



HUMANIST Monthly

Vol. XXXVIII No. 12
December 2024

A Publication of the Capital District Humanist Society
Connecting the Secular Humanist Community of Upstate New York, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont

Sunday, December 8th, 2024

In Person at 12:30 PM and Online at 1:00 PM

LOSING THE DARK – THE IMPORTANCE OF DARK SKIES TO ASTRONOMY, NATURE, AND US



Dr. Mindy Townsend

Finding truly dark skies has gotten harder and harder as humanity has become more urban. This not only makes it difficult for astronomers to see faint night sky objects, it has an effect on wildlife who also take their cues from the stars. Join Dr. Mindy Townsend, astronomer with the Dudley Observatory at Siena, as she discusses the unintended consequences of lighting up the world.

Dr. Mindy Townsend is the Dudley Astronomer with Siena College in Loudonville, NY. After earning a BA in Political Science, a BS in Physics, and then a Law Degree, and passing her bar, she then returned to her original passion for space and astronomy, and received a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Kansas where her dissertation focused on how very massive galaxies grow. She has over 5 years' experience conducting outreach and communicating science with K-12 students and the public.

This event is free and open to the public. It will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, New York and via Zoom. Light refreshments will be available before the talk, but **please bring your own beverage**. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please follow the instructions below to request an email invitation to attend.

ANYONE WHO IS NOT A CURRENT PAID MEMBER of CDHS can attend. Send an email request to: CDHS.Albany@gmail.com. Please send the request several days prior, or you may log onto our Meetup page: <https://www.meetup.com/Capital-District-Humanist-Society/>, then click on JOIN, then click on ATTEND, and use the RSVP function, and the link will be available.

The Capital District Humanist Society provides a supportive community for exchanging ideas, heightening our knowledge of the world and ourselves, fostering moral and ethical growth, and promoting the principles of secular humanism. CDHS is a member organization for people with humanist values. Our values include commitment to free inquiry, rational thought, lifelong education, democracy, social concern, and fellowship.

Capital District Humanist Society, Inc.

Established 1986

Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety>



CDHS is affiliated with:

The American Humanist Association (AHA)

Center for Inquiry (CSI)

Humanists International (HI)

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA)

On Sunday, January 12th, 2024, 12:30 PM (In Person) and 1:00 PM (Online)

The Capital District Humanist Society Presents:

Misinformation, Conspiracy Theories and Extremism in an Age of Political Mega-Identities

Misinformation is nothing new. For as long as humans have communicated, they also manipulated information and deceived others to gain power. Nevertheless, scholars, journalists and pundits have expressed a concern about humanity entering a new “Post-Truth” era, one driven by the collapse of truth and political turmoil. In this talk, Dr. Ophir argues that humans have never been motivated by accuracy, and that the current moment could be better explained by considering unprecedented technological and political developments.

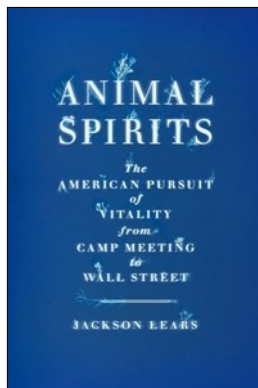
Yotam Ophir (PhD, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2018) is an Associate Professor of Communication at the University at Buffalo. He studies political and science communication (media effects, persuasion, misinformation, conspiracy theories and extremism). Dr. Ophir’s work was published in journals such as the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), American Journal of Public Health (AJPH), Journal of Communication (JOC), and Communication Methods and Measures (CMM). His book “*Misinformation & Society*” will be out in the fall of 2025. Dr. Ophir is the head of the Media Effects, Misinformation, and Extremism (MEME) lab, is a member of UB’s Center for Information Integrity, and is a distinguished fellow at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2023, he received the “Exceptional Scholar: Young Investigator Award” from the University at Buffalo.



Dr. Yotam Ophir

This program will take place both in person (at 12:30 PM) and online (at 1:00 PM) via Zoom. The in-person event will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, NY. It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be available at the in-person meeting before the speaker’s presentation. Current paid CDHS members will automatically receive an invite to the on-line meeting via email. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please see page 1 to request an email invitation to attend.

CDHS Book Group is reading *Animal Spirits: The American Pursuit of Vitality from Camp Meeting to Wall Street* by Jackson Lears. The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays.



Contact Frank Robinson if you would like to join the spirited and informative discussion.

CDHS Executive Council

Executive Director	Don Porterfield
Secretary	Vacant
Treasurer	Roland Tozer
Programs, Publicity	Fred Levine
Publications	Carol Quantock
Social Activities	Candace Fuller
Membership, Telephone	Judith Herbert
Meetup Coordinator	Fred Levine
Compliance	Vacant
Member at Large	Sherry Levine

Appointed Positions

Hospitality	Sue Parry
Room Arrangements	Frank Robinson
Caring Network	Rosina Ansaldo

RECAP OF OUR NOVEMBER SPEAKER'S TALK

by Frank Robinson

Nikhil Goyal is a sociologist who's worked for Senator Bernie Sanders at the Senate Budget Committee. He spoke about his book, *Live to See the Day: Coming of Age in American Poverty*.

Starting in 2015, he followed a number of youngsters growing up in Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood, of aging row houses, populated mostly by Latinos and African-Americans. Working class, or perhaps more accurately underclass, with endemic poverty. The housing crappy, the schools overcrowded, underfunded, and crumbling, epitomizing the "school-to-prison" pipeline.

Ryan Rivera was not even 13 when a stupid prank, setting a fire in a trash can, resulted not merely in school disciplinary action, but bringing in the police. He wound up detained, in court, then expelled from his school and sent to a "reform school" more like a prison, run by a private for-profit company that also specializes in private prisons. Young Ryan was humiliated and profoundly frightened.

He scarcely even hoped to ever see adulthood, expecting to wind up either dead or incarcerated. Neighborhoods like his suffer a crisis of gun violence and premature deaths. Their average lifespans are around 71 — on par with less developed countries like Egypt. Goyal suggested that all this dysfunctionality is not due to character deficiencies in people like Ryan and their families, it's a consequence of the difficult environment they're forced to navigate.

Ryan was actually fortunate enough to land up in a school that was good for him, and he clawed his way out of his daunting circumstances into a decent responsible adulthood. But hardly can we expect every such kid to achieve that.

So what is to be done? Important though schools are, Goyal posited that fixing schools is not enough, without fixing the urban environments in which they're embedded. He pointed to the 1996 federal welfare reform as being a setback in that regard. He also discussed President Biden's 2021 "Build Back Better" plan, an ambitious program for the kind of renewal he envisions; it did not pass, though some elements of it did find their way into the subsequent (misnamed) "Inflation Reduction Act." Goyal spoke of measures like a living minimum wage, universal pre-K education, revitalizing trade unions, etc. While he considers the federal government politically paralyzed now in regard to such things, he does see some progress being made at the state level.

A recording of Ben's presentation can be found on the CDHS YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/7zIKnTwhupl>.



Join the bunch for lunch! We will gather at a location TBD (we've had great meals at Diner Time in Latham) on December 19th at 11:30 AM. January's date is the 16th. Please let Rosina Ansaldo know by Wednesday evening if you'll be joining them.

NOTE: We're looking for more suggestions for restaurants for the Lunch Bunch. We'd like to give our local eateries a chance by rotating them every few months and returning to the ones that get enthusiastic thumbs up. Please send ideas to Rosina Ansaldo. Thanks!

Attending a CDHS Meeting? Why Not Volunteer To Provide Snacks?

If you've attended in-person CDHS monthly meetings, then you know that light snacks are available before and during the meeting. Finding people to volunteer to bring snacks has not been an easy job, and Sue Parry, Hospitality Coordinator, has been asking attendees to step up and bring some snacks to share. **Please keep in mind that you can be reimbursed up to \$60** if you submit your receipt to Treasurer Roland Tozer or Don Porterfield. You can also opt to donate the food.

At the November EC meeting, the EC voted to order food from a local establishment at meetings only when no volunteers were signed up. Snacks should not be elaborate: cheese and crackers, chips/dips, a veggie tray, and cookies or other type of dessert are the usual "go-to" noshes. **Refreshments volunteers are not responsible for beverages, as members will bring their own.**

Unless otherwise announced, meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month at Pinnacle Living at Forts Ferry, 45 Forts Ferry Road, Latham, NY 12110 in the Library/Lounge. Setup time: arrive between 12:00 noon—12:15 PM to set up food table; plates, utensils, etc. are located in the on-site CDHS cart.

If bringing snacks, plan on 20-25 attendees, and choose food that you'd be willing to take home if there are leftovers or plan to share them with others who are interested in taking leftovers.

To volunteer or for more information, please contact Sue Parry at sueparryharmony@gmail.com.

Pirates' Bounty: Our Social on December 14th

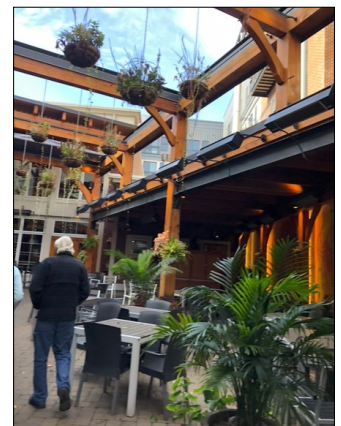
The holidays are rolling in fast, so mark your calendar for Saturday, December 14th to join us for the annual Pirates' Bounty (Chinese auction) from noon to 4:00 PM at Pinnacle Living. Please bring a dish to share for a potluck lunch and a "gift" for the Pirates' Bounty. We had lots of laughs last year exchanging and opening our gifts.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Dee Fuller at candacelf13@gmail.com by December 10th to let her know if you will be joining us for this lighthearted event. We look forward to seeing you there!

November Social Netted an Interesting Visit and Great Lunch

It was decided to try to hold a monthly social on a weekday instead of the usual Saturday to see if more people could attend. We had a small but eager number of folks who visited the NYS Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, followed by lunch at Druthers, also in Saratoga. Even though tours weren't scheduled, museum docent Mark Koziol walked us through the history of the NY National Guard and the armory building. He also described the various exhibits that are available to walk through as part of a self-tour.

Attendees met for lunch at Druthers afterward and enjoyed the food and the pleasant setting.



In Memory of Frank Wind, 1944—2024

Frank Herbert Wind, the son of Blanche and Harold Wind, left this magnificent planet on 10/30/2024. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 26, 1944. He and his younger brother, Jonathan, grew up in Queens, attended public schools, and participated in the American Jewish Society for Service as teenagers. He obtained his Bachelors in Geology from Queens College, then began grad school at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, where he met his first wife, Barbara Kay Brown. He obtained his Masters and PhD from Florida State University before beginning his tenure with Texaco in the Los Angeles area, then moving with the company to Denver and, later, Houston. He and Barbara had two children, Beverly and Jeremy. When Barbara passed away and Beverly decided to attend Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, Frank retired and moved with Jeremy to the Hudson Valley.

He responded to a personal ad in The Poughkeepsie Journal and soon met and fell in love with Diane Ellen Lee, “Dee.” They were married on August 19, 2001. Dee had been a professional storyteller for years, and Frank was fascinated by the craft. He began writing and performing his own stories, and together, they formed the storytelling duo Frank-Lee Speaking. Upon moving to Albany, he became an active member of the Capital District Humanist Society, where he shared his knowledge of evolution and discussed his views on the separation of church and state, and made many friends along the way. A special accomplishment was designing an eco-friendly house in Castleton. He always loved cooking, and his passion and refuge was the kitchen. He was artistically inclined and loved taking pictures during his travels. He also enjoyed hiking in the Albany area with his group HARP: Hiking At a Relaxed Pace. Frank loved Scotland, which he visited 12 times with Dee, and which came to feel like a second home—especially the town of Linlithgow.

He is survived by his brother, Jonathan, his wife, Dee, and his children and grandchildren. Dee’s son, Scott Freedman, has three children with his wife, Jeannie: Korbin, Clayton, and Emmelynn. Frank’s daughter, Beverly, married Maxwell Berger, and they gifted Frank and Dee with two granddaughters, Cassidy and Nico, aged seven and four, who are a whirlwind. Frank’s son, Jeremy, married Brit Caswell and moved to Albuquerque. They gifted Frank and Dee with three grand kitties who never write.

His companionship and dry humor will be greatly missed by all those who love him.

Three charities to which people can donate if they so desire: Capital Rep, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Celebration of Life for Frank Wind Scheduled for December 7

On Saturday December 7, from 2 to 5 in the afternoon, we will gather at the **GE Theatre in Proctor’s in Schenectady** to celebrate the life of Frank Wind in song and story! You can park in the parking garage and on the street for free.

There will be time to socialize, spend time with old and new friends and share stories about Frank. We will have a program of music and stories that will last about an hour. Several dear friends have agreed to participate in and orchestrate this program to honor a very special person.

Snacks and beverages will be provided. I need to know how many tables will be needed. PLEASE RSVP by Wednesday, November 27th.

I hope that many of you can join me for this beautiful celebration.

If you cannot attend in person, Dee will be creating a What’s App group or providing a Zoom link for anyone who is interested. Please let her know.

CDHS INVOLVEMENT IN ALBANY AREA PRIDE
EVENTS—2025

Can We Count on You to Participate?

CDHS is hoping to become involved in the Albany area Pride events in May, June, and July of 2025. Our options are to:

- ◆ walk in the Pride Parades under a CDHS banner
- ◆ host an informational table at Pride events providing visitors with information about CDHS
- ◆ sell LGBTQ+ supportive stickers made by one of our members – the sales profits are to be split among CDHS, the member who creates the stickers, and local LGBTQ+ advocacy groups
- ◆ or, all of the above!
- ◆ transporting our table, banner, awning, literature, stickers to/from the place where we will set up on the day of the event(s)
- ◆ tabling (sitting at our table, handing out literature, selling stickers, and speaking to visitors about CDHS and why we are involved in Pride activities (four-hour shift(s) or full day/event shift(s))
- ◆ walking in the parade
- ◆ carrying one of two ends of the CDHS banner in the parade walk.

Knowing the level of participation we can expect from our membership is critical in order to properly scale our plans. There were four local Pride celebrations in 2024: Albany (downtown), Bethlehem, Saratoga, and Troy. Please think about whether you can commit to helping with any of the following tasks, and if you can, please send me (Judith Herbert, your CDHS Pride planner) an email at 6nospam@gmail.com by December 13, 2024. Enter Pride Events Interest in the subject line. Thank you!

Privacy in CDHS Directory and Meetings

CDHS members have been receiving their member directories electronically for the past two years. The 2024 Directory, while distributed electronically, does not contain members' street addresses out of concern for their safety and privacy due to possible data breaches (please note that the CDHS database has not been hacked). For the past few months, the EC has discussed whether or not to include street addresses again since members seem to like the convenience of looking up addresses for carpool or correspondence purposes.

It is important to note that **any** member can opt out of their personal information (even including their name) being included in the CDHS Directory upon request. A member can also opt out of having their photo appear in this newsletter or other CDHS publication.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding personal contact information in the member directory, please contact Judith Herbert at 6nospam@gmail.com. For requests regarding images in the Humanist Monthly, contact Carol Quantock at quantumwoman@gmail.com.

Executive Council Needs Your Help!

CDHS' continuing existence is highly dependent on members stepping forward in various ways to ensure it remains a viable, thriving organization. All members are welcome to attend EC meetings to see how things work and whether you might be able help out. If you would like to make a positive difference for CDHS, reach out to a member of the EC about how to attend an EC meeting. You might be pleasantly surprised to find a good opportunity for you that may enhance the benefit you will get from our unique organization. Members with ideas, who are willing to help bring them to fruition would be most welcome.

At present, there are two vacant positions on the EC: Secretary and Compliance Officer. Both these positions require work done on a monthly basis. Neither position is difficult, but both are necessary for records and reporting purposes.

Please consider volunteering a bit of time each month to be an active part of a progressive secular organization in a safe environment with like-minded members of varied backgrounds.

If interested, send an email to Don Porterfield at CDHS.Albany@gmail.com to ask about the open positions on the Executive Council. Don will fill you in on the duties of each position and approximately how much time you can expect to spend per month on either one.

Capital District Humanist Society, Inc. PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209

(518) 533-2666 E-mail us at cdhs.albany@gmail.com

Visit us on the web at humanistsociety.net

The Capital District Humanist Society (CDHS) is an independent, non-profit (and non-prophet), non-partisan and strictly non-religious educational and social organization for those who share humanist values: commitment to education, rational and free inquiry, democracy, social concerns and fellowship. CDHS is affiliated with the four major humanist organizations - the American Humanist Association (AHA), the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) and the Humanists International (HI).

There are five types of CDHS member support: Individual, \$50/yr.; Family, \$80/yr.; Sustaining, \$100/yr.; Patron, \$150/yr.; and Lifetime Member, one contribution of \$1000 or more.

Members receive our publication, *The Humanist Monthly*, and vote each September on the make-up of the governing Executive Council. Members are eligible for election to the Executive Council and may also serve as appointed officials. Members are welcome to attend Executive Council meetings.

The IRS recognizes CDHS as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, all donations, both cash and materials with established "fair market value", qualify as charitable contributions for income tax purposes.

Donations are gratefully accepted to help speed our growth. CDHS is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization under the IRS Code. Financial disclosure information and our annual report are available upon request.

If you know of someone who may be interested in CDHS, please pass this newsletter along or give us the name; we will send a sample copy or two with no obligation.

We value your input. In the best humanist tradition, CDHS has no rigid picture of itself. We ask you to join us, not follow us. What activities and services would you like CDHS to provide its members? Send us your suggestions, questions, and comments.



CDHS
 PO Box 11209
 Loudonville, NY 12211-0209

FIRST CLASS

Address service requested

CDHS ++ PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209 ++ (518) 533-2666

<https://www.humanistsociety.net>

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MEMBER SUPPORT FORM

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City ++ State ++ Zip _____

Email _____ Fax _____

How did you hear about the Humanist Society? _____

All this information will be included in our Directory, which is distributed to members only, unless you request otherwise by checking and signing here: I do not want to be listed in the CDHS Member Directory _____

Levels of Member Support	Annual Payment	Date ____/____/____
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- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership | \$ 50 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership | \$ 80 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member | \$100 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$150 | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | one-time contribution of \$1000 or more _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional tax-deductible donation | \$ _____ | _____ |

Please make checks payable to CDHS

Please send me additional information