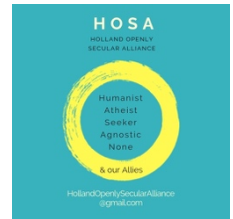


Holland Openly Secular Alliance

HOSA is made up of Holland-area Humanists, Agnostics, Seekers, Atheists, and NONES. We found our way to each other by way of social justice, interfaith, and diversity circles and through introductions, one interested person to the next. *HollandOpenlySecularAlliance@gmail.com*



In support of the secular community, HOSA:

- Provides monthly speakers and facilitates community discussions focused on all aspects of living the secular life;
- Addresses local issues that have an impact on the secular community;
- Partners with religious allies in peace, social justice, and earth-care projects;
- Hosts an annual series of events during Openly Secular month (October).

HOSA believes it is important to strengthen the public presence of the secular community:

- To encourage secular Hollanders to know they are not alone and to empower them, if and when ready, to “come out” of closet.
- To create a secular infrastructure of support, advocacy, and community for the growing numbers of NONES in our community.
- To represent secular individuals and families on city-wide boards and committees.
- To address breaches in the constitutional wall separating church and state by advocating for non-religious citizens, employees, and students.

Resources and Opportunities

1. HOSA Speakers/Community Book Groups: "Getting to Know What Your Secular Neighbors Believe"

- Ethical Perspective: Greg Epstein, *Good Without God*
- Sociological Perspective: Phil Zuckerman, *Living the Secular Life*
- Feminist Perspective: Annie Laurie Gaylor, *Women Without Superstition*
- Church/State Perspective: David Niose, *Nonbeliever Nation*

2. Holland Sentinel: Recent HOSA “My Takes” + responses

- Nelson Hart’s My Take - "You May Call Me a NONE"
<http://www.hollandsentinel.com/news/20180804/my-take-you-may-call-me-none?rssfeed=true>
- Rev. Kent Fry’s Response to Nelson’s My Take - "Doubt Not Antithetical to Faith"
<http://www.hollandsentinel.com/news/20180808/letter-doubt-not-antithetical-to-faith>
- Nelson’s Response to Kent Fry’s Response: Finally Found My Self
<http://www.hollandsentinel.com/news/20180810/letter-i-finally-found-my-self-and-im-thankful>
- Bin Lim’s Response to Kent Fry’s Response: “Embrace Wisdom from All Sources”
<http://www.hollandsentinel.com/news/20180812/letter-embrace-wisdom-from-all-sources?rssfeed=true>
- Bin’s My Take: "Not Everyone in Holland is Christian"
<http://www.hollandsentinel.com/news/20180814/my-take-not-everyone-in-holland-is-christian?rssfeed=true>

3. Interfaith Conversations: Grand Haven Interfaith’s “The Big Questions” on Oct. 24: Loutit Library

Definitions

The Nones

- “The ‘nones’ are Americans who say they don't identify with any religion. Demographers have given them this name because when asked to identify their religion, their answer is ‘none.’” PRC
- “One-fifth of the U.S. public, and a third of adults under 30, are religiously unaffiliated today. Their ranks now include more than 13 million self-described atheists and agnostics (nearly 6%), and nearly 33 million people who have no particular religious affiliation (14%).” Pew Research Center
- “The vast majority of “nones” (78%) say they were raised as a member of a particular religion before shedding their religious identity in adulthood.” Pew Research Center, 2016

Humanism

- “Humanism is an ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It does not accept supernatural views of reality. (The International Humanist and Ethical Union)

Atheist

- “Let me say right at the outset that I’ve always been very reluctant to use the word “atheist,” not because I’m embarrassed or ashamed of it, but I think that this view scarcely deserves a title. No one has a special name for not believing in witches—I’m not an “a-hexist”—and I don’t have a word for not believing in ghosts. So the idea of there being a special name for what I’ve never had, which is a belief in god, seems to me to be odd.” Jonathan Miller, *Atheism: A Rough History of Disbelief*

Agnostic

- “An agnostic is a person who has entertained the proposition that there is a god but believes neither that it is true nor that it is false.” The term was invented in 1884 by English biologist, T.H. Huxley to denote people who confess to being ‘hopelessly ignorant concerning a variety of matters, about which metaphysicians and theologians, both orthodox and heterodox, dogmatize with the utmost confidence.’ (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Spiritual, But Not Religious (SBNR)

- "Spiritual but not religious" is used to self-identify a spiritual life stance that does not recognize organized religion as the sole or most valuable means of furthering spiritual growth. Some SBNRs place an emphasis on their interior life, including for some, a Jesus-centered piety. Others place an emphasis on individual mind-body-spirit well-being.” Updated Wikipedia Entry
- “About a quarter of U.S. adults (27%) think of themselves as spiritual but not religious, up 8 percentage points in five years. This growth has occurred among male and female, and all races, ages, educational levels, and political affiliations.” Pew Research Center, 2017

Morality: Can one be good without a god?

“While science has made great strides in treating pathologies of the human mind, far less research exists to date on positive qualities of the human mind including compassion, altruism and empathy. Yet these pro-social traits are innate to us and lie at the very centerpiece of our common humanity. Our capacity to feel compassion has ensured the survival and thriving of our species over millennia.” (Stanford’s Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education)

“Good Without God is not a book about whether one can be good without God, because that question does not need to be answered --it needs to be rejected outright. To suggest that one can't be good without belief in God is not just an opinion, a mere curious musing -- it is a prejudice.” Greg M. Epstein, Author of Good Without God and Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University

“Most U.S. adults now say it is not necessary to believe in a god to be moral and have good values (56%), up from about half (49%) who expressed this view in 2011. This increase is the result of changing attitudes among those who do identify with a religion, including white Protestants. Among all religiously affiliated adults, the share who say belief in a god is unnecessary for morality ticked up modestly, from 42% in 2011 to 45% in 2017.” Pew Research Center, 2017

“As children of life, we are equipped by life with compassion as it is essential to the survival and thriving of our species. We see this unadulterated trait in the red fire ant colonies of the Amazon. When a flood hits a red fire ant colony in the Amazon jungle, the species adapts to the water by linking legs and creating a living raft that floats on top of the water. On this living life raft, the queen and young are kept safe and dry until the floods subside and their raft reaches land. We are equipped by LIFE to create living rafts for each other.” Patricia Lynn Reilly

About Morality from *Living the Secular Life* by sociologist Phil Zuckerman

“George Jacob Holyoake (a school-master, lecturer, writer, and magazine editor from Birmingham, England) first coined the term 'secularism' in 1851. He spent 6 months in jail for giving a speech deemed hostile to Christianity. According to him, secularism is not about being against religion; rather, it is something positive, a personal orientation predicated on a this-worldly ethos — that is, guiding beliefs and principled ideals that are concerned with the here-and-now, people and nature, life and existence. Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human.

Being good means treating others as you would like to be treated. That is the bedrock of secular morality. For the non-religious, morality isn't about doing what someone in authority tells you to do or not doing something because you fear the otherworldly consequences. Rather, secular morality hinges upon little else than that Golden Rules' basic, simple logic of empathetic reciprocity. Given its easy applicability and inherent reasonableness, the Golden Rule is widespread the world over. Although we find versions of the Golden Rule within all of the world's religions, not a single one of these religious articulations requires a God; all that is required is basic, fundamental human empathy.”

Eight Common Myths About Secular Individuals: www.OpenlySecular.org

Myth #1: Secular people are angry at god and just angry in general.

Fact: Secular individuals don't believe in a god, so they can't be mad at a god. Some secular people are angry about what happens based on religious beliefs, but that is different from being angry at a god.

Myth #2: Secular people wish to convert people away from religion.

Fact: Secularism is not something that people can be converted to. It is a personal decision that takes a lot of thought and consideration. Although many secular people would like to see more acceptance of secularism and discussion of religion, this does not necessarily mean that they wish everyone to be secular. Many simply wish to coexist with the religious and be accepted for who they are.

Myth #3: Secular people live empty, unfulfilled lives.

Fact: Secular individuals have lots of things in life that make them happy and fulfilled: friends, family, sports, love, helping make the world a better place, and learning new things. The list could go on and on, and in almost every place it overlaps with what makes religious people happy, too.

Myth #4: Secular people have no morals.

Fact: Secular individuals are typically just as moral as theists. Secular people derive their morals from philosophy, role models, experience, and family values. Typically, the only disagreement is over the use of scripture and religious dogma as the basis of morality. Beyond that, secular people and theists can (and do) typically agree on many aspects of morality and what it means to be a good person.

Myth #5: Secular people are arrogant.

Fact: Some secular people are arrogant. Some religious people are arrogant. Most secular people find the claims of religion unconvincing and are willing to calmly explain why. This is honesty, not arrogance.

Myth #6: Secular people don't know what it feels like to believe.

Fact: Many secular people were religious at one point, and therefore have most likely experienced religious feelings. Secular people typically recognize that these feelings can be significant and meaningful, but they see them as emanating from their brain, not from a god. Many of us experience the same emotions we did from religion by contemplating the universe or looking at stars in the sky.

Myth #7: Secular people have nothing to live for.

Fact: Secular people have lots to live for, most of which religious people would also say they live for. They live to enjoy the company of people they like/love. They live to satisfy their curiosity by learning about the world. They live to experience new things and to take in the wonders of reality. They live to make the world a better place for everyone.

Myth #8: Secular people are the reason misfortune befalls America.

Fact: There is no evidence to support this position. Bad decisions that result in damaging effects on the US or the world are made by a lot of people of all religions. However, scapegoating is an effective tactic for creating an out-group. This is why the idea that non-theists are at fault for America's woes is especially worrisome. It contributes greatly to the notion that non-theists, no matter how kind or charitable, are the enemy. This can make life difficult for non-believers.