



Humanist Society of New Mexico



June 2011

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> zelda@amadorbooks.com

Quote of the Month

You can have no influence over those for whom you have underlying contempt.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

HSNM Family Co-Op Alternative Children's Sunday School

First and third Sundays, 3 PM
First Unitarian Church

Call 505-292-4375 for more information
or go to www.Meetup.com.

Santa Fe Humanists Saturday, June 4th, 10:30am

Heath Insurance vs. Health Care

Community Room, Main Library, 145 Washington
Ave.

For more information contact Bill Weihofen
(505) 988-1343

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, June 11th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion starts at 10:10am

Restricted to Members and their Guests Only. For invitation please contact Zelda Gatuskin at 505-344-6102 for details or questions.

Refreshments: Ruth E. Frances

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, June 18th

Topical Discussion – Open to the Public

What is the Effect on Society of Violence as Entertainment?

Erna Fergusson Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd. NE

Saturday, June 25th

Speaker Meeting – Open to the Public

Report on the 2011 AHA Conference

By Zelda Gatuskin and Salem Smith

Humanist Minute: TBA

Refreshments: Rita Sjunnesson

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford 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.

The Humanist Society of New Mexico

A 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/Committees

Zelda Gatuskin: President

Roy Moody: Vice President

[Education/Programs]

Fred March: Past President

[Special Projects]

Leland Franks: Treasurer

Jerry Gilbert: Secretary [By-laws, Membership]

Carolyn Kaye, Member-at-Large

Randall Wall, Member-at-Large

Veronica Garcia, Public Information Chair

Ongoing Projects:

Ron Herman, Director of Classes

Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor

Attila Csanyi, Friendly Philosopher's Director

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$15 annually. HSNM membership is \$15/year (\$20 for two adults in the same household. Send subscription or membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall, paragon2012@comcast.net or 1009 Childers NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month. Website submissions may be sent to president@humanistsocietyofnm.org. HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues, visit www.americanhumanist.org for more information about the American Humanist Association.

President's Message

by Zelda Gatuskin

I've noticed that my conversations with prospective HSNM members must always contain a "belief" segment. There is concern for what humanists might and mightn't believe, and if the interested party properly aligns with our perceived or assumed doctrine. Humanism is often equated with atheism and/or an anti-religion posture, but our use of the term "naturalism" is also sometimes construed as placing us on the opposite end of the spectrum, among nature worshipers, pantheists and various metaphysical orders. What generally puts everyone at ease and allows conversation to shift away from potential points of conflict to broad points of agreement, is when I blurt out: "I don't care what anyone believes or doesn't believe, and I don't think it's anyone's business what I believe." I go on to talk about the ideal of a secular society, in which we are all free to follow and express the belief or philosophy of our choice but prohibited from imposing our ways on others. This is where heads start to nod in agreement.

Humanist philosophy separates ethics from beliefs and places responsibility for human behavior squarely on the shoulders of humanity, regardless of its members' personal spiritual feelings. The phrase itself, "humanist philosophy" implies that we are able to debate approaches to living and social structure without reference to supernatural elements. I would even argue that the insertion of belief or disbelief into the mix hinders fruitful discussion. How can I argue with anyone's beliefs? How can I disprove anyone's disbelief? Of more concern to me personally, how can I possibly properly articulate my own beliefs? My beliefs are a moving target, I find, and defy my efforts to pin them down.

I've been writing for many years. I have written around and around the questions of what I think and feel and believe, and the overall state of my consciousness at any given time. In a short poem or a 400-page novel, I can come close to conveying, to my own satisfaction, my take on life and the world I live in. I am satisfied with those forms because they are holistic, and they encircle and approach the ideas from multiple perspectives. Linear arguments do not help me get to my deepest held beliefs. I can write a sentence with

precision from beginning to end concerning what I believe, but the moment I add that period, I discover that the words do not ring true. They are a 2-D representation of a multi-dimensional phenomenon. I'm happier when I let myself be than when I make myself express a firm, unyielding belief.

I want to work for and live in a secular society where belief is a private matter and what we talk about publicly is respect. If you as a person respect me as a person, then it doesn't matter how we label ourselves. We can focus on our working relationship. Who cares what either of us believes, as long as we are pulling together to make our world better and modeling compassionate, constructive, ethical behavior?

Societies have always had ways of dealing with people who behave badly. Right now we have some extremely bad players in society who wrap themselves in the mantles of religious, nationalistic or economic dogma. The torrent of rhetoric about "believing in" one thing or another deflects scrutiny and criticism of their actual behavior. I think we're all getting sick of it. It's time to get away from distracting "belief" debates and engage in substantive discussions - leading to action - about fairness, freedom and respect.

HSNM Governance Notebook

by Zelda Gatuskin

The HSNM Governing Board met on Saturday, May 14 and scheduled a follow-up meeting for May 24. Our committees reported significant progress, especially on our By-laws review and establishing the HSNM Scholarship. The Membership Committee has also been busy sorting out the issues raised when the AHA ended our dues-sharing arrangements. I am especially pleased to report that the GB approved my appointment of Veronica Garcia as Chair of the Public Information Committee, and that Veronica has accepted and is already applying herself to this important task. To learn what's up with committees and how you can help, contact the committee chairperson, or stick around after our usual monthly meeting at the Summit Apartments to talk in person. GB meeting minutes are available to HSNM members upon request, and include a summary of our Treasurer's Report. Contact Jerry Gilbert.

Next Speaker Meeting Bio and Introduction

HSNM President Zelda Gatuskin, and member Salem Smith attended the annual AHA Conference which was held in Boston in April. They will share their impressions of the conference and the current direction of AHA, and report on the many sessions they attended on a range of subjects including: the human potential for

peace, health care, minority rights, church/state separation, humanist meditation, and more. If time permits, Zelda will recap the one day Action Coalition for Media Education conference she also attended while in Boston. (ACME President Bob McCannon was our speaker in April.)

Media Analysis by Bob McCannon

[Our terrific April speaker, Bob McCannon, President of the Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) has provided this sample media analysis of "a *Journal* PR effort, benefiting Exxon." If you would like to be on Bob's *Untold Stories* list to receive his ongoing critique of our local media, send an e-mail to him at mccannon@flash.net. ZG]

The article "Exxon Defends \$11B Profit," which appeared in today's [April 29] *Journal* is journalism at its worst. At best, the article merely reprints an Exxon press release. At worst, it is an opinion piece by an uninformed *Journal* employee.

Since the *Journal* regularly publishes opinions as news (see any *Upfront* column), it could be either, but in any case, doing Exxon's public relations dirty work sets a new low for the *Journal*. The story reads in part:

"Sensing public outrage over gasoline prices that have topped \$4 in some states, the company struck a defensive posture Thursday after posting some of its best quarterly financial results ever.

"Exxon said it had no control over high oil prices. It said it's one of the biggest taxpayers in the United States. It cast federal subsidies as 'legitimate tax provisions' that keep jobs at home, and cast itself as a victim of Washington scapegoating. What's more, the company argued, it doesn't even make that much money selling gasoline."

The idea that Exxon has "no control" over high oil prices is laughable. 60 Minutes has showed how the big oil companies are all speculators in the oil market.

Saying it is "one of the biggest taxpayers" while in the next sentence defending its tax tactics that allow it to pay NO federal taxes - NONE - boggles the mind. How stupid do they think we are? Exxon admits one of its most profitable quarters ever (\$11 Billion), but then tells us that it "really doesn't make that much money from selling gasoline."

Really? What is it selling? I hope it is an antacid to help us get down all this bogus bologna.

Hearts, Flowers and Birds

by Jean O'Hara, Feb. 15, 1997

The first sign of spring is a puttering
Birds exploring the ground for worms under
Flowers peeping through the soft moss to bring
Life before the rains strike it asunder,
Then, that which washes the snow, ice and dirt
Away so that clean Nature can extract
That which prepares the land for flowers' work,
Has the budding posies sowed and harkens Seeds' fact.
This enhances proliferation that
Announces the feat of what every
Bird, flower, hind and roe stood for and sat
Remembering by heart and memory.
Confutation cannot be denied, thus,
That Nature covers with Beauty, less muss.

ReasonCinema: Bring Humanism and Film Together

by Maggie Ardiente, Humanist Network News

The American Humanist Association has launched a new project and website to promote and support humanist films—just in time for the upcoming first-ever freethought film festival.

Reason Cinema is a film series project sponsored by the American Humanist Association. Since 2008, the AHA has hosted free screenings of films with humanist or progressive themes open to the public in Washington DC and other cities in the United States. These screenings are often followed by informative discussions with directors, producers, and leading philosophers and policy experts on humanist issues. Our aim is to advance a secular agenda through innovative films that connect humanism and the arts.

Visit Reason Cinema's new website at www.reasoncinema.com.

The AHA has recently helped promote the major motion pictures *Creation* starring Paul Bettany and Jennifer Connelly and *The Golden Compass* starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig; the Sundance award-winning documentary *FUEL*; PBS's miniseries *Becoming Human*; comedian Bill Maher's *Religulous*; Vivek Palavali's *Creator of God*, and more.

The AHA is also a lead sponsor of the first *International Freethought Film Festival*, to be held at the historic Tampa Theatre in Tampa, Florida from May 13 to May 15, 2011. Visit www.freethoughtfilmfest.org for the latest updates, or read an interview with Andrea Steele, the festival's organizer, in *Humanist Network News*.

Movies that we've co-sponsored or promoted include:

- *Creation*, a major motion picture starring Paul Bettany and Jennifer Connelly
- *Becoming Human*, a three-part PBS miniseries on evolution
- *FUEL*, a documentary on biodiesel by Josh Tickell
- *Religulous*, a comedic critique of religious belief from comedian Bill Maher
- *The Golden Compass*, a major motion picture on the children's book by 2008 International Humanist of the Year Philip Pullman
- *The God Who Wasn't There*, directed by Brian Flemming
- *Heart of the Beholder*, directed by Darlene Lieblich
- *So Help Me God*, directed by Simon Cole
- *Creator of God*, written and directed by Vivek Palavali

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, June 6th

General Discussion

Monday, June 20th

My Experience in Costa Rica

Dawn Liberman

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room.

Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico

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

Sunday, June 5th, 9am

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, June 21st, 6:30pm

Social Meeting at 6:30pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25

New Mexicans for Science and Reason

Wednesday, June 8th, 7pm

The Brayton Cycle

Milton Vernon and/or Steven Wright

UNM Law Building, Room 2405

1117 Stanford NE