



THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

August 2016

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/>

<http://hsnm.wordpress.com>

president@humanistsocietyofnm.org

HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque

HSNM meetings are free and open to the public (unless otherwise noted.)

Saturday, August 13th

HSNM Informal Meeting

The informal meeting usually held on the second Saturday of each month is being suspended until further notice. Topical and Speaker meetings will continue as usual.

Saturday, August 20th

HSNM Topical Discussion 10:00AM – Noon

A Declaration of What Humanists Can Do as an Entity and Individuals

Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, August 27th

HSNM Speaker Meeting 10:00AM – Noon

Anthropology at UNM and Around the World

Kristina Whitney

Botts Hall, Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Meetings by HSNM Affiliates are held throughout the month.

For more information please visit their websites.

Atheist Skeptical Kingdom of Albuquerque (www.meetup.com/ASK-Atheist-Skeptical-Kingdom-of-Albuquerque)

New Mexicans for Science and Reason (www.nmsr.org)

Santa Fe Atheist Community (<http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Atheist-Community>)

Roswatheists (<http://www.meetup.com/Roswatheists>)

Next Speaker Meeting

Kristina Whitney will be guiding us through the exciting research that has been going on in the Anthropology Department over at UNM. She will also share with us some of her own research on canteens. The history behind their origin is complex and global, and underscores how quickly the world became interconnected as North and South America were being explored and colonized.

Our Speaker's Bio

Kristina Whitney is in her final semester of obtaining her MA in public archaeology at UNM. Her thesis is on settlement patterning of pastoral groups in southeastern Ethiopia, with the aim to aid in establishing an archaeological baseline for an understudied area in Africa. Other research interests include the origin

The Humanist Society of New Mexico
A Nonprofit Corporation

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association
Member of The New Mexico Coalition of Reason

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

Officer/Committees

Ananda Parnell: President

Randall Wall: Vice President/Speaker Programs

Cynthianne Yabut: Secretary

Zelda Gatuskin: Past President

Richard Grady: Treasurer

Cheryl Gatner: Member-at-Large

Tara McCaughin: Member-at-Large

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM Membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$20 annually, HSNM membership is \$20/year (\$30 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 submission to: Editor, Randall Wall, Paragon2012@comcast.net. The deadline for Newsletter submission is the third Friday of each month. Website submission may be send 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.

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 humanist responsible for its own affairs.

and use of a specific canteen style in the American Southwest, and the connections of that style to canteens in the Mediterranean and Middle East. She is working on a publication for that research now, but it has not yet undergone peer review. She's also interested in how archaeology is perceived by the public and how it can be utilized to foster a sense of community and sense of place, while also realizing that archaeology needs to gain a larger part of the public interest as a science in order to maintain relevance within the current congressional atmosphere. She obtained my BA in anthropology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where her senior thesis focused on Byzantine water jugs. She's been able to maintain her interest in water vessels through her canteen research, while also maintaining a global outlook on archaeology as a tool for investigative discovery. While she's from the East Coast, she mostly grew up around Tucson and most of this summer has been spent on an archaeological survey of national parks in southeast Arizona.

On the Horizon

September 24th – A Day at the Museum (of Natural History and Science)

Botts Hall is unavailable for our September Speaker Meeting, but we are turning lemons into lemonade and planning a field trip to the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. Please contact Randy if you can

help with making the arrangements for our group tour, collecting RSVPs, carpooling and greeting.

Nominations For HSNM Governing Board Open

Nominations for the HSNM Governing Board are now open. The elected board positions are President, Vice-President/Speaker Programs, Treasurer, Secretary, and two Members-at-Large. Please give this serious thought and submit your name or another's along with your reason(s) to the HSNM Search Committee: Zelda Gatuskin (505-344-6102, zelda@amadorbooks.com); Jeanette Smith (505-232-9838, jeanettec47@gmail.com), or Cheryl Gatner (505-890-4176, kewwnurse@gmail.com).

Deadline for nominations is September 10. Candidates will be asked to submit proof of membership in good standing and a short biography to the Committee by September 15. The candidates will be announced in the October newsletter, and election ballots will be included for members in good standing.

Note: The Past President also serves on the Governing Board; it is not an elected position. Should the immediate past president be unable to serve, the President will appoint a previous past president.

It's Time to Renew Your HSNM Membership

Please support HSNM by joining now or renewing your membership for 2016-2017. You may send your dues and completed form by snail mail to the address at the top of the form, or you may bring them to an upcoming meeting (give to Cynthiaanne or Richard). We also have a way to pay online from hsnm.wordpress.com. Your membership must be up to date by September 15 in order to be eligible to vote in our Governing Board elections.

If you have recently joined or renewed your membership and do not owe dues, please fill out and return the form, so we can verify your contact information.

Your HSNM Governing Board

Please do not hesitate to call on us if you have questions about dues and membership or our election process, nominations for the new Governing Board, speaker suggestions, or (especially) a burning desire to volunteer to help with meetings, membership or publicity.

Ananda Parnell, President, (505) 480-6377, ivory_tusk@comcast.net

Randy Wall, Vice President & Speaker Programs, (505) 379-5791, theparagon2012@gmail.com

Richard Grady, Treasurer, (505) 554-1156, jr_grady@hotmail.com

Cynthiaanne Yabut, Secretary, (505) 410-2998, severinlattier@gmail.com

Cheryl Gatner, Member-at-Large, (505) 890-4176, kewwnurse@gmail.com

Tara McCaughin, Member-at-Large, (352) 484-7135, deblynstara@yahoo.com

Zelda Gatuskin, Past President, (505) 344-6102, zelda@amadorbooks.com

The Myth of Moral Superiority

by Harry Willson

September 2007, Courtesy of Amador Books, www.amadorbooks.com

American policy-makers have been making preposterous statements and dreadful decisions for many decades, and especially recently, and a thoughtful person has to wonder what causes such behavior. This may be a helpful clue -- they have been believing the myth of moral superiority. Andy Rooney cries out, from time to time, "Don't forget, we're the good guys here!" It seems to justify remarkably stupid and remarkably harmful policies.

Consider the American arsenal of nuclear weapons. One can wonder why we have them and why we have so many. Everyone remembers, or

has heard of, Albert Einstein's letter to FDR, that Hitler's scientists may be on the track of a nuclear explosion, which could become a war weapon. I was just thinking -- say it's 1942, and suppose Hitler could have one by 1944. How would the overall situation be improved if the U.S. had one, or several? It's a crime and a disaster if any one ever goes off, isn't it? Isn't it so, even still, more than sixty years later? So how did we get fooled into thinking that it would be a good and worthwhile thing for us to have one, or several, or several thousand? We were tricked into such insanity by the myth of our moral superiority.

Hitler was a bad person. But we are not bad. We are good people -- in fact, the myth says, we are better than most people. The problem is this -- it isn't true. We are not good people. We are not better than other people. In fact a case could be made out that any country founded on genocide and slavery, which ours was, must be made up of not-good people. Moral superiority, in the light of all that, is ridiculous. But the myth persists.

Some fail to see how incongruous it is, that we have thousands of nuclear weapons, in gross violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which we have ratified, while at the same time we are badly lathered up that Iran may be working on getting one, some years from now. Iranians are bad people, we think. They have no business resenting or even remembering our overthrow and murder of their president, Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953. We are good people, the myth insists. We can be trusted to use the bomb in a good way -- [?][!] -- but they cannot.

And still the myth persists. Two instances of it surfaced recently.

[a] The winners of a high school competition of some sort were invited to the White House for a recognition ceremony. Two of the winners prepared a letter for the acting president, and by happenstance, found opportunity to hand it to him. He began to read it. It was appealing to him to close Guantanamo and end the practice of torture. He read a few lines, and stopped and looked the young ladies in the face and said, as he handed the letter back, "We don't torture."

But we do torture. The evidence is incontrovertible, and piled up in huge quantities.

Abu Graib, Guantanamo, Padilla, kidnaping, rendition, the labeling of the Geneva Convention prohibitions as "quaint" -- the only way to ignore all that evidence is to believe the myth of U.S. moral superiority, to the point of believing and saying, "Whatever we do is good, so torture is not torture, when we do it."

[b] A prominent pro-war candidate for president was being interviewed on a television news/talk show. "We should be worried about China," he said. "Why should we be worried?" "They're thinking of building aircraft carriers?" "Is that bad?"

"We don't want Chinese aircraft carriers off the coast of Africa."

"Why not?"

"They would be intimidating to the people of Africa."

"What about our aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf?" the newsman asked.

"Oh, we don't intimidate." With a straight face, really meaning it, the candidate said that.

Why would anyone build an aircraft carrier, if he didn't intend to intimidate someone else? The only way a person could make such a ridiculous assertion as, "We don't intimidate," after our active participation in government overthrows in Iran, Guatemala, Congo, Chile, Panama and Iraq, just to name a few, is through believing in the myth of U.S. moral superiority. But all those dead people testify to the falsehood.

Renunciation of the myth, and then reparations, could be first steps in rectifying what has become a very serious world crisis. It has become the U.S. versus the rest of the world.

Quote of the Month

The word philosophy sounds high-minded, but it simply means the love of wisdom. If you love something, you don't just read about it; you hug it, you mess with it, you play with it, you argue with it.

Hugh Jackman