

## INTRODUCTION:

### The Colors of Humanism

There has been increased visibility and expressed frustration on the part of humanists who do not fit the dominant racial and ethnic paradigm. While present in humanism for many years, people of “color” (as inadequate as this term may be) have only recently gained recognition in ways that have enhanced calls for diversity, a greater awareness of difference within the context of the humanist movement.

This shift in thinking, however, begs the question: what is the nature and meaning of humanism within the various communities comprising the humanist network we call a movement? That is to say, in more general terms, what is the “look” of humanism’s diversity and how might the markers of difference become more pressing and compelling elements of our collective vision and our core values?

Such questions form one of the basic interests of the Institute for Humanist Studies, and in order to explore answers to these important and pressing questions we invited humanists from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds to provide descriptions of humanism within the context of their communities—to outline the “colors” of humanism. Our hope in extending this invitation was to undertake a process of exposure and growth whereby we learn more about the nature of difference within humanism and begin to maximize the potential of difference and diversity in ways that enhance the benefits of humanist thinking and praxis.

Contributors to this special issue were asked to give some consideration to a range of questions and themes:

1. What is the history of humanism in your community?
2. What defines the content and focus of humanism in your community?
3. What is necessary for the further growth of humanism in your community as a mode of thought and praxis?
4. What is the future of humanism in your community?
5. What is the future of humanism in the United States, in light of developments in your community?

They, however, were free to develop attention to these questions and themes in their own ways—in light of the complexities and nuances of their own communal arrangements. And so some essays give greater attention to the formation of humanism within their communities while others focus on the praxis of humanism within their particular geographies of life. Some are more

journalistic in tone and others are more academic in nature. The goal in blending these styles is to better represent the mosaic of humanist thought and practice—the numerous ways in which it is articulated, discussed, and understood. In this way, these essays acknowledge the manner in which humanism feeds thought within academic circles, while also representing the language and grammar of humanism as thought and lived within non-academic communities. While different in tone and style of presentation, what holds all the essays together is recognition that diversity is strength and greater understanding concerning the nature of our diversity can only enhance our movement.

The Institute for Humanist Studies is grateful to the contributors for their insights and compelling accounts of humanism. I am also appreciative of the support received from the Institute for Humanist Studies board and staff during the development of this project. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the external reviewers, particularly Fred Edwords and Patrick Connors, for the sharp insights and questions that served to improve the essays and their presentation.

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