



Humanist Society of New Mexico



March 2008

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

Seminar to Kickoff Children's School

The HSNM Governing Board has agreed to co-sponsor a seminar on parenting without religion. Dale McGowan of Atlanta, GA, will conduct this event titled "Parenting Beyond Belief" on the afternoon of March 22 in our usual meeting room in the UNM Law School. Dale will also speak at our Formal meeting on that day at 10:00AM, and he will hold several book signings around Albuquerque that weekend. This event will also be sponsored by the UNM Humanist Society, our campus affiliate.

The seminar will also be the first major activity for the HSNM children's Sunday school subcommittee, which has grown since the mention of our education program in the December 3 issue of TIME Magazine. Four young couples are supporting this subcommittee now, and one of them (Liz and Adam) has volunteered to teach the first series of classes. They will hold a mixer for parents and their children in their new home on a date in April to be announced later. (continued next page)

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, March 1st, 2008 10:30am

Uncertainty Principles

San Mateo de Santa Fe Clubhouse (Office),
601 W. San Mateo Rd.
(NW corner of San Mateo & St. Francis Dr.)

Grants Humanists

Saturday, March 1st · 10:00 to noon

How to Change the World in Our Lifetime

Karen Cooksey

NMSU, Grants Campus, Room 103

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, March 8, 2008

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Refreshments: Helen Fuller

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, March 15, 2008

Topical Discussion

Alternatives to Militarism

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library

423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, March 22, 2008

Formal Meeting

Parenting Beyond Belief: On Raising Ethical, Caring Kids Without Religion

Dale McGowan

Refreshments: Harry and Adela Willson

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

Sunday, March 2nd, 2008

HSNM Book Club

2:00-4:00pm

A Thousand Splendid Suns

by Khalid Hosseini

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.

Dale's seminars and book by the same title are empowering secular parents across the country to raise ethical, caring, confident kids without belief in myth and superstition. See more information on Dale and his book and register for the seminar at

www.parentingbeyondbelief.com, or call me at 505-292-4375 to register.

Ron Herman, Director of Classes

On State Political Torture

By Donald Gutierrez

Originally published in *Tikkun*, Feb 2, 2007

Part III

What can be done about state torture? One could certainly join or support organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch or the San Francisco-based Survivor's International (S. I. helps in the healing of torture victims and in restoring them to stable social-economic conditions). Or one could even go further, as Helen Bamber's Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture does, and try to put pressure on governments practicing state torture. This is obviously more of a comprehensive approach than dealing simply with the effects of torture, which is itself a formidable enterprise.

The more immediate need, however, is to create a "revolution in sensibility" that affects the average person's perception regarding the frequency with which torture is employed. It is an almost intolerable thought that our own government has supported brutally repressive governments around the world, and thus has sizably contributed to the substantial misery as well as murder of millions of people in the past half-century.

Americans concerned with global political torture should refuse to elect politicians that support oppressive regimes, or, better yet, run for office themselves. If a state takes refuge in secrecy to support an inhumane foreign policy, all possible pressure should be brought to bear on the government's leaders by NGOs, grass-roots groups, and activists.

State torture should arouse instinctual opposition, whether it is perpetrated by our own government or by a foreign regime. Torture transforms societies into vast madhouses of suspicion, fear, guilt and hatred. Yet combating torture is possible. Organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch provide one framework for ethical protest against the

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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

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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.

formidable terrorism of state torture. These organizations have done invaluable work in liberating victims of tyrannical states. Obviously, Helen Bamber's Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, in urging that the state itself be confronted, and that the social and institutional sources of torture should be probed, attempts a far more ambitious critique of diabolic governments. The question remains, however, of how to actually confront the root causes of torture. Bamber claims that it is important "to place torture in a proper context. Otherwise, you are not actually honoring the people who have suffered; you are merely looking at a body that has been assaulted or mutilated....torture isn't only about sadistic impulses. It's about power, about privilege, about poverty, and the distribution of resources; it's about something which is most preventable....the legal instruments are there to prevent torture."

To deal with state torture, the average person needs to come alive to the reality of torture, and to the crucial realization that the state is a terrorist institution of major proportions. We need to realize that all state-sanctioned torture or terrorism is a political act, and that in any society that calls itself democratic or free, responsibility ultimately rests in the citizenry to do something about it.

The Power of Negative Thinking

One day last month the following series of thoughts came to me, totally unasked for:

"Scenario: The Acting President goes to Israel, where he is assassinated by a suicide bomber. Cheney becomes Acting President, taking the title along with the power he has been wielding all along. Cheney appoints Tom DeLay Vice-President, and declares martial law. Cheney dismisses Congress and the Supreme Court, in the name of national security. Democrat politicians are arrested and held incommunicado. All artists, cartoonists and writers who have expressed opposition to or disapproval of or mockery toward the Bush-Cheney administration are arrested. Under the Police State, Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid are privatized and dissolved. The gap between rich and poor widens, until only fourteen families own everything. Tourism comes to an end. The national forests are cut down. The beaches are covered with oil spills. Nuclear waste is left untended. The sick are left uncared for and the dead unburied. Starvation is rampant, especially in urban areas. Public schools are closed. Only one communication corporation controls all information outlets. Off-switches are removed from

radio and TV sets. The internet is shut down. All phone calls are monitored. Habeas corpus is permanently suspended."

Once a body gets started thinking like that, it's easy to get carried away. Some call it "negativity." Others could call it "realism." A knowledge of history contributes to the tendency to think that way. "What I learn from studying history is that nobody [in power] learns anything from studying history." There is nothing in the previous paragraph [except the off-switch thing] which has not happened somewhere in modern times, more than once. In fact the so-called War on Terror has become an excuse for such things in this decade in many parts of the world. Many of them are already happening here, not to rich white folks, to be sure, yet, but to real live human beings nevertheless.

Many people are seriously turned off by such negative thinking. I suspect that at the root of that attitude is a belief in magic, that is, that "thinking makes it so." "If we refuse to think about it, it won't happen, or it won't be too bad. Thinking about it, and openly expressing it, will help cause it."

There is a branch of medicine called Diagnosis. "What's the matter? What could be causing it? Have we run into this before? Something for sure is the matter." "There's something rotten in the state of" Wherever. I have run into people who refuse to listen to what they call negative thinking. "If you don't have solutions, then shut up. I don't want to hear about insoluble problems." I'm not sure solutions can be found without preliminary diagnosis.

It is just a little strange to be living in the Last Days of the civilization one is in. Everything is disintegrating, dissolving, fading away, losing value. The money, the promises, the ideals, the hopes for the future, one's own plans and dreams, the connections to other people and to strangers – all are diminishing. Fear has taken over most people, it seems. And anger, which may be simply fear turned outward, seems to be nearer the surface. It is no longer clear how to protest. Writing rants and essays and unpublishable op-ed pieces seems futile. But one thing is still basic. In the midst of this malaise, which has become so huge and widespread, one must get clear, and then make a clear statement, for posterity, for whoever comes later, if anyone. Not all of us consented that any of this that is going on was a good idea. Some of us did not want it, and did not approve of it in any way. We will go under with the rest, but not without protest. Not without making it very clear that we oppose the Powers that Be utterly.

We remember fondly the days when we could register our protest publicly. We put our bodies on the

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line. We had the idea that it made a difference, that it could make a difference. Now we aren't so sure. Many who seem to agree with our evaluation of the situation refuse, or are unable, to join with us and others in any meaningful protest. Most Americans, miserable and fearful as they are, really think that protest is un-American, indecent somehow, unseemly, impolite, negative – and our awareness of that fact demoralizes us further.

But meanwhile, we must get clear, and that may have a negative ring to it.

Harry Willson

Senate Panel Should Reject Federal Court Nominee Honaker, Says Americans United

Church-State Watchdog Group Says Wyoming Lawyer Holds Extreme Views On Religion And Government

From Americans United for Separation of Church and State, www.au.org

February 7, 2008

Americans United for Separation of Church and State has urged the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee to reject a federal court nominee who holds extreme views on religious liberty in America.

On Feb. 12, the Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to consider the nomination of Richard H. Honaker to the U. S. District Court for the District of Wyoming. The Rock Springs, Wyo., attorney promotes the idea that the U.S. Constitution creates a Christian nation and that government need not remain neutral on religion.

“Honaker’s views on religion and government are extreme,” said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. “He is unfit to serve as a federal judge, and the Senate Judiciary Committee should scuttle the nomination.”

In a letter to committee members, Lynn noted that at a 2005 Homeschoolers of Wyoming Convention, Honaker said, “[I]f taught accurately, history can teach us that the greatest American patriots and leaders were Christians, and that there is indeed a Christian basis for American institutions of law, government, and business.”

In the same address, Honaker also attacked the

Supreme Court because it “no longer talks about America as a Christian nation or about the Christian underpinnings of the law.” Lynn said that those and many other statements not only reveal that Honaker’s legal interpretation “is out of touch with current Supreme Court precedent, such statements imply that he will not look to the United States Constitution and federal statutes to resolve cases but instead will look to his understanding of God’s law. Moreover, his comments indicate that he would like to re-shape American legal jurisprudence so that it can return to its ‘Christian base.’”

Honaker, a loud opponent of reproductive rights, was nominated to the federal bench by President George W. Bush last spring. Lynn’s letter argued that Honaker has also shown a striking callousness to minority faiths. The Wyoming lawyer has suggested that democracy and freedom prosper only because of Christianity and that other faiths pose a danger to such freedom. “A judge with such an opinion of minority faiths is unlikely to be able to fairly and objectively adjudicate issues affecting their freedoms and rights,” wrote Lynn.

Lynn’s letter calls on the Senate Judiciary Committee to reject Honaker’s nomination based on his skewed take on religious liberty and his abrasive view of non-Christian faiths.

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, March 3, 2008

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, March 17, 2008

Happiness

Walt Kirsch

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, March 2nd, 2008, 9am

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

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