



# THE HUMANIST SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

October 2013

A Membership Chapter of the American Humanist Association

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

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

## Saturday, October 12

10:10am to noon

### **HSNM Informal Meeting**

HSNM Members and their Guests  
Only. For invitation or questions,  
please contact Zelda Gatuskin at  
505-344-6102

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian  
School NE, Albuquerque, NM  
Refreshments: Helen Fuller

## Saturday, October 19

10:00am to noon

### **HSNM Topical Discussion**

*Initiatives, Special Elections...*

*Whatever*

Special Collections Library  
423 Central Ave. NE

## Saturday, October 26

10:00am to noon

### **HSNM Speaker Meeting**

*Connecting the Climate Dots  
Between NM and the Amazon*

Vickie Peck

CNM - Montoya Campus, 4700  
Morris NE, Rm H-128

Refreshments: Cynthia Yabut  
Humanist Minute: Carolyn Kaye

## Other Meetings of Interest

### Tuesday, October 8

7:00 to 8:30pm

#### **First Unitarian Humanist**

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

### Wednesday, October 9

7:00 to 9:00pm

#### **NMSR**

*Illusions*

Dave Thomas

Museum of Natural History and  
Science

### Saturday, October 26

1:00pm

Freedom from Religion, Local  
Chapter

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

#### **Roswatheists**

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

## **President's Message for October 2013**

Here are some items that have come to my attention lately that speak to the growing economic inequality in the U.S., an issue humanists should be concerned about and are in a unique position to address - if we have the courage to do so.

\* NPR, 8/9/13, "Study: Poor Are More Charitable Than The Wealthy." Guy Raz interviewed psychology researcher Paul Piff, whose game-playing subjects received 10 credits (in lieu of cash) and determined how many, if any, would be given to a partner that was a stranger to them. "[W]hat we found was that the lower-class people ... were inclined to give away 44 percent more [of their credits]," Piff reported. "[I]t's really compassionate feelings that exist among the lower class that's seen to provoke these higher levels of altruism and generosity toward other people."

\* Money News, 9/13/13, "Krugman: Growing Inequality is Becoming Extremely Destructive" by Michael King (article provided by Dale Roff). King quotes Krugman:

## 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

Bill Kimbrough: Vice President/Speaker Programs

Leland Franks: Past President

Richard Grady: Treasurer

Jerry Gilbert: Secretary/Membership

Jay Lee Evans, Member-at-Large

Ashley Jordan, Member-at-Large

Randall Wall, Member-at-Large

### Ongoing Projects:

Ron Herman, HSNM Family Co-op Coordinator

Randall Wall, Newsletter Editor

Sylvia Ramos, Chair, Feminist Caucus-HSNM

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$20 annually, HSNM membership is \$20/year (\$30 for two adults in the same household). Send subscription or membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 27293, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7293. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall, paragon2012@comcast.net or 1009 Childers NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month. Website submissions may be sent to president@humanistsocietyofnm.org. HSNM dues are now paid separately from AHA dues, visit [www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org) for more information about the American Humanist Association.

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

“Inherited privilege is crowding out equality of opportunity; the power of money is crowding out effective democracy,” and cites these numbers: “95 percent of the gains from economic recovery since 2009 have gone to the top 1 percent....more than 60 percent of the gains went to the top 0.1 percent, people with annual incomes of more than 1.9 million.”

\* Albuquerque Journal, 9/19/13, “Census: N.M. poverty rate increased from 2000 to 2012” by Barry Massey. The article notes that 43 other states have seen the same trend.

\* CNN, 9/21/13, “House bill would take 3.8 million off food stamps” by Jennifer Liberto. The legislation would cut \$40 billion over the next decade.

Some might accuse me of engaging in “class warfare” for simply citing these items. If the term applies at all, then who is making war on whom? It seems like the rich are making war on the poor, not the other way around. But the moneyed interests cry foul whenever we bring up income disparities and ask that wealth be shared for the good of all. I guess it hurts the billionaires’ feelings when we peons dare to suggest that no one is deserving of the kind of personal income that rivals the budgets of small countries.

Call it what you will, there seems to be a compassion gap every bit as wide as the financial divide. Humanists would do well to engage this debate. We reject out of hand the underlying puritanical mindset by which greed is rationalized as merely holding on to what was divinely granted, and suffering is either a hallowed martyrdom or something actually deserved. Further, we embrace scientific method and critical thinking, through which we can put aside emotions and assumptions to collect measurable data and compare results objectively. By objective standards of prosperity such as mortality rates, education and employment, the U.S. is falling behind. That should tell us something about our brand of capitalism.

We humanists have our own blindspots and self interests. Shall we reject the supernatural gods only to embrace without question an equally whimsical concept - money? If you feel I have blasphemed in the way I phrased that, then I’ve made my point. Money is a kind of god and capitalism is its religion. I propose that a society where some people starve while others get \$2 mil-

lion per year from businesses that deplete and despoil their nation's natural resources has severed its connection to reality every bit as much as a society ruled by superstition and religious dogma.

"Non-participation is itself a form of dissent," a wise man once told me. We see an example of this in the Albuquerque Journal, 9/19/13 letter, "Radical simple living is good for me and the earth" by Don Schrader. Don describes his satisfaction with his drastically scaled-down lifestyle. He does not paint himself a martyr or judge the rest of us, but closes simply with: "Change as fast as you can as long as you enjoy it and are quite sure you will stick with it for life."

Few of us are as brave or committed or contrary or crazy - or whatever you want to call it - as Don Schrader. We see the need all around us, and we aspire to increased prosperity as much for others as ourselves. The question in my mind is this: Can fairness, equality and security ever be attained under our existing economic construct, or are we stuck in a game in which there will always be - there must be - lots and lots of losers in order that a few will win big? If the latter, then we are going down the path of many a fallen empire.

### **Humanist Speaker Meeting October 2013**

Please join us at the Humanist Society on October 26, 2013 to hear a talk by Vickie Peck about climate science, the intertwined strands of atmospheric circulation, petroleum, and the long-standing social interchange between the peoples of Ecuador and the US. Vickie will also share her experiences living in an isolated Amazonian village.

Vickie will discuss William DeBuys' recent book (A Great Aridness: Climate Change and the Future of the American Southwest). He predicts that New Mexicans are in for a very dry, fire-prone, tree-less future, and outlines the connection between the desert landscape of the Southwest and another landscape just south of the equator that is the polar opposite- the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest.

### **Speaker Bio**

Vickie Peck holds a Ph.D. in microbiology and genetics, and was a member of the Biology Department research faculty at the University of New Mexico for ten years.

In 2000 she founded a private consulting practice, Bio-Logic, LLC, where she develops detectors for infectious diseases and teaches molecular biology to science and engineering professionals.

Vickie leads ecotourism journeys deep into the Amazon rainforest of Ecuador, and is committed to protecting the heart of the rainforest.

### **Women's Equality Day Celebration**

by Sylvia M Ramos, M.D. Chair, Feminist Caucus-Humanist Society of New Mexico

Gracias y ¡Adelante!

I want to thank all the HSNM members who donated their ideas, time, labor and money to bring together and present the Women's Equality Day celebration and rally in support of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Thanks also to HSNM members who showed their support by attending the event.

All agree that we were successful in raising awareness about the status of women's rights in this country and the need for the ERA. \*Our program speakers, poets and singers did a wonderful job weaving the tale of American women's history and struggle for recognition of their innate human rights and the need for a written guarantee of those equal rights in our Constitution.

We succeeded in raising the level of awareness in the community about the Humanist Society of New Mexico, gathering grassroots support in the community, and building long-lasting coalitions among the many not-for-profit \*organizations working to help women, children and families in New Mexico. We could not have presented this event without the commitment and work of these organizations.

We garnered the attention of our community and elected leaders both locally and nationally. Ours is a representative democracy. Although as a non-profit organization we cannot exhibit any partisan bias, no major local or national legislative effort can succeed without the support of our elected leaders. We invited leaders of the Democratic, Republican and Green parties. We are grateful that \*ten accepted our invitation and were recognized from the podium.

Although about 300 people attended the event, it's

hard to quantitate because the park is large, the public gathered in several areas, and we did not have a specific counter. My estimate comes from the many signatures on the petitions and registration sheets; the number of elected officials who came with retinues; the over 20 community organizations that brought several members, including the New Mexico Department of Public Health; the number of people whom I did not see but have told me how much they enjoyed the event; and the many people I saw from the stage.

The event had its own Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/NmWomensEqualityDay](http://www.facebook.com/NmWomensEqualityDay)) and Twitter hashtag (@NMWEday). These are still active and you can still like us and tweet to us. We're still considering the long-term use of these sites. Coverage of the celebration and rally in the print, radio and television media included radio interviews, publication of an Op Ed and a letter to the editor in newspapers, and brief mentions on television evening news programs.

There is, however, much work still to do going forward. The goal of the Feminist Caucus is to have the ERA ratified by three more states, so that it will become the law of our land. Therefore, we will continue to urge the NM state legislature to pass our ERA Memorial asking our congressional delegation in Washington to sign on as cosponsors of the resolutions in the House (H J Res. 43) and the Senate (S J Res.15) to do away with the deadline for ratification. Once a majority of all members of Congress cosponsor the resolutions, the amendment will be sent out to the states for ratification. The effort to get those last three states will then proceed.

We still need and ask for your help. If any of your New Mexico \*state elected officials and community leaders are among those who came to our event, call or write to thank them and ask for their continued support of guaranteed equal rights for women. Please, also, \*call or write Senator Tom Udall, Representative Ben Ray Lujan and Representative Steve Pearce and ask them to become cosponsors of the resolutions to do away with the deadline for ratification. Gracias. ¡Adelante!

\* Over the coming weeks we will post updated ERA Action resources on the HSNM website and also create an archive of WED participation and speeches. If you are unable to access materials online, please contact Sylvia or Zelda; we will also have some of the handouts

available at our meetings.

### **HSNM Team to Answer Phones for KUNM Fund Drive**

If you tune in to KUNM-FM (89.9 in Albuquerque) on Monday, October 14 you may hear mention of HSNM. Our team of 4 (Zelda, Richard, Carolyn and Cynthia) will be answering phones for their fall fundraiser. This has become a regular activity for us and we really enjoy it. KUNM is one of the resources we count on to help us get the word out about HSNM activities. This is our chance to support them in return.

### **NM Book Awards Finalists Announced**

Once again HSNM has sponsored the Philosophy category of the NM-AZ Book Awards. Finalists were announced on Sept. 20 and the winners will be revealed on Nov. 15. Don Gutierrez's book *Feeling the Unthinkable: Essays on Social Justice* is a finalist in the Political Book category, and *From Fear to Love, My Journey Beyond Christianity* by Harry Willson is a Philosophy finalist. Both books were edited by Zelda Gatuskin and published by Amador Publishers.

### **Summer Obviates Lebensraum**

by Jean O'Hara

There is nothing going on here at all-  
No books, no news, radios, no telly.  
Say what would keep a human on the wall?  
Lo fly, to get near a spider's belly?  
Businessmen figures what kind of shoes  
One has. For the policy, they have barefoot  
Or pregnant. Ah yes, it is not the booze,  
(Drink to me only with the eyes) and look.  
It is the gentleman from Rome who is  
Going to tell what one thinks, does and - whiz  
Is it clodhoppers or hush puppies?  
Otherwise, it is going to be no peace.  
Yet, it is war and catechism not the shelf five.  
Ockham's razor is to live - not survive.