



THE HAT NEWSLETTER

The Quarterly Periodical of the HUMANIST ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO

Promoting Humanism and the Separation of Church and State

END OF SUMMER PARTY

123 Howland Avenue

East of Bathurst; north of Bloor in the Annex:
at the family home of Moses Klein.

(TTC transport suggested as parking is limited.)

*Pot - luck buffet – no meat or shellfish,
please.*

**Sunday, August 27th
from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.**

Stimulating conversation, fine company,
good food and fun!

UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKERS

Topic

Speaker

Date

Location

Above TBA.

Speaker events will commence after the
summer.

OTHER

Please see the HAT website for articles, news
items, updated events, colourful PDF copies of all
the newsletters and more!

REMINDER

If you would consider receiving your newsletter as an
attachment to your email rather than a surface-mailed
copy please let me know **yes** or **no** (if you have not
already!). I felt obligated to redo the mailing list
recently which means you are receiving this
newsletter a little later than I first intended – my
apologies. Thank you for your many replies!

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Weekly forums (see entry below) take place at
the 519 Church Street Community Centre. (The
group can decide to meet elsewhere in the rare
case of a room / building cancellation.) If in
doubt about any event, please go to the **HAT
website for event details, scheduling
information**, etc., or call HAT at (647) 361 -
7084.

HUMANIST DISCUSSION FORUMS One of our most
popular programs takes place each Saturday
from 11:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. We meet in an
informal way to discuss various topics of
interest to free-thinkers. (You don't have to be a
HAT member to attend.) If you are looking for a
spirited group with whom to discuss ideas and
make new friends, you are welcome to show
up! Check the website for weekly details on
topics to be discussed. After a discussion,
group members often go out for a coffee or a
bite to eat. Centrally located, not far from
Yonge and Bloor, the forum takes place at 519
Church Street - steps north of Wellesley
Street.

Monthly Book Club If interested in re-
facilitating discussions about books please
email me or any other member of the SC, or
leave a message at (647) 361-7084.

Guest Speakers Speaker events are held
every three months from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00
p.m. Please see opposite column for
information about the free speaker events.
All welcome!

*Note: Out of respect for people with allergies and
chemical sensitivities, we request that participants at
HAT events avoid using scented products such as
perfumes, colognes, hairsprays, etc.*

The HAT Newsletter

Vol. 24: No 3

July - September

EDITOR: Cornelia Laven

The HAT newsletter is published on a quarterly basis. Copy deadline is ten days prior to publication.

The editor welcomes your contributions! Submissions are routinely from members, relatively current, signed by you, your own work, quoted material on which you comment and, finally, not opposed to the spirit of humanism. My preference is that your submissions be emailed as attached MS Word documents or simply pasted into your email. The editor reserves the right to select materials and to edit these for style, length and content. Submissions may include articles, photos, poems, illustrations, book reviews, cartoons and so forth.

The aim is *never* to rewrite your meaning, but to ensure clarity and balanced, ethical reporting practice. Space is limited and we cannot guarantee publication. All opinions are those of the authors and *not* necessarily those of the editor, steering committee or HAT members. All initialed material is the work of the editor.

COPY DEADLINE
September 25, 2017

Send Submissions and Advertising to:

HAT EDITOR

Humanist Association of Toronto
Box 68559, 360A Bloor St West
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1X0

Or by email to the Editor:

lleahcc@gmail.com

HATNewsletter@gmail.com

HAT phone line/voice mail: (647) 361 - 7084

email: **coordinator@humanisttoronto.ca**

web: **http://www.humanist.toronto.on.ca**

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Summer has arrived and the SC has set August 27th as the date of our annual party. Once again, Moses Klein and his family have opened their home to us for this celebration and we thank them for this. (Please read the details on page one or enjoy the invite page at the finish of the newsletter!)

Richard Dowsett's article on intimacy, submitted months ago, could finally be slotted into the newsletter and starts on page four. As well, Joyce Li and Marisa Berton reviewed some interesting-sounding books. I encourage the two members to revive our defunct book club!

*In April, Moses reported that our refugee family had gone to Australia as "they were tired of waiting". His motion that HAT wait for another Syrian family wishing to emigrate, and for HAT to continue working with Friends of Music (FOMA), passed unanimously -- please see the **motion** on page three. **Recently, Moses informed me that a refugee family is scheduled to arrive as soon as July 26th, 2017!***
c.l.

ADVERTISING RATES

Classified: (1 insertion) 25¢ per word; min. 10 words - max. 60 words.

Display: (6 insertions) \$25 dollars per column inch. Full column is 3½" wide by 10" long.

**Please note that the above prices are half-price for members.*

Please submit camera-ready artwork or layout and copy to the HAT Editor.

Make cheques payable to the:

Humanist Association of Toronto

Note The editor can at any time, for reason of incompatibility with the general principles of secular humanism, refuse to accept an ad.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The HAT Steering Committee meets monthly to conduct the business of the association. Since HAT is a member-driven organization, your presence and participation are essential. Members are welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings.

Coordinator..... Richard Dowsett
coordinator@humanisttoronto.ca

Recording Secretary..... TBD

Treasurer Richard Dowsett
HatTreasurer@gmail.com

Membership Secretary Stephen Biggar
HatMembership@gmail.com

Web Administrator..... Stephen Biggar
HatTWebAdmin@gmail.com

Program Coordinator TBD
HatProgram@gmail.com

Public Relations Officer..... TBD

Spokesperson Moses Klein

Newsletter Editor..... Cornelia Laven
HatNewsletter@gmail.com

External Representative Martin Frith

Members at Large Tanya Long, Janet Rudd,
Jon Aldridge

NOTEWORTHY MOTIONS OF THE MOST RECENT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Motion to keep the money earmarked for a Syrian Refugee family aside until another family emerges through FOMA - but HAT is happy to canvas our people for support of any current refugees in non-monetary ways.

Please obtain a little background about the above motion in **Notes from the Editor** on the previous page.

Personalized

HUMANIST CEREMONIES

Are you or one of your relatives planning a wedding?

Will you soon be organizing the funeral of a friend or relative or pre-planning your own?

Would you like to have a naming ceremony for your new baby or grandchild? Or a coming-of-age ceremony for a young adult?

We are licensed humanist officiants who collaborate with you to create meaningful life-passage ceremonies that fit with your values, beliefs and traditions. We are also creating brand new traditions that fit with a secular humanist worldview.

HUMANIST OFFICIANTS AT YOUR SERVICE

MARY BEATY TORONTO, ON
marybeaty@gmail.com
(416) 461-1772
www.weddingsoftoronto.com

MARTIN FRITH, BES, M.Div., RMFT
OAKVILLE, ON
info@ceremonieswithchoice.ca
(416) 362-1141
www.ceremonieswithchoice.ca

SARAH BOYER MESSENGER
TORONTO AND MUSKOKA, ON
sarah@sarahmonies.ca
(416) 731-1958
www.Sarahmonies.ca

MANDY ST GERMAINE RICHMOND HILL
TORONTO, COLLINGWOOD (ON)
mandy@mandystgermaine.com
www.MandyStGermaine.com
(416) 806-8027 / (705) 446-5634

MICHAEL J. WHEELER
mjtwheeler@hotmail.com
(416) 887-8010
www.MichaelsCeremonies.com

JOHN G. MANUEL OSHAWA, ON
DurhamWeddings@yahoo.ca
(905) 432-2468
www.durhamweddings.webs.com

DR GAIL MC CABE HAMILTON, ON
gailmccabe@gmail.com
(289) 396-0060 / (905) 220-9072 C
www.gailmccabe.com

SYLVIA MCGROARTY OAKVILLE, ON
sylviamcgroartyofficiant@hotmail.com
(289) 681-4933

STEPHEN PERIN TORONTO ON
thewhitepine.ceremonies@yahoo.com
647-918-0153

<http://scperin.wixsite.com/thewhitepine>
www.facebook.com/humanist.officiant.thewhitepine/

DICK COMBEER TORONTO ON
416-487-3582
dcombeer@gmail.com

THE INTIMACY GAP

Richard Dowsett

I'd like you to think for a moment -- count in your head how many times have you come in physical contact with another human being today? How many of those times were intentional? Pats on the back, hugs, holding or shaking of hands and not just incidental contact? The number of touches we have each experienced today probably varies widely from zero all the way up to 20 or more.

Whatever your number may be, a recent study indicates that seventy-five percent of people would say they would like more touching, more closeness, than they get now. That means there is an 'intimacy gap' in our society between what we get and what we want. How can we close the gap to get the level of hugs and touches -- to get the closeness we need?

Before we explore that question, what if I told you that you would be healthier and happier by increasing your touching by just ten percent.

HEALTHIER

- Loving touches increase our levels of the hormone Oxytocin. Oxytocin lowers levels of the stress hormone Cortisol, boosts our immune system and stimulates the production of our body's natural pain relievers, endorphins.
- Touch can increase serotonin levels. Serotonin helps regulate Dopamine, the excess of which can lead to aggression and anxiety.
- Welcome touches also trigger a relaxation response that lowers our blood pressure and pulse rate. Who hasn't felt immediately relaxed and soothed when holding or being held by a loved one?
- Boosted immunities, lowered pain levels, lowered tension and stress - health in a Hug!

HAPPIER

Happiness is best predicted by the quantity and quality of our relationships. Physical proximity is one of the criteria by which we determine the quality of a relationship. When we touch and hug those around us, we deepen those relationships. The effect is doubled when the Oxytocin kicks in on both sides creating a feeling of trust, security and attachment.

Being understood is also a key to happiness -- touching has been found to be a universal language that can communicate distinct emotions with startling accuracy. One study found that touch alone can reveal emotions with accuracy rates of up to eighty-three percent according to a 2009 article in *Emotion*, a journal of the American Psychiatric Association. I experienced this effect first-hand at my Dad's funeral. A hug or loving arm around my shoulders said volumes when words felt hollow and inadequate.

Stronger and more secure relationships with better communication -- holding hands leads to happiness!

FURTHER AMAZING THINGS ABOUT TOUCH

- 1) It benefits both the one being touched **and** the one administering the touch.
- 2) The more you become used to being touched, the more adept the body becomes at releasing Oxytocin and as more is released sooner the effect becomes heightened.

Even without the research, I think we all instinctively know the importance of touch. So, how can we close the intimacy gap and gain all the benefits on offer?

Intention: Make it a clear goal in your life to create intimacy with those around you. If they are a little distant, build closeness with trust and vulnerability. For those that are ready, a handshake or a gentle hug as a greeting or upon departure is often acceptable. With those at the centre of our emotional lives make a hug or touch a regular part of daily interactions. When I lived with my parents or stayed for a visit, I never went to bed without hugging and kissing them first. At first my mother insisted upon it. Later, I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Opportunity: Commit to seizing the opportunities in your relationships to express yourself through touching,

hugging a grieving friend, encouraging someone with a pat on the back or just sitting and holding the hand of a lonely senior can give both of you a needed boost. Touching is a skill. The more you practice, the more natural and comfortable you will feel doing it.

Parenting: You can help lay the groundwork for future world intimacy by hugging and touching your kids throughout their lives. They never stop being your children and you never stop being their parents

'Touching Top Ups': Massage is a wonderful way to experience and learn the joys of being touched in a safe, structured environment. Pets are also a great touching top-up. The right dog or cat will absorb all the cuddling and stroking you can possibly dish out.

A word of warning -- touch is a very powerful force. As beneficial and positive as a welcome touch is, an unwelcome one can be equally as disturbing and negative. When in any doubt, announce your intentions and ask permission. The other's reaction should govern your behaviour.

Join me in thinking back to your 'touch number' for today. If you are like seventy-five percent of the people in Canada, that number is too low. Think seriously about all the evidence and research presented here about the benefits of touch. Feel in your nerves and muscles how good your last hug felt. You owe it to yourself to close your "intimacy gap". Make it your intention. And when you do, you'll be helping others to also close their gap

FIVE THOUGHT-PROVOKING BOOKS TO READ THIS SUMMER

Joyce Li and Marisa Burton

Looking for something to read while lying on the beach, swinging in a hammock, or making your daily commute this summer? We have collected a list of five books we have recently enjoyed, and which we think you may, too. These books can be considered 'humanist' in the sense that they illuminate the complexities of the human condition: how we grow and age and change; how we relate to one another; and how societies shape our behaviors.

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawande

Non-fiction, 282 pages, published 2014

Atul Gawande is a surgeon and former health advisor to Bill Clinton. In this book, he explores the science of aging but also the many ways in which medicine, wealth, and social change have radically transformed aging and death -- in good ways and bad -- over just a few decades. Reflecting on his own life and medical practice, Gawande confronts the ways that our society and medical system often focus single-mindedly on prolonging life while failing to ask important questions: not just "What makes a good death?" but also "What makes life worth living?"

Perfect Little World by Kevin Wilson

Fiction, 352 pages, published 2017

Dr. Preston Grind is a child psychologist who, with the help of a wealthy backer, implements the "Infinite Family Project". Nine couples, along with young single mother, Izzy Poole, join the experiment with their newborns, living communally and raising their children together. Dr. Grind's motivations for starting the project, Izzy's motivations for joining, and all the complicated dynamics that ensue make for a continually surprising novel. Funny and sweet and heartbreaking.

We Love You Charlie Freeman by Kaitlyn Greenidge

Fiction, 336 pages, published 2016

Another research experiment with unpredictable outcomes. The Freeman family accepts the challenge of living with, and teaching sign language to Charlie, a rambunctious chimpanzee. A cute premise, surely, but it turns out not all is as it appears. The story alternates between the present-day and the 1920s, when the seeds for the current research were planted. Clever and provocative, this chimp story turns out to actually be one about racism, loneliness, and the ways in which we betray one another.

Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America by Jill Leovy

Non-fiction, 326 pages, published 2015

Jill Leovy spent years embedded with a team of homicide detectives in a poor, predominantly black neighborhood of Los Angeles. The narrative follows the investigation of the murder of 18 year-old Bryant Tennelle, a police officer's son. This book is much more than a true crime thriller though -- Leovy weaves in wide-ranging research and interviews with officers, detectives, families, and community members to draw a sensitive and heartbreaking portrait of their struggles with grief, race, justice, and both over- and under-policing.

The Last Neanderthal by Claire Cameron

Fiction, 288 pages, published 2017

This wildly imaginative novel tells the parallel stories of Girl, part of the last Neanderthal family to roam the planet, and Dr. Rosamund Gale, the paleoarchaeologist who discovers her remains in the present day. The women have vastly different struggles, different ways of living, and different sets of skills -- suggesting why one species survived while the other didn't -- but it becomes clear, as their stories weave together, that they also have much in common. An unexpectedly entertaining read.

AN EMAIL TO MY SISTER by C.L.

Dear Sister,

I recently asked Housing that my apartment unit be caulked to prevent future infestations of bugs and mice. There are no bugs, thankfully, but there are mice! (I have been reluctant to use the ghastly poisons that are used to kill mice -- poisons that dilute the blood slowly and kill each wee victim over an extended period of time.) Today is the day that caulking is to take place...

At present, it appears that only one young mouse is left. He peeps his head out to inspect me, as I busy myself on my computer at night, to see what I am up to. When I inevitably yell in displeasure at his sudden visitations, said mousie vanishes at the speed of light until the following day when our game continues. The second of his ilk appears to have moved to a kindlier Eden and I trust that the caulking will ensure that the move is a permanent one! A third occupant fell into my kitchen sink and drowned miserably. There was nothing to eat in this watery grave and the accident was likely an instance of the adage 'curiosity killed the cat' becoming true; apparently, mice do not have nine lives, however.

Preparations for the caulking may also encourage rodents of all persuasions to leave my abode for a less disquieting utopia -- it cannot be soon enough! My measures of persuasion include using bleach-water to enhance my carpet's *joie de vivre*, removing surreptitious turds with the assistance of a magic potion, mopping the tile floors and baseboards to excess and so on. Well, time to see whether all that can be done has been done! [I will continue my email to you tonight.] 

The unit has been caulked! A sympathetic young man, who studies graphic arts at York U, came to do the job. While conversing with my rescuer, before I departed my abode and left him to his labour, I saw *how* one caulks and what *implements* are used, in case his donkeywork went awry in my absence.

I came home after the young artist had long gone. In the evening, while seated at my wooden 'computer table' in the startlingly salubrious living room and lulled by a sense of new beginnings throughout the apartment, I rested my eyes dreamily on the blanched floors. Suddenly, across two or three feet of living-room carpet, a swath of ugly debris sprang into view. To my astonishment, much of what I saw there looked like the mouse turds I sometimes found hidden in the dimmest corners of my abode, often behind pieces of hard-to-move furniture. The current pellets had been left out in the open, deliberately near where I routinely use my computer! I realized that the remaining mouse, upset by the hostile changes to the home it shared with me, had taken revenge. Minutes later, I also noticed that the resident mouse had savaged a ballpoint pen lying on my table and the gluey ink has dyed the teak wood a permanent blue.

Vengeance of the Mouse, indeed! I wish these wee creatures would be less intrepid and not demonstrate their objections so efficaciously. Even the smallest mouse evades the live traps I set so cunningly night after night ('death traps' often impose undue pain and maiming well before the mouse takes his last breath). In any case, I might have to get the pest police involved or, better still, enlist the help of a boa constrictor to catch these critters. Hopefully, the snake will not eat me in error, or befriend the mouse and eat me on purpose.

Much put upon by spiteful Mousies, I yet remain your loving Sister,

Corrie



Humanist Association of Toronto

www.humanisttoronto.ca

Membership Form 2017

Date: _____ New Member: Renewal Member:

If new member: What influenced you? _____

Name(s): _____

Please print. If this is a "Household" Membership, please include all member names (use next line if necessary).

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home phone: _____ Email: _____

Note: we will only use your contact information for HAT-related communication

Final

Please circle the appropriate amount(s)

Membership	HAT membership
Individual	\$30
Student/Limited Resources	\$10
Household	\$40
Limited Income Household	\$15
Life Member	\$200
Donation	
TOTAL	

You may enjoy subscribing to [Humanist Perspectives Magazine](http://www.humanistperspectives.org).
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- 2. By Interac Email Transfer via your online bank. Please send payment to HatTreasurer@gmail.com,
with a one word in lowercase answered question.
- 3. By Stripe online www.humanisttoronto.ca/join-hat/

- Do you wish to be listed in our public membership directory? Yes No
- May we contact you via MailChimp a better, more efficient email system? Yes No
- The current quarterly newsletter is available from the website but
would you prefer a print copy of upcoming newsletters by regular mail? Yes No
- May we exchange your name and address with like-minded organizations? Yes No

HAT issues Official Donation Receipts for all contributions.

We welcome your membership and hope to see you at our meetings and events!

THANK YOU

*HAT MEMBERS and GUESTS are
Warmly Invited to the
Annual SUMMER PARTY by*

The Humanist Association of Toronto

on

Sunday, August 27, 2017 4 – 8 p.m.



**Pot-luck buffet,
stimulating conversation
and fun!**

(No meat or shellfish, please.)

At the home of Moses Klein:

123 Howland Avenue

(East from Bathurst subway station and north of Bloor.

Limited parking - take TTC if possible.)

