



Humanist Society of New Mexico



August 2008

www.humanists.net/nm/ fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

President's Message

A short time ago Ron Herman arranged a lunch with me and Jeff Cornelius to discuss the future of humanist education here in New Mexico. As most of you know, Ron is our overall education director and is planning our
(continued on next page)

HSNM Family Co-op

Alternative Children's Sunday School

August 3rd & 17th, 11:00 am

Regular Meetings

Ground Level, College of Santa Fe, Albuquerque
Campus, Pinetree Corporate Center
4501 Indian School Rd. NE

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, August 2nd, 10:30am

Ethics and World Trade

Southside Branch Library
6599 Jaguar Drive

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

Grants Humanists

No Meetings During the Summer

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

HSNM Book Club

No Meetings During the Summer

Saturday, August 9th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Refreshments: Janet Johnson

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, August 16th

Topical Discussion

What Makes a Good Life?

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library

423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, August 23rd

Speaker Meeting

A Comparison of Science and Religion

Ron Herman

Refreshments: Randall Wall

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.

initial adult education offering. Jeff is directing our Family Cooperative education program which has five to twelve children in attendance at the College of Santa Fe building just up the street from the Summit. Five new families brought their children to the special program on magic presented by the folks at New Mexicans for Science and Reason, and at least two plan to enroll their

children in the Cooperative.

Ron gave his talk on Science and Religion at the AHA conference and will share it at our next speaker's meeting. Jeff has recently enrolled in the Humanist Institute's leadership education program. Your Board approved to cost-share his participation for the initial series this December. We are very grateful to those who have contributed to match Julian Anderson's generous challenge grant, and to all the others who have contributed to HSNM's educational and other initiatives.

While we started our lunch discussion on educational promotion and management issues, we also brainstormed some ideas about how to make the HSNM experience more vital to all of its members. Here are some of the ideas that were floated:

- To enable our new young family members to routinely interact with our established members, add one hour to our Sunday School schedule for an adult program to include topical discussions and special events. This would require one or two parents to continue working with the children.
- Establish an HSNM Charity Fund to support local grants to community organizations that meet criteria yet to be defined. This would allow our members to channel some of their charitable giving through the HSNM so that we can project a positive image in the New Mexico Community.
- Create a special series of "Humanist Minutes" inviting any of our members to speak up to five minutes on "Why I am a Humanist? While writing this it occurred to me that we can consider publishing such statements in this Newsletter, whether or not they are verbally presented.
- Ask one of our members to volunteer to organize parties with a target of at least four social events per year.
- Try to establish some periodic reporting in the Albuquerque journal about the HSNM and its activities.

Please contact me with your reaction to these ideas, with any additional ideas you may have, and with any offers to take the lead in making things happen.

**The Humanist Society of New Mexico
(HSNM)**

A Membership 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

Frederic March: President

Harry Willson: Vice President/Programs

Jerry Wesner: Past President

Ed Root: Treasurer

John Waldrop : Secretary

Ron Herman: Director of Classes

Jeff Cornelius: Family Co-op

Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor

Janet Johnson: Book Club

Ted Cloak: Community Liaison

Phil Smith: Webmaster

Membership Director: Open

Social Coordinator: Open

Publicity Director: Open

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$12 annually. Send subscription and membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall at Email paragon2012@comcast.net

The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month.

Resistance

What would the American people do if some power from a different hemisphere bombed all our sewage treatment plants, all our electric power plants, and all our water supply stations? What would we do if, after that, that same power sent an invading force into every city, arrested the state governors and city mayors, and went house to house breaking down doors and arresting the male inhabitants? What would we think when they looted our museums and confiscated our crops and minerals? Would we as a people object? What percentage of our population would form some kind of resistance movement?

I try introspection, and on the assumption that I'm not much different from my neighbors, I think some of us would resist. I know how seriously I resent it when intruders break the doors of my house. I become a mortal enemy of the intruder, and I don't "get over it."

But I notice that the American people are very passive. I don't think the majority believe that protest, let alone armed resistance, is patriotic. Our current population could not pull off anything like the original American Revolution. That kind of zing is missing. A fire has gone out. Solidarity is nowadays quickly and easily mocked, and not taken seriously at all.

When election fraud occurred in the Ukraine, the Ukrainians massed in the streets until some kind of correction was made. Here we have had two fraudulent presidential elections in a row and the Americans never protested seriously at all. Even after the evidence is out, we have tolerated the fraud, and done little to guard against the next attempt to steal another election.

Comparisons to the fall of Rome come to mind. They had little "defense," except mercenaries, whose loyalty is fragile when things get rough. Our National Guard is in another hemisphere, so they won't be much help in defense, when it comes to that. The fact that our National Guard is the invading and occupying force in someone else's country makes the word "defense" all the more inappropriate.

Some have referred to the suicide bombers and hijackers as cowards. I do not understand that. The word seems more fitting for those of us who tolerate murder and arson and rape and door-breaking, and do nothing to resist.

But perhaps I should not be so hard on our people. They have been heavily bombarded, that is, seriously brainwashed, by the mainstream media. The people are busy with two or three jobs, trying to maintain an absurdly high standard of living. They are being lied to all the day long, and all evening, too, blatantly and subliminally. They have been taught to believe that

protest is un-American. They have not been taught any history. Many, perhaps most, do not comprehend the concept of the negative number. Preachers and teachers have done their best to rescind what Rousseau called "the Social Contract." "Get yourself saved." "Get the highest-paying job, no matter what is entailed." Greed has been regarded as not only permissible but "cool," for several decades. How could I be expecting a revolution, given all that? We lack the guts for it.

Having said that I must add that I'm glad we as a people seem to have lost the guts for additional pre-emptive wars of aggression and torture. Our people are sick of it. It will come to an end soon, unless someone steals the next election.

Just look, again, at what we're able to tolerate!

[1] Four dollar a gallon gasoline, soon to be five dollars.
[2] A huge bail-out for banks and "investors."
[3] Ads which suggest, "Consult your doctor."
[4] Slogans like "Support the troops," in the face of torture, Walter Reed Hospital filth, a promised veto of a new G.I. Bill of Rights, and fourth and even fifth deployments into a war/occupation zone.

"These are times that try men's souls."

Check out the Library of Old Rants at Harry's website: www.amadorbooks.com

Harry Willson

Study Says One in Five Atheists Believe in God

From Humanist Network News, the weekly e-zine of the Institute for Humanist Studies, www.humaniststudies.net

Staff Reports, July 2, 2008

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released a second report from its U.S. Religious Landscape Survey on June 23 concluding that Americans are highly religious and tolerant of other religions and that religion is politically relevant. While none of this is news, the study's findings about nonreligious Americans are.

Pew reported that 21 percent of atheists in their survey said they believed in God or a universal spirit, that six percent of them considered it a personal god, and that 40 percent of agnostics feel certain that God exists.

Conversely, among respondents who say they are affiliated with a religious tradition (Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, etc.), a surprising number said they actually do not believe in a god or universal spirit.

"When atheists are telling you they believe in God and Catholics are admitting they don't, that's evidence

of the stigma our society puts on nontheists," said Lori Lipman Brown, director of the Secular Coalition for America. "Americans repeatedly tell pollsters that an atheist is the last person they'd want their children to marry, the last person they'd vote for as president. This prejudice also appears in the widespread impression that atheists lack ethics and values."

A *Newsweek* study published in an article titled "Is God Real?" on April 9, 2007, indicated that surveys putting the number of Americans without a god belief at anywhere between 21 to 63 million are probably low. Half of *Newsweek's* respondents last year reported personally knowing an atheist.

"Unless these small numbers of atheists have unusually vast social networks, those respondents tell us that nontheists make up a lot more than just eight or 12 percent of the U.S. population," said Brown. "It says a lot about the difficulty of coming out of the closet, whether it's to family, pollsters or fellow parishioners."

The Pew Center said that religion in America is politically relevant; however, says Brown, so is its absence. "When you look at the results, you see the secular vote is much larger and more up for grabs than other groups who receive an awful lot of attention from politicians and pollsters. And yet with both major parties pandering to religion, our constituency is feeling more and more like outcasts in our own democracy."

According to the Pew survey, there are more than twice as many atheists and agnostics (a combined 4.0 percent of all respondents) as there are Jews (1.7 percent), and about four times as many as there are Muslims (0.6 percent).

Atheists and agnostics also have higher ratios of independent voters than most other groups in the study. The overall percentage of voters with no religious affiliation, which includes atheists, agnostics, and secular and religious unaffiliateds too, is nearly equal (16.1) to the percentage who are mainline Protestant (18.1).

Letter to the Editor

The Willson-Dawkins thesis about the origin of religion ("Thre Pressure to Believe", July newsletter) is highly plausible. Anyone interested in thinking more about the subject would probably enjoy reading *Not by Genes Alone* by Richerson and Boyd. If you are familiar with Dawkins' writings, you can rightly infer from the title that Richerson and Boyd build on the "meme" concept that Dawkins proposed as a cultural analog of genes. The main idea is that the human ability to imitate each other is based on brain structures that we inherit genetically. The advantage of imitation, if one has the ability, is that it is much quicker and easier than thinking

through problems for oneself (contrary to popular belief monkey and apes have very little capacity for imitation). Where the meme hypothesis gets very interesting is in studying who we choose to imitate. There are few surprises here but we tend to forget the importance of peers, celebrities and people perceived as successful. The perception of "success", of course, depends on what ideas one has already adopted about values and social status. Very few of us invent our own value systems without absorbing many ideas from our social environment.

Dale L. Berry, Grants, NM

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, August 4th

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, August 18th

The Evolution of the Humanist Manifestoes

Ron Herman

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

Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

Sunday, August 3rd, 9am

The documentary "The God Who Wasn't There" will be shown.

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, August 18th

Social Meeting at 6:30pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25

New Mexicans for Science and Reason

Wednesday, August 13th, 7pm

Listing Listeria and Counting Campylobacter: Monitoring Foodborne Illness in New Mexico

Sarah Lathrop, DVM, PhD

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402