



Humanist Society of New Mexico



October 2012

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

HSNM Family Co-Op

Alternative Children's Sunday School

Informal MeetUps: field trips, hikes, socials

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

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, October 6th, 10:30am

An Informal Discussion

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

For more information contact Martin Tierney
(505) 983-5001

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, October 1st- General Discussion

Monday, October 15th

Discussion: Four Kinds of Freedom

Attila Csanyi

*Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite
Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room.
Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.*

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, October 13th

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: Randall Wall

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, October 20th

Topical Discussion – Open to the Public

Lies, Half-Truths & Politics

Erna Fergusson Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd. NE

Monday, October 22nd, 7pm

Speaker Meeting – Open to the Public

The Rise of Secular Americans

David Niose

AHA President

First Unitarian Church (Social Hall)
3701 Carlisle NE, Albuquerque

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/Speaker Programs

Fred March: Past President/Education

Leland Franks: Treasurer

Jerry Gilbert: Secretary/Membership

Carolyn Kaye, Member-at-Large

Randall Wall, Member-at-Large

Ongoing Projects:

Ron Herman, HSNM Family Co-op Coordinator

Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor

Attila Csanyi, Friendly Philosopher's Director

Sylvia Ramos, Chair, Feminist Caucus-HSNM

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 October 2012

by Zelda Leah Gatuskin

On behalf of myself and the Board, our thanks everyone who renewed their membership to HSNM. Your pitching in with the required dues and, many of you, something extra; and, a few of you, a lot extra obviously keeps us going on the practical level. But it also keeps HSNM going in a less tangible but significant way. With each dues payment and donation, you are telling the Board and Committees and all those who give their time and energy to HSNM that what we are doing, building, sustaining, is appreciated and worthwhile.

Soon we will form a new Governing Board from a mix of elected positions and GB-approved appointments. We will also have a mix of returning and new GB members. I like the metaphor of starting a new chapter. We are at the gratifying point of coming to a semi-conclusion, a little blank space at the end of the page in which to pause and reflect before picking up the story afresh. Not everything, in fact hardly anything, has been wrapped up in a neat package. I would say that HSNM ventures into our next chapter with more loose ends than pretty bows. It would be nice to have our committees filled, to have our meeting locations locked in - we might even dream of a happily-ever-after scenario in which we have our own permanent meeting and classroom space.

We are somewhere in the middle of the story that we are writing as we go along, anticipating all kinds of exciting developments for future chapters. This is where humanists feel most comfortable – a place that has no predetermined conclusion or historical agenda driving us forward along an inflexible path. Curiosity, creativity, the feeling of potentiality pick us up and push us along as naturally as a breeze lifting a leaf. When we are moved by the mood of exploration, we make progress, not without effort but without feeling depleted. Rather, we feel charged up. What's around the next corner, on the next page, and the next?

As an artist, which by definition implies a certain loner quality, it was not clear how well suited I would be to taking a leadership position with HSNM. On the other hand, artists apply ourselves to our projects with a devotion that makes little distinction between what is

work and what is play, so at least I was in shape for the late hours it sometimes takes to keep up with this group. Further, artists imagine things that haven't been created yet and figure out how to make them real. It's the "vision thing" plus planning, experimentation, practice and follow-through. Anyone who pursues their work with such eagerness should consider themselves an artist.

We have members in HSNM who have embraced their particular task with exactly that kind of dedication. They are inspired, even driven, and their efforts pay off for all of us. I'm thinking of our Family Coop members and their persistence in developing the Humanist Sunday School; the tireless energy of Dr. Sylvia Ramos in mobilizing a humanist campaign to push for passage of the ERA; Randy Wall's diligence in producing our HSNM Newsletter; our Humanist Lives team and the many hours they have put into collecting interviews; and folks like the Littles and the Fullers who have so graciously seen to our routine, essential monthly tasks.

Not everyone can or needs to put in that kind of effort for HSNM, and no one should be expected to maintain that level of involvement indefinitely. My vision for our next chapter includes a larger cast of supporting characters so that we can take some of the pressure off those who have stepped up to fill key positions. Even if you can't bring yourself to sign up for an official role (I know how it is, I've been there) you can still approach someone whose work you especially admire and appreciate to let them know "you can call on me" when the going gets tough. Sometimes, just knowing that someone has your back makes all the difference between dutifully slogging through or embracing the task with artistic zeal.

In her remarks to the AHA upon accepting the 2012 Humanist Heroine Award, Debra Sweet told us: You never know which of your small actions will make a big difference. And one of our most beloved historians, Howard Zinn, wrote: "You don't have to do something heroic, just something, because all of these somethings, at certain points in history, come together, and make the world better."

Let's turn the page, put all our somethings together, and see what we can make happen in HSNM's next chapter.

Thanks to Don Gutierrez for the Zinn quote, which appears in his review of *The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy* that is included in his new collection *Feeling the Unthinkable: Essays on Social Justice* (2012, Amador Publishers).

October Speaker Meeting

We are fortunate to have AHA President David Niose for our October Speaker, but please make a big note on your calendars: the meeting is Monday evening at 7 p.m., October 22 at the UU church. This was going to be an extra meeting for us but as it turns out we were unable to get either the UU space or the Law School classroom for our usual 4th Saturday meeting, so Monday night will be it for our October meeting. We will announce election results, have some dessert and hear from David about his important new book, *Nonbeliever Nation*. David's talk is called, "The Rise of Secular Americans," which is also the subtitle of the book. The talk is about the growing secular movement and how it is emerging as the best hope for reversing the damage that has been done to America by the religious right.

David Niose's background includes experience in law and mass communication. Having practiced law in Massachusetts since 1990, Niose has also worked in print and broadcast media, taught both history and law, and written extensively on a wide array of issues. Upon joining the AHA board in 2005, Niose initiated and helped develop the AHA's media campaign. Niose has appeared in national media and spoken to groups around the country, emphasizing the importance of utilizing mass media to inject humanist ideas into the public dialogue, improve the public image of humanists, and sway public opinion away from the religious right. As an attorney, Niose has advocated for church/state separation and the rights of humanists and other nontheists, and he is currently involved in implementing a legal strategy to enforce the rights of humanists and other nontheists via the avenue of equal protection law. He has worked with the Secular Coalition for America in various positions to help advocate for the rights of Secular Americans, and has served on the boards of Greater Worcester Humanists and Greater Boston Humanists.



Humanist Society of New Mexico Nominee Biographies

Zelda Gatuskin, President:

Zelda Gatuskin is the author of several books of fiction and creative nonfiction; she is also an artist and website designer, and is editor in chief of Amador Publishers, LLC. She is originally from Wilmington, Delaware and is a graduate of Emerson College in Boston. Statement: I have had a challenging and rewarding couple of years serving as president of HSNM. I feel that I still have a lot to learn and accomplish in this position, and I'm excited about the opportunities for our chapter provided by my new role as co-chair of the AHA Feminist Caucus. I will strive to fill out all of our Committees so that we can expand our outreach activities and strengthen our humanist community.

Bill Kimbrough, Vice-President:

Bill has participated with the Humanists off and on since 1991, and became an actual member several years ago. He teaches college courses in Religion, Humanities, Philosophy, Ethics and Critical Thinking for Central New Mexico Community College; and has taught Geography, History of Islam and Western Civilization for Santa Fe Community College. He served as an instructor for the University of Phoenix, New Mexico for 18 years, and chaired the College of Arts and Sciences for over seven years before retiring in 2007; in addition to having taught at UNM and NMSU. Bill is co-author of a book on critical thinking and has written numerous essays on various religions and ethics. He holds an MA in Philosophy from UNM (1997), an M Div in Religious Studies from Denver Seminary (1961), a BBA from UNM (1956). Bill started teaching after a 40-year business career.

Jerry Gilbert, Secretary:

Jerry had been an active clinical psychologist for about 30 years until retirement almost 12 years ago. He has been a strong believer in a professional's responsibility to keep the public educated and informed, sharing information that people could use to enrich their lives. That is why he has and does participate in many organizations and projects that make education their primary mission. He received his B.A. from Northeastern University in Boston, MA, his M.A. from the University of Mississippi, and his Ph.D. at the University of Alabama. He practiced individual, marriage, and family counseling at a family guidance

center for 23 years. He served as a psychologist at Alabama State prisons for eight years and conducted a private practice for nineteen years. Some of his special projects included writing television public service announcements for a Mental Health Association, and for a Victims of Crime and Leniency advocacy group. He was coordinator for the Alzheimer's Disease Support Group and trainer for the Latchkey Warmline and telephone crisis volunteers. He was also a leader for parenting, divorce adjustment, self-esteem, and assertiveness learning groups, and a leader of a support group for families of Gulf War military. For most of his adult life he has acted on Humanist principles without being aware of the label. His experience with political activism includes membership in the National Organization for Women, which included marches and protests. He is a staunch advocate for human rights. This viewpoint is also evidenced in his work for the Alabama Prison Project on behalf of inmate mothers, and for Victims of Crime and Leniency on behalf of survivors of crimes and the families of victims who did not survive. These two programs helped me to see both sides of a tragic reality. He is married and has four grown children and one granddaughter.

Eric Pax, Treasurer:

Eric was born in 1963 in Clovis, New Mexico. He graduated from Northeastern Illinois University in 1995 with a bachelor's in accounting. Shortly thereafter he passed the CPA exam. He has been at his current employer, Ameritest - a Market Research Firm, for 10 years. His current position is Controller/HR Director. He has one daughter, 9 years old.

Richard Grady, Member-at-Large:

Richard is a retired accountant, musician and music teacher. He sings barbershop, plays tournament bridge, reads a lot, and listens to a lot of music, principally classical, opera and jazz. He especially enjoys reading books of history and science.

Jay Lee Evans, Member-at-Large

During the work-week, Jay protects habitat, species, and **your** quality-of-life as a public lands manager. He is the Great Grandson of a Texas Ranger who was Marshall of El Paso; grandson of "sure 'nuff" New Mexico cow/calf ranchers; and son of a Peace Activist who served in the Army. Jay spent more than two decades traveling the US and Canada with 'the Last of the Old Time Big Top' circuses. Jay enjoys the principled, thoughtful discussion

at HSNM, but finds it equally important to 'walk the walk', and so has been involved in numerous mainstream and progressive political campaigns.

Ashley Jordan, Member-at-Large

Ashley Jordan is a recent graduate of UNM, with a B.A. in English, Professional Writing. While she only began identifying as a humanist after meeting Zelda through Amador Publishers and finding HSNM 2 years ago, she has long held the beliefs dear to her heart along with every Star Trek fan. Raised agnostically here in New Mexico, she is always active in something, from helping protect Pit-Bull rights to working with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. A participant in both Humanist Lives and the HSNM-Feminist Caucus, Ashley would be honored to serve as a Board Member at Large for our wonderful humanist community.

Transcending Sects (But Not Sex!): Humanism as Anti-Tribalism

by Andy Norman

Humanist Network News

*He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle and took him in.*

--Edwin Markham

In prior installments of this series, I attempted a kind of overview of the philosophy of humanism. The idea was to articulate humanism's core principles and present them in a useful way. We can call five of these the principles of *dignity*, *well-being*, *understanding*, *inquiry*, and *openness*. To recap:

- **Dignity:** We recognize the dignity and rights of every human being.
- **Well-being:** We work towards a world that affords well-being for all.
- **Understanding:** We see ignorance as a major obstacle to long-term well-being and seek to replace it with understanding.
- **Inquiry:** We celebrate the search for understanding—inquiry—and abhor efforts to curtail it.
- **Openness:** We seek to overcome the fears, dogmas, and tribal loyalties that frustrate the quests for understanding and moral progress.

I added a sixth principle, one expressing an understanding of what moral codes are for. They

function, it says, to protect our most basic interests, promote mutual cooperation, and advance collective well-being. By making these functions explicit, we invite reflection on how we can adjust our moral codes to better serve these ends. We might call this last idea *the principle of moral function*.

I argued that this six-principle formulation has some nice features, among them that its elements link up to form a felicitous argument: each principle is individually hard to deny, yet taken together, they add up to a compelling case for abandoning the divisive superstitions of humanity's tribal past.

I declined, however, to present these principles as *definitive* of humanism, arguing that we don't need another "ism" that divides people into warring camps. By interpreting them as indicators of, rather than conditions on, humanist identity, we can include in the project all who wish to advance worthy ends, whether or not they find themselves ready to forsake more sectarian loyalties. Yes, human beings have a deplorable tendency to factionalism, but we can't overcome it by forming a tribe of anti-factionalists, riding into battle against religious sects. To coin a phrase, we humanists are committed to *transcending sects* (no, not *sex*, but *sects*). The dissolution of inquiry-corrosive tribalisms requires (among other things) an attitude of inclusion, respectful engagement, patience, and humility. In many ways, it is this attitude, more than the principles, that defines humanism.

We will examine this attitude more closely in coming installments of *Brainstormin.* But first we must ask: Does embracing an *inclusive humanism* mean forsaking confrontation? Must we tiptoe about and moderate our convictions to avoid offending believers? Not at all. Our commitments to inquiry and constructive engagement encompass a wide range of behaviors that can challenge and provoke. Indeed, our principles often *require* us to make others uncomfortable. Greta Christina's category of "fierce humanism" is far from being oxymoronic—true humanism is fierce when it needs to be. If humanism is centered on what Greg Epstein's humanist chaplaincy calls "An Ethic of Love," we must not forget that certain situations require tough love. Namby-pamby, feel-good kinds of love have their place, but so too do assertiveness and conviction. Again, we will explore this tension more fully at a later date.

As I see it, the six principles listed above provide a reasonably comprehensive summary of *what* humanists stand for. If you compare the moral content of these principles with those of, say, the Ten Commandments, humanism's comparative maturity stands out clearly. If you really want to understand humanism, though, it is

also important—perhaps more important—to understand *how* humanists embrace these principles. For a humanist's relationship with her core principles is quite unlike a believer's relationship with the core tenets of his faith.

And herein lies a critically important fact about humanism. Long ago, humanist thinkers discovered a truly revolutionary truth about the proper role of core convictions in a well-lived life. The discovery solves an ancient problem, and will someday help humanity outgrow its childish fascination with destructive ideologies. This makes humanists the bearers of a great gift to future generations—an insight we would do well to make explicit, and actively impart. Articulating this truth goes a long way towards explaining what humanism is, and why it is the philosophy of the future.

Tune in to the next issue of *Brainstormin'* to learn more about what might, in the end, prove to be humanism's signature contribution to posterity.

Remembrances

by Jean O'Hara, November 96

One cannot seal one's self in a cork lined
Room and keep safely everything sound,
There must be room for a person to find
New experiences for the new round
That comes with bustling holiday actions;
These make music, people's laughter, a gift
Like apartments and houses – one's bastions-
This human dignity before the shift
To urban merchandising's the clever
Trick. Just change Halloween to the season
This makes merry Christmas the good leveler
To straighten out one's staid reason.
So, before we give all the Father Christmas,
Let the light shine on the spirit through brass.

Let's Lighten Up!

The Church Plaque

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed Little Johnny was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the church. The seven-year-old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the boy, and said quietly, "Good morning, son."

"Good morning pastor" replied the young man, focused on the plaque.

"Sir, what is this?" Little Johnny asked.

"Well son, these are all the people who have died in the service," replied the pastor.

Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque.

Little Johnny's voice barely broke the silence when he asked quietly, "Which one, sir, the 8:30 or the 10:30 service?"

Groaners

An invisible man marries an invisible woman. The kids were nothing to look at either.

Deja Moo: The feeling that you've heard this bull before.

I went to buy some camouflage trousers the other day but I couldn't find any.

Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly; but when they lit a fire in the craft, it sank, proving that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.

Two antennas meet on a roof, fall in love and get married. The ceremony wasn't much, but the reception was excellent.

A dyslexic man walks into a bra.

Two hydrogen atoms walk into a bar. One says, "I've lost my electron." The other says, "Are you sure?" The first replies, "Yes, I'm positive..."

First Unitarian HUManist Group, 7pm

October 9th, 7pm to 8:30pm

Social Hall, First Unitarian Universalist Church,
3701 Carlisle Blvd. NE

Open to both Religious and Secular Humanists

Meets the second Tuesday of each month

Roswatheists

Saturday, October 13th, 2:45pm

Saturday, October 27th, 2:45pm

Starbucks, 1309 N. Main Street, Roswell, NM