



Humanist Society of New Mexico



January 2008

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

President's Message

Our annual Winter Holiday Party was a great success thanks to the hospitality of Sam and Marilyn Brownstein. Marilyn cooked up a fabulous Mexican chicken dish and other good things. Adela Amador brought her truly ethnic posole and everyone else brought too much stuff for me to credit each and everyone. Conversation was lively and we topped off the evening with a silent auction of Marilyn's charming and quirky ceramic creations, with proceeds donated to the HSNM. Among the quirky things I chose was a ceramic matzoh that lacked the crunch but will make a great trivet. Other good news is that we have a new member, Mina Yamashita, who lives at the Summit and who has agreed to sponsor our meeting there. Mina, many thanks and welcome. So the first meeting each month will remain at the Summit.

That's it for now. I will be out of the country throughout January, so Joan and I wish each of our members a joyous New Year.

Fred March

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, January 5, 2008 10:30am

Strengthening Democracy with Instant Runoff Voting

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

Grants Humanists

Saturday, January 5th 10:00 to noon

The Deceptive Practices of Soothsayers and Mind Readers

Dr. Henry 'Hank' Bulger

Grants First Presbyterian Church

400 Nimitz Dr., Grants, NM

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, January 12, 2008

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Refreshments: Laverne Rison

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

Saturday, January 19, 2008

Topical Discussion

To be Announced

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 26, 2008

Formal Meeting

The Future of Our Regional Water Supply

Katherine Yuhas

Refreshments: TBD

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

Sunday, January 6, 2008

HSNM Book Club

2:00-4:00pm

The Kite Runner by K. Hosseini

Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank 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 (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

President: Frederic March

Vice President/Programs: Harry Willson

Treasurer: Ed Root

Secretary: John Waldrop

Membership: Frederic March

Public Information: Salem Smith

Director of Classes: Ron Herman

Social Activities:xxxxxxxxxx

Newsletter Editor: Randall Wall

Website: Phil Smith

Ex Officio: Jerry Wesner

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.

AMERICAN-BRITISH ETHNIC CLEANSING IN THE CHAGOS ISLAND

THE TRAGEDY OF THE DIEGO GARCIAN PEOPLE

In his acceptance speech for the 2005 Nobel Prize for Literature, British playwright Harold Pinter made a crucial observation: while the hideous crimes of Joseph Stalin's regime are very well known, those of American imperialism are virtually unknown in the West (and certainly, one might add, by many Americans). One heartbreaking example of this serious ignorance is America's (i.e., Washington's) and England's (i.e., London's) unknown crimes against the inhabitants of the tiny island of Diego Garcia, located in the middle of the Indian Ocean. We infrequently hear reports of American bombers taking off from the island to bomb democracy on Afghanistan and Iraq and virtually nothing about the American detainee-torture cell also located there.

But what and where is Diego Garcia island? Who lived there before it became an American base? How did the United States acquire and transform it into their fourth biggest expeditionary base in the world? Diego Garcia has been inhabited for well over two hundred years by Creoles who were brought by the French from Madagascar and Mozambique as slaves late in the 18th Century. The Chagos Islands, which include Diego Garcia, were later seized from France by England, the Chagossians thereby becoming British citizens entitled to all the rights accompanying that status. Nevertheless, in the late 1960s the Diego Garcians (pop. 2000) were forcibly removed from their island--which had been to them a very habitable paradise for generations--by the British to render a deal: London would lease the island to the United States (i.e., the Pentagon) for fifty years plus a 20-year automatic extension, in exchange for a \$14 million reduction for a Polaris nuclear submarine.

To push this "deal" through involved a number of extremely secretive, illegal, criminal and morally outrageous offenses against the Diego Garcians. Among others, it involved ignoring and obliterating the British-citizenship rights of this people by expelling them from Diego Garcia with a ruthlessness reminiscent of Nazi ethnic cleansing. The Diego Garcians, who loved their dogs dearly, helplessly beheld them either gassed or burned alive by American troops already ashore building

airstrips, rec centers, a swimming pool, a bar and barbecue facilities, etc., for themselves. The treatment accorded their dogs was apparently intended to suggest to these islanders that their fate would be similar to that of their dogs if they did not cooperate with the British. The Diego Garcians (or Chagossians) were moved by ship under conditions akin to those imposed on African slaves: men were corralled in the bridge, women and children stuck in the hold with a cargo of fertilizer (bird shit) for a bed, while horses, thanks to Sir Bruce Greatbatch, then Her Majesty's British Governor of the Seychelles, were provided the most comfortable quarters on the ship for a five-day sea journey of 2500 miles. According to one report, the horses were fed during the trip; the Diego Garcians were not.

The Chagos islanders were literally dumped in Mauritius, a British colony where they were unwanted and unemployable due to an already very excessive population and scarcity of work. Treated like tramps, they remain there to this day, living in abject misery and extreme need, some dying of wretched poverty or even of sadness for loss of their island home. When boldly confronting very high-placed officials in London and Washington, the well-informed Australian investigative journalist and documentary filmmaker John Pilger (to whose stunning recent book *Freedom Next Time: Resisting the Empire* this essay is much indebted) is told outrageous lie after lie, such as that the Chagossians have been paid for their removal, that they never lived in Diego Garcia, that the island was uninhabitable and thus unsafe for their return and habitation, that the Diego Garcians were temporary contract workers, that the conditions of the Cold War demanding a base surrounding the Soviet Union were more important than the fate of merely 2000 "natives" (that excuse from arrogant, authoritarian former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger) and so on. This monstrous, elaborate crime, covertly implemented by very high-ranking British and American statesmen against the Chagossians, was kept secret by Presidents Johnson and Nixon as well. Nor was either the British Parliament or Congress informed about the "deal."

And even after the British High Court in 2003 repudiated a 1965 ordinance to expel the people of Diego Garcia and the Chagos Islands, the latter, when a few of them returned to their native land with passports, were nevertheless told by a British sea patrol to leave the island instantly, while, as Pilger with sharp irony mentions, "A hundred yards along the beach, a colony of Yachties and sailors, most of them not British, played volleyball on the beach. No one disturbed them".

While these "Free-World" athletes were frolicking on the sand of one of the Chagos Islands,

Muslim detainees at Diego Garcia's Camp Justice, one of in-numerable American Black Cells strung throughout the world, were likely being administered various kinds of "justice" including waterboarding, a mode of Bush-approved agonizing "coercive interrogation" that could lead, and sometimes has led, to death by suffocation or drowning. Chagossian heaven had become Rumsfeldian hell, but at least the British government had gotten an American nuclear sub relatively cheap. Further, a beautiful island that had for many generations perfectly fitted the modest subsistence needs of an indigenous people, had, as one senior American official demanded, been "swept and sanitized" of an indigenous people to, as Pilger states, accommodate "four thousand service personnel and support contractors (Blackwater?), two of the largest bomber runways in the world, anchorages for thirty ships, two nuclear berths, space weapons tracking domes, shopping malls, nightclubs, a golf course, tennis courts, swimming pools and more"--and probably a brothel or two.

Meanwhile, the original Diego Garcia people continue to languish in Mauritius in their decades-long poverty and agony despite attempts on their part to secure legal justice (the British High Court again held—in 2006-- that they had a legal right of return to their land, but matters are still pending). Bereft of their stolen island and home, they are the victims of a crime against humanity that almost no one even knows about.

Donald Gutierrez

A HUMANIST BOOK FOR KIDS, AND GRANDKIDS!
"Highly recommended," by Bill & Shirley Little, and Harry & Adela Willson
THE KIDS' BOOK OF AWESOME STUFF, by Charlene Brotman.
\$15 each + \$3 S&H, from 22 Howard St., Newton, MA 02458 -- tel 617-332-5616
Amador Publishers has ordered a supply, also. 505-877-4395

***The Golden Compass* Author Avoids Atheist Labels** (slightly edited for length)

By Duncan Crary, HumanistNetworkNews.org

Philip Pullman, author of *The Golden Compass*, shied away from labeling himself an atheist last week while speaking on the *Humanist Network News* podcast.

Pullman's statement might surprise those who have listened to Catholic League President Bill Donohue's attacks on the author. In an Oct. 9 press release clamoring for a boycott of *The Golden Compass* movie, Donohue called Pullman a "militant English

atheist" whose books are "written to promote atheism."

During a Nov. 28 phone interview, however, Pullman told *Humanist Network News* (HNN): "Identifying oneself as anything, for a writer, for a novelist, is a perilous thing because then you find yourself acting as a spokesman for this cause or that cause. I have always tried to avoid saying 'I am an agnostic', 'I am an atheist', 'I am a humanist', 'I am an anything else' because that way you are limiting the way that your books are received."

"I'm sorry to be sort of reluctant to accept labels, but one of the reasons for this is that I don't like telling people how to read texts. This is the sin that the fundamentalists commit, in my view. They say, 'You must understand this book literally,'" Pullman told HNN, adding that he stopped believing religious claims more than 40 years ago.

"Philip Pullman, Sam Harris and Congressman Pete Stark have all questioned the limitations of labels like 'atheist' and 'humanist' during recent interviews on our podcast," said Matt Cherry, executive director of the Institute for Humanist Studies, who interviewed Pullman by phone. "They are looking for intelligent debate. But all too often, people want to reduce the debate to a simplistic shouting match. We hope that thoughtful religious believers and nonbelievers alike will not be afraid to follow the example set by Pullman and Harris and examine their own creed."

Pullman said that those who wish to boycott *The Golden Compass* movie are behaving exactly the way the religious villains behave in his books: "They are repressing arguments, they are repressing freedom of speech, they are trying to prevent people from understanding things; they are doing exactly what I describe in the book."

On the Oct. 24 *Humanist Network News* podcast, Sam Harris explained why he rejects the "atheist" and "humanist" labels: "What we're doing is falling into a trap, in some sense, set by religious people because atheism as a term is so ill-dignified in our culture. It has such bad PR that to answer to the name of atheist, in some sense, already wins the argument for your religious opponent."

Letter to the Editor

Re: Schank Review of Klein

My personal crap detector positively choked on the phrase "...impose draconian libertarian economic policies". That is one of those (liberal) politically correct phrases like "light-skinned, black person". Anyone who cannot see the utter nonsense in those phrases is beyond help.

Let me remind you that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were established and sanctioned by governments, and enjoy the support of government force (i.e. guns and other draconian measures) to function. Yes, I know these entities were established to "help" developing countries; but it did not take all that long for the unintended consequences to manifest themselves, did it? 99.9% of bureaucrats and politicians fail to anticipate and recognize the disastrous, unintended consequences of their bleeding heart, do-gooder actions.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are about as far as you can get from libertarian ideas.

Those individuals and groups who make micro-loans to poor people in developing countries, so that they can start small businesses, are operating according to libertarian principles. It is a real shame that the benefits of such micro-loans will never be experienced by poor people in the USA. Here, all legally enterprising poor people are stifled by licensing, permit and minimum wage requirements.

Elke M. Mikaelian
Roswell, NM

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, January 7, 2008

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, January 21, 2008

Terrorism

Bob Liebman

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, January 6, 2008

Part 2 of "A History of Disbelief" Sunday, 9am.,
Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202
Harvard SE

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

Social Meeting at 7pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316 The 25
Way, Near Jefferson and I-25