



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on June 25, 2019

Supreme Court Rejects Humanist Arguments Against “Peace Cross”

After the end of World War I, citizens in and around Bladensburg, Maryland, paid for erection of a 40-foot-high concrete “Peace Cross.” Completed in 1925, the cross commemorates the 49 men from their area who had paid the ultimate price during the conflict. Their names appear on an accompanying stone marker.



The monument stands on what was originally privately owned property. However, the site is now part of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, a governmental agency. Bladensburg is a District of Columbia suburb, and structures such as this one are maintained by the federal agency.

Recently, the American Humanist Association saw fit to challenge the existence of such a monument on public land. Its leaders claimed that an obviously religious structure on land falling under federal jurisdiction violates the First Amendment and they sued to have it torn down or moved. Their claim stressed that its very existence and location constituted a violation of the Constitution’s prohibition against governmental establishment of a religion (the Cross is obviously a Christian symbol) and constitutes favoring one religion over others. The true meaning of the First Amendment supports neither of those claims.

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The matter travelled through several judicial layers before ending up at the Supreme Court. A lower federal court had earlier agreed with the arguments presented by the Humanists but its court ruling was appealed. In a decision rendered on June 20, the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that the monument can stay where it is has been for almost a century.

The two justices appointed by Donald Trump (Gorsuch and Kavanaugh) joined court veterans Roberts, Thomas, Alito, Breyer and Kagan to make seven in favor of leaving the monument in place. Justices Sotomayor and Ginsburg disagreed with the majority. President Trump’s administration saluted the ruling along with the American Legion that occasionally holds memorial ceremonies at the site.

The American Humanist Association published its initial goals in 1933. Never hiding their atheism, the *Humanist Manifesto’s* 34 signers attacked creation, called for a “socialized and cooperative economic order,” and objected to the hard and fast adherents of “the religious forms and ideas of our fathers.” After its mere four pages of text, AHA listed the names of 34 signers among whom can be found revolutionary educator John Dewey, leftist historian Harry Elmer Barnes, and R. Lester Mondale, the older brother of Clinton administration (1993-2001) Vice President Walter Mondale.



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An expanded version of Humanist goals then appeared in 13 pages published in 1973 and signed by 114 individuals. *Humanist Manifesto II* boldly insisted:

- “traditional theism ... is an unproved and outmoded faith, especially faith in a prayer-hearing God”;
- “promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful”;
- “ethics is autonomous and situational”;
- “The right to ... abortion ... and should be recognized”;
- “We believe in the right to universal education”; and
- “We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move toward the building of a world community”

Among the 114 signers of the 1973 *Humanist Manifesto II* are author Isaac Asimov, behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner, USSR scientist Andrei Sakharov, NOW Founder Betty Friedan, UNESCO veteran Julian Huxley, and an assortment of educators from many of the world universities. U.S. Communist Party leaders Gus Hall enthusiastically endorsed all of these goals.

Humanists published another version of their beliefs in 2003 without retracting any of their previous stances. A successor of two previous manifestos, this remarkably shorter version lists only six main beliefs including that humans result from “unguided evolutionary change,” ethical values result from “experience,” and “life’s fulfillment emerges from ... the service of humane ideals.”

It is hardly a surprise, therefore, that the American Humanist Association sought to challenge the very existence of the Peace Cross. The beliefs of those who financed its creation and have maintained it for many decades survived the humanist’s challenge. But there will no doubt be more attacks in the future on the hallowed monument in Bladensburg, and in any other place where God and immutable moral standards are recognized. Count on the Declaration of Independence and its four mentions of the deity being a future target of the atheistic humanists

Congratulations and thanks are in order for the seven Supreme Court justices who have dealt the atheists, ethical subverters, world government advocates, and humanists an important setback.

John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#).



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