



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



September 2008

[www.humanists.net/nm/](http://www.humanists.net/nm/) [fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com](mailto:fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com)

## HSNM Family Co-op

### Alternative Children's Sunday School

September 7<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>, 11:00 am

#### *Regular Meetings*

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

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## Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am

### *Empathy and Compassion*

Southside Branch Library  
6599 Jaguar Drive

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

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## Grants Humanists

Saturday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 to noon

### *Myth*

Henry Bulger

For more information contact Henry Bulger  
(505) 287-4465

NMSU, Grants Campus, Room 103

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

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**Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

### HSNM Book Club

2:00-4:00pm

*Walking the Tao: A Search for Understanding*  
*Guided by the Tao Te Ching*  
by Paul H. Deal

Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank NE

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**Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>**

### Informal Meeting

*General Discussion*

Refreshments: Leland Franks

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

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**Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>**

### Topical Discussion

*What is Beauty to You?*

Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE

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**Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>**

### Speaker Meeting

*Abstinence Comes to Albuquerque: The*  
*Struggle Continues*

Johnny Wilson

Refreshments: Salem Smith

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

**H**umanism 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.

## One Million Dollar Challenge Grant!

The Humanist Society of New Mexico wants to help fund the \$1,000,000 Louis P. Appignani challenge grant. Anonymous members have pledged to match funds donated to the Appignani challenge up to \$1,000. To do this, we will need to be informed of your donation to the

### 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](mailto:paragon2012@comcast.net)

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

AHA Endowment Fund in the name of The Louis P. Appignani challenge grant. So, simply send your tax-deductible contribution to the AHA Endowment fund at 1777 T Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009-7125 with the notation that it is for the Appignani challenge grant. Then, call or email Carolyn Glen Kaye (323-5288, [dbgenghis@aol.com](mailto:dbgenghis@aol.com)) who will track our donations and inform the Albuquerque donors to PAY UP! Telephone message preferred. Let's all get behind this unique opportunity to measurably advance humanism. It's the best legacy you could leave.

*Carolyn Glen Kaye*

## Dilawar's Thigh: Deep Inside the Dark Side

### Part I

In the documentary film "Taxi to the Dark Side," the audience beholds an American soldier well over 200 pounds time after time savagely kneeling the thigh of a small adult Afghan male named Dilawar. The kneeling assault had occurred off and on for five days. Dilawar, his arms strung to an overhead beam by handcuffs, was totally vulnerable. He died the next day, officially listed as a homicide, his death ascribed to a blood clot in his brain that apparently resulted from the continuous battering of his femoral artery.

Dilawar's fate embodied extreme punishment preceding judgment, an act all too typical in the justice accorded Arab and Muslim terrorist suspects. According to Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, (who appears in Taxi), of ninety-eight deaths in detention, twenty five were homicides. As it turned out, Dilawar was later declared innocent of the charge that he had been involved in a rocket attack on an American air base. But it was too late--he had been gradually beaten towards death over a period of five days. The several low-level soldiers immediately involved in Diliwar's brutalization either received bad discharges, prison sentences or other punishments.

What was obvious in the film is that these American soldiers are themselves victims of a policy and climate of extreme mistreatment of detainees going up the ranks to, and emanating from, generals and ultimately from Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney, legally backed by the Justice Department's

Office of Legal Counsel. Virtually all of these higher-ups, generals like Geoffrey D. Miller (the "Gitmoizer" of Abu Ghraib) and Ricardo S. Sanchez, got off scot-free. So of course did Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and George Bush.

Rumsfeld was finally removed from office, but not for imposing a regime of detainee torture. As for Cheney, he of course remains in office, doing his utmost to prevent light illuminating what his and Rumsfeld's directions have been perpetrating inside the darkness: Dilawar's thighs being so pulverized by heavy knee slam after knee slam, that, according to a medical evaluator, had Dilawar lived, amputation of both legs would have been necessary.

## Part II

But what kind of treatment should a detainee suspect of "high interest" receive, someone like Ibn Sheik al-Libi, said to be head of an al-Qaeda training camp? As one FBI agent put it (according to Alfred W. McCoy's A Question of Torture), they didn't beat the truth out of him but what they wanted to hear. The crucial consideration that the false information tortured out of al-Libi was used by Powell to formally justify starting the war harbored a felonious dishonesty that should have exposed not only Powell but the top Bush administrators to impeachment if not legal indictment.

Beneath the vast horror of the war against Iraq and the radical evil of the Bush administration in starting it resides the dreadful image of a powerful American-military knee slamming into a man's totally vulnerable thigh, the screams this and other forms of beating wrenched from Dilawar, and, as the movie narrates, the sadistic, crazed fury of the military guards continuing to beat Dilawar to silence his screams. I focus on Dilawar because particularizing his atrocious plight might aid in particularizing and dramatizing the plight of thousands like him in American detention globally. There are many thousands of Middle and Far East people in American military incarceration, and, according to reliable authorities, most of them are innocent. Nevertheless, those caught adjacent to the violent death of American soldiers, even if innocent, are likely to become convenient targets either of savage American military vindictiveness and retaliation or of local warlords selling captive "terrorists" to American authorities. And the result of such vindictiveness and greed, as a Marine Sergeant A. at Forwarding Base Mercury said in 2005, is that "...half of these guys get released because they didn't do nothing....But if he's a good guy, ... now he's a bad guy because of the way we treated him," The New York Review of Books, (11/3/05), a "treatment," according to this whistleblower

Sergeant, resulting in detainee broken bones from baseball bats wielded by FBM Marines. The unconscious implication of this attitude of course is that turning "good guys" into "bad guys" through extreme abuse turns the abusers into "bad guys" and the civilian authorities at the top into super "bad guys."

Meanwhile, many innocent Iraqis, Afghans and others languish in Abu Ghraib, Bagram, Guantanamo, Diego-Garcia's "Camp Justice" and elsewhere in undisclosed locations in the hands of black-masked Elite Forces and contract agents. All too many of the thousands of detainees, either being knee-whacked, chained naked and handcuffed for hours to floors or window-bars above their head or caged like animals, are also being psychologically tortured. Indeed, detainees claim that psychological torture is worse than physical torture. According to the lawyer Clive Stafford Smith cited in Jane Mayer's New Yorker article "The Black Sites" 4/30/07), his detainee/client, Binyam Mohamed, said that speakers "blared music into his cell while he was handcuffed...", which included "ear-splitting rap anthems" (54). Mohamed found this incessant horrible noise more intolerable than, according to Stephen Gray's Ghost Plane: The CIA Torture Program, experiencing several ordeals of razor cuts to his penis when later held in a Moroccan detention center.. Psychological torture has driven some detainees insane, as it can most people, and sometimes within 48 hours, which would explain why, again, according to Mohamed and other witnesses, some detainees have endlessly banged their heads against walls or have attempted suicide at Guantanamo and other sites.

And, as if all of this accumulative physical and psychological pain is not sufficiently formidable, these detainees are victims of what McCoy has meticulously shown to be CIA modes of the "clean" torture of sensory deprivation--their bodies and minds cut off from sound, sight and touch by ear pads, heavy goggles and thick gloves, further inhibited by being shackled at waist and ankles when taken out of cages or windowless isolation cells. Even if the "Gitmo" prisoners were, in Rumsfeld's infamous phrase, the "worst of the worst", this crazy-making treatment, according o American and international legal sanctions, itself constitutes an extreme violation of the treatment any imprisoned person should receive. But then who tells Bush's Washington what it can or cannot do to detainees even if not yet proven guilty, even if not tried for years--or forever? The Military Commissions Act of 2006 has allowed Commander-in-Chief Bush to do anything he wants to anyone, including any American. Now, however, with the Supreme Court's crucial decision on Guantanamo detainees having a legal right to habeas

corpus, King Bush can no longer decide everything.

### Part III

Dilawar is only one extreme example of the massive criminal abuse of Near and Far Eastern peoples being perpetrated primarily by the United States under the fallacious assumption that all these thousands of detained human beings have to be held to prevent them from fighting again. They have in effect been assumed by ethnic or religious identity or superficial, false accusation to be guilty before having been legally proven so--a gross violation of human rights in any society regarding itself as just or civilized. Thus, innumerable detainees--some just children-- have been wasting away for years in American torture prisons in gross violation of habeus corpus.

Supposedly the clinching argument for continuing incarceration of "War on Terror" detainees is the Ticking-Bomb" scenario. A captive could, allegedly, harbor the secret knowledge of an imminent bomb disaster, so torture to get at the truth. But according to scholars of torture like McCoy and Darius Rejali (author of the authoritative Torture and Democracy), such key individuals are very unlikely to get caught. And even if they were captured, torture would most likely produce false information, as the case of al-Libi proved catastrophically enough. Furthermore, most arrested detainees, according to experienced FBI agents, know nothing. Might they fight if released? Surely, that depends on the kind of treatment they experience during confinement, whether the reputed FBI mode of winning their confidence or the CIA mode of brutalizing alienation.

Meanwhile, where is the presence and pressure of American moral indignation? There certainly are voices and NGOs rising in opposition to Bush-Cheney's administrative savagery. For example, the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York tried to have Rumsfeld served with a warrant when he was in Paris in 2007. But the protest against torture has no swelling of societal condemnation against Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld being responsible for covert (and now overt) policies in which military and even contracted guards expose detainees naked to freezing cold and extreme heat, beat them like dogs, punch and kick their groin, force them to stand in place for twenty four hours or more until their feet and ankles are swollen to twice their natural size, thereby causing horrible pain and possible kidney failure--and so on and on.

### Part IV

Institutional torture of any individual should torture our conscience. Indifference to the ongoing or

excruciating torture of other human beings reduces our essential humanity and being. When our government tortures in our name, it criminalize everyone of us not only as citizens but as members of a nation traditionally famous for, and rather boastful about, its civil liberties and rule of law. Punishment before judgment, as in Dilawar's case, becomes punishment as illegal and criminal judgment. Dilawar's thigh, rightly understood, is our thigh.

Meanwhile, Diliwars's wife and pre-teen daughters, subsisting in an Afghan village, no longer have a husband and father. If nothing else, one hopes they never hear of a film called "Taxi to the Dark Side."

*Donald Gutierrez*

## A Country at War

The mainstream media reporter quoted the Republican spokesperson, without any corrective comment, "We are a nation at war." But this is not wartime. I remember wartime. I was a civilian, too young to be in the armed forces, a Boy Scout, in fact, but old enough to know what was going on. I remember it very well. One could say it poisoned childhood and adolescence.

My cousins in Scotland were being bombed, and we were not allowed to be unaware of that. Here it was an all-out effort on "the home front," as it was called. Everyone was involved. We were all at war. We knew who the enemy was -- Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo -- the Krauts, the Dagos and the Japs. There was very little opposition or protest, except from groups who for conscientious reasons opposed war itself. The vast majority thought the war was unavoidable, necessary and worthwhile. Congress had declared war, as per the Constitution. [Congress has not done so since.] The aim of the "war effort," as it was called, was "unconditional surrender."

Let me list several notable aspects of the war effort.

[1] Young boys, and not-so-young men, were all touched by the draft. Most young men went; many enlisted before the draft got to them. The physically unfit, classified 4-F, carried considerable stigma. Persons who qualified physically, but did not go, went into some war-related industry at some indispensable task, or were labeled "draft-dodgers" and were despised. I recall how yellow paint was splashed all over the neighbor's front stoop, on that account.

[2] Businesses retooled. In our town, the factory that made venetian blinds quit doing that and converted to making huge rolls of camouflage. The silk mill made

parachutes exclusively. Sylvania made radio tubes for military communication. The war took precedence over every other consideration, including profit.

[3] There was a 100% excess profits tax "No one is going to get rich off of our boys' dying," the president said, and that president was not a congenital liar. I suspect there was some cheating, but the intent was clear. No profiteering. Our overall aim was to win the war.

[4] There was government interference in every aspect of business. The O.P.A. fixed prices --"Office of Price Administration." What can we do about the price of gasoline? It was not a problem, during wartime. The prices of all items were fixed by the O.P.A.

[5] Key items were rationed. Coffee, sugar, tires, gasoline, meat, clothing, shoes -- we were all in this together, and we all shared the inconvenience. I had saved my money from working on the truck farm, and went downtown to buy a new bicycle. The attendant laughed. "Don't you know there's a war on, Kid?" I did know, but it hadn't become my war, quite, yet.

Contrast all that with the "war on terror." Who is the enemy? A tactic cannot be the enemy. Aerial strikes from hundreds of miles away, or from 30,000 feet in the air is terror, as much as suicide explosives under one's coat. Who is the enemy? Who is supposed to surrender unconditionally? This current "wartime president" is using the phrase "war on terror" to bamboozle people, including Congress, into allowing him powers not in the constitution. This so-called war is his excuse for major abuses of power, torture, spying and lying, for starters.

When asked what we civilians should do to help the "war effort," we were told to go shopping. What a contrast, between this and real war! When it really was a war it entailed rationing, excess profits tax, do without and sacrifice. This "war" is an excuse for theft and sadism and gross falsehood.

Congress needs to declare that we are NOT at war, and then enhance our participation in international policing, to find international criminals, like Osama bin Laden. And as policy, we need to quit bombing and door-breaking and indiscriminate shooting of people. The "war on terror" has been a deception from the beginning.

*Harry Willson*

## **Parenting Beyond Belief: Freethought**

Column by Dale McGowan

For HumanistNetworkNews.org

August 6, 2008

About two years ago, my daughter Erin ("the B"), then eight, went through a brief period of self-

recrimination, dissolving into tears at bedtime but unwilling to say why.

The morning after one such nighttime session, Erin and I were lying on the trampoline together, looking at the sky, and I asked if she would tell me what was troubling her. "Did you do something you feel bad about, or hurt somebody's feelings at school?" I asked. "There's always a way to fix that, you know."

She knitted her brow and turned away. "No. It isn't something I did."

"Something somebody else did? Did somebody hurt your feelings?"

"No." A long silence. I watched the clouds for awhile, knowing it would come.

At last she spoke. "It isn't anything I did. It's something...I *thought*."

I turned to look at her. She was crying again.

"Something you thought? What is it, B?"

"I don't want to say."

"That's OK. You don't have to say if you don't want. But what's the problem with thinking this thing?"

"It's more than one thing." She looked at me, her forehead in furrows. "It's...it's bad thoughts. I think about saying things or doing things that are bad. Like..."

I waited.

"Like bad words. That's one thing."

"You want to say bad words?"

"NO!" she said, horrified. "I don't at ALL! But I can't get my brain to stop thinking about this word I heard somebody say at school. It's a really nasty word and I don't like it. But it keeps popping into my brain, no matter what I do, and it makes me feel really, really bad!"

She cried harder, and I hugged her. "Listen to me, B. You are never bad just for thinking about something. Never."

"What? But...If it's bad to say a bad word, then it's

bad to think it!"

"But how can you decide whether it's bad if you don't even let yourself think it?"

She stopped crying in a single wet inhale, and furrowed her brow. "Then...It's OK to think bad things?"

"Yes. It is. It's fine. Erin, you can't stop your brain from thinking – especially a huge brain like yours. And you'll make yourself crazy if you even try."

"That's what I'm doing! I'm making myself crazy!"

"Well don't. Listen to me now." We went forehead to forehead. "It is never bad to think something. You have permission to think about everything in the world. What comes after thinking is deciding whether to keep that thought or to throw it away. That's called your judgment. A lot of times it's wrong to act on certain thoughts, but it is never, ever wrong to let yourself think them."

I pointed to her head. "That's your courtroom in there, and you're the judge."

The next morning she woke up excitedly and gave me a high-speed hug. Once she had permission to think the bad word, she said, it just went away. She was genuinely relieved.

Imagine if instead I had saddled her with traditional ideas of mind-policing, the insane practice of paralyzing guilt for what you cannot control – your very thoughts. Instead, I taught her what freethought really means.

In the year since that day, Erin has often mentioned that moment, sitting on the trampoline, as the single best thing I ever did for her. As with most such moments, I had no idea at the time that I was giving her anything beyond the moment itself. I just wanted her to stop crying, to stop beating up on herself. But in the process, it seems, I genuinely set her free.

## Letter to the Editor

The rest of the August newsletter contradicts Harry's "Old Rant" on resistance. Humanists in New Mexico are resisting the depressing status quo with a positive program. Constructive programs have always been the biggest threat to oppressive terrorist regimes. From Constantine's empire ("the first totalitarian state") to the present time optimistic builders have been slaughtered

as heretics, imprisoned as enemies of the state and prosecuted as subversives. The American struggle for independence succeeded because we inherited a positive program from Enlightenment England and the restoration of tyranny was disadvantaged by an ocean between the colonies and the tyrant. But the effort to restore tyranny continues under multiple labels: militarism, fascism, terrorism, national security, etc. The most effective resistance is, and always has been, a matter of keeping our "eyes on the prize" of an enlightened social order.

*Dale L. Berry, Grants, NM*

### **Friendly Philosophers**

**Monday, September 1<sup>st</sup>**

Meeting Cancelled

**Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup>**

*Creationism Vs. Naturalism: Classical Ideas about the Origin of Humans*

Atila Csanyi

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

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### **Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group**

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

**Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 9am**

Julia Sweeney's video titled "Why Bother with Science?" will be shown

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

**Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>**

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

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### **New Mexicans for Science and Reason**

**Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

*Albert Einstein's Cosmic Religion*

John Geohegan

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402