



THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

June 2014

A Chapter of the American Humanist Association

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/>

<http://hsnm.wordpress.com>

zelda@amadorbooks.com

HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque

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

Saturday, June 14

HSNM Informal Meeting 10:15 AM - 12:15 PM

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.

Refreshments provided.

Saturday, June 21

HSNM Topical Discussion 10:00 AM - Noon

TBA

Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, June 28

HSNM Speaker Meeting 10:00 AM - Noon

Science In Your Fiction

Janet Greger

Free and open to the public

Botts Hall, Special Collections Library

423 Central Ave. NE, Albuquerque

Humanist Minute: TBA

Meetings by HSNM Affiliates are held throughout the month.

For more information please visit their websites.

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

First Unitarian HUmanist Group

(<http://www.uuabq.org/classes.html>, 505-344-8930)

Freedom from Religion Albuquerque

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

Santa Fe Atheist Community

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

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

President's Message

by Zelda Gatuskin

I walk in the cool of the morning, and the air around me is alive with bird calls. I stop and look up into the trees. All the young foliage is moving lightly in the breeze and glimmering in the dappled sunlight. I cannot locate a single bird, in flight or otherwise. My ears direct my eyes to look - over there, up here, right behind me, right above me... I recognize the melodious calls of robins, the squealing of hummingbirds, cooing of doves, the twittering of the LBJs ("little brown jobs"), and a pair of blackbirds laughing back and forth. Obviously I am surrounded by birds, but my bedazzled eyes cannot make out even one.

At other times, the trail is silent, unnaturally so. The birds are keeping quiet on purpose - "not a peep," as they say. I conclude that the hawks must be hunting. I start looking and listening for them. I expect to see or hear them soon, and I often do. This gets me thinking about how many years I walked these trails, and others, and never thought much about the

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.

Officers/Committees

Zelda Gatuskin: President
Randall Wall: Vice President/Speaker Programs
Leland Franks: Past President
Richard Grady: Treasurer
Jerry Gilbert: Secretary/Membership
Ashley Jordan: Member-at-Large, Newsletter Editor
Cynthianne Yabut: 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 submissions to: Editor, Ashley Jordan, AshleyNJordan@GMX.com or to Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Friday 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.

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.

hidden world existing right above me in the trees. It has always been there, and there have always been people who enjoyed closely observing it. Over time, I have become one of them.

I might use the obviously present but generally invisible birds in the treetops as a metaphor for all of the components that make up the universe. Observant people have long understood that everything is made of something, moved by something. They supposed the existence of particles, waves, fields, and the like. Their conviction that physical reality could not exist as it does without such an understructure drove them to invent techniques for revealing and measuring things that are not obvious to our senses. Along the way, they had to endure a lot of scoffers. Even today, there are religious fundamentalists for whom accepted scientific discoveries about the makeup and history of the world are still unproved conjecture. They can hear the birdcalls, but refuse to make the logical leap, or even to accept the testimony of someone who has climbed the tree.

Strangely, my metaphor can be applied equally well to describe ideas that seem antithetical to science. Imagine that the twittering in the treetops represents another kind of hidden world that exists within reach of our comprehension but is generally imperceptible. Call that world Spirit. Awareness of it can come gradually or suddenly. People might go for long periods or their whole lives without perceiving it or looking for it. Meditation, like a walk in the woods, can bring one to the quiet, patient place where this wondrous world can be detected.

Like the songs of unseen birds, there are certain sensations that one may perceive and then process into the conclusion: There must be something here. I refer to dreams and daydreams, deja vu, serendipitous or coincidental encounters that feel fateful, worries that prove prescient, impulses that verge on telepathic, and strokes of artistic inspiration. Shall we naturalists, in the name of reason, reject the input from our own bodies? Reason tells me that although there is no evidence for an outside, sentient, supernatural force that creates these phenomena for its own purpose, the phenomena exist nonetheless, so there must be a source, and a natural system in which they operate. If we are creative and persistent enough, we may find ways to discover more about these experiences.

Psychology and cognitive science are already unlocking many secrets of our mental and emotional functions. Perhaps this realm is also made up of particles, fields and waves that will one day prove to be the source of magical-seeming mental transmissions and ideas. Maybe it all does boil down to chemistry. But we should be humble in our assumptions about our capacity to objectively examine and accurately perceive the structure of our own consciousness. How many more layers of reality do exist to which we have not yet gained access?

Now I am wondering why I have risked my good humanist reputation to speculate on such things as spirit, telepathy and precognition. I guess because a little birdie told me.

June Speaker Meeting: Science in Your Fiction **By Janet Greger**

Science in fiction isn't about little green men. Rapid developments in science have made what was once pure fiction real (or at least close to real). For example, scientists have created cloaking devices and cloned animals. This talk allows you to look at fiction through the eyes of an experienced scientist turned novelist.

JL Greger is no longer a biology professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Instead she's putting tidbits of science into her medical mystery/thriller novels: *Coming Flu*, *Murder: A New Way to Lose Weight*, and *Ignore the Pain*. All are at least partially set in New Mexico and all included tidbits of cutting-edge science. For more information visit her website at <http://www.jlgreger.com>.

Incorporation Update

by Zelda Gatuskin

Did and done! As of May 1, 2014 HSNM is a nonprofit corporation. My thanks to the membership for your strong endorsement of this action, and to the Governing Board for keeping the ball rolling. In particular, our Secretary Jerry Gilbert and Treasurer Richard Grady have been put through their paces.

But the real hero of the day is our Past President Leland Franks. I think it's safe to say that without Leland's dedication and expertise, we would not have gotten through this process. (Hmmm, I wonder if he had it

planned right along that our incorporation "birthday" would fall on the Day of Reason.) Great job, everyone! HSNM is all grown up!

Give Secular Invocations!

The following invitation from Rachael Berman, AHA Grassroots and Celebrant Program Coordinator was sent to current AHA Chapter Leaders, but we have many members who are qualified to participate in the Humanist Society's new program. If you have held leadership roles in HSNM and/or our local community in the past, please consider taking part:

A new and exciting program has just gone live through the Humanist Society: an online hub for secular invocations! You can now be listed as an individual who wants to give secular invocations at the start of public events.

This new initiative will give you a great opportunity to expand the reach of your passion and activism by being the forerunners in replacing traditional invocations with the more appropriate secular invocations.

This new online hub for secular invocations will include the following features:

1. An introduction to what secular invocations are and why they are important
2. Application to deliver secular invocations and to be endorsed through The Humanist Society
3. Various video and text examples of humanist and secular invocations given in the past
4. A comprehensive list of those who wish to perform secular invocations in various cities and states around the country

Secular Invocation website: <http://humanist-society.org/invocations/>

There is no fee associated with the application and no references are needed.

This is a great opportunity to emphasize our positive humanist and secular values. We need your help to spread the word about these invocations and raise

public awareness that there is a substitute for traditional religious invocations.

Volunteers Needed for HSNM Humanist Minute

We start each HSNM monthly Speaker Meeting with a “Humanist Minute,” which is usually more than one minute but less than five. It can be a poem, short reading, or brief talk on any subject of interest to humanists. Practice your public speaking skills in front of a friendly audience - this could be your first step towards giving Secular Invocations! To sign up, contact Randy Wall, our Vice President, at Paragon2012@comcast.net, or speak to him at one of our meetings.

New Online Courses Available from Secular Activism.org

Visit secularactivism.org to register now for June’s online courses about secularism, free will, and diversity:

-The Science and Philosophy of Free Will, with Richard Carrier.

-Sexual and Gender Diversity, by Julia Hemphill with Greta Christina

-Sean Faircloth on Defending Secular Government: Strategies for Success

-God’s Not Dead? How an Unscripted Philosopher can Disprove God, by Dan Fincke

-The Founding Fathers and Religion, by Myron Jackson with Sean Faircloth

-Does Morality Need God? A Christian (Dr. Baggett) and an Atheist (Dr. Shook) Debate

Only \$59 for a one month course, accessible 24/7 and you can participate at any time of day. PSA offers three to six courses a month, so watch for announcements.

When you join the email list, give your organization’s name when asked how you heard about secularactivism.org.

More courses on God’s existence and morality without God, led by Dan Fincke and John Shook, are also available.

We also welcome suggestions for future courses. You can contact PSA president John Shook directly at jshook@secularactivism.org

When thirty members sign up for Secular Activism’s email list, HSNM will receive a certificate for a free course registration, good for any course during the rest of the year.

Additional online resources are available at the AHA’s Kochhar Humanist Education Center, including the “Many Faces of Humanism” course created by HSNM Past President Fred March.

An Etiology Issue Observed

By Jean O’Hara

All the man wanted was five dollars cut and
Dried. Slackened? The blue ribbon bulls have not
Lied. They saw with the County Fair wind’s sand.
The bulls stood up to look through the bar’s slot.
All the elderly have to do is ride
The trains. The oldster cannot sit down here.
The reason – someone does not want them. Snide
Says, “Nothing is for ancients.” (Look, a bull steer?)
All the givens will say, “They are better
Than an old Greek or someone’s letter.”
“Pluck the flowers,” one says, “And see the rain.”
Who sees the last of one of whom one sees fain?
Has dummkoph ever heard of a textbook?
He stole five bucks. See, Man, the bulls took a look.

Food For Thought Quote

“I think a lot of people don’t understand that when we talk about these issues—blackface, rape jokes, the appropriation of marginalized cultures, and so on—we are having an ethical conversation, not a legal one. There is no thought police. No one’s coming to your house and carting you off to Insensitivity Prison. But you, as a person living on this planet, get to make a choice whether you want to hurt people or help people. Whether you want to listen or shut people out.” - Lindy West