October (see the call for participation on the front of the back mailing page).

The 36th Annual Meeting of the Association for Humanist Sociology

October 12-16, 2011

The Hotel Orrington in Evanston, IL

**Guest rooms are \$139+tax (for up to 3
guests and \$10 more for a 4th)**

Deadline for Reservations: September 12

**Call 888-677-4648 and ask for the
Group Reservations Department**

**Late proposals may still be accepted
depending on space in the program.
Contact Program Chair, Chris Dale
(cdale@nec.edu), for information.**

Membership Review of Constitution

Revisions Important

Kathie Gaianguest

The AHS Constitution has been under review for the past three years. It is now time for all AHS members to participate in the final approval of proposed revisions. Members attending the annual Business Meeting in October will be asked to vote to send the revised Constitution out to the membership for a final vote. Therefore, it is important that we get feedback *before* the Business Meeting.

Our organization has evolved and changed to meet membership, management, and societal, especially electronic communication, changes. The Constitution Review Committee (CRC), the Board members, and Association members have provided review and valuable input as we have considered how to bring our Constitution up-to-date with these changes. This process has invited a continued revisiting of the foundational values and premises of our organization, as well as a constructive discussion of how AHS needs to develop as it continues its role as a vital and meaningful organization for its members.

The Constitutional Review Committee's Draft Report and a revised draft of the Constitution can be reviewed on the AHS website. Both documents will have some revisions responding to Board members' feedback in June. (Final documents for Board and membership approval in October will be posted on the website by mid-September.)

Three ways to participate in this review are:

- (1) Contact Kathie Gaianguest, Chair of the Committee at gaiangu@maine.edu; or 207-667-1282; or 128 Great Ledge, Lamoine, Maine, 04605.
- (2) Attend a special session at the annual meeting in Evanston/Chicago devoted to discussin these proposed revisions.
- (3) Attend the Business meeting at the annual meeting.

The CRC members look forward to hearing from you.

Kathryn Gaianguest, Chair; Chet Ballard;
Steve McGuire; Greta Pennell; Gina Petonito.

Proposed Constitutional Revisions

Summarized by Jim Wolfe, Editor,
and Kathie Gaianguest, Chair, CRC

In preparation for the membership discussing proposed constitutional changes at the annual meeting (both in a special session and in the business meeting) followed by voting by mail, the AHS Board, at its mid-year meeting, considered recommendations from the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC).

The following revisions proposed by the CRC were accepted by the Board:

- * Eliminate the positions of Director of National Liaison and Director of Media Relations. These posts have not been filled in the past. Instead, more effort and resources could be put into the work of regional representatives and into having joint sessions and social hours at regional meetings (spelled out in a new AHS Handbook of policies and procedures).

- * The Nominations Committee shall have co-chairs, who become officers and non-voting Board members. Each year, the President-Elect will appoint a new co-chair from among those just elected. All Nominations Committee members serve in staggered two-year terms. Therefore, each year there will be one new co-chair and one co-chair having served in the previous year, providing continuity in the nominations process.

- * A person may serve only once as President-Elect, President, and Past President, except in the case of a premature vacancy of the President office.

- * In the event of a vacancy in the office of the President, the duties of that office shall be assumed by the Past President, with the Program Chair continuing to organize the annual meeting as planned for that year. The Past President seems preferable to the President Elect because the Past President has experience with the post while the President-Elect is busy preparing for the following year and becomes President at the end of the annual meeting anyway.

- * Association members may present suggestions to the Board at any meeting. The Board welcomes input from members as part of the participatory process toward decision making. Thus a written request to speak, which has not been practiced, is not required.

- * In contrast to the general rule requiring a run-off election if no candidate receives a plurality of at least thirty-five percent, candidates for the Nominations Committee receiving the most votes for the two or three positions shall be declared elected.

- * Becoming a standing committee, the Book Award Committee shall consist of (# of members TBD) appointed by the President Elect in consultation with the Vice President for Publications. The Book Award Committee is charged with selecting the recipient for the AHS Book Award and conveying that selection to the Vice-President for Publications.

The Board concurred with the CRC in a few recommendations to make no change to the Constitution:

- * When two people share the same position, each will still have ½ vote on the Board.

- * Mid-year Board meetings are permitted by the Constitution, but are not mandatory.

- * Twenty voting members must still sign a petition for an amendment to the Constitution to go to the membership.

The Board responded to four areas of the CRC report by making additional recommendations for the CRC to consider. The CRC is currently reviewing the following:

- * The term of the new Nominations Committee members begin immediately after their election (instead of the CRC proposal of their term beginning at the start of the annual meeting), increasing their ability to seek candidates before their activities begin in earnest at the annual meetings. The Board also recommended that the two-year term end with the start of the annual meeting, though informal participation with the first meeting of the committee at the annual meeting would be helpful.

- * The inclusion of wording during this current revision of the Constitution which permits *either* paper ballots or web-based ballots, providing AHS with the ability to move to web-based voting if/when the technology has been perfected to guarantee full member participation in elections and referenda.

- * There was considerable discussion amongst Board members regarding the limits for persons serving in

**The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways;
the point is to change it.**

Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," XI.

voting positions on the Board. The Board accepted the limitations on one person serving in each of the presidential positions (see above). In response to the CRC proposal that a person may be elected to each of the Vice President positions only once, the Board recommended that no one may serve more than two full terms in any one office as a voting member of the Board, which would enable a person to hold the same Vice Presidency for two terms. Though concerned about new representation in leadership, the Board discussed but declined to recommend that no one may serve more than three full terms as a voting member of the Board (seen as too arbitrary).

* One new recommendation was sent to the CRC for consideration: that all voting members of the Board be elected. This implies that Secretary and Treasurer, who are currently appointed, would have to be elected. The CRC will consider this thoroughly. Concerns were voiced about the Nominations Committee having additional tasks of finding qualified candidates to run for these offices. The Board noted that candidates for these two positions could run uncontested.

One outstanding issue is being addressed further by Board members: reinstatement of 501(c)3 status which will allow AHS to establish an affiliated AHS Foundation which can receive tax-deductible contributions and offer scholarships and other charitable programs. This classification would be necessary in the Constitution along with the recent 501(c)6 reclassification, which continues our tax-exempt status but no longer allows contributions to be tax-deductible.

Other AHS Board Discussion and Decisions

Jim Wolfe, THS Editor

Since AHS is more of a professional than a charitable organization, its status with the IRS last year became 501(c)(6) making contributions to it ineligible for a tax deduction. At its mid-year the Board asked treasurer Chuck Koeber to inquire into establish an affiliated AHS Foundation as a 501(c)(3), so donations to specific scholarships or other charitable programs could be tax-deductible, and it approved a membership fee (roughly \$60) for Koeber to join a Kansas organization to receive legal information regarding non-profit organizations.

In a follow-up discussion at the mid-year meeting, the Board contracted with Sage to publish *Humanity & Society* starting in January. The primary advantages of moving to Sage include: broadening impact and readership, more global representation, established electronic infrastructure for reviews including on-line tracking of submissions and reviews, handling of all financial matters associated with subscriptions, the journal would be bundled with other journals, marketing support (which might include podcast author interviews), facilitation of electronic storage through EbscoHost, copy editing, changing and verifying addresses. Sage would assume all financial risk. The only cost to AHS would be \$5 for each individual subscription. Sage would keep all revenue from the institutional subscriptions. The shift to Sage would only have a small impact on the AHS budget. The senior editor is Shawn Bigelow; the executive editor is Janine Schipper. The August issue of *Humanity & Society* has been completed; next year there will be a special issue on the Sociology of Art. Email submissions to humanityandsociety@nau.edu

The Board discussed establishing a graduate student paper award, hosting events for graduate students at regional conferences, organizing graduate student panels at the annual meeting, organizing a graduate student reception, making concerted efforts to encourage graduate students to come to the hospitality suite, creating a position on the board for a grad student (providing it was not tokenism). Kalob agreed to take responsibility to organize some of these activities at the Chicago meeting as a pilot. The Board approved up to a \$1000 to support this effort, which could pay for air travel and lodging to support a graduate student organizer and a grad student reception at the annual meeting.

**This food is the gift
of the whole universe—the earth,
the sky, much hard work.
May we live in a way that is
worthy of this food. May we
transform our unskillful states of
mind, especially that of greed.
May we eat only food that
nourish us and prevent illness.
May we accept this food for the
realization of the way of
understanding and love.**

**Buddhist recitation in Thich Nhat Hanh
“Living Buddha, Living Christ,” p. 27**

With Bailey as Chair and Koeber as a member, the Board created an ad hoc committee to administer a graduate student paper award in memory of Frank Lindenfeld, a longtime member of AHS who did work on work collectives and cooperatives.

The Board established an ad hoc committee chaired by Bailey, with membership from Burris-Kitchen, Spector, and Fitzgerald to establish guidelines and procedures and a time-line for the Book Award committee.

In light of the inconsistencies and inequities involved with spouses or partners coming to AHS meetings with some paying full registration fee and some none and attending receptions varying, the Board recommend that a guest meeting registration fee of no more than 50 percent of the member registration fee nor less than the grad student rate be established by the President in consultation with the Program Chair.

In order to fill the posts of Vice-President for membership (vacated by Abdallah Badahdah) and of VP for publications (about to be vacated by Alan Spector in October 2011 when he becomes President-Elect), the Board instructed the Secretary to contact the Nominations Committee to seek candidates for both VP positions, so that a special election could be held early in the upcoming Fall semester.

Having reviewed some of the shortcomings of the current AHS website, the Board urged Stephen Adair to continue to work with Woody Doane to develop a new site at CCSU that would incorporate an improved design and be able to facilitate a secure method for web voting and the collection of credit card payments. The cost to accept cards was estimated at approximately \$900 per year. The fees through Bank of America are: \$20 month, a .25 charge per transaction, 2.14% transaction fee, and an \$18 quarterly fee.

Having had a contentious referendum last year, the Board asked Adair to write up a set of procedures for referendum votes to be reviewed by the Board, which would include advance notice if items are to be debated and decided at the annual meeting and the possibility of voting on a referendum other than at the time of the Spring elections.

**Every gun that is made, every warship
launched, every rocket fired, signifies,
in the final sense, a theft from
those who hunger and are not fed,
those who are cold and are not clothed.
---U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower**

Taking Risks *Jim Wolfe, Editor*

With the inspiration of Jane Addams and in anticipation of our annual meeting focusing on “Daring to be Dangerous,” I thought I would reflect on myself as a dangerous activist/sociologist. I take my cue from an email from my department chair saying that while we all try to challenge our students, I tend to take more risks.

In my MDiv thesis on “The Case for a Functional Christology,” I held that affirming Jesus as Lord does not say something metaphysical about Jesus but expresses a commitment to follow him. Years later when through Marx I discovered Feuerbach affirming the best in humanity as divine without projecting it into the sky, I was on familiar ground. However, with Marx I believed that the purpose of philosophy was not just to understand the world but also to change it, and my praxis in the Sixties in seminary and after was spelled out in engaging in the struggle for civil rights.

I have never been impressed with boundaries, and I feel like I belong wherever I am. So this white suburban Presbyterian found himself working for a black Baptist church in inner city Cleveland. There were some dangers. My television was stolen on my first day at work before I had a chance to unload my unlocked church van. A summer staffer was robbed of his watch (when he was unwise enough to be out at 2 AM). We ourselves were burglarized while on vacation. We figured it was children (since they stole ice cream :-)) and did not tell our paper boy next time we were away. We arrived in Cleveland just before the Hough riots broke out though we had not yet obtained housing in the neighborhood and watched the riots on TV. I went to work every day, but suburban volunteers stayed away despite my assurances we rioted only at night. My older son was the only white child in an all-black kindergarten, but we knew he was in when he got his neighborhood moniker (Dragon Breath).

In Operation Breadbasket, our request that a grocery chain hire more blacks and promote more was initially ignored, but after a boycott with teenagers and me picketing every day at the local store, the chain agreed to our request. I got to meet Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who came up from Atlanta to help us celebrate the victory. Though martyred by an assassin’s bullet, Doc remains a hero for me and model of fearlessness, persistence, and non-violent direct action.

When after three years the church in Cleveland ran out of money for my position, I applied both to churches and to grad school. In that era of black power, the black churches wanted only black ministers, and I was too blackened by my experiences for white churches to want me though some praised my integrity (as they turned me down). Grad school said Yes, and I was off to Berkeley to get a PhD in Religion and Society.

Berkeley was the perfect place to study the Counterculture, which I not only researched but celebrated and which I continue to present to students in terms of its values in contrast to those of the dominant culture. My main doctoral work was in civil religion, a new scholarly arena though it is as old as Durkheim's aborigines, whose religion expressed loyalty to clan (not church). I wrote my PhD thesis on the Kennedy Myth as a religious phenomenon drawing on social scientists, speechwriters, poets, preachers, and memorial books in an unbounded multidisciplinary approach. Fifty years later I am turning it into a book.

After grad school, I had a series of one-year teaching jobs. At the University of British Columbia, I taught religious studies (sabbatical replacement), then political science, and then Great Books. Then I got my dream job at Iowa State, a joint appointment in Sociology and in Religious Studies, which lasted for four years, renewed each spring, until it vanished (soft money). I published and perished, contributing chapters to books on counterculture and on presidents, giving papers at conferences, writing articles. If marginality breeds insight, I should have plenty.

The safest choice I made was to get a bachelor's in computer science, which led me into four years of teaching computer science and fifteen being a computer programmer for an insurance company. I taught sociology on the side, and after I retired as a programmer at age 65, I was able to devote myself to academics, mostly as an adjunct but sometimes full time, teaching sociology at University of Indianapolis and religious studies at IUPUI. Never having to impress a promotion and tenure committee and not caring a whole lot about what anyone thinks of me frees me up to teach in a bold, creative, and lighthearted manner using outrageous role-plays in which I expect students to refute the extreme positions my characters take. As St. Francis said, "If you have nothing, you have nothing to lose."

Students in my religious studies classes and fellow participants in a biweekly Jesus Seminar group (also known as a heretics club) enjoy my free-wheeling and broad-reaching approach to religion, but not so the

churches. In the pulpit I say whatever I think (which may be one reason I don't have a pulpit :-). In a prayer during an intern year while in seminary, I thanked God "for Mary Magdalene and all that is voluptuous and seductive in women." I was just being sincerely grateful, but folks said I was being provocative. In 1991 I took a sermon to several churches. I call it my "kiss of death" sermon since none of those churches ever asked me to preach there again. In the sermon, I said: "The sin involved with homosexuality is not what gay people do in their bedrooms out of love but the loveless way the church has treated them." Lest I give in to the desire to be palatable, a fellow clergyperson told me: "You are a prophet and don't you forget it." Although I pursued peace as president of the Indianapolis Peace and Justice Center, an invitation for me to speak at a convention of a peace church was rescinded when they learned I was not a pacifist. Recently, however, a friend from that church invited me to speak to him and fellow pacifists about the merits of the just war theory. We had a great time.

In contrast to the churches, atheists love me. Recognizing me as a fellow freethinker though sketching in a religious vein, folks from our local Center for Inquiry interviewed me in a podcast about my book "A Song of Faith" and were intrigued with my poems and with the way I interweave seven religions in creating my own. I also share my seven-religion credo with my religious studies students though only after I have made them take the pledge that they will not believe everything I say. Then we are free to share and share alike, no holds barred.

So there is one person's story about taking risks. I look forward to hearing presentations at our upcoming annual meeting involving danger and hearing how this relates to the context of the presenter's life.

Our first and most pressing problem is how to do away with warfare as a method of solving conflicts between national groups within a society who have different views about how the society is to run.

--- Margaret Mead

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Daring to Be Dangerous: A Sociology for our Troubled Times Annual Meeting of the Association for Humanist Sociology Chicago-Evanston: October 12-16, 2011

As we prepare to gather in Chicago for our 2011 annual meeting, we are reminded of the great sociologist and social worker, Jane Addams. For most of her adult life she lived and worked in Chicago, founded Hull-House and helped to establish a number of other peace and justice organizations, including the ACLU and the NAACP. For her efforts, especially in opposition to war, she was called “the most dangerous woman in America.”

Addams was willing to take the heat for her beliefs and refused to give up the fight for a more just and peaceful world. It should occur to us that being identified as “dangerous” can indicate success. Indeed, that was the case with Addams. Those who stood to benefit from the status quo believed her to be dangerous precisely because she had the potential to inspire people to challenge those in power.

Today, as war marches on, inequality intensifies, and the Radical Right grows more threatening, it is time for humanist sociologists to steel themselves for the coming struggles and do the work—research and teaching and community engagement—that is necessary to build a better world.

If in the process we are individually or collectively called “dangerous” by those with power, then we will know that we are truly being faithful to our calling as humanist sociologists.

This year, we will be gathering at the Hotel Orrington in downtown Evanston. The Orrington is a beautiful, historic and unionized hotel just a walk away from Lake Michigan, Northwestern University, and numerous restaurants, bookstores and other places of interest. It is a first-rate conference facility.

An opening plenary session will take place at the Hull-House Museum, featuring Mary Jo Deegan, author of *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School*.

There will also be a special tour of Chicago, highlighting the city’s working class and immigrant history. The keynote address at our meeting will be delivered by Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK and Global Exchange.

We invite our members—and all people of good will inclined toward peace and justice—to join us for our 2011 meeting. We invite proposals for papers or sessions that feature scholarly work, reflections on teaching and activism for social change, book discussions, film screenings, music or other forms of creative expression.

Proposal DEADLINE: Extended to July 15

For more information or to submit a proposal, contact Chris Dale, Program Chair (cdale@nec.edu; 603-428-2306) or Dennis Kalob, AHS President (dkalob@nec.edu; 603-428-2205).



EVANSTON



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THE HUMANIST SOCIOLOGIST



ASSOCIATION FOR HUMANIST SOCIOLOGY NEWSLETTER

Who Are We The Association for Humanist Sociology

Our Past: The Association arose out of growing disenchantment with conventional sociology and a need for a more clearly value committed emphasis in sociological work. We came together in 1976, not out of shared politics or similar "schools" of sociology, which were, and still are, richly varied, but out of a common concern for "real life" problems of peace, equality, and social justice.

Our Philosophy: Humanists view people not merely as products of social forces but also as shapers of social life, capable of creating social orders in which everyone's potential can unfold.

Our Purpose: Accordingly, humanist sociologists study life with a value commitment to advance that possibility through scholarship and practice. We intend to be an active support network for sociologists committed to humanist values, as they practice sociology in institutions often hostile to such an approach. To this end, we produce a quarterly journal, *Humanity & Society*, as well as a newsletter, *The Humanist Sociologist*; we organize national meetings and have sessions at regional sociology conferences.