



Humanist Society of New Mexico



February 2008

www.humanists.net/nm/ fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

School Progress Report

On Jan. 5th the School Subcommittee viewed a fast scan of my PowerPoint presentation for the adult class "Human Progress: Milestones in Science and Religion." We also met with three newly-identified couples who are interested in a humanist children's school.

The main purpose of the meeting was to convey the general content and solicit feedback on the adult course. There were several good suggestions that will help guide my completion of the course development. I consider the content about 90% complete at this time. My next step is to organize the milestones into individual class lesson plans with objectives and assessment points. I will strengthen the storyline focus in an attempt to grab our students' attention and engage them throughout. I will provide opportunities for the students to distinguish between religion and science at every opportunity. We will have our next subcommittee meeting on Saturday February 2nd at 2:00 pm for a final course review and to set the schedule of classes.

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, February 2nd, 2008 10:30am

Humor, Hume and Humanism

Community Room, LaFarge Branch of the Santa Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

Grants Humanists

Saturday, February 2nd, 10:00 to noon

A Humanist View of Revelation

Grants First Presbyterian Church
400 Nimitz Dr., Grants, NM

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings are free and open to the public and run from 10:00 to noon (except where noted)

Saturday, February 9, 2008

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Refreshments: Leland Franks

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

Saturday, February 16, 2008

Topical Discussion

To be Announced

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE (NW corner Edith and Central - parking on the street.)

Saturday, February 23, 2008

Formal Meeting

Ancient Egypt in 50 Minutes

Dr. Richard Berthold

Refreshments: Jerry Wesner

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

Sunday, February 3, 2008

HSNM Book Club

2:00-4:00pm

Screwed by Thom Hartmann

Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank NE

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience, and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

We have a golden opportunity to launch this course during national election campaigns when pandering to religion is very likely to be prevalent. Publicity is integral to this effort, which means that we need a

interviews, design paid advertising, and help us with marketing issues. If you can help with publicity, or if you would like to join the School Subcommittee, please call me or Fred.

We are very grateful to the many donors who have sustained this effort by contributing to our school fund.

Ron Herman

The Humanist Society of New Mexico (HSNM)

A Membership chapter of the American Humanist Association.

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

Officers

President: Frederic March

Vice President/Programs: Harry Willson

Treasurer: Ed Root

Secretary: John Waldrop

Membership: Frederic March

Public Information: Salem Smith

Director of Classes: Ron Herman

Social Activities:xxxxxxxxxx

Newsletter Editor: Randall Wall

Website: Phil Smith

Ex Officio: Jerry Wesner

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$12 annually. Send subscription and membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall at Email paragon2012@comcast.net

The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month.

A HUMANIST BOOK FOR KIDS, AND GRANDKIDS!
"Highly recommended," by Bill & Shirley Little, and Harry & Adela Willson
THE KIDS' BOOK OF AWESOME STUFF, by Charlene Brotman.
\$15 each + \$3 S&H, from 22 Howard St., Newton, MA 02458 -- tel 617-332-5616
Amador Publishers has ordered a supply, also. 505-877-4395

Humanists discuss mediums, illusions

By Diane Fowler, Cibola County Beacon

January 8, 2008

The monthly meeting of the Grants Humanists Saturday examined such phenomena as mind reading and seances and how they can be used to fool and defraud participants.

Hank Bulger, a self-described "bizarrist magician," led the group and demonstrated several magic tricks. "My objective in making this presentation is to show these tricks for what they are and that magicians are selling something they can't guarantee," he said.

"Many churches are also selling stuff they can't back up," he added.

In a riveting demonstration, Bulger showed the trick of passing a metal spike through his arm. Although it looked very convincing, the magician explained that he had applied rubber cement to his arm and it was that surface that the spike passed through.

"Of course, the lack of blood should also indicate that the spike didn't actually pass through my flesh," he remarked.

Bulger also addressed the phenomenon of levitating

couple of people who will write press releases, arrange

séance tables and various card tricks.

Humanism is often seen as an alternative to traditional churches, he said, although it has often been demonized by the religious right.

In the Humanist Manifest III, Humanism is defined as a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms the ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

The document lists beliefs that were determined by a consensus of humanists.

- Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation and rational analysis.
- Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.
- Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.
- Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.
- Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.

Humanist writer Ron Herman pointed out that activists can choose from the many issues of our time, including abortion rights, the right to die, intelligent design versus evolution, Armageddon politics, the environment, militarism, prayer in public schools, faith-based initiatives, gay rights and church/state separation to address.

Herman suggests that Humanists can no longer shy away from confrontation. "To do so risks the loss of individual rights, the demise of a free and prosperous nations, and ultimately the very lives of unbelievers and non-conforming believers."

The Grants Humanists meet the first Saturday of the month at the Presbyterian Church at 10 a.m., 400 Nimitz Drive.

On State Political Torture

By Donald Gutierrez

Originally published in *Tikkun*, Feb 2, 2007

Parts 1&2, (Part 3 in next month's issue)

I

The tortured inhabit a world of pain that separates them from the normal experience of life. Torture victims are

subject to such extreme conditions that it difficult for us to identify with this experience, let alone contemplate it. Contemplate torture? Many would regard this as morbid, even as *schadenfreude*. This charge is generally absurd. It is derived from insensitivity toward the victims or the guilt of non-involvement. What is more pertinent—and serious—are the millions of people who shut themselves off from the politically tortured, let alone from social prisoners.

Our era has seen many disappear into the extrajudicial maze of tyrannical political regimes. We occasionally read or hear about these disappearances, then go about our business, secure in our faith that we won't be like Kafka's Joseph K., arrested one fine morning or one dark night. Yet these terrifying abductions have happened frequently to those who believed just that.

Part of the terror of illegal arrest (often by the state's soldiers, paramilitary or police) is that one cannot identify one's place of captivity. Frequently captors are unidentifiable too. Who sent them? By what law or right do they impugn one's privacy like this? As the accused or condemned frequently cannot answer such questions, they become terrorized. Realizing that one is "detained" plunges us into psychological chaos. Few things are more frightening than being at the mercy of arbitrary, merciless and exceedingly immoral forces. The reason this plight is so terrible is obvious: anything can happen to you. What would our minds and bodies make of a situation of immeasurable moral cruelty in which our captors inform us that we are being imprisoned unconditionally, that we are swine or vermin, that the source of the screams emanating from the room next door are our parents, siblings, or children?

Even today, these horrors occur daily. It is important for us to consider their scope: approximately two-thirds of the world's governments practice illegal detention, incarceration and torture, and at least one—Israel—practices it "legally."

II

Through military training schools such as the former (and renamed) School of the Americas, the United States has promoted state practice of torture amongst its military client states in the Third World. Father Roy Bourgeois, a former Marine and a militant opponent of the SOA who leads a demonstration against the school almost yearly, puts the blood bond between the United States and its Latin-American client states pithily when he states that "this is where the killing starts."

According to Frederick H. Gareau, the SOA "is the most famous of more than 150 facilities in the United

States and abroad to train foreign soldiers. The school has trained upward of 59,000 Latin American military personnel, policemen and civilians. Ten of the graduates became the president/dictators off their countries, 23 became ministers of defense, and 15 ministers of other departments." For example, one SOA graduate, former Bolivian dictator, General Hugo Benzer Suarez, from 1971 to 1978 murdered 468 Bolivians, detained or imprisoned 4318 for their political actions, deported 663 and tortured at least 100, as well as arranged massacres, mainly of peasants and labor unionists.

The purpose of the American military's instruction of torture has been to terrorize large, disadvantaged classes of people into accepting the political authority of governments tasked with protecting American economic and military interests. American opposition to Communist influence—and today "terrorists"—was so ferocious that any form of resistance to the Latin American class representing American interests was automatically stigmatized as Communist and deserving of savage treatment. Torture was thus regarded during the Cold War as the most efficient mode of social control in Latin American nations with a history of class oppression. The fact that many Latin Americans were not Communists was not a factor; the United States had a history of brutalizing Latin American countries to achieve economic control, so if torture administered by the Latin-American state was effective, it was acceptable.

Letter to the Editor

Labels. Humanist? Atheist? The label that feels best to me is "Freethinker." I can't deny that I am an evolutionary biologist, an environmentalist, a human being (species *Homo sapiens*), scientist. Humanism has a rich history with which I'm not ashamed to identify. According to Alan C. Kors' *Atheism in France, 1650-1729* atheism became intellectually respectable as a result of arguments between theologians. Scholastics utterly demolished Cartesian "proofs" for the existence of God and vice versa. Jean Meslier, "the priest who became an atheist", simply followed the controversy to its logical conclusion. I can respect Congressman Pete Stark being careful about how he labels himself because politics is nasty and well timed smears can destroy a political career. But the rest of us do no service to society by trying to dodge every label that is pejorative in the self serving vocabulary of this or that fruit cake religious cult. Fundamentalist preachers say that Presbyterians are atheists because they supported *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 and have many times backed the teaching

of evolution in public schools. Anyone remember how "liberal" was transformed into a pejorative term? No, our thinking cannot be free if we worry about how other people are going to label us.

Dale L. Berry
Grants, NM

A Darwin Day Special Presentation by Dr. Marshal Berman - NMSR

Dr. Marshall Berman, retired Sandia Labs physicist, and a Vice President of New Mexico's former State Board of Education, will give a "Darwin Day" presentation on "*The 'Intelligently Designed' Attack on Science and Society*." 7 PM Wednesday, February 13th, at the UNM Law Building, 1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402. Information: 268-3772.

Quote

"Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little."

Edmund Burke

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, February 4, 2008

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, February 18, 2008

Fitness

Dr. Jon Tyson

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room. Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

Sunday, February 3, 2008

Part 3 of "A History of Disbelief" Sunday, 9am,
Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202
Harvard SE

Tuesday, February 19, 2008

Social Meeting at 7pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316 The 25
Way, Near Jefferson and I-25