



# THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

[www.SBHumanists.org](http://www.SBHumanists.org)

NOVEMBER 2011

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## November Program

**Speaker: Sanjiv Bhattacharya**

**"Secrets & Wives: The Hidden World of Mormon Polygamy"**

Mormonism is much in the news these days. In order to learn more about this religion (or is it a cult?) Sanjiv Bhattacharya will discuss his book *Secrets & Wives* and his experiences investigating the world of Mormon polygamy, a world more disturbing and dramatic than you'll find on TV. He will discuss this personal journey, touching on his interactions with these groups including how some welcomed him while others hounded and followed him.

He'll also cover the surprising manifestations that Mormon fundamentalism take, and the eccentricity and extremism in that subculture. Polygamy will be discussed as it is covered in the media and how this has evolved over the years, culminating in the question - should polygamy be decriminalized? Expect a talk that is humorous, surprising and thought-provoking all at the same time.

In a 16 year career as an English journalist, Sanjiv Bhattacharya has been a features editor in London, a documentary filmmaker in Los Angeles, the editor of *GQ India* and, through it all, a freelance writer in both the UK and America.



A philosophy graduate from Cambridge, his work has focused on fringe groups and subcultures, sex, crime and entertainment. Turning to freelance writing and moving to Los Angeles in 2000, he became interested in polygamy, writing a piece which led to a documentary entitled *The Man With 80 Wives*. He then spent several months exploring the wider world of Mormon fundamentalism in the American West. The story of his travels became *Secrets & Wives: The Hidden World of Mormon Polygamy*, which came out in June on Soft Skull Press. He now lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two dogs.

**When:** Saturday, November 19th, 2011. Doors open at 2:30 pm; meeting starts 3pm.

**Where:** The Patio Room at Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road.

**Fee:** Optional donation \$2 for members and students, \$5 non-members.

**Dining:** [Del Pueblo Café](#) in the Magnolia Shopping Center. Email your reservations by November 15th to: [Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org](mailto:Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org)

**For More Info:** 769-HSSB (769-4772)

**Please park only in spaces behind the church marked "VDM"**

## Welcome, New Members!

Peter Price, Santa Barbara  
Professor Joe White, Lompoc

## HSSB Book Club

Due to unexpected illnesses and vacations the scheduled HSSB Book meetings for November and December have been cancelled. The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 18th, 2012 at **Dick Cousineau's** home at 1:30 PM. At this meeting a club revitalization and rejuvenation will be attempted. Please attend and bring your ideas to actualize this attempt. All those interested in joining the club are especially welcome. Thanks

## Humanists' Support Group Claudia Solé

I'm happy to report that Humanists are a happy and healthy lot. Still, we want to remind you that we are here for you whenever needed or wished for. Be well. The Care Committee. [solemio@verizon.net](mailto:solemio@verizon.net)

## From the President by Ron Kronenberg

At our October meeting I was delighted to see a beaming **Dick Cousineau** hold up a chart compiled by our membership chair **Mary Wilk** showing there are now 170 of us. If we were an athletic team, it would not be difficult to name our most valuable player and the one most responsible for those growing numbers. Keeping the Society running smoothly is of course a team effort but Dick has always been an important part of that team. Now as program chair he has engaged a series of speakers that we can all look forward to. Like so many of you, I was introduced to our Society by Dick.

Not only does **Ray Stone** publish our extremely successful *Secular Circular*, he also thinks out of the box and initiates programs like "Meeting of the Minds", which allowed Dick to perfect his Steve

Allen persona this summer. **Andrew Hankin** as Bertrand Russell, Ray as St. Augustine, **Roger Schlueter** as Thomas Jefferson, and director **Meredith McMinn** as Empress Theodora, rounded out the cast of our "Meeting of the Minds" program. It was one of the most delightful programs in the history of our Society. Fortunately, we will have another production this coming summer, in which you too can audition for a role.

I was thrilled last month to visit Hagia Sophia in Istanbul built during the reign of Empress Theodora. She did a great job and I was fortunate to have met her at our "Meeting of the Minds" program. Of course the Hagia Sophia has changed since her time; earthquakes, religious strife, fire and war have taken their toll. Currently, it is a museum as decreed by Ataturk in the 1920's when he formed Turkey into a secular nation. There is a great deal of apprehension in Turkey today as the secular society loses influence to those who want a more religious country.

All of the members of our board are doing a fine job of keeping our programs running smoothly. One purpose of this letter is to invite you to become part of the leadership. Our monthly combined dinner and board meeting is often fun and productive. A new board takes over each July, but it is not too early to think about become a board member.

This is my third year as president and my last. Our next president will come from within the society, we do not outsource. Personally I have found the president's job satisfying. It is however healthier for our society to bring new people into leadership roles. On that note, talk to me or to other board members, if you are interested in getting more involved. The election process is not too vigorous. We hold no debates or primaries.

Santa Barbara deserves, and we members enjoy, a dynamic Secular Humanist Society. New people in leadership are essential in keeping it dynamic. We offer on the job training and a secure retirement ☺. You are welcome to come to any board meeting and see firsthand how we function. Board meetings

are always on the Tuesday preceding our Saturday membership meetings. The next board meeting is November 15th, 5:30 p.m. at the home of Mary Wilk.

## "Ignorance and Stupidity" by Professor Joe White Jim Balter

Professor Joe White is the chairman of the Philosophy Department at SBCC ... and much more. He's the author of books and screenplays, recipient of numerous awards, and a warm and funny guy who has been lauded by many of his students as a superb teacher. Nearly eight years ago Joe spoke to our society about Happiness; now, as he nears completion of his book "A Primer On Ignorance and Stupidity", he took us on a philosophical romp through these attributes with the aim of showing us that we should be glad to have them.

Joe started thinking about ignorance and stupidity when he was working in erotetic logic: the logical analysis of questions. The "normal" logic we are familiar with is inferential logic, the sort that is aimed at providing justification for claims, but questions also bear analysis. A question implicitly defines a set of answers, and so we might be asking the wrong question ... for instance, "what sort of path do the planets take in the fixed heaven" -- it took the genius of Copernicus to realize that's the wrong question. And "why were we being punished by the black death" ... doesn't allow for a natural infectious agent as the answer. When Medtronic Corporation asked Joe to talk to researchers because problems arise from asking the wrong questions, he realized that, for erotetic logic to be helpful, we have to not only understand questions, but to question our questioning. But what if people don't ask questions?



**Professor Joe White**

Photo: Robert Bernstein

People don't want to be thought ignorant or, worse, stupid ... this seems hardwired, as being called stupid is an insult in every culture. Knowledge is power, lacking it makes us vulnerable; those with more knowledge have higher social status. We're an ultrasocial species, evolved through predator/prey relationships; we live close together and have complex divisions of labor. As a community we need a shared system of belief, but when another community has different beliefs, someone must be wrong. We don't want to be mistaken -- that elicits primitive fear -- so we eliminate the problem by converting the others ... or killing them.

The irony is that, because of ignorance and stupidity, we have civilization. We are each ignorant of all but a small fraction of human knowledge (which, if put on a stack of CDs, would stretch to the moon). And there are things each of us couldn't do even if we knew about them, like dancing, playing Hamlet, or the math of subatomic physics. Because of these individual limitations, we are woven together, yielding complex divisions of labor.

But ignorance is complex. Socrates viewed not knowing, but thinking one does, as toxic because we act on these false beliefs, while knowing that one *doesn't* know is good. But that's oversimplification because we're responsible for knowing things; the lines are blurred. And there are other forms of ignorance, e.g., obliviousness (being unaware of something altogether), unconscious cognition, as discussed in Malcolm Gladwell's "Blink" (Joe encouraged us to read it), and "bullshitting", filling in knowledge gaps by making stuff up.

Ignorance can be useful: justice should be blind to prejudicial details, privacy concerns mean that it's immoral to know some things (think of "peeping toms"; Joe raised the interesting question of whether an omniscient being is immoral), and there's junk knowledge like celebrity gossip that we're better off not knowing.

Since so much world conflict is based on "I'm right, you're wrong", the usefulness of ignorance led Joe to think of his project, "2020: A year without war", based on the idea that history can be changed by bringing 10% of the population on board. Fifteen people are six months into building an online international web community of at least 700 million people by the year 2020. Joe hopes that all of us will become members when it goes live in the near future.

Conquering their fear of appearing ignorant and stupid, many members engaged Joe in a lively Q&A! Go to [our website](#) to hear Joe's delightful talk and the ensuing exchange.

### **Board Launches Speaker Sponsor Program** **Richard Martin**

Bringing quality speakers to our monthly meetings has become increasingly more expensive in recent years. The HSSB Board has launched a new program and fund, the *Speaker Sponsor Program* to which members are invited to make tax deductible contributions. Contributions will be matched by HSSB funds to meet the increasing cost of travel, housing, meals, and speakers fees. By strengthening our speaker program, we hope to increase the attendance of members and visitors to our meetings, increase our membership, and make our programs more interesting and relevant to our community.

Letters describing the Speaker Sponsor Program were mailed on October 29th. If you did not receive the letter, please contact Richard Martin for a copy (see contact information at end of this newsletter).

### **Not so Famous Humanists and Others** **Dick Cousineau**

In this month's essay I have chosen not to highlight famous Humanists as I have done for the past year or so, but rather I've decided just to quote some

recent scholars, writers and "troubled" believers. I hope you find this interesting as well as thoughtful.

*Doctrine is but the skin of truth set up and stuffed* -  
Rev. Henry Ward Beecher

*For twenty years I prayed for freedom, but received no answer, so I prayed with my legs* -  
Frederick Douglass

*It is not strange that the descendents of those Pilgrim Fathers who crossed an ocean to preserve their own freedom of opinion have always proved themselves intolerant of the spiritual liberty of others.* - Robert E. Lee

*All fanaticism is a strategy to prevent doubt for becoming conscious* - H.A. Williams

*Why do born-again people so often make you wish they were never born in the first place?* -  
Herb Cain

*Praying is like a rocking chair, it'll give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere.* -  
Gypsy Rose Lee

*We will live to see the day when St. Patrick's Cathedral is a child-care center and the pope is no longer a disgrace to the dress he wears.* - Gloria Steinem

*Stuff is all there is, while any thing that is not stuff is nonsense.* - Antony Flew

*There is no end to rationales based on fears of pure possibilities* - Anon

*Impartiality in the face of atrocity can be indistinguishable from complicity.* Anon

*Many young people today are narcissists who wallow in their advanced technology at the expense of their humanity and social interactions.*  
- Anon

*Martyrdom is the only way a man can become famous without any ability.* - G.B. Shaw

*I can muster no sympathy whatever for the misguided piety that makes a national religion from a piece of the wall of Herod, and for its sake challenges the feelings of the local people.* - S. Freud

*A mystic is a person who is puzzled before the obvious, but understands the nonexistent.* - E. Hubbard

*The word religion has acquired a very bad name among those who really love truth, justice, and charity. It also exhales a musty odor of sanctimony and falsehood.* - L. Burbank

### **Ansel Adams, Photographer**

At your death you returned the aged form  
Nature had loaned you for a lifetime.  
You understood that they belonged to her --  
Those minerals and chemicals that made you,  
That formed in you a talent and a passion  
To be her chronicler and her defender.

Yosemite's light and shadow were  
Ephemeral things from which you fashioned  
glory,  
Caught the yearning of redwoods,  
Transfixed the force of waterfalls  
On the crest of a moment --  
Perceptions snapped and artfully transformed  
Into an act of worship.

Now you repay the gift of life  
With the gift of death,  
Completing the cycle,  
As leafmold engenders new leaves,  
Making space for new miracles.

What have we learned from your vision?  
That we are custodians of a fragile world,  
Magnificent but perishable,  
And only briefly entrusted to us.

~ Helen H. Gordon

**Helen Heightsman Gordon**, M.A., Ed. D., published five textbooks while a Professor of English at Bakersfield College, Bakersfield, California. Also many articles, opinion pieces, and humor, in scholarly journals, newspapers, and professional newsletters. Her poetry has been published in such diverse publications as *Amelia*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and *The Relief Society Magazine*. Her chapbooks of poetry and humor are available on the publisher's website, [www.anacade.biz](http://www.anacade.biz). (Helen is a member of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara.)

"Ansel Adams, Photographer" was published in *Above Us Only Sky, Atheist Poetry, Volume Two*, Incarnate Muse Press, 2008.

**Michelle Rhea**, Poetry Editor of the Secular Circular can be reached at [michellerhea@cox.net](mailto:michellerhea@cox.net).

## **Letter to Editor, Secular Circular**

### **Atheism vs. Agnosticism or What I Know and Do Not Know**

Although I was unable to attend Mr. Bugliosi's (September) presentation, I did read his book. And I am a little troubled that I bothered to do so. I thought it was neither well organized, nor well written. And ultimately did not make a very strong, much less clear, case for agnosticism.

Some very clever people (including Bertrand Russell and Richard Dawkins) have put forth arguments in favor of strict atheism. What they have not done is put forth any proof.

Modern science tells us that our universe started with a "big bang". It tells us that all matter was compressed into a ball, and some 13.7 billion years ago exploded. (And just recently we are being informed that some of that matter is still accelerating, rather than slowing, as logic or previous science would suggest. More to come on that, I hope?)

But what science cannot tell us is what triggered the explosion of that ball of compressed matter, nor who, or (if you prefer) what created it in the first (?) place.

As an agnostic, what I know is that – I do not know if there is some intelligence or power that exists beyond (or perhaps co-existent with) our known universe. And I know that neither you the atheist, nor you the theist, do not know either. If you did, you would be able to offer some substantial science to back your claim. And you haven't.

And I know one thing more. I know that I will continue to live my life in a manner that will, at least in some small way, enhance the ability of others to live in peace and without fear of hunger or disease. And I will do so without fear of some divine retribution, or belief in some measure of reward in some form of afterlife. And I will do so in a way that, I hope, does not offend either the devout believer or disbeliever. I will do so because it is the right thing to do, and allows me to sleep well.

Good night.

**Hugh Smart**

Editor

A recent [Mother Jones article](#) describes an Army Leadership Conference at West Point, at which the estimated 40,000 gays and lesbians in uniform were represented for the first time. Jason Torpy, an Iraq vet and president of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, pleaded the case for—among other things—adding atheist chaplains to the armed forces.

We should try to get Jason Torpy to come speak in Santa Barbara.

**Robert Egenolf**

### **Atheist Alliance of America goes International Roger Schlueter**

Our Society has long been an affiliate of Atheist

Alliance International (AAI), an organization that promotes “a world view based on the values of reason, empiricism and naturalism, and respects and protects the separation of religion and government.” While that organization certainly had an international component, it was predominantly a USA-based entity. Recognizing that reality, the organization recently split into two separate entities. AAI was reconstituted as a truly international body with headquarters in Ireland. The USA component was reconfigured as Atheist Alliance of America (AAoA, to distinguish it from the other AAAs). AAoA is now just one member of AAI (yes, the acronyms get a bit much, don't they).

Having just elected a new Board of Directors, AAoA is now in its early formative stages including setting goals and priorities for the new organization. Fortunately, our Society has a direct involvement in this process since I have been elected to that new Board of Directors. I have participated in the early evolution of AAoA and now serve on two Board subcommittees: the Policy Subcommittee which is chartered to establish operating procedures for the new group, and as Chair of the Affiliate Subcommittee which will implement outreach efforts to local groups such as our own Society.

Are you interested in how atheism/humanism plays out on the national stage? Are you frustrated or happy or perplexed by the (non)appearance of secularism in the national dialog? If so, don't hesitate to let me know of your opinions.

### **Founding Fathers' Views on Religion: Thomas Jefferson Ron Holzwarth**

Jefferson was born into the Anglican Church and remained a lifelong member, nominally. Yet he came to reject his church's superstitious dogmas, such as the belief that Jesus was divine. Jefferson concluded that Jesus was simply a human advocate of compassion and forgiveness – the finest such in history. Jefferson even compiled the moral maxims of Jesus into a compilation later called the “Jefferson Bible,” from which he omitted

what he called the “superstitions, fanaticisms and fabrications” that perverted the gospels.

Jefferson did not believe in miracles, saints, salvation, damnation, or angelic presences. He strongly opposed those who, like Patrick Henry, wanted to establish some form of theocratic Christian state (for Virginia and, later, the new nation). In fact, in 1798, Alexander Hamilton – himself a devout Episcopalian who tried to found a Christian Constitutional Society – accused Jefferson and other founders of “a conspiracy to establish atheism on the ruins of Christianity.” When Jefferson founded the University of Virginia, he again provoked attacks denouncing him as an “Infidel” for having insisted that no religious faith should be taught at the University as part of its course of instruction. Jefferson refused to issue proclamations of thanksgiving or prayer during his years in office.

As a Virginia legislator and governor, Jefferson led efforts to separate church and state. He succeeded in disestablishing his Anglican denomination as the official state church, and wrote the Virginia Act for Religious Freedom outlawing religious tests for citizens.

He called himself a Unitarian and was ranked among Deists, the Enlightenment-era thinkers who rejected mystical Christianity, but felt they perceived God in the vastness and intricacies of nature.

Jefferson made an immortal vow of “eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.” This is engraved upon his memorial in Washington.

### Jefferson Quotes

On the dogmas of religion, as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarreling, fighting, burning, and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own.

The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.

History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes.

Question with boldness even the existence of a God, because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

I have ever judged of the religion of others by their lives.... But this does not satisfy the priesthood. They must have a positive, a declared assent to all their interested absurdities. My opinion is that there would never have been an infidel, if there had never been a priest.

[Jesus'] principles were departed from by those who professed to be his special servants, and perverted into an engine for enslaving mankind and aggrandizing their oppressors in church and state. The purest system of morals ever before preached to man has been adulterated and sophisticated by artificial constructions into a mere contrivance to filch wealth and power to themselves.

References:

1. *Fighting Words: A Toolkit for Combating the Religious Right*, by Robin Morgan. 2006.
2. *2000 Years of Disbelief*, by James A. Haught, 1996.

### Web Site of The Month Roger Schlueter

For the last two months, the [Freethought Blogs](#) have been featured as a growing collection of

individual blogs (does a collection of blogs equal a clog?). The collection keeps on growing but this month only the new blogs will be noted:

[A Voice of Reason](#) by Al Stefanelli. Al's blog's full title, "A Voice of Reason in an unreasonable world," well describes his writings. Al is the Georgia State Director for American Atheists and a professional journalist and media commentator.

[En Tequila es Verdad](#) by Dana Hunter. The title in English is *Tequila is Truth* and it contains a bit of geology, a bit of science fiction and a bit of atheism, all served with a dash of ... spirits.

[Rock Beyond Belief](#) by Justin Griffith. Justin is the Military Director for American Atheists and provides another view of what it is like to be an atheist while serving in the Army.

[The Atheist Experience](#) is the record of a weekly live call-in television show sponsored by the Atheist Community of Austin. This blog features contributions from current and former hosts and co-hosts of the show.

[The Crommunist Manifesto](#) is anonymously posted by a scientist, musician, skeptic, and long-time observer of race and race issues. His focus is on bringing anti-racism into the fold of skeptical thought and promoting critical thinking about many topics that make us uncomfortable.

[Token Skeptic](#) by Kylie Sturgess. Subtitled, "Bending Misconceptions With Her Mind", Kylie's blog speaks to art, science, skepticism and "whatever-else-she-thinks-of-today". She is a prominent freethought activist in Australia.

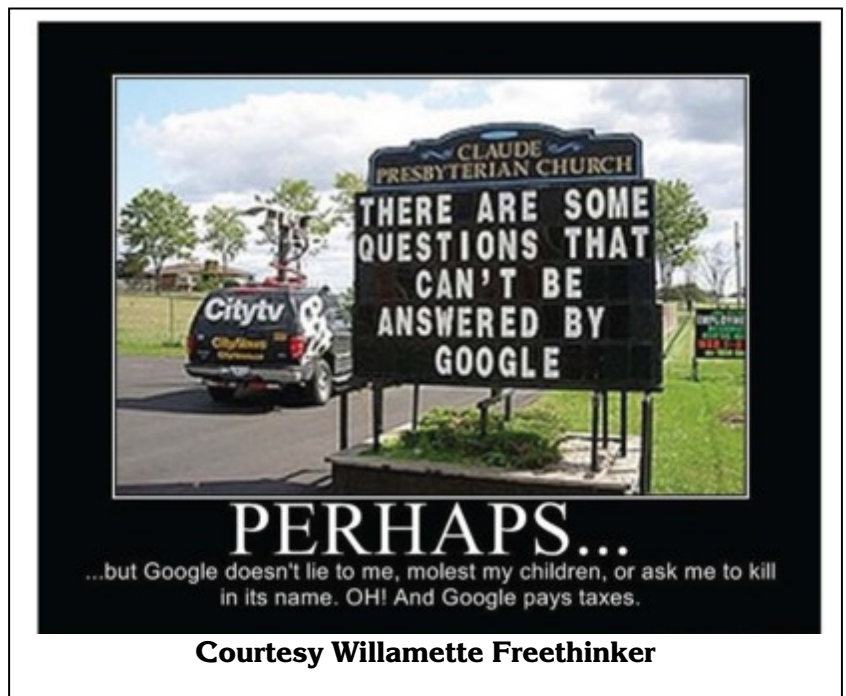
[What Would JT Do](#) by JT Eberhard. JT is a no-holds-barred atheist who is active in supporting secular student activism from the heart of Ohio. He covers politics, secularism and even calls a football game now and then.

**Last month** the new White House petition web site, [We the People](#), was included here as a Web

Site of the Month. At the time, I noted that some were cynical that this was just a ploy to display Obama's claimed emphasis on transparency but that I withheld judgment, hoping that it might really be a way to petition our government for "redress of grievances", a phrase directly from the First Amendment of the Constitution.

At the time, the most popular petition involved legalization of marijuana. Having gotten 74,169 signatures - far more than any other petition - the White House has responded as promised. That response is [here](#). In my opinion, it is a complete non-response in that it completely ignores the central issue that the petition raised. A complete takedown can be found [here](#).

I am now firmly in the cynic camp on this effort by the Obama Administration. Sigh, just one more instance in a very long line of disappointments.



#### Quote of the Month

Life in Lubbock taught me two things: One is that God loves you and you're going to burn in hell. The other is that sex is the most awful, filthy thing on earth and you should save it for someone you love. – Butch Hancock, country singer, (b. 1945)



## **Rising Atheism in America puts Religious Right on the Defensive'**

**Paul Harris**

**The Guardian(UK), Saturday 1 October 2011**

**Courtesy: Willamette Freethinker**

About 400 people are preparing to gather for a conference in Hartford, Connecticut, to promote the end of religion in the US and their vision of a secular future for the country.

Those travelling to the meeting will pass two huge roadside billboards displaying quotes from two of the country's most famous non-believers: Katharine Hepburn and Mark Twain. "Faith is believing what you know ain't so," reads the one featuring Twain. "I'm an atheist and that's it," says the one quoting Hepburn.

At the meeting, members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) will hear speakers celebrate successes they have had in removing religion from US public life and see awards being presented to noted secularist activists.

The US is increasingly portrayed as a hotbed of religious fervour. Yet in the homeland of ostentatiously religious politicians such as Michele Bachmann and Rick Perry, agnostics and atheists are actually part of one of the fastest-growing demographics in the US: the godless. Far from being in thrall to its religious leaders, the US is in fact becoming a more secular country, some experts say. "It has never been better to be a free-thinker or an agnostic in America," says Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-president of the FFRF.

The exact number of faithless is unclear. One study by the Pew Research Centre puts them at about 12% of the population, but another by the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College in Hartford puts that figure at around 20%.

Most experts agree that the number of secular Americans has probably doubled in the past three

decades – growing especially fast among the young. It is thought to be the fastest-growing major "religious" demographic in the country.

Professor Barry Kosmin of Trinity College, who conducts the national Religious Identification Survey, believes up to a quarter of young people in the US now have no specific faith, and scoffs at the idea, prevalent in so much US media and culture, that the country is highly religious or becoming more so. "The trending in American history is towards secularisation," Kosmin said.

He cites the example of the changing face of Sunday in the country. It was not too long ago when many sporting events were banned on Sundays and most shops were closed too. Now the opposite is largely true. As in Britain, Sunday in the US has become a normal shopping day for many, or a day to watch big football or baseball games. "The great secular holiday in America is Super Bowl Sunday. Even in the deep south, the biggest mega-church changes its schedule to suit the Super Bowl," Kosmin said.

He also pointed to social trends – greater divorce rates, gay marriage and much higher percentages of people having children out of wedlock – as other signs that the religious grip on society has loosened. There are other indications, too. For a long time studies have shown that about 40% of US adults attend a church service weekly. However, other studies that actually counted those at church – rather than just asking people if they went – have shown the true number to be about half to two-thirds of that figure.

More Americans are now choosing to get married or be buried without any form of religious ceremony. At universities, departments devoted to the study of secularism are starting to appear. Books by atheist authors are bestsellers. National groups, such as the Secular Coalition of America (SCA), have opened branches across the country.

Herb Silverman, president of the Washington-based SCA, lives in Charleston, South Carolina. His local secularist group was founded in 1994 with 10

people, but now has 150 members. "I've been living here in the buckle of the Bible belt since 1976 and things are getting a lot better," Silverman said.

Yet there is little doubt that religious groups still wield enormous influence in US politics and public life, especially through the rightwing of the Republican party. Groups such as Focus on the Family are well-funded and skilful lobbyists.

Kosmin said the attention paid by politicians and the media to religious groups was not necessarily a sign of strength. "When religion was doing well, it did not need to go into politics. Secularity of our population and culture is obviously growing and so religion is on the defensive," he said.

However, it is still a brave US politician who openly declares a lack of faith. So far just one member of Congress, Californian Democrat Pete Stark, has admitted that he does not believe in God. "Privately, we know that there are 27 other members of Congress that have no belief in God. But we don't 'out' people," said Silverman.

Others think that one day it will become politically mainstream to confess to a lack of faith as US political life lags behind the society that it represents. "Politicians have not yet caught up with the changing demographics of our society," said Gaylor.

### **Dawkins Event Banned in Michigan**

The Wyndgate Country Club in Rochester Hills, Michigan (outside of Detroit), cancelled an event with scientist and author Richard Dawkins after learning of Dawkins's views on religion. The event had been arranged by the Center for Inquiry–Michigan (CFI). The Wyndgate terminated the agreement after the owner saw an October 5th interview with Dawkins on The O'Reilly Factor in which Dawkins discussed his new book, *The Magic of Reality: How We Know What's Really True*.

In a phone call to CFI–Michigan Assistant Director Jennifer Beahan, The Wyndgate's representative

explained that the owner did not wish to associate with individuals such as Dawkins, or his philosophies.

Although privately owned, The Wyndgate facilities are open to the public for special events and occasions. According to Title II of the Federal Civil Rights Law of 1964, "open to the public" means "all persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation, as defined in this section, without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin."

"It's important to understand that discrimination based on a person's religion—or lack thereof—is legally equivalent to discriminating against a person because of his or her race," said Jeff Seaver, executive director of CFI–Michigan. "This action by The Wyndgate illustrates the kind of bias and bigotry that nonbelievers encounter all the time. It's exactly why organizations like CFI and the Richard Dawkins Foundation are needed: to help end the stigma attached to being a nonbeliever."

### **Non-HSSB Events of Interest** **Diane Krohn**

#### **Upcoming Events in California:**

- November 6: Dr. Daniel Kahneman: *Thinking: Fast and Slow*. CalTech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- November 6: Dr. Brian Fagan: *Elixir: What the History of Water and Humans Tells Us About California's Future Water Crisis*. CFI West – Los Angeles.  
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#linden>
- November 13: Dr. Robert Trivers: *The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life*. CalTech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>

- November 20: Sam Brower: *Prophet's Prey: An Inside Look at Warren Jeffs and the Fundamentalist Mormon Church*. CFI West – Los Angeles and Costa Mesa.  
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#linden>
- November 20: Dr. Michael Gazzaniga: *Who's In Charge? Free Will and the Science of the Brain*. CalTech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- December 4: Edward J. Larson: *Re-Inventing Scott: Science in the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration*. CFI West – Los Angeles and Costa Mesa.  
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#brower>
- December 11: Margaret Wertheim: *Physics on the Fringe: Smoke Rings, Circlons, and Alternative Theories of Everything*. CalTech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>

### Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- November 6: Carl Sagan Day, Davie, FL, Broward College Central Campus. A weekend of various activities that celebrates the work of astronomer and science advocate Carl Sagan.  
<http://carlsaganday.com/>
- November 19-20: Scepticon IV, Springfield, MO. Speakers include Dan Barker, Hemant Mehta, Darrel Ray, David Silverman, PZ Myers, and many others.  
<http://scepticon.org/>
- December 16-18: Florida Regional Atheists Meet (RAM), Fort Lauderdale, FL. Speakers include James Randi, Mr. Deity, David Silverman, Sean Faircloth, and many others.  
<http://freethoughtflorida.com/wp/archives/821>

### HSSB Contact Information

#### Officers:

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#### Board Members at Large:

Wayne Beckman	Claudia Solé
Dick Cousineau	Nancy Wahl
Roger Schlueter	Mary Wilk

#### Newsletter Editor:

Ray Stone

<mailto:Editor@santabarbarahumanists.org>

#### Newsletter Deadline:

Deadline for submissions to the Secular Circular is Midnight, the last day of each month.

HSSB meetings are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 2:30 pm, usually in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Rd., Santa Barbara. More information is available at our web site:

[www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org](http://www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org) or by contacting any board member. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis.

To send a copy of this newsletter to someone interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or [mwilk@cox.net](mailto:mwilk@cox.net). Newsletters are also available at the above web address.

Annual HSSB membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) to become a sponsor. One may subscribe to our newsletter only for an annual fee of \$20.

Link to HSSB Photos:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/Humanist.Society.of.Santa.Barbara>

HSSB Phone: 769-HSSB

## HSSB Calendar

**Saturday, November 19. Monthly meeting. Sanjiv Bhattacharya.** Speaker: Sanjiv Bhattacharya "Secrets & Wives: The Hidden World of Mormon Polygamy". Patio Room, Vista Del Monte, 2:30pm.

**Sunday, November 27** (and the last Sunday of every month), 10am, **Secular Sunday Brunch** for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion. No cover charge; membership not required. Pay only for your food, drink and tips. Cody's Cafe, 4898 Hollister Ave. in the Turnpike Center, Goleta in the room to the right as you enter the restaurant. For information phone Board member, Mary Wilk at 805-967-3045.

**Saturday, December 17.** Winter Solstice Party, at Valle Verde.

**Wednesday, January 18,** at 1:30 p.m. **Book Club** reorganizational meeting at the home of Dick Cousineau, 505 Alegria (off Las Positas).

**Saturday, January 21. Monthly meeting. Barney Brantingham.**

**Saturday, Feb 18. Monthly meeting. Tom Mates. "Judeo-Islamic America"**

**Saturday, Mar. 17. Monthly meeting. Michael Newdow. "My Day at the Supreme Court"**



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