



Humanist Society of New Mexico



January 2007

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Today, I want to focus on George Lakoff. Who is George Lakoff? He is a linguist, a professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, a former Secretary of Labor, and the energy behind the cleanest political fresh air in the nation. Our next book discussion event will discuss his *Don't Think of an Elephant – Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. If you read nothing else, read Chapter 7 - What the Right Wants, Chapter 8 – What Unites Progressives, and Chapter 10 How to Respond to Conservatives.

The connections to the kind of strategy that I am encouraging for our humanist movement will be evident. Lakoff helps progressives develop strategies to combat “toxic conservatism.” What Dennett labels “toxic religion” is thoroughly woven into that same cloth. Not all conservatism is toxic and neither is all religion. So if we want to be effective we need to accurately define our real adversaries and issues, and not waste our ammunition.

I believe that his kind of thinking can help us build the HSNM into a more involved and vital organization. But I obviously cannot do it alone. We need your Lakoff-informed ideas, and we need your energy and commitment. So whether or not you come to our book discussion, buy and read this wonderful ten-buck book, and start thinking about it. Lakoff's newest 2006 book “Whose Freedom? – The Battle over America's Most Important Idea” builds on the previous one. If you liked the first you will most likely want to read the second.

Have a happy new year.

Fred March

Humanist Notes

This year's Choice Rally will be January 22 at the Roundhouse. We would like to arrange a carload to assure a noticeable Humanist presence. If you can attend, please call Carolyn Glen Kaye at 323-5288. It is

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings run from 10:00 to noon and are free and open to the public.

Saturday, January 13, 2007

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

Saturday, January 20, 2007

Topical Discussion

Strategies for Engaging the Public on Humanist Issues

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE
(NW corner Edith and Central - parking on the street.)

Saturday, January 27, 2007

Ethical Theories: Philosophical, Secular, Religious

William Kimbrough

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

HSNM Book Club

Facilitator, Janet Johnson

January selection, *George Lakoff's Don't Think of an Elephant: Know your Values, Frame the Debate*

Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank, 2-4PM Sunday,
January 8th

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, January 6, 10:30 am

Does America Need Religion?

La Farge Branch, Santa Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

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.

held on the Roe v. Wade anniversary and is a dignified one-hour program of brief speeches by legislators and advocates. Depending on individual preferences, we either enjoy a Santa Fe lunch and attend a museum, or simply return home.

ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH -WHO DECIDES? is the title of a Hadassah community education forum to be held Sunday, January 7 from 2:00 to 4:30 pm. at the Jewish Community Center

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.

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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.

(5520 Wyoming,NE). Officials from UNM Medical School, Southwest Women's Law Center, Planned Parenthood, New Mexicans for Responsible Sexuality Education, and Danice Picraux (NM State Legislator) will discuss the rapid erosion of sexuality education, legal and medical aspects of reproductive freedom. Last year, about six of us attended the Hadassah forum at which Barry Lynn spoke and found the forum to be substantive and stimulating. We picked up a new member as well. As you may know, the religious right is challenging not only abortion but contraceptives (Comstock Act revisited?). Thus, this is critical for male and female humanists. For reservations, call Doris Taylor at 867-5043 by January 3, 2007 for \$15 reservations, \$10 for students. At the door prices are \$18.

From the Freedom From Religion Foundation: "Our challenge of a "faith pod" in a New Mexico State prison (*Grants, italics mine*) seeks to stop a 24/7 bible-based program intended to be 'franchised' nationwide."

If you become aware of church-state separation issues coming before the legislature, please call me. (see <http://legis.state.nm.us>).

Carolyn Glen Kaye 323-5288

Atheist Alliance

Margaret Downey, recently-elected president of Atheist Alliance International, spoke to some two dozen AA&F members and guests about AAI's wide range of activities and issues. Ms. Downey is the founder and president of the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia and the Atheist Anti-Discrimination Support Network. She's an excellent speaker and a warm person, and her experience and grasp of topics and events of concern to her audience was inspiring.

According to AAI's website, www.atheistalliance.org, AAI has 44 chapters in the US and ten in other countries, and is a charter member of the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) (www.secular.org).

SCA consists of seven national freethought organizations, and is represented in the nation's capitol by lobbyist Lori Lipman Brown, who will speak to UNM Humanists and HSNM members at the SUB on January (see article next page).

Check out the AAI website and learn about its 2007 Convention to be held in Washington, D.C. Sept. 17-30, with Dawkins and Dennett among the speakers. Learn that your purchase of books from Amazon.com through the AAI website will add funds to AAI's exchequer. You'll also find humor, book recommendations, links with like-minded groups, and info on AAI's member magazine, Secular Nation. And, don't miss the events calendar, which includes info on Darwin Day (Feb. 12, 2007) and National Day of Reason (May 3, 2007).

Janet Johnson

Secular Activist to Speak Here

The UNM Humanist Society and the Humanist Society of New Mexico are co-sponsoring a visit to Albuquerque and a talk at UNM by Lori Lipman Brown, Director of the Secular Coalition for America. This humanist activist will speak at 3:00pm on Tuesday, January 16 in the Student Union Building (just north of Popejoy Hall) upstairs in the Fiesta Room. There is an elevator in the SUB for your convenience, and there is parking in the building just east of Popejoy, which also has an elevator.

Mrs. Lipman Brown has been a Nevada State Senator, a lawyer, and an educator. She is now the first lobbyist in Congress specifically representing the interests of nontheistic Americans. The members of the Secular Coalition are the American Humanist Association, Atheist Alliance International, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Institute for Humanist Studies, Secular Student Alliance, Secular Web (Internet Infidels), and the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

If you would like to join us for a lunch or dinner with Lori, call Ron Herman at 292-4375, and he will provide you with details once arrangements are firm.

Ron Herman

Amador Book Bash a Success!

On Sunday afternoon, December 10, Amador Publishers, a local humanist publishing company, celebrated its 20th year of operation, and the inclusion of our new partner, Zelda Gordon, with a party at the Art Is OK Gallery and Sculpture Garden, on Menaul Blvd, next to Cost Plus. Amador is owned by Adela Amador and Harry Willson, members of HSNM.

Part of the celebration was the introduction of Harry's new book, *MYTH AND MORTALITY: TESTING THE STORIES*. Early indications are that this book could become an important addition to the literature of "death and dying," as well as an important humanist manifesto.

The party included readings from the new book, as

well as writings by Adela and Zelda, as well as voice and keyboard music by Frank Johnson, food, drink and lively conversation. The sponsors called the event a great success.

Biologist extends olive branch to evangelicals

By JEFF BARNARD

Associated Press Writer

Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson might normally arouse suspicion among evangelicals, given his faith in science over Scripture.

But in his latest book, "The Creation, An Appeal to Save Life on Earth," the two-time Pulitzer Prize winner extends an olive branch to Christian believers in hopes of saving the Earth from the biggest mass extinction since the dinosaurs.

Wilson's book is the latest attempt to bridge the gap between evolutionary science and a literal interpretation of the Bible, a rift dating back to Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection.

"Pastor, we need your help. The Creation — living Nature — is in deep trouble," Wilson writes in this letter to an imaginary Southern Baptist pastor. "You might well ask at this point, Why me? Because religion and science are the two most powerful forces in the world today."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a longtime reader of Wilson's work on sociobiology, and was initially impressed by Wilson's honesty in the book, but has since grown skeptical of Wilson's motives after not seeing any concrete contacts with evangelicals since the book came out in September — contacts Wilson says are coming.

"E.O. Wilson did not write that book to evangelicals," Mohler said from his office in Louisville, Ky. "He wrote it to his fellow naturalists as a way of encouraging them to find a public relations strategy to reach out to a broader constituency.

"I don't think humanity can bring the world to an end. The fundamental judgment we must fear is the judgment of the creator. When he comes in judgment, certain ecological sins will be among the sins for which he calls us to account. That is not in Scripture the pre-eminent issue. That is where we have to reject E.O. Wilson and his policy."

Indeed, many evangelical leaders have rejected environmental efforts, arguing that it's important to stay focused on core social issues such as stopping abortion and opposing gay marriage.

But among the evangelical wing that has become more concerned about environmental issues in recent years,

the reception has been enthusiastic. Calvin DeWitt, a professor of environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin and a founder of the Evangelical Environmental Network, said Wilson's book would restore the term "creation" to scientific discussion.

Richard Cizik, vice president of governmental affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, which represents 45,000 churches, gave a copy to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad last September, when Ahmadinejad addressed the United Nations.

"I think (Wilson) has been courageous to come forward, and we need to be equally courageous," said Cizik. Though the issue of protecting all life on Earth has been the most controversial he has faced, "We will not allow this to be ignored."

"From my vantage point, we are going to destroy half the species of plants and animals by the end of this century unless we can abate the destructive part of that activity," Wilson said from his home in Lexington, Mass.

"In the environmental community, we've been preaching to the choir on one side, and not presenting a very friendly face to the vast American religious audience on the other side. I thought it was just supremely logical that we could get together on middle ground, neutral ground."

The book appears to have found an audience. It made Amazon.com's top 10 lists in religion and science, and Weil reports it has gone to a fourth printing.

"For you, the glory of the unseen divinity; for me the glory of the universe revealed at last," Wilson writes. "For you, the belief in God made flesh to save mankind; for me the belief in Promethean fire seized to set men free."

Wilson's fears of an impending ecological disaster are no isolated view. For example, a 1998 survey of 400 scientists commissioned by New York's American Museum of Natural History found most were convinced that the sixth great extinction of plants and animals on Earth was under way.

The root cause is human overpopulation, which leads to habitat loss, climate change, invasive species, pollution and over-harvesting, Wilson writes.

Wilson argues the financial sacrifice to change the equation would not be great. Studies estimate a one-time payment of \$30 billion — a tenth of 1 percent of gross world product and 8 percent of the cost to date of the war in Iraq — would protect habitat for 70 percent of the world's plants and animals on land.

"I think Ed has really hit a very rich vein of thought with his book," said Peter Raven, president of the Missouri Botanical Garden, professor of botany at Washington University in St. Louis, and a science

adviser to the Vatican. "The notion was very well received by theologians and others at a meeting I just attended in Chicago."

That was the conference "Without Nature? A New Condition for Theology," held in October at University of Chicago Divinity School — a sign of how popular environmental issues have become.

"I think Ed has really hit a very rich vein of thought with his book," said Peter Raven, president of the Missouri Botanical Garden, professor of botany at Washington University in St. Louis, and a science adviser to the Vatican. "The notion was very well received by theologians and others at a meeting I just attended in Chicago."

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"With the political right, especially expressed through the present White House, generally indifferent to the contribution of science to key issues, maybe now there will be a potential for a friendlier relationship between religious conservatives and scientists," Wilson said.

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(slightly abridged version - Ed.)

Meetings of Local Groups

Friendly Philosophers

Tuesday, January 2

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Tuesday, January 16

Safari in Tanzania

Pictures and narration by

Doris Sahd and Virginia Malone

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

Atheists/Freethinkers Group

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

Meeting on first Sunday, 9am, Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Second meeting on third Tuesday at 7pm at a restaurant to be announced.