

Humanism and Its Aspirations

Humanist Manifesto III, a successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933*

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The lifestance of Humanism—guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience—encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance.

This document is part of an ongoing effort to manifest in clear and positive terms the conceptual boundaries of Humanism, not what we must believe but a consensus of what we do believe. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:

Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.

Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.

We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.

Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.

Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

Humanists are concerned for the well being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain that it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process and a planetary duty to protect nature's integrity, diversity, and beauty in a secure, sustainable manner.

Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.

Signatories

We who sign Humanism and Its Aspirations declare ourselves in general agreement with its substance and, while not necessarily endorsing all of its specifics, unreservedly offer it to a candid public.

Philip W. Anderson

Nobel laureate in physics, 1977

Philip Appleman

Poet and distinguished professor emeritus of English, Indiana University

Khoren Arisian

Senior Leader, NY Society for Ethical Culture

Janet Jeppson Asimov

Psychiatrist and science writer

Bill Baird

Reproductive rights pioneer

Frank Berger

Pharmacologist, developer of anti-anxiety drugs

Paul D. Boyer

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1997

Lester R. Brown

Founder and president, Earth Policy Institute

August Brunsman

Executive director, Secular Student Alliance

Owen Chamberlain

Nobel laureate in physics, 1959

Matt Cherry

Executive director, Institute for Humanist Studies

Carlton Coon

Former U.S. Ambassador to Nepal

Paul J. Crutzen

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1995

Richard Dawkins

Charles Simonyi professor, University of Oxford

Pierre-Gilles de Gennes

Nobel laureate in physics, 1991

Johann Deisenhofer

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1988

Riane Eisler

President, Center for Partnership Studies

Edward Ericson

Leader emeritus, Ethical Culture

Roy P. Fairfield

Cofounder, Union Graduate School

Antony Flew

Philosopher

Levi Fragell

President, International Humanist and Ethical Union

Kendyl Gibbons

President, Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

Sheldon Glashow

Nobel laureate in physics, 1979

Babu R. R. Gogineni

Executive director, International Humanist and Ethical Union

Sol Gordon

Sexologist

Herbert A. Hauptman

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1985

Jim Herrick

Editor, the *New Humanist*

Dudley Herschbach

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1986

Fran Hosken

Editor, *Women's International Network News*

Stefan Jonasson

Immediate past president, HUManists

Larry Jones

President, Institute for Humanist Studies

Jone Johnson-Lewis

President, National Leaders Council of the American Ethical Union

Gerald A. Larue

Professor emeritus of biblical history and archaeology, University of Southern California

Yuan T. Lee

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1986

Joseph Levee

Board member, Council for Secular Humanism

Ellen McBride

Immediate past president, American Ethical Union

Mario J. Molina

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1995

Lester Mondale

Retired Unitarian Universalist minister and signer of Humanist Manifestos I and II

Henry Morgentaler

Abortion rights pioneer

Stephen Mumford

President, Center for Research on Population and Security

William Murry

President and dean, Meadville-Lombard Theological School

Erwin Neher

Nobel laureate in medicine, 1991

Sara Oelberg

President, HUManists

Indumati Parikh

President, Center for the Study of Social Change, India

Katha Pollitt

Columnist, the *Nation*

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Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1977

Howard Radest

Dean emeritus, the Humanist Institute

James Randi

Magician, founder of the James Randi Educational Foundation

Larry Reyka

President, the Humanist Society

Richard J. Roberts

Nobel laureate in medicine, 1993

David Schafer

Retired research physiologist, U.S. Veterans Administration

Eugenie Scott

Executive director, National Center for Science Education

James R. Simpson

Professor of international agricultural economics, Ryukoku University, Japan

Warren Allen Smith

Editor and author

Matthew Ies Spetter

Associate professor in social psychology at the Peace Studies Institute of Manhattan College, NY

Oliver Stone

Academy award-winning filmmaker

John E. Sulston

Nobel laureate in medicine, 2002

John M. Swomley

Professor emeritus of social ethics, St. Paul School of Theology

Robert Tapp

Dean, the Humanist Institute

Henry Taube

Nobel laureate in chemistry, 1983

E. Donnell Thomas

Nobel laureate in medicine, 1990

Kurt Vonnegut

Novelist

Sherwin Wine

Founder and president, Society for Humanistic Judaism

All Living Past Presidents of the American Humanist Association

Edd Doerr, 1995–2002

Michael W. Werner, 1993–1994

Suzanne I. Paul, 1992

Lyle L. Simpson, 1981–1984

Bette Chambers, 1973–1979

Lloyd L. Morain, 1969–1972, 1951–1955

Robert W. McCoy, 1966–1968

Vashti McCollum, 1962–1965

The above is a partial list. Signers added after press time will appear on the website of the American Humanist Association. Institutions are listed for identification only.