



# AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION'S 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN – 2016

## OVERVIEW

The American Humanist Association (AHA) is the premier organization advancing humanist values and philosophy, and a leading organization within the active movement for better treatment of all nontheist Americans. Expanding on 75 years of continued refinement and advancement of the humanist worldview, the AHA raises a voice for humanism in the United States in order to bring about a progressive society where being good without a god is an accepted and respected way to live.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the American Humanist Association (AHA) is to advance humanism, an ethical and life-affirming philosophy free of belief in any gods or other supernatural forces. Advocating for equality for nontheists and a society guided by reason, empathy, and our growing knowledge of the world, the AHA promotes a worldview that encourages individuals to live informed and meaningful lives that aspire to the greater good.

## OUR CORE VALUES

Humanism encompasses a variety of nontheistic views such as atheism, agnosticism, rationalism, and naturalism, while adding the important element of a comprehensive worldview and set of ethical values that are informed by scientific knowledge and driven by a desire to meet the needs of people in the here and now. Humanists build a positive lifescape on a foundation of reason, empathy, compassion, and egalitarianism.

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The American Humanist Association prioritizes the following to support our mission and values: Public Awareness of Humanism, Equality for Humanists, Building Community, and Positive Humanist Action.

## I. PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HUMANISM

Humanism, as a positive nontheistic worldview, needs to be a household word. Raising public awareness is a core AHA strength, and strategically it underlies all other objectives.

From our enhanced AHA headquarters, we will raise public awareness via education, publications, the Humanist Celebrant program, Humanist Chaplaincies, holidays, invocations, social justice activism, social media, collaborative charity ventures, lawsuits, lobbying, coalitions, and essentially every one of our programs. AHA development and public relations staff will be active in getting the word out about their activities to AHA supporters, to members of the press, and directly to the general public through letters, talks, commentary, activism, ads, and more. We aim to increase media mentions of AHA from 60K to 100K annually and ensure all national media outlets cover our campaigns.

We aim to increase the number, variety, and readership of articles we place in various publications, including seeking 150,000 monthly visitors to TheHumanist.com. Our social media presence should increase to over one million followers, and our overall base of members and supporters should grow to 50,000. On the political front, we will increase our national and international lobbying, hold leadership positions in several coalitions, and seek five or more members of Congress to openly identify as humanists.

The AHA aims to continually develop the humanist philosophy through articulating humanist policy and updating core concepts to incorporate the best of what we know. The front lines of this intellectual pursuit are found in AHA adjuncts and affiliates. Local humanist groups are daily debating humanism's views on every conceivable issue. The AHA's Institute for Humanist Studies is bringing qualified academic leaders together to explore topics in symposia, journals, and book-length publications that will better our understanding of humanist viewpoints. The AHA's Humanist Institute is directly educating people through onsite trainings and certificate programs as well as through its Kochhar Online Humanist Education series. Constant research is warranted to reveal deeper nuances in our understanding of how to apply humanist values to our daily lives. In the future we will seek to have humanism included in comparative religion curricula.

## 2. EQUALITY FOR HUMANISTS

Nonbelievers are not treated with equal respect in our society, and our government is often deeply entangled with religion. Humanists are victims of discrimination in many aspects of American life, including: the workplace, pharmacies, hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, community centers, institutional chaplaincies, the military, academia, schools, prisons, the media, sports, scouting, government buildings, politics, elections, the courts, memorials, holidays, and even within our own families. Equal treatment for humanists in addition to a government that does not intrude on the religion or nontheistic values of Americans are both needed to achieve full equality.

As theocratic interests in American government have gained momentum in the new century, the American Humanist Association stands ready to meet the challenges of dismantling Christian privilege head-on via



earned media, lobbying public officials, and bringing legal violations to court. Such challenges include the White House Office of Faith-Based Partnerships, vouchers for religious schools, the teaching of creationism and other religious dogma in public schools, religious exemptions for vaccination, preferential treatment of religion in the tax code, medically inaccurate sex-education in our public schools, religious exemptions on valid medical procedures, religious monuments on public land, religious invocations before public events, and even religious words printed on our money or in our oaths.

The AHA's Appignani Humanist Legal Center cases focus largely on church-state separation because intermingling religion and government automatically disadvantages humanists. We will seek difference-making, winnable cases that set and maintain good precedents—aiming to maintain an 85-90% win rate. We also will coordinate advertising campaigns, engage in public speaking, work in coalitions, and provide educational programs for both adults and children. The Center for Freethought Equality's PAC will seek to help elect open humanists to public office and pave the way for politicians to protect the interests of humanists and other nontheists. We'll know we're having the public impact we desire when members of the media seek us daily on the subject area of equal treatment of humanists.

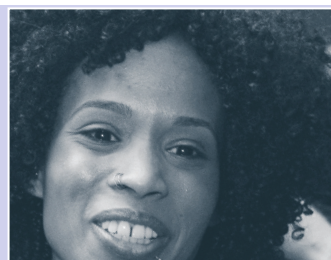
### 3. BUILDING COMMUNITY

By building a sense of meaningful community, members can engage more fully with humanism in more dimensions of their lives. We recognize this need in the following specific areas of life: child rearing including child care programs and educational resources for kids and parents, senior services, legal representation, social justice activism, access to resources, local chapter life, access to celebrants and chaplains, life transitions, times of personal tragedy, humanist ethical instruction, holidays, and charitable ventures.

We will address these needs via direct support of our chapters and affiliates, which we will endeavor to grow from 180 to over 300. Chapters will be supported by doubling our grant program so that groups can grow and try new initiatives. We will improve tabling materials, starter kits, and provided press contacts, as well as doubling the existing speakers' bureau while expanding its diversity and quality. We'll seek to expand our Humanist Society adjunct program to have over 1,000 professionally credentialed humanist celebrants, including 100 chaplains, that can be of service locally in a variety of ways, including conducting celebrations and memorials.

We will aim to assist local groups to build memberships and expand local media effectiveness. And we will expand attendance and access to annual conferences as well as expand involvement with regional conferences. We also hope to help our local groups achieve the dream of having space to house their activities. We will also build meaningful virtual communities through robust social media, forums, and online group education.

And we hope to help educate kids and adults in local groups through the combined resources of AHA ongoing programs (like [kidswithoutgod.com](http://kidswithoutgod.com)), Institute for Humanist Studies academically sound materials, the Humanist Institute's Kochhar Online Humanist Education series, and our cooperation with Camp Quest.



## 4. POSITIVE HUMANIST ACTION

Humanists care about the civil rights of underrepresented groups like racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ community, women, and others not getting a fair chance. The objectives of social justice action address many different areas of need in which humanists see injustice that we feel compelled to help rectify. These areas include civil rights, the environment and climate change, racial equality, LGBTQ issues, feminism, addiction and recovery, death with dignity, reproductive freedom, population dynamics, prison rights, the death penalty, economic justice, peace initiatives, health care, and religious freedom.

We address inequities via enabling our adjuncts and local groups to engage in meaningful change work as well as direct lobbying, filing lawsuits, initiating public relations outreach, and social media campaigns.

AHA staff-supported volunteer efforts will dedicate work on these issues, facilitating outreach on social justice issues. Several social justice-oriented legal cases will be initiated by the Appignani Humanist Legal Center. AHA's chief lobbyist will increase social justice lobbying on Capitol Hill and ensure scorecards address the full range of humanist issues; local leaders will do the same at state and local levels. Humanist Institute educational programs will be developed that address social justice issues and educate thousands.

## IDEAS FOR ACTION

**A number of new ideas deserve exploring as we attempt to reach our performance targets. Among them are:**

- Duplicate membership strategies that have been successfully utilized by other non-profits like the NRA, NAACP, and American Red Cross.
- Attempt to place human interest and lifestyle pieces aimed at particular target markets in various national publications.
- Find ways to bring families with children into local groups. Don't let local groups get pigeonholed into seeming cold and academic. Include music, art, and education.
- Connect Institute for Humanist Studies research and Humanist Institute training modules to provide ongoing secular/religious education at local and national levels.
- Develop a series of 2-5 minutes videos on humanism and the national connection to give to local groups to include regularly in their meetings.
- "Humanism: What Is It?" course should be developed and sought to be taught at the college/university level.
- Help sponsor the construction of monuments and memorials that respect church-state separation and include AHA's name on them.



## Conclusion

THE AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION IS VIBRANT AND STRONG, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OUTLINED IN THIS PLAN WILL INCREASE OUR EFFECTIVENESS AND REACH TO ENSURE A MORE VISIBLE AND MEANINGFUL HUMANISM FOR THE FUTURE.