



# THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

May 2014

A Membership Chapter of the American Humanist Association

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/>

<http://hsnm.wordpress.com>

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## HSNM Meetings in Albuquerque

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

Saturday, May 10

**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, May 17

**HSNM Topical Discussion** 10:00 AM - Noon

*How We Became Humanists*

Special Collections Library 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, May 24

**HSNM Speaker Meeting** 10:00 AM - Noon

*Marriage Equality: Getting It, Keeping It, and Making It Real*

Havens Levitt

Free and open to the public

Botts Hall, Special Collections Library

423 Central Ave. NE, Albuquerque

Humanist Minute: Attila Csanyi

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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](http://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'm glad that the new *Cosmos* series is airing two nights a week, because sometimes it takes two viewings to see it all. I confess, I am apt to nod off during any program about astronomy. Once the screen is filled with the night sky, and we start zooming through outer space, my mind begins to drift off into space as well. We are traveling at the speed of light...tracing the universe back in time...approaching the Big Bang...entering a Black Hole...

I almost dozed off just thinking about it. Black Holes do it every time, not to mention quarks, dark matter, neutrinos... I have been known to fall asleep during the opening credits. To be fair, it's not only astronomy. Programs on paleontology and biology can have the same effect. And once the double helix shows up, and a narrator starts breaking down the components of DNA... Good night, nurse! I'm doing better with the new *Cosmos*, which benefits greatly from advances in digital production. There is nothing the artists cannot do in the way 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  
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](mailto: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.

animation, and the writers and directors are adept at using their skills to keep my attention on the screen.

Maybe you've noticed how the current series uses high-tech visualizations to convey abstract concepts and phenomena beyond natural human perception, but turns to fairly rudimentary animations to depict the historical events surrounding scientific discoveries. When a story is of a human scale, we don't need all those bells and whistles to keep us tuned in - our own experience allows us to mentally flesh out the characters, even their inner emotions, from a graphically flat, almost abstracted presentation. By approaching its topics from a variety of angles and points of view, *Cosmos* keeps my attention from flying into space and drifting off into dreamland. The shows jump around a bit much - from the Big Bang to life in a dewdrop - but I can't complain. Those conceptual leaps and directorial cuts have kept me not only awake but actively processing the wide-ranging and complex material.

The great challenge of science is achieving objectivity. What is true, has been true, and will remain true, regardless of human perception and consciousness? Since we only know the world through our minds and living experience, we must engage in elaborate mental gymnastics to imagine ourselves outside of humanity, to think through what reality is on the macro scale of the entire cosmos and the micro scale of genes and atoms. Mathematics, at once relentlessly precise and utterly abstract, provides a specialized language through which to deal objectively with our explorations of the world.

The challenge of *teaching* science and math also involves *subjectivity*. We must make all of that objective knowledge meaningful to the students, so they will be motivated to learn. But desire alone isn't enough. New information sticks better if it can be attached to some relevant existing knowledge or familiar activity. The simple act of drawing or viewing a picture can be sufficient to make that connection. Biographies of people who figured out how things work create an emotional connection and provide a common narrative context - the life story - which brings otherwise remote matters into focus.

The arts and sciences have always been inextricably linked. What I find so exciting about art and science in the digital age is that the correlation of the two has come so close as to actually eliminate, in many cases, that old fudge factor we used to call "artistic license." The artists

and animators of today's science programs can readily translate a point to a pixel to produce an absolutely accurate graphic representation of how and where and when particles, cells, people and planets exist. They may use the very same tools that the scientists use - the same tools that we ourselves may have available on our home computers and even our phones.

*Cosmos* demonstrates the heights to which our digital age can take us. The series' exceptional integration of disciplines points to a potential coming Renaissance for the 21st century, in which human knowledge and artistic expression will again surge forward in tandem. I hope I'm not just dreaming.

### **May Speaker Meeting: "Marriage Equality: Getting It, Keeping It, and Making It Real" With Guest Speaker Havens Levitt**

This month's speaker meeting will feature a summary of how we got to the NM Supreme Court ruling in December of 2013 that legalized LGBTQ+ marriage in New Mexico and how we can further the conversation about marriage and equity for all families.

Havens Levitt is the coordinator of the All Families Matter Coalition, more than 70 organizations who came together to support the campaign for marriage equality in New Mexico. Now that New Mexico has marriage for both same gender and opposite gender couples, the Coalition is looking beyond marriage. Havens is a native New Mexican, retired high school math teacher, prize-winning pie baker, and long-time activist on behalf of the LGBTQ community. She proudly considers herself a feminist and a humanist and looks forward to speaking with the humanist community.

### **Incorporation Results**

By Jerry Gilbert

Fourty-one members of the Humanist Society voted on the Board's recommendation that HSNM become incorporated. Thirty-nine voted in favor, with two opposed. Plans for incorporation will proceed. If you have questions about the incorporation process, please let us know so we can keep everyone well informed.

### **Welcome Our New Board Member-At-Large**

We want to give a warm welcome and a great big thank

you to Cynthianne Yabut for agreeing to sign on as our newest Member-At-Large for the remainder of the term.

Cynthianne has lived in Albuquerque for 8 years, and has an English degree from UNM. She worked in Southern California for 35 years as a desk-top publisher, copywriter, and editor. Cynthianne returned to Albuquerque after retiring to care for her mother. Besides volunteering with HSNM, she works with an animal rescue group. She is particularly interested in economics and politics.

Cynthianne has gone above and beyond in terms of volunteering to help out at HSNM meetings and events, and we are thrilled to be able to officially recognize her many efforts. Be sure to say Thank You next time you see her for all her hard work!

### **Unholy Trinity Tour: Updated Times!**

The Unholy Trinity Tour is coming to Albuquerque - one of only three stops! Matt Dillahunt, AronRa and Seth Andrews were once believers in God, the spiritual and the supernatural. Today, they're atheist activists known worldwide. Event and parking are FREE!

The event will now take place Saturday, May 3rd, from 1-5pm at the University of New Mexico, in the Anthropology building, room #163.

For more information and directions, you can visit <http://unitedcor.org/nm/page/unholy-trinity-tour>.

### **NOW Conference: Faces of Feminism- Strength in Diversity**

By Sylvia M. Ramos

Women comprise 51% of US citizens, yet are not included in the Constitution (except in 19th Amendment- right to vote). Their lack of overt recognition in this founding document leaves the impression that they are not the equal of men and that leads to de facto inequality. Women lag behind men in professional and economic opportunities and, therefore, achievement. Furthermore, women are daily subjected to discrimination via laws aimed at abolishing their innate right to equal treatment under the law in areas including employment, career advancement, pay equity, reproductive health care choices and autonomy over all aspects of their anatomy and lives.

Year after year, women spend countless hours, money, energy and emotion fighting the same fires of injustice that have plagued them since the beginning of our republic. Resources that might have been better spent in self-fulfilling endeavors and efforts to improve the lives of their families and communities have gone into protecting, temporarily, their human rights.

Join over 500 local and national feminists at the annual conference of the National Organization for Women (NOW) that will be held in Albuquerque June 27 to 29, 2014. Hear about ongoing initiatives to address gender-based discrimination, including the ongoing campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment; end pay inequity; increase access to education and career opportunities; ensure women's access to the health care of their choice. Learn how to become an activist and help determine the future course of women's rights in our country.

Find out more at <http://now.org/about/conference/>

### **HSNM Feminist Caucus and TheHumanist.com**

HSNM Board Member-At-Large Ashley Jordan has begun writing a weekly feminist caucus column for TheHumanist.com. Though only two articles in, she has already sparked heated debate and controversy with her commentary, exposing some of the backwards, misogynistic thinking that even Humanists are capable of. If you'd like to read her articles, you can find them featured on [www.TheHumanist.com](http://www.TheHumanist.com). But only read the comments if you think you have the stomach to handle them.

### **Humanist Book Review: The Monuments Men, by Robert M. Edsel with Bret Witter**

By Carolyn Glen

The entertaining movie of the same title, even with its lovable iconic actors, i.e. Clooney, Goodman, Damon etc. is likely to leave one curious as hell. How did this small group of middle aged art curators actually locate and save literally tons of monumental art looted by the Nazis in World War II which the Germans had hidden away in 1,000 mines, castles and repositories? And why did they bother? After all, to my knowledge, there had never been a military group created for such a purpose in previous wars--nor since. Remember the looting of the Baghdad museum in that hideous war?

The attitude then was, "Stuff happens..." Then, there is the ever nagging enigma of why the collections of Jewish aristocrats were especially targeted.

This book reads like a mystery novel as it unravels these historical questions and the motivations of the men and one amazing French woman who preserved the culture of Europe.

Of special interest, many chapters conclude with personal letters, some from Hitler and Goring, and many from the men themselves to their wives. For example, Hitler directs Goring to concentrate especially on the Jewish collections as being of particular quality. Ironic.

There are many small stories to savor as when Patton, after throwing up at the smell of death at a labor camp, refuses to enter. Eisenhower does and comments to Mamie, "I made the visit deliberately so as to give first hand evidence of these things, if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda." All persons of a Humanist bent who have struggled to comprehend "Nazi cruelty, bestiality, and savagery" (Eisenhower) towards Jews will want to read this book. I also recommend:

"Inside the Third Reich" by Albert Speer

"Mein Kampf" by Adolph Hitler

"Conservatives Without Conscience" by John Dean

"Night Dreams" by Paul Deal

### **Meet Me in Philly**

by Zelda Gatuskin

Are you planning to attend the AHA Conference in Philadelphia at the beginning of June? Please let me know if you will be there so I can acknowledge our HSNM delegation. As co-chair of the AHA Feminist Caucus, I will be presiding over the annual business meeting of the FC (open to all AHA members) during the lunch hour on Friday, June 6, and then presenting our report at the AHA's State of Humanism meeting later in the afternoon. At the luncheon on Saturday, June 7, I will have the honor of presenting the Humanist Heroine Award to Jessica Valenti.

This year's AHA Conference is being held just a few blocks away from a small museum dedicated to the creator of arguably the most iconic humanist sculpture ever. Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker* stands in front of



the entrance to the Rodin Museum in downtown Philadelphia. The museum houses the largest collection of Rodin's work outside of Paris. Now an adjunct of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the museum does not charge for admission and is small enough to tour quickly for a brief but satisfying overview - or you could immerse yourself for several hours. Rodin (1840-1917) was an influential participant in the philosophical and artistic movements that brought naturalism to the fore at the end of the 19th century. The vision and engineering required to produce his bronze sculptures epitomizes the marriage of art and science. The entire collection and a wealth of information about Rodin and his work is online at <http://www.rodinmuseum.org>.

## A Possible Cure for HIV Has Been Found, But No One's Talking About It

By Ashley Jordan

For the first time since the HIV/AIDS epidemic swept the world in the early 1980's, killing an estimated 36 million people, the scientific community has announced a possible cure.

So far, two infants born HIV positive have been what scientists are calling "functionally cured" by the administration of new antiretroviral drugs just 30 hours after birth. There is no trace of the virus in their systems or their tissue, making them the first human beings in the world to be completely cured of HIV.

"This is the first well-documented case of functional cure in an [HIV-positive] child and suggests that very early [antiretroviral therapies] may prevent establishment of a latent reservoir and achieve cure in children," says doctor Dr. Deborah Persaud, who presented the first child's case at the 20th annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infection.

Let's be real here: This is GIGANTIC news. The HIV/AIDS virus has killed more people worldwide in its 33 year span of existence than any other disease or major war or event that we know of. Even with treatments and prevention, the virus has killed 1.3 million people this year. So why, then, isn't anyone talking about a potential cure?

I asked the same question when, in 2010, there was talk of a functional vaccine being tested in Africa and showing very positive results. A vaccine for HIV/AIDS? The disease could be eradicated in a generation! But no one talked about that, either.

In fact, there's more news on the vaccine. Just recently, the Bionor Pharma vaccine has led to the discovery of a possible cure in adults of the HIV/AIDS virus. Let me say that again: We have a working vaccine for HIV/AIDS, and now they're saying it might also cure the disease in already infected patients. The new Vacc-4X reduces the viral load among infected patients, with latest result showing 64 percent less median viral load within 6 months.

So why haven't you heard about this? Why aren't all the news stations talking about it so that people can throw

*Humanism and The Arts*

**"#Humanism"**  
By John Michael Gill  
April, 2014

*Have a piece of Humanist Art? Send it in and see it featured in the newsletter!*

their money at these scientists and get these new drugs through FDA approval faster? Why isn't the HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness community up in arms that these drugs and breakthroughs aren't being given more air time?

The fact of the matter is, there's less money in curing HIV/AIDS than there is in treating it for 20 years while the infected patient suffers, and so no one is talking about it.

Maybe this isn't the whole reason. Maybe I'm just getting a little too cynical. But it is at least part of the reason why the drugs that functionally cured the two infants haven't been rolled out to every hospital where HIV positive babies could be born in the world, and why the vaccine, which was developed in 2008, has yet to undergo FDA approval trials.

The other reasons might be that talking about the HIV/AIDS virus has become pretty unpopular in the last 10 years. Think about it- when was the last time you flipped on the news and heard anything about HIV/AIDS? During the '90s, it was all anyone could talk about. Finally, people had started listening about this epidemic, and science was realizing it wasn't just a "gay disease" or a "black disease". Yes, by the '90's, it had started affecting straight, white people, too, and so organizations sprang up, science jumped to, and antiretrovirals became the standard treatment. People with HIV/AIDS stopped receiving death sentences, and began receiving prognoses of 20 or so years to live. Awareness campaigns made infected people back into human beings with a disease, and then... what happened?

Did we forget that there are still 35.3 million people living with HIV/AIDS? I can't even remember the last time World AIDS Day was given any air time!

We've gotten complacent about the HIV/AIDS virus. We've stopped talking about it, stopped thinking about it, and all the while it's still been killing people.

Now we have a possible cure, and it's time to start talking about it again.

Call your friends and family, let them know. Write letters to your local newspapers and radio stations and T.V. stations. Post about it on your social media. Make #HIVCure trend on twitter!

Talk about it, care about it. If we don't, who will?

### **Snowstorm for Internet Jerks**

By Jean O'Hara

It is quite apparent in Washington,  
D.C., that snowing is a popular  
Attitude and not just a joke or fun  
Used by groups or people singular.  
For you see if you want to cheat or lie,  
You must just prevaricate and shout, "Fire,"  
And then a crowded theatre must vie  
With and be a den of iniquity. "Aspire,"  
Say the ones from the underworld,  
"Don't you know we want to have monies worth?  
For the insults and threats we flung and hurled?  
Kneel and we'll beat, maim, you're holy on earth."  
The monks from the dark ages have their work,  
This is displayed in literate form, Computer Jerk.

#### **Food For Thought Quote**

*"Faith in God means believing absolutely in something with no proof whatsoever. Faith in humanity means believing absolutely in something with a huge amount of proof to the contrary. We are the true believers."* - Joss Whedon