



Humanist Society of New Mexico



July 2011

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> zelda@amadorbooks.com

Quote of the Month

It is no longer obligatory upon a woman to give herself to one man to save herself from being torn to pieces by the rest.

Jane Cunningham Croly

HSNM Family Co-Op Alternative Children's Sunday School

No Meetings for the Summer

Call 505-292-4375 for more information
or go to www.Meetup.com.

Santa Fe Humanists Saturday, July 2nd, 10:30am

Immigrant Issues

Community Room, La Farge Branch of the
Santa Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

For more information contact Bill Weihofen
(505) 988-1343

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, July 9th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion starts at 10:10am

Restricted to Members and their Guests Only. For
invitation please contact Zelda Gatuskin at 505-
344-6102 for details or questions.

Refreshments: Salem Smith

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, July 16th

Topical Discussion – Open to the Public

What is Belief?

Erna Fergusson Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd. NE

Saturday, July 23rd

Speaker Meeting – Open to the Public

HIV/AIDS: It Hasn't Gone Away

By Janet Lindsey

Humanist Minute: TBA

Refreshments: Kelly Wright

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford 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.

The Humanist Society of New Mexico

A 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/Committees

Zelda Gatuskin: President

Roy Moody: Vice President

[Education/Programs]

Fred March: Past President

[Special Projects]

Leland Franks: Treasurer

Jerry Gilbert: Secretary [By-laws, Membership]

Carolyn Kaye, Member-at-Large

Randall Wall, Member-at-Large

Veronica Garcia, Public Information Chair

Ongoing Projects:

Ron Herman, HSNM Family Co-op Coordinator

Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor

Attila Csanyi, Friendly Philosopher's Director

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$15 annually. HSNM membership is \$15/year (\$20 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 for more information about the American Humanist Association.

President's Message – For July 2011

by Zelda Gatuskin

Printed in this Newsletter is an abridged version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the United Nations committee that drafted this document, which was adopted by the U.N. on December 10, 1948. The United States was a signatory nation, but in the ensuing years we have not walked the talk. Our country has assiduously avoided ratifying several International legal treaties that together constitute an International Bill of Rights to give the weight of law to the 30 human rights enshrined in the Declaration.

Think about the highly politicized issues dividing our country today, and how differently we would have to approach them if we truly embraced the meaning of this Declaration. We could stop arguing about who should be entitled to what and start figuring out how to guarantee everyone the fundamental security and dignity that civilized, compassionate human beings recognize to be the birthright of all. If you are feeling overwhelmed by the number and severity of problems facing our country and the world at this moment, look at the foundation that has been laid for us by others who lived in hard times. Extraordinary work has been done. It is a fitting task for our humanist societies to carry the mission forward. Let's consider what we can do to educate the public about Universal Human Rights, and bring the weight of public opinion to bear on our leaders to put deeds to words.

Our July speaker meeting will feature Janet Lindsey discussing HIV prevention in NM. Janet will address the misconception that this is a concern only for the gay community, while reporting on the real health risks that result from misinformation about HIV/AIDS. Many of you have come to me and said, "We want to do more than just talk about things, we want to do something positive." This is our chance to do both. Please help spread the word about Janet's talk so that we can shine some light on a matter that requires attention, compassion, and action.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

[Abridged Preamble]

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Now, therefore, The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

[Abridged Articles 1- 30]

1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind.
3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.
5. No one shall be subjected to torture.
6. Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.
7. All are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.
8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him.
9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention

or exile.

10. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing in the determination of any criminal charge against him.
11. Everyone charged with a penal offense has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty.
12. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation.
13. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence.
14. Everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution.
15. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.
16. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family.
17. Everyone has the right to own property. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.
18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
20. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
21. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.
22. Everyone has the right to social security and is entitled to realization of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for the free development of his personality.
23. Everyone has the right to work, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions.
24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours.
25. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
26. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
27. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests

resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

29. Everyone has duties to the community. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others.

30. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

Read the complete document:

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>

July's Governance Notebook

by Zelda Gatuskin

The HSNM Governing Board met on May 24 and is scheduled to meet again on June 22, primarily for the purpose of moving along with our HSNM By-laws review. Jerry Gilbert and Paul Deal have been working hard to produce a revised by-laws document that we can present to the membership for review and comment. If we stay on schedule, members will receive the proposed revised by-laws in their August Newsletter, along with a membership renewal form (see below). The GB will accept member comments on the by-laws revision for several weeks, then finalize the document and put it before the membership for a vote in October.

Okay, here's the deal with dues...

Those who are members of both AHA and HSNM had been accustomed to paying dues to the AHA for both organizations. In January, AHA announced that there would be no more dues sharing, meaning they would keep the full amount of dues paid to AHA and the chapters would be responsible for collecting our own dues. This amounts to a dues increase for all AHA members, since your \$15 annual dues to HSNM is no longer being paid out of your dues check to AHA. You'll have to pay the \$15 to HSNM in addition to the amount you pay to AHA. You can be sure that presidents of the affected chapters have made some noise about both the policy change and the manner in which it was conveyed. AHA conceded they had been a bit hasty and honored the dues sharing arrangement through February 2011. If you paid AHA dues before March 1, then HSNM has received a share of those dues. If you have paid AHA dues since March 1, HSNM has not gotten any share.

To simplify our process for keeping track of HSNM dues, and to allow a few months grace period for those caught in the middle of the AHA switcheroo, the board has approved the following process and policies for membership renewals:

* Everyone's HSNM membership dues will be payable in August of each year beginning in 2011. Dues are \$15 per individual or \$20 per couple residing in the same household, and entitle members to vote in HSNM elections, to serve on the HSNM Governing Board and Committees, and to be listed in and receive the HSNM member directory, issued annually.

* Renewing members who pay their dues from April 1 through August 31, 2011 will be considered paid up through August 31, 2012.

* Everyone will get a membership renewal form with the August Newsletter. Please fill in your current contact information and return the form whether or not you are enclosing a check for annual dues and/or an additional donation.

* Any member who is concerned about their dues payment schedule or who is having difficulty paying their dues should make a note on their renewal form, and they will be contacted by a GB member.

Next Speaker Meeting Bio and Introduction

Janet Lindsey is an HIV Preventionist at Families and Youth, Inc. (FYI) in Las Cruces, New Mexico. She works to improve HIV testing and education, runs a syringe exchange site, and is actively involved in the New Mexico Community Planning and Action Group. Janet is currently attending New Mexico State University to obtain her bachelor's degree in Community Health. Her work in the HIV community includes the study of possible links between mental illness and increased risk of HIV.

Janet also assists the GLBTQ population with HIV prevention, and focuses on organizing Gay Straight Alliances in high schools around New Mexico. GSAs allow GLBTQ students to have a safe place to talk about obstacles they face, and some schools are still without them.

Janet's talk will focus on debunking myths about HIV and AIDS, as well as how the disease has changed. She will show which populations are at the most risk of contracting HIV, and how education can prevent the spread of the disease. The future of HIV will also be discussed as there is still no known cure for the disease.

HSNM Humanist Minute on Political

Correctness

By Jerry Gilbert

Over the last few decades our society has been undergoing a transformation of language usage in regard to how we label or refer to various groups of people.

1. Race is now often referred to as Ethnicity: Anthropologists created racial categories. Now they have abandoned them.

The label “Black People” has been replaced by “African-Americans.”

Personally I would rather not refer to people by their skin color. I would rather call “Black People” African-Americans; call “White People” Caucasian-Americans; call “Brown People” Hispanic/Latino Americans, etc. Individuals and groups decide what to call themselves.

2. Gender:

a. We are phasing out referring to adult females as “girls” (and adult males as “boys.”)

b. We use the terms “firefighter” and “chairperson” rather than call a woman a “fireman” or a “chairman.”

c. We distinguish among gay, lesbian, and bisexual homosexuals.

Some women object to the term “**fe-male**,” because it sounds like “male” with a prefix, much like Eve coming from Adam’s rib.

Now we have to encourage people to replace “**his-tory**” with “our story”; replace “**man-kind**” with “people”; and get theists to stop referring to their deity as “**He**”!

3. Instead of “Retarded” and “handicapped” we say “mentally and physically challenged.”

4. Instead of “the lower class” we say “middle or working class.”

5. “Dwarfs” and “midgets” have been replaced by “Little People.”

6. “Slow learner” has been replaced by “developmentally delayed.”

7. Instead of “ignorant” we say “low-information” person.

Many people believe we have gone too far with political correctness, and maybe we have. But I look at the issue differently. First of all, **I don’t like the term “political correctness.”** It sounds as though we are being insincere under pressure. It sounds as though we are **politicians** trying to win over voters...**WAIT!** I probably shouldn’t say politicians because the term has such negative connotations. Maybe we should call them.... **Justly Elected Representatives of their Constituents**.... NO ...that won’t work. The acronym is **JERC!**

In any event, instead of talking about political

correctness, let’s talk about being respectful and fair to people. Let’s talk about being sensitive to people’s identity, because people ARE sensitive about their identity. Identity is how people “own” themselves, rather than have someone else “own” them by using unfair, insensitive, or derogatory terminology. Owning one’s identity is self-empowerment.

I take no pride in being either “white” or “male.” But these two categories comprise majority groups in our society, who typically set the political agenda. Increasingly, those who belong to so-called “**minority groups**” are taking pride in their group characteristics; they are **owning** their personal and group features with **pride**, and I think that is a good thing.

Some people say it’s just “a rose (or weed) by any other name...” In other words, changing the label for something doesn’t change that something. That’s true. **But** when we talk about people who have been and are the victims of discrimination, rejection, oppression, or worse, we are dealing with more than factual characteristics. We are dealing with perception: people’s perception of themselves, and people’s perception of others. And our perceptions influence how we treat other people.

So if we use labels which express a negative view of people, we are likely to treat them worse. Changing the label we use publicly, **can** be helpful. And, of course, it would be even more helpful if we change our **patronizing view** of others.

That is what Humanism is all about!

I can respect **all** people as human beings, but I **don’t** have to respect their behavior. I can still say that someone is acting like a **jerk**...**NO**...I meant to say like a **politician**.

Chalmers Johnson: The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic

Reviewed by Donald Gutierrez

[Ed. Note: This article is soon to be published in War Crimes Times by the American Vets for Peace]

Hannah Arendt, author of The Origins of Totalitarianism, once wrote that “The central political idea of imperialism...is expansion as a permanent and supreme aim of politics.” This quotation could serve as the cardinal thesis of Chalmers Johnson’s latest book The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic. Johnson, author and editor of fifteen scholarly books, is considered the American Dean of Asian-Pacific Studies. His Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire, and now

Sorrows, should also establish Johnson as an authority on contemporary American imperialism. From 1967 to 1973 Johnson was a consultant to the CIA's Office of National Estimates. "Thus" he says ominously in Sorrows, "began my introduction to the secret world" (9).

The book's subtitle, "Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic," intimates its thematic direction. Johnson defines militarism as "the phenomenon by which a nation's armed services begins to displace all other institutions within a government devoted to conducting relations with other nations" (23-24) and puts its own institutional self-preservation above all else.

Johnson lists and discusses the major signs of militarism: 1-"The emergence of a professional military class and the subsequent glorification of its ideals" (58), 2-"the preponderance of military officers or representatives of the arms industry in high government positions" (62) and 3."A devotion to policies in which military preparedness becomes the highest priority of the state" (63). Although these attributes fit the current White House administration snugly, Johnson indicates at length that both American militarism and imperialism have a long history. Further, and even more important, he elaborates in cogent detail the modern configuration of imperialism in military bases spread globally, the sizable role of privatization of military activity, the impact of American imperialism and militarism on other nations, the elaborate institutional secrecy to advance militarism and thus imperialism, the impact of American imperialism (or neo-Colonialism) on globalization and, finally, the erosion of American democracy under what has been called a "Pentagonized Presidency."

How did all this begin? Johnson begins his explanation of imperialism by tracing it back to the early 19th century when the United States indicated its "interest" in all of Latin America and usurped Indian and Mexican territory. The American takeover of the Caribbean and ultimately the Philippines was made possible through exploiting the sinking of the Maine and liberating Cubans and Filipinos not only from Spain but from themselves at the cost of possibly 100,000 Filipinos. This evolving imperialism also exhibited itself in Indiana's Senator Beveridge announcing that "the Pacific Ocean is ours" (43). And while the Pacific Campaign in World War Two was designed to end Japan's imperialism, winning that war also allowed the United States to dominate the Pacific.

As the 20th century and the Cold War developed, the United States had an excellent excuse for spreading its imperialistic wings to defend its national (i.e., corporation) interests against the Soviet Union by

claiming to defend the Free World, an insistence that rings hollow considering that Washington supported repressive regimes in virtually every country it could. Johnson makes it emphatically clear that this strategy has continued in our time, explaining American intervention in Kosovo and the two wars against Saddam Hussein despite such rationalizations as humanitarian intervention and freeing a repressed people.

Johnson's discussion of American military bases provides stunning information and insight into what the Pentagon is up to globally. There are at least 725 bases abroad.

The political corollary to this condition is that uniformed American military officers far outnumber American civilian officials abroad, suggesting force rather than diplomacy in dealing with other nations. To Johnson, these bases embody a kind of American second government, a "vast complex of interests, commitments and projects...paralleling civilian society" and consisting of *permanent* (itals. added), naval bases, military airfields, army garrisons, espionage listening posts, and strategic enclaves on every continent of the globe" (22-23). What makes all of this sinister is the extraordinary secrecy of this global military macrocosm, not to mention its incredible expensiveness.

A prime example of this secrecy and expense is Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo. According to Johnson, Bondsteel, constructed by a private company, is the largest and most expensive base erected since the Vietnam War, costing around \$36.6 million to build and \$180 million annually to run. Significantly, this supercamp with its six-mile perimeter, nine observation towers and its mass of attack helicopters and communications paraphernalia, looks permanent. Johnson climaxes his discussion of imperialistic base-building and secrecy in asserting that "Bondsteel is intended to play a role in a grand strategy to secure for us Middle Eastern and central Asian oil supplies and to control oil going to other countries" (145).

America has its own share of military bases, 969, an extraordinary number which partly explains why our contemporary military consists of 1.4 million troops and possesses a defense budget "larger than most national budgets" (189). Further, despite the rhetoric about having no dealings with tyrants and terrorists, Washington (Cheney in particular) readily fraternized with utterly savage heads of regimes like Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in order to establish bases in Central Asia which in turn leads to a massive lethal spiraling: "The creation of new bases requires more new bases to protect the ones already established, producing ever-tighter cycles of militarism, wars, arms sales and base

expansions” (214). Johnson exemplifies his claim by citing bases not only in Oman and the United Arab Emirates, but in Turkey, Egypt, Israel and Djibouti as well as in four third-world Central Asian countries. This proliferation of bases in the Near and Middle East compels Johnson to ask whether this heavy American military presence is designed to dominate the oil regions or whether the bases have taken on a life of their own.

If Americans ask what all this militarization costs them, Johnson provides some shocking typical examples. Lockheed Martin, the world’s largest manufacturer of ordnance, was in 2001 awarded a \$200 billion contract to construct F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, a warplane, urges Johnson, irrelevant to 21st century war needs. The Abrams battle tank costs \$4.3 million apiece; 230 (costing almost \$1 billion) were available at the huge Camp Doha in Kuwait for the second Iraq war.

But as domineering the world directly is too strenuous even for America’s resources, developing proxy militaries has become attractive to Washington. This practice has led to two expensive and politically pernicious programs: the State Department’s IMET (International Military and Education Program) and the Pentagon’s FMF (Foreign Military Financing). Formed in 1994, the IMET “offers military instruction to the armies of 96 countries...” (132), and, by 2002, 133 countries at a cost in 2003 of \$80 million. The FMF, which in 2001 received over \$3.5 billion (and in 2003 requested over \$4 billion) “gives money to countries to buy American weapons and then supplies training in how to use them” (137). That most of these countries have brutal regimes does not appear to concern Washington.

When a government harbors a second, militaristic and exorbitant shadow government, secrecy becomes essential. The Bush/Cheney administration was, however, not the first presidency to harbor covert government enterprises or institutions : “The White House has always kept the ‘intelligence agencies’ budgets secret, and deceptions in the defense budget date back to the Manhattan Project of World War II...” (12). Secrecy, claims Johnson, is integral to bureaucracy; the less informed Congress, the media and the public are, the better. The most effective way of providing White House/Pentagon secrecy is through the “Black Budget” which has financed such “Black Programs” as the atomic bomb in World War II. Washington continued to operate in secrecy, evidenced by Truman’s National Security Agency, Eisenhower’s National Reconnaissance Office, Kennedy’s Defense Intelligence Agency and Clinton’s National Imagery and Mapping Agency, all of these agencies with unpublished

but apparently multi-billion-dollar budgets (the General Accounting Office, moreover, has discovered at least 185 Black Programs).

Of special interest to all Americans should be the top secret ECHELON program, an arrangement between English-speaking governments to intercept and share “non-military communications of governments, private organizations, businesses and individuals...” (165). ECHELON enables Washington to snoop on Americans indirectly, as no laws prohibit this sort of intelligence-swapping, and, in any event, no mechanisms of accountability exist. The Pentagon has more than once been willing to go far beyond spying on the nation it is supposed to defend. Johnson cites a 1960s Joint Chief of Staff proposal to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara called Operation Northwoods in which the American military would “shoot innocent people on American streets, sink boats carrying refugees from Cuba, carry out terrorist acts in Washington , Miami and elsewhere, and then pin the blame on Cuban agents” (301) to justify another invasion of Cuba.

Considering the ponderous American military presence throughout the world, Johnson’s CIA concept of blowback becomes frighteningly relevant. Regarding 9/11 as blowback, Johnson then makes a statement that would shock only Americans ignorant of the genocidal aspects of American foreign policy for the last half century: “...I myself thought that the attacks could be blowback from American policies in any number of places, including Chile, Argentina, Indonesia, Greece, all of Central America, or Okinawa, not to mention Palestine and Iran...” (227).

Johnson thinks that Washington’s policy on globalization both undermines it and at the same time provides yet another potential cause of blowback. Such Washington-controlled programs as the undemocratic IMF and the World Bank have had a massively deleterious impact on third-world nations; while these countries struggle to survive economically, the IMF-imposed SAPs (structural adjustment programs) severely undercut their essential social programs so as to repay high-interest foreign bank and transnational corporation loans. Such an “adjustment” increases the gap between the rich and poor in these countries, further fueling anti-West hatred. Yet, as Johnson crucially perceives, the expense of Washington’s militarism and of its gargantuan foreign debts (possibly \$3.5 trillion in the current decade) both undermines globalization while putting the United States dangerously at risk of economic collapse should foreign investors decide to pull their investments, a development Johnson relates directly to Washington’s military unilateralist and imperialism.

Johnson concludes Sorrows with a chapter itemizing and elaborating discussion of four sorrows of America's imperialism and militarism: "a state of perpetual war, leading to more terrorism against Americans..." (285), "a loss of democracy and constitutional rights..." in an increasingly authoritarian presidency, the annihilation of principles of truth to disinformation and a celebration of war and power, and national bankruptcy and dismemberment of social programs to finance ongoing military projects.

Sorrows describes an American military imperialism in which the Pentagon has most of the world (ominously including the United States) divided up into five "Commands," in which an American general (Anthony Zinni) in charge of the Mid-East Command has twenty American ambassadors under his direction and in which President Bush had targeted sixty (Cheney, forty) nations for terrorist status, who thus merited "preemptive" attack.

Johnson's "I fear that we will lose our country" (12) seems prescient, after Bush's eight years in the White House and a foreign policy by the Obama Administration that appears to be similar to Bush's. Sorrows convincingly envisions the disaster that lies ahead for the United States and the world if the juggernaut of American imperial militarism is not somehow stopped.

Social Isolation Through Social Networking

By Ashley Jordan

There is an old experiment that any college student, regardless of major, will learn about in introductory psychology classes. It is a short video which shows a baby being played with and behaving adorably. The baby is happy and well adjusted.

Then the mother figure that was playing with the child stops playing, and refuses all attempts by the baby to be touched, or even looked at. Within moments, the baby withdraws into himself and becomes depressed. The mother is still in the room, but the attention, the human physical contact that we all crave is lost, and the child despairs.

It is this human factor that we lose through social networking websites like Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter. Numerous studies are popping up to tell us about the dangers of our young generation's need for social networking through the internet. The form of connection is proving to do the opposite of what was originally intended; those who use these services are beginning to feel more isolated than they were before. The convenience of Facebook is appealing to all. With a few clicks you can be reconnected with family, old high

school friends, new love interests, and even your current social network. You can have a whole conversation with your boss from your bedroom, in your pajamas.

This is the problem. You don't have to leave your house to know what is going on in everyone's lives; Twitter encourages your friends to tell you about their day in 140 letters or less (including spaces). When a person no longer feels the need to go out to dinner with their friends to catch up they lose more than a good meal. They lose the ability to reach out and hold someone's hand. They lose the opportunity to look into someone's eyes and connect with them.

This ability to connect with one another, to problem solve, to offer support is what makes us human. As more and more people stop going out to meet friends and have the social interaction that they are only partly getting through Facebook or Twitter, the feeling of isolation and depression grows.

The experiment with the baby is a simple example of this. But it is not too late for anyone; at the end of the video the mother figure comes back in, and the baby is happy again. Little things like saying hello to the mailman, holding the door open for someone, or giving a friend a hug can fulfill this need and lift our spirits. We only need to step outside our houses, put down our smart phones, and the connection we think we've lost will start again.

Election Goes Away

by Jean O'Hara, Oct 24, 1996

It is easier to walk down the street
If there are no sidewalks, just places right
On the edge so that no Middle for feet
Is required or a path, cow or dog fight.
Moreover, in a bustling polyglot
City, --i.e., like the metropolis,
District of Columbia, there's a blot
On Judiciary Square. That's what's missed.
The proper lebensraum, just by the bye,
Is for pizza stands or just what the chance
Is that passes for a Congressman's vie
As confused ballots get a wordy dance.
See the just election office's job
So, no one is a protoplasm blob.

Friendly Philosopher's Meeting

The Friendly Philosopher's meetings will be July 4th and July 18th. The July 18th will feature Larry Brown speaking on the "Psychology of Faith". Meeting location is Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson. Dinner at 5:30pm, talk follows.