

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
WESTERN DIVISION

No. 5:15-ct-03053-F

AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION
and KWAME JAMAL TEAGUE,

Plaintiffs,

v.

FRANK L. PERRY, et al.

Defendants.

DECLARATION OF JASON MICHAEL HOLDEN

I, Jason Michael Holden, certify, and state under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, as follows:

1. I am an inmate in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), currently housed in the Federal Correctional Institution at Sheridan Oregon (FCI-Sheridan). I have been at this institution since April 21, 2010. I am scheduled to be released at the end of April 2017. I make the following declaration with regards to the activities of the Humanist group that has been approved to operate by the BOP and overseen by the Religious Services Department at Sheridan FCI.

2. Our Humanist group is an official affiliate of the American Humanist Association (“AHA”). The name of our chapter is “Humanists of Sheridan: Candles in the Dark.”

3. Our Humanist group has been meeting since July 2014. BOP gives us two time-slots each week to meet: (i) Mondays at 12:00 - 1:30 pm; and (ii) Wednesdays at 7:00 – 8:00 pm.

On average, about six to ten Humanist inmates attend the Monday meetings. About four or five attend the Wednesday evening sessions.

Humanist Study Group

4. The “Humanist Study Group” meets on Mondays.
5. The general format of the Monday meeting is as follows:
 - 1) Intro/Welcome New People
 - 2) Sharing Circle
 - 3) News & Updates
 - 4) Reason and Theology
 - 5) Main Topic and Discussion
6. We open by reading the main points of the *Humanist Manifesto III: Humanism and Its Aspirations*.
7. If any new members are present, we welcome them to group and give them packet of Humanist source material to read. We also give them contacts at Freethought Books Project and Brights’ Newsletter.
8. Sharing Circle is a few minutes where anyone who wishes to can share things they are going through or dealing without fear of judgment or ridicule.
9. A recurring segment of our meeting, “Reason and Theology,” critically examines theological claims using arguments from books on Humanism and non-theism generally.
10. Each meeting also consists of a forum topic where one or two members present an informative talk on a subject from a Humanist perspective that aims to appeal to both reason and compassion. Our forum topics include but are not limited to the following:
 - 1) Humanist Manifesto III: pick a bullet point and discuss

- 2) Finding meaning and purpose for your life
- 3) Critical Thinking, examining beliefs, identifying fallacies
- 4) Comparative religious study, e.g. Mysticism v. Science
- 5) Social issues: gender, race, etc.

11. Time permitting, at the end of a Monday meeting we will engage in a Freethought Discussion or watch a movie or play a game related to Humanism.

Humanist Worship Service

12. “Humanist Worship Service” meets on Wednesdays. During Humanist Worship Service, we conduct secular meditation or watch a video related to Humanism. We also sometimes use the time to discuss current events that warrant a freethought discussion.

Humanist Holidays

13. The principal holiday our Humanist group observes is Darwin Day. Darwin Day is a celebration to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin on February 12, 1809. Darwin Day highlights Darwin’s contribution to science and promotes science in general.

14. Since our group was recognized by BOP, we have had three official Darwin Day observances at FCI-Sheridan. Our Darwin Day observances include a speech about Darwin, special snacks or a feast, and a movie about Darwin. I wrote two speeches that I have rotated for these Darwin Day observances. One speech is about Darwin’s theory of natural selection, how he formulated it, struggled with it, and the ensuing controversy. The other speech discusses Darwin’s compassion and utilitarian morality. The first two years, BOP gave us permission to bring snacks up to the chapel and have a special time to celebrate. This year we were allowed a feast provided by food service, which included pizza, salad, and a dessert.

15. Auspicious Days: we also celebrate certain U.S. and internationally recognized observance days such as the U.N.'s Children's Health Day, Earth Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Pi Day. Humanists also celebrate Winter Solstice, also known as "Human Light," and Summer Solstice, also known as "World Humanist Day."

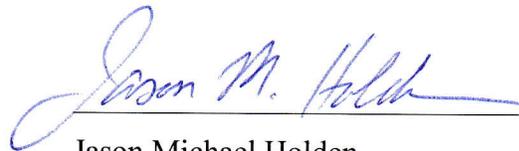
Community Volunteers

16. Like other religious groups recognized by BOP, the Humanist group has access to guidance from community volunteers. A Humanist celebrant, Bernie Dehler, visited our group on a monthly basis for almost two years. He arranged a guest appearance by an expert on evolution to coincide with our Darwin observance one year.

Rehabilitative Benefits

17. The Humanist group has played a critical role in my personal development and rehabilitation. By studying and discussing Humanist values and materials with other Humanists and outside Humanist volunteers, I have been able to come to terms with who I am and discover who I would like to be. I have been able to develop a positive self-narrative that speaks of a life beyond addiction and crime because of the Humanist ethics I have learned. I am especially proud that I was able to help pave the way for other federal Humanist prisoners to enjoy the rehabilitative benefits of a Humanist group.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on this day of April 21, 2017.



Jason Michael Holden