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INTRODUCTIONS ARE IN ORDER. I have questions for you and you no doubt have some for me. But I'll begin with a preview of the current issue—the last of 2006 and my first as editor.

Corliss Lamont, who appears in the “Humanist Flashback” on page 37, wrote that the guiding focus of Humanism is a “concentration on the welfare, progress, and happiness of all humanity in this one and only life.” Such is the basic truth at play in the pages before you, covering concepts of liberty, justice, authenticity, and compassion. My we Humanists are a principled lot!

More specifically, the general theme herein is the state of democracy. Approaching the eve of the U.S. mid-term elections, questions abound concerning the effectiveness of strategies, the apparent gain or fallout from this misstep or that, and just how much of a referendum voters will inflict upon the current administration when they go to the polls. Democrats are optimistic about their chances to gain the congressional majority, Republicans are digging in for a fight, and there seems a general consensus among the populace that anything could happen. After all, this is a democratic election.

But democracy isn't just about politics. To Humanists it is both a concept and an ideal. One could say that every person in the world wants the ability to make decisions for the good of themselves, their families, and their communities; and that democracy—as a decision-making process of the people, not an event—best affords this opportunity. But is the current state of democracy healthy enough to support the individual in such an endeavor? Can the individual's participation in the democratic process continue to offer hope for change, dialogue, and the improvement of human life? And can we respect the rights of voters whose morality differs from our own? Such are questions raised in these pages by Margaret Rozga, Kenneth Anderson, Sarah Posner, and Steven Hill.

Regarding additional matters of individual liberty and the preservation of democracy, we take a close look at Humanist pioneer Philip Paulson's seventeen-year legal battle to remove a twenty-four ton cross that has been standing on government property in violation of the federal and California state constitutions. His is a struggle both personal and public, and altogether noble. For those who appreciate such hands-on Humanism, New Orleans stories by Dr. Joseph “Joel” Andrews and Harry Greenberger will prove additionally engaging.

The issue's features are rounded out by Andrew Bard Schmookler's examination of the moral “skeletons” on both sides of the nation's closet, and David Niose's creative take on would-be Humanists and the politics of identity.

Now, after all this talk of the individual, perhaps you're thinking, “Fine. But *who are you* and what have you done with Fred Edwards?” My predecessor—whom I most gratefully acknowledge for his impeccable stewardship, integrity, and mentoring—is indeed in the house and running on all cylinders as a consulting editor and the AHA's new director of communications. And me? I come to the *Humanist* after many years moonlighting as a cyclist-poet while working in science communications at The Scripps Research Institute atop a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean and teaching creative writing and critical inquiry classes at San Diego State University. From there, it was just a natural evolution to this dream job of being your editor and taking up the torch of the premier Humanist publication in North America.

But enough about me; let's talk about you. We constantly hear how the world is shrinking in the sense of interconnectivity. Everyone writes about everything going on everywhere, which begs the question, why the *Humanist* magazine? Better yet, why Humanism? Rather than seek an answer to that question, as editor I feel obliged to see that it keeps getting asked in these pages in ways that entertain, confront, and impress. The late, great Joe Strummer once sang, “The people must have something good to eat on a Sunday.” And yes, they should also have something good to read. 