



Humanist Society of New Mexico



October 2009

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

Quote of the Month

The only truly new ideas [the right] has come up with in the last twenty years are (1) supply side economics, which is a way of redistributing the wealth upward toward those who already have more than they know what to do with, and (2) creationism, which is a parallel idea for redistributing ignorance out from its fundamentalist strongholds to those who know more than they need to.

Barbara Ehrenreich

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

Saturday, October 10th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Visitors please contact Fred March at 505-323-6784
for details or questions.

Refreshments: Leland Franks

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, October 17th

Topical Discussion

*Impermanence – Buddhism, Greek
Philosophy, etc.*

Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, October 24th

Speaker Meeting

Coming Out of the Original Closet

Lee Delaney

Humanist Minute: Paul Deal

Refreshments: Randall Wall

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

HSNM Family Co-op

Alternative Children's Sunday School

Call 505-292-4375 for meeting times

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, October 3rd, 10:30am

Individual Rights for Corporations

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

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

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

Frederic March: President

Bill Little: Vice President/Programs

Jerry Wesner: Past President

John Waldrop: Treasurer

Carolyn Kaye: Secretary

Ron Herman: Director of Classes

Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor

Janet Johnson: Book Club

Ted Cloak: Community Liaison

Phil Smith: Webmaster

Membership Director: Open

Social Coordinator: Open

Publicity Director: Open

Family Co-op: 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.

***Review of Dreams From My Father: A Story
of Race and Inheritance***

By Harry Willson

After too many rants revealing our "disappointment with Obama," it is time for a change of pace and a change of mood. I'm going to review Obama's first book, DREAMS FROM MY FATHER: A STORY OF RACE AND INHERITANCE. The book is much more important now than it was when it was first published in 1995.

Several of us, former colleagues on the faculty of an Albuquerque prep school, met for lunch. We hadn't seen each other in many years -- the others were traveling through Albuquerque, having moved away decades ago. We had all held onto our progressive views, with similar attitudes toward current national and world problems. We were all disappointed with the way things were going -- bank bailouts, health care, war. One of the visitors startled me, when she blurted out, "We don't deserve him. Obama is a better man than we could have hoped for."

This book gives us amazing insight into the man. What he wants, what he wants to accomplish, his normal way of thinking and reacting are all revealed. What's gone wrong is not his fault. The problem is too much ignorance, too much unawareness and meanness and cruelty and falsehood.

Never in our history have we had such an opportunity to know and understand the man who wields all that power. "Give him a chance," many wise persons have pleaded. The health care issue, war and plain old arithmetic [negative numbers!] may yet overwhelm us all, including Obama and all his hopes and all our hopes. But let's not let anyone get away with lying about what kind of man he is.

DREAMS FROM MY FATHER. I read it aloud because the print is too small for Adela. We were both able to savor the excellent writing. Don't speed-read this one, please! Reading this book will help anyone understand Obama's patience, his ability to hope, his coolness under mean and nasty fire, his good humor, his willingness to compromise. Impatient people, like me,

wonder what's with all the hesitancy to confront, to push, to insist, to prosecute. This fellow doesn't work that way. And his awareness of his blackness makes him wiser than we impetuous types would be in such a situation.

This book comes in three sections. The first section is called "Origins." His black African father is absent. But Barack has to decide who he is, that is, what he is. It isn't urgent in Hawaii, where a little brown boy can live with his white, that is, pink, mother and pink grandparents. It's even less of a problem in Indonesia, where he lived with his dark-skinned stepfather and white mother. But when he went to college in Southern California, a decision had to be made. He decided he was black. He could hardly do otherwise, given the color of his skin and the prevailing attitudes in this country. There is no slavery in his background, but nevertheless he joins the black movement.

The second section, called "Chicago," tells of his experiences in community organizing in that city. He worked mostly with black churches and black politicians. Results were meager and frustrating, but extremely satisfying when they turned up. Persistence, patience, courtesy, solidarity -- this is where he learned all about all that.

The third section takes place in Africa, where Barack meets all this stepmothers and half-siblings, who don't bother calling it "half" at all -- he is simply "brother" and "son." The reader may be confused a little at first, but it is worth persisting, to appreciate the richness of extended family life, and to see one more time the devastating effect Europeans have had on people of color.

There is nothing mysterious about Barack Obama. Family, race, career, accomplishments -- he's just like us, only clearer. There is insight in this book about being black. Here's one who decided to be black. But the important thing is getting clear. Accept the genes you have. Get past the bitterness. Be yourself, not someone else's appendage. And be thankful for allies, helpers, kin.

Check out Harry's "Rant of the Month" and the library of old rants at www.amadorbooks.com

Texas Holds 'Em: No Go to Christian Curriculum

By Ruth N. Geller
HumanistNetworkNews.org

September 2, 2009

The Texas public school curriculum will have less Christianity and more rationality - thanks, in part, to the efforts of the American Humanist Association (AHA) and other supporters of fair and balanced education.

On July 30, the American Humanist Association sent a letter to the Texas State Board of Education that expressed concern about the social studies standards being set for Texas public schools. The letter raised objections about the possibility that Texas would adopt "a new social studies curriculum that would present the United States as having biblical foundations and would minimize our nation's strong tradition of church and state..."

The letter urged the Board to provide a fair and balanced account of U.S. history, taking into consideration both the traditions of division between church and state and religious pluralism.

Bob Bhaerman, education coordinator of the Kochhar Humanist Education Center (a program of the AHA), composed the letter along with AHA Communications and Policy Manager Karen Frantz. Bhaerman is a former elementary school teacher and college professor of curriculum development.

As of Sept. 1, approximately 2,300 signatures were gathered on a petition created in conjunction with the AHA's letter, which called on the Texas State Board to keep the curriculum historically accurate.

The Texas State Board of Education, a body of 15, appointed six curriculum advisors to help develop textbook curriculum for history and social studies. Of the six curriculum experts, three can be called religious far right extremists. For example, the Rev. Peter Marshall, one of the appointees, states on his web site that, "(My) life and ministry is dedicated to helping to restore America to its Bible-based foundations through preaching, teaching, and writing on America's Christian heritage and on Christian discipleship and revival."

Another conservative curriculum advisor, Phillip Barton, believed - as did Rev. Marshall, - that neither labor leader Cesar Chavez or Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American to achieve that position, were appropriate role models for students.

Texas has the second-largest school system in the United States, and many textbooks that are published and used by students across the country are written to meet Texas guidelines. So a student reading a skewed-to-the-religious-right social studies textbook outside of Texas, could very well be reading something written in synch with the religious beliefs and world view of

Christian conservatives who influence the Texas Board.

"The separation of church and state is the issue. It's not a Christian nation and they're trying to make it sound like it is," said Bhaerman.

In late August, after the first draft of the revised curriculum became available to the public, the AHA responded again. However, this time the AHA called on supporters to send a letter to the State Board commending them for not including some of the feared religious and conservative content in its first draft.

The alert says the curriculum for the most part is "satisfactory," despite one section of the draft curriculum that requires students to be able to "identify conservative advocacy organizations and individuals, such as Newt Gingrich, Phyllis Schlafly, and the Moral Majority." As it stands now, students are not asked to identify equivalent liberal advocacy organizations, such as Planned Parenthood, the Sierra Club, etc. The AHA also asked supporters urge inclusion of such standards in the final curriculum.

While noting that it was "hard to say what prompted the review committee not to include the religiously-tinted standards some members of the school board and the advisory panel were calling for," Frantz said that the strong pressure from the AHA and the community for historical accuracy did make the board very aware that -" 'Hey, this is something that people care very strongly about and the backlash could be considerable if we don't get this right'. "

It appears that the letter and the petition, which garnered more signatures than any other petition in AHA history, has had an influence in Texas, and helped correct what would have been a very unbalanced view of history.

Letter to the Editor

Knowing who and what is disrupting climate is important for determining what can be done about it. But more important is getting some certainty and detail in predictable consequences. The most extreme effects are already seen at higher latitudes. People living close to sea level are seeing changes everywhere but in Alaska and presumably all around the Arctic thawing coastal soils are crumbling, forcing coastal villages to move to higher ground. For both practical and sentimental reasons I choose to focus my attention and donations on endangered species. Polar bears and Arctic seals are

directly threatened by the rapid loss of the ice pack that they depend on. The rapidly shrinking area of sea ice is a direct effect of a disrupted climate. But many places species are threatened by direct local impacts of human activities such as hunting to feed an exploding human population, deforestation, diversion of water, dumping of toxic chemicals, etc. In Jared Diamond's *Collapse* even his examples of societies successfully developing sustainable economic systems suggest a grim implication. They are all dependent on relatively stable, "robust", ecological systems.

Dale L. Berry

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, October 5th

Open Forum

Bring a Your Own Topic for General Discussion

Monday, October 19th

Vermin – Humanity as an Endangered Species

Harry Willson

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

The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico

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

Sunday, October 4th, 9am

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, October 20th

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, October 14th, 7pm

Shedding Some Light on Dark Matter

Dinesh Loomba

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402