



# THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

January 2014

A Membership Chapter of the American Humanist Association

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> [zelda@amadorbooks.com](mailto:zelda@amadorbooks.com)

HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque  
HSNM meetings are free and open  
to the public unless otherwise  
noted.

### Saturday, January 11

10:00 AM - Noon  
HSNM Informal Meeting  
For HSNM members and their  
guests.  
For invitation or questions,  
please contact Zelda Gatuskin at  
505-344-6102  
Albuquerque Center for Peace and  
Justice  
202 Harvard SE, Albuquerque  
Refreshments.

3rd Saturday Topical Meeting  
will resume in February.

### Saturday, January 25

10:00 AM - Noon  
HSNM Speaker Meeting  
The Science Classroom and the  
Public School Culture Wars  
Lisa Durkin  
Free and open to the public  
Botts Hall, Special Collections  
Library at Central and Edith  
Humanist Minute: Jerry Gilbert

### Other Meetings of Interest

#### Wednesday, January 8

7:00 to 9:00pm

#### **NMSR**

*The Quadro Tracker*

Dale Murray

Museum of Natural History and  
Science

#### Tuesday, January 14

7:00 to 8:30pm

#### **First Unitarian HUumanist**

**Group**, 1st UU Church, Fellowship  
Hall

#### Saturday, January 25

1:00pm

Freedom from Religion, Local  
Chapter

See <http://www.meetup.com/FFRABQ/> for meeting details

#### Monday, January 27

ERA Recognition Day

NM State Legislature

Santa Fe, NM

#### **Roswatheists**

Roswatheists meets every other  
Saturday. To find out more please  
visit <http://www.meetup.com/Roswatheists>

### **President's Message for January 2014**

by Zelda Gatuskin

New Years is one of my favorite  
holidays. It's secular. It's hopeful. It  
epitomizes the puzzle of being an  
aware human. Our ideals and in-  
tentions are of the highest nature,  
and we're going to settle down to  
our worthy tasks and resolutions  
for the new year with redoubled  
energy... just as soon as we blow off  
some steam and bid a raucous, dec-  
adent "good riddance" to the old,  
spent year. Yep, we do like to have  
it both ways.

Different cultures celebrate the new  
year at different times and with  
different customs. The date itself  
doesn't seem to matter as much as  
the simple fact that there is one,  
and everyone agrees to it. We need  
a way to count the passage of time,  
and, more importantly, we need  
that moment when we stand on the  
precipice of another year and take  
a breath before we plunge in anew.  
If only in imagination, time stops.  
We need that. We can't always be  
in motion. Whether we choose to  
party wildly or to sleep through  
that magically imbued stroke of

## The Humanist Society of New Mexico

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.

### Officers/Committees

Zelda Gatuskin: President

TBD: Vice President/Speaker Programs

Leland Franks: Past President

Richard Grady: Treasurer

Jerry Gilbert: Secretary/Membership

Jay Lee Evans, Member-at-Large

Ashley Jordan, Member-at-Large

Randall Wall, Member-at-Large, Newsletter Editor

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 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](http://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 humanity responsible for its own affairs.

midnight on December 31, we can all look forward to a fresh start, a mental re-set.

The new year makes me think about the differences between the digital and analog worlds. Right now I'm typing on my computer, and it knows exactly what the date is and what time it is. I click "save" and, voila, the date and time are associated to the document. Though I could get lost in thought and lose track of time, my computer has a chip that never loses track. Even when the machine is off, that clock keeps keeping time. It is an instrument of admirable precision. But it will never provide the satisfaction of taking the dog-eared calendar off its nail on the wall and putting up a nice new one.

Is it an innate characteristic of humans to mark time, to set milestones, to measure our lives every which way? The rituals that acknowledge beginnings and endings provide both the comfort of repetition and the courage to face the future. Where there is a juncture - a meeting of one thing with another, a divergence, or a break of some kind - there is opportunity for change. Here again I find myself appreciating the analog mode, where milestones are experienced, not simply tabulated.

Take my journal as example: Each time I write my way to the end of another blank book, I get to celebrate my own private New Years. I literally "close the book" on however many months it took me to fill those pages. I like this better than keeping a typed journal. While there surely is a limit to how large a digital document can get, as far as my perception is concerned, the file might as well be infinite. I have no sense of pages piling up in the wake of my entries, noticeably expanding in size from ink and handling; and no physical indication of a diminishing stock of paper ahead. Shall I write forever? Will I never get to the end of my thought?

The perfectionist in me adores the exactitude of the computer. The digital age, like the industrial revolution, has freed us and increased our potential in more ways than I can possibly list here. But these innovations entrap us as well. Machine time is perfectly monotonous. Does anything in nature have such a relentlessly even beat? In the human/computer partnership, we may start to wonder which of us is programming the other.

Real life covers the same temporal distance as our computers' clocks, but with many hitches and skips. The variations give us something on which to hang our memo-

ries and dreams. When breaks in the pattern don't come frequently enough, we invent some - a holiday here, a special personal ritual there. Time marches on, but we humans are always doing the cha-cha. Happy New Year!

### **January Speaker**

Lisa Durkin is an Albuquerque native and daughter of a retired Anglican Deacon, and is married with three adult children. She earned a Master's Degree in Science at New Mexico Tech, and has taught science for a combined 18 ½ years in Middle School and High School and Parochial School. Lisa helped PED write Science Benchmarks and Standards and set out scores for NMS-BA. She is past president of Coalition for Excellence in Science and Math Education; and, she has testified in Santa Fe many times over 10 years to block creationist legislation.

Title: The Science Classroom and the Public School Culture Wars

A report on the challenges facing public school science and math educators in a culture that is increasingly divided between a scientific view of the world and religious beliefs. How are schools, teachers, parents and students to handle demands that scientific theories be "balanced" by religious perspectives? Lisa Durkin shares her techniques and strategies for defusing the conflicts between religious views and science, wherever they come up. Learn how we humanists, whether or not we have children in the school system, can help to insure the quality and objectivity of public school education.

### **New Year, New Venues**

For 2014, HSNM is moving our meetings back to the heart of Albuquerque:

Our 2nd Saturday Informal Meeting is moving from the Summit Apartments to the Peace Hall at the Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice at Silver and Harvard. As a member of the Peace Center's PAJOLA coalition, ("Peace And Justice Organizations Linking Arms"), HSNM has use of the Peace Hall once per month. It is a well-equipped, flexible space with a full kitchen, plenty of tables and chairs, and even a piano. There is a small parking lot beside the Peace Center and another across

the street, and free parking along Harvard on Saturdays.

Our 3rd Saturday Topical Meeting will return to the Special Collections Library on the NW corner of Central and Edith starting in February.

The Special Collections Library will also be the location for our January Speaker Meeting - we will be in the refurbished Botts Hall on the south side of the Library. Get to know this location! We will return here for our Speaker Meetings in April and thereafter (see below for February and March location.)

Although parking meters around the Special Collections library are in force on Saturday and much of the street parking is for permitted residents, there are free spaces available at these locations: The abandoned Pop'n Taco across the street from the Library on Edith; the large vacant lot one block east of the Library on the NE corner of Central and Walter and a smaller one on the south west corner of that intersection; on Gold Avenue one block south of Central; and at various spots around the library about one block away on Copper, Central, and Arno.

### **On the Horizon**

Our February and March Speaker Meetings will be held in the multi-purpose room of the NM Museum of Science and Natural History on Mountain Rd. This will also be the location for Darwin Day events. Sunday, February 9, is shaping up to be the focal point for Albuquerque's celebration of Charles Darwin's achievements, an occasion to also celebrate science, education and the excitement of discovery, as well as to consider the importance of science for the survival of humanity. Save the date!

### **HSNM Governance News**

Bill Kimbrough has stepped down as HSNM Vice President. In accordance with our by-laws, the President will appoint a new VP to serve out the term, with approval of the Governing Board. The GB will meet on January 11, following the HSNM informal meeting. The GB meeting will be held at the Peace Hall, and HSNM members are welcome to stay and observe. There are several open Member-at-Large positions on the Governing Board. Anyone who would like to be considered for an MaL position should speak to a Board Member and plan on sitting in on the GB meeting.

## Human Light Benefits Roadrunner Food Bank

Many thanks to all who made our Human Light potluck party on December 14 such a fun and tasty event, and to all who donated so generously to the Roadrunner Food Bank. We collected a total of \$772.00 in checks and cash and 4 boxes of food weighing approx. 50-60 pounds. Special thanks to Leland and Richard for collecting and delivering the donations.

## ERA Recognition Day

by Sylvia Ramos

**ERA Recognition Day is January 27- please hold the date.** As part of our ongoing campaign to have the Equal Rights Amendment ratified, the Feminist Caucus-HSNM in conjunction with the Albuquerque chapter of the National Organization for Women (Abq-NOW) will hold an ERA Recognition Day at the NM State Legislature on Monday, January 27, 2014.

As part of the day's activities, we will:

- \* speak with legislators about women's rights and the ongoing need for a guarantee of equality for women in the US Constitution
- \* present a short program about the ERA in the Rotunda from 2:30 to 3:30 PM
- \* join with other women-focused organizations in a day of activism to highlight the human rights of women.

Among the other organizations there on that day will be: the American Association of University Women who will be lobbying on behalf of education; the NM Coalition for Choice and Santa Fe NOW whose Roe v Wade program will be at 1:30 and the League of Women Voters who will have a Legislative Reception at 5:30.

We urge everyone to come up and participate in our Democracy in support of women's rights.

More information will go out in early January and will be posted at [www.Facebook.com/Nmwomensequality-day](http://www.Facebook.com/Nmwomensequality-day).

Nelson Mandela: "It always seems impossible until it's done."

Happy Holidays and best wishes for a New Year filled with the power and promise of feminism.

## Roswatheists Food Drive

by Doris Rashad

On November 18th, a good friend of mine told me that she was having some trouble feeding her family. While discussing raiding our pantries with my husband, I realized, "Hey! I know a group of compassionate, kick-ass people who'd love to help".

On the evening of November 19th, I took about a week's worth of groceries donated by a few members of my group. On the 20th, I was able to go back with about another week's food.

Let me tell you a little about my friend. I will change her name for privacy. I worked with Cindy for a few years. She had a good job, a husband and three lovely daughters. 2013 has been very tough on her. Her husband was in an at-fault car accident at work, so was fired, but was also severely injured. Cindy took off three months to help him. All of her daughters are in college and living with Cindy; one has a baby. While her husband was injured, he became abusive. He was already facing charges because of the accident at work. He was finally arraigned about three months ago. About a month later, Cindy was unwell herself, but was out of sick time, vacation time, and unpaid leave, so she was laid off.

She is slowly beginning to put her life back together, and my group of lovely, caring Roswatheists had a hand in it. So I'm letting you all know because we don't get to hear all of the positive things our atheist communities do.

I know that Roswatheists isn't a unique bunch of individuals. Atheist groups across the US and the world get together in times of crisis and need, but we don't use f---ing bullhorns. In this case, I am using a bullhorn. Because of this group, Cindy and her children can at least eat until she figures out what to do next-whether that's food stamps or she is somehow able to get a job in the next little while or something else. Either way, she knows she can ask the Roswatheists for help.

So to the Roswatheists who saw the e-mail within a few hours of my asking for help, thank you.

## Let's Talk about Privilege

by Ashley Jordan

Do you know who usually gets offended when I bring up the fact that the most privileged people in our society are White, Straight, Cis-Gendered Men? Yeah, it's usually the White, Straight, Cis-Gendered Men.

There's a reason for this, and it's that people seem to think I'm implying that all White, Straight, Cis-Gendered Men are bad people. Now, let's be very clear: That is not what I'm saying. But we need to realize when we talk about issues of discrimination and oppression that the people who fall into those categories experience a significant amount of privilege over others, and how that privilege is used can make them bad people.

Let's first talk about what privilege is and why we have it. Privilege, generally speaking, can be anything afforded a person due to their perceived superior position in society from things they don't actually control. Gender, race, sexual orientation- it's generally accepted that these are things human beings have little control over at their time of birth (though we'll talk about issues of privilege that face the Trans community in a moment). It's important to note here that there are also many privileges that come from things we can control, such as religion or lack thereof, wealth, able bodied-ness, presentation of our chosen gender, and so on.

The most important thing to understand about privilege is that any privilege you experience is based solely on the discrimination against people or peoples who do not have the thing that you have. And, in the reverse, any discrimination or oppression you experience is a result of the privilege of others.

Let's go back to the knee-jerk reaction I opened with: I say, "All White, Straight, Cis-Gendered Men have privilege". A White, Straight, Cis-Gendered Man says, "But I'm not a bad person! Stop attacking me!" The connection being made here is that privilege is a bad thing.

My knee jerk reaction is, "Yes, yes it is bad." And while people who benefit from societal privilege may not be horrible, corrupt people who steal candy from little children, it's still important to understand what privileges we have and how we use them. Ignoring that fact that you have privilege over others or using that privilege to benefit yourself is bad, and, yes, you should feel

guilty about it.

Let's go into an example. I am a white woman. If we take just those two factors of my identity and ignore the rest, we can see that I both experience privilege because I am white, but experience discrimination because I am a woman. As a white woman within the feminist movement, I find I am oftentimes listened to above the voices of women of color. And while my voice, 9 times out of 10, will not be heard over that of a man's with a differing opinion, it will be heard and listened to over a woman of a different race than my own.

So how do I use this privilege to help others? The answer here may seem obvious: Give them a voice! Speak for them! Make people aware of their issues!

You may not like this next part, but that's actually the wrong answer. The answer of how I use my white privilege to help women of color is not to speak for them, but to listen to them, and then, when I have heard what they have to say about their issues, to make space for them to speak. I cannot simply listen to them and then repeat what I have heard to others- I must use my energy to make sure that others listen to the source. Otherwise, the wise and thoughtful words of another will oftentimes be ascribed to me, the white woman, because that is the first place other white women started listening. I also have a responsibility that comes with my privilege not to contradict or disagree with the issues that women of color say they face. After all, I'm not a woman of color; how would I know?

Privilege is complicated and tricky. It can be as small as using someone's preferred gender pronouns regardless of their presented gender, and as large as winning a position of employment or office due to that privilege. Transgendered people especially face a ridiculous amount of discrimination for the perception that it is their choice to experience or not experience gendered privilege. A Trans-woman can be accused of not understanding women's issues because they were born biologically male, and a Trans-man can be accused of attempting to take or use male privilege. These accusations often come from people who are Cis-gendered, or in other words, people whose biological gender matches that of their perceived and presented gender. How many times have you heard the story of a parent refusing to use their Trans child's preferred gender pronoun because it is "too hard"? That is another example

of privilege. When you have never been mistaken for the wrong gender or forced to use a bathroom that does not match your gender identity, you've experienced cis privilege.

It might seem tempting, at the end of this article to dismiss your privilege and say, "Well, I've never used my privilege that way on purpose, and it's not my fault I was born this way". The problem with that logic is that when we ignore that our own privilege exists, we actually make the problem worse. The only way the problem gets better is by identifying which privileges we experience openly and honestly, and then actively working to dismantle the power structures that make that privilege work. We cannot claim to be humanists, in it for the betterment of all humankind, if we do not recognize our positions of power over others and attempt to give that power up. We all have un-learning to do when it comes to privilege and power. It's time we got serious about it.

I am a White, Cis-Gendered, Middle-Class, Bisexual, Able-Bodied, Atheist Woman. What's your privilege?

### **The 2013 Freedom of Thought Report: Atheist Discrimination Around the World** Humanist Network News

The Freedom of Thought Report is an annual survey on discrimination and persecution against non-religious people in countries around the world. The latest report is available free to download at [www.freethoughtreport.com](http://www.freethoughtreport.com). The website also includes an interactive map and condensed table of key findings.

The first report was published in 2012 on International Human Rights Day, December 10th. In his preface to the report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, said:

As a universal human right, freedom of religion or belief has a broad application. However, there seems to be little awareness that this right also provides a normative frame of reference for atheists, humanists and free-thinkers and their convictions, practices and organizations. I am therefore delighted that for the first time the Humanist community has produced a global report on discrimination against atheists. I hope it will be given careful consideration by everyone concerned with freedom of religion or belief.

For the 2013 report we asked two victims of anti-atheist persecution to provide the introductory remarks. The cases of Kacem El Ghazzali and Alber Saber, from Morocco and Egypt respectively, also feature in the report. They said:

Freedom of thought and belief must not be compromised. When regimes violently attack people for their ideas and beliefs, all human rights suffer. Oppression of thought by the state is a sign, not of strength, but of ego-mania and cowardice.

In spite of international treaties and conventions, many states discriminate in subtler but important ways. And this has a global impact. Laws against "insulting" religion in relatively secure, relatively secular countries, for example, are not only analogues of the most vicious blasphemy laws anywhere in the world, but help to sustain the global norm under which thought is policed and punished.

We welcome this report. The world cannot fix these problems until they are laid bare.

Find out more about the report, make a submission, and download the latest report at [www.freethoughtreport.com](http://www.freethoughtreport.com).

### **The Silent Generation** by Jean O'Hara

The forgotten war is no more, sorry,  
The strewn bodies and broken lives people  
Things like the Red Badge of Courage and old glory  
which people,  
(What's mined from memories lost in concentration  
camps, lethal.)  
The sight of dynasties found in history books  
Is not enough to soften the distance that looks  
At the space between what is, and what could be, as figured  
by lackeys  
That passes as the western and eastern worlds' distractions.  
One cannot possibly appreciate  
The gap that makes a real approximate  
Of the demand for the recognition of broken lives,  
It's just the way that the Holocaust survives.  
There's just so much experience that doesn't get written,  
It's the poor human element that gets smitten.