



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

JUNE 2015

Summer Solstice Party! June 21st, 2015



Date and Time: Sunday, June 21st, 1:00 p.m.

Location: Stow Grove Park, Area 3, La Patera Rd., Goleta

Cost: \$10.00 per person



Picnic is catered by Woody's BBQ
Menu: BBQ chicken, Tri tip, salad, beans, bread
Soft drinks, beer, and wine

Great food, fun games and scintillating conversation.

Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share.
You might want to bring a comfy chair and a hat.

Please RSVP to Anne Rojas at annehrojas@gmail.com or call 564-6086.
If you can help set up, serve or clean up, please let Anne know when you RSVP.

Activities

Judy Fontana

Annual Summer Solstice Picnic: Sunday, June 21st at 1 p.m., Stow Grove Park, Goleta. This year's picnic will cost \$10 and will be catered by Woody's. See page 1 of this newsletter for details.

Welcome to Our New Members!

Susan Ryan, Santa Barbara

President's Column: No Offense Intended

Colin Gordon

"Everyone was just shocked. We looked around to reassure each other we had just seen the same thing. Did it really happen?" "Offensive, absolutely." "Incredibly insensitive." These are some of the comments on an incident at a recent Democratic convention (see *The Santa Barbara News-Press*, 5/18/2015). What awful obscenity could have been uttered to cause such shock and awe? Reading on, we find that a video of the incident on social media shows candidate Sanchez tapping her hand over her open mouth while making a whooping sound, in making a joke about Indian-Americans and Native Americans. It lasted for a whole second and included approximately three taps. Are we perhaps getting a little over-sensitive?

Warning! We are treading on dangerous ground here, picking our way through a perilous minefield of political correctness with trip wires and the occasional IED set by an activist who really wants to get his point across. The views expressed do not represent those of the Humanist Society - so now I am free to invoke my first-amendment rights. Just who, I wonder was so offended? Often it seems that the media are the first to reel back in horror when such a sin is committed, followed closely

by a legion of activists who feel the pain for everyone else, even though they are not directly affected. The actual offendees often have little to say in the matter. Not many American Indians (oops! Native Americans) rushed to man the barricades. It is too easy to give offense, often without even realizing it. Almost any allusion to matters affecting a minority can be cause for complaint. There is a move to remove all tomahawks, headdresses and other Native American regalia from the logos of football teams; but I am glad to see that our smokeshop Indian remains alive and well in front of Santa Barbara Cigar and Tobacco on State Street.

We have seen words that have been deemed offensive replaced by more benign words, which sometimes in turn become offensive, as though the subject's offensiveness rubs off on the word itself. Retarded is now mentally challenged, gay marriage is marriage equality, mongoloid is Down's syndrome. The great majority of us are well-meaning people who wish nothing but good for all, so if a word change makes someone happy, we are all for it. Yet the substance itself does not change, only the words that represent it. Fortunately, the words themselves still retain their original untainted meanings; if a driver in Ulaanbataar applies his brakes, of course he becomes a retarded Mongoloid.

The word homosexual, while perfectly descriptive, went the way of offensive words and was replaced by Gay and Lesbian, two groups which, we all agree, have now taken their rightful places in society. Two more groups were soon added, Bisexual and Transgender, which involve knowledge of anatomy which I do not possess. So then there was LGBT. But it did not stop there. Now I have it on good authority that counselors at a local college have to respect the sensitivities of students in any of the LGBTQIAAP+ categories. Of course you know that the others are Queer, Questioning, Intersexed, Asexual,

Allies, and Pansexual. Before we drown in this alphabet soup, we note with relief that the list is followed by “plus” which stands for everything else. The tactics of the LG community in furthering their cause has to be admired for its organization and its ultimate effectiveness in swinging popular support behind them. There are lessons to be learned here for our Humanist minority.

Support for marriage equality is gathering momentum nation-wide. However the timing may be a little off. U.S. marriage rates have reached historic lows in recent years. Since 1970, when about 74 marriages happened annually for every 1,000 unmarried women, the marriage rate had declined by nearly 60% to 31 per 1,000 by 2012 (National Center for Family and Marriage Research, Bowling Green State University). So the LG’s have signed on to an institution that is in steep decline. They have hitched their wagon to a falling star, or, deftly switching metaphors, have booked passage on the Titanic.

Is there a moral or a lesson in these considerations? Probably not, they are just the ramblings of a senior citizen (not an old person, please) who finds acronyms unsettling and change hard to handle. Maybe it’s just TMI.



Letters to the Editor

Re: What Would a Secular Foreign Policy Look Like:

I would like to add a comment concerning the SC article “What would a secular foreign policy look like?” Secularism is not enough of a criteria to formulate foreign policy. We are Secular Humanists so we temper our secularism with a standard of principles. Anti-religion is not the only standard to consider in our decisions. We need a secular humanist foreign policy not just a secular one.

-Ron Kronenberg

HSSB Board Elections

All HSSB members should have received election ballots in the mail. Please remember to vote. All ballots must be received by June 10th to be counted. Contact Colin Gordon or Roger Schlueter if you have questions about the election or ballots.

 “Religion has actually convinced people that there’s an invisible man living in the sky who watches everything you do, every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a special list of ten things he does not want you to do. And if you do any of these ten things, he has a special place, full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish, where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry forever and ever 'til the end of time!

But He loves you. He loves you, and He needs money! He always needs money! He's all-powerful, all-perfect, all-knowing, and all-wise, somehow just can't handle money!”

— George Carlin

May Speakers

Tony Ortega and Paulette Cooper: The Unbreakable Miss Lovely: How the Church of Scientology Tried to Destroy Paulette Cooper Robert Bernstein

By my estimate of 90 attendees, this was a record crowd for an HSSB event at Vista del Monte. Many came because of Tony Ortega's blog.

Paulette Cooper wanted to be a writer from age eight. At age 15 she read Martin Gardner's *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* and was intrigued by the Scientology section. Gardner wrote about it the year it came out as *Dianetics*.

Many years later James Randi told her how much Gardner admired her courage. She had no idea how much courage she would need when it all started.

Paulette was never a member of Scientology, but attended one of their main "Orgs" (training classes) to see what was going on. She chose the Hotel Martinique Org in Manhattan. Many famous people came there and it seemed to be a major center to check out. She had been working on Madison Avenue in advertising, so she chose the name Paula Madison as her alias.

The "class" involved "bull-baiting." It consisted of people face-to-face shouting and trying to get each other to react. They stared into each others' eyes, daring not to blink. It went on for hours. She was hallucinating, which was the point.

Scientology founder L Ron Hubbard claimed to have discovered the nature of the human mind and this was a way to get to it. The idea was to focus on some weak spot. In her case, the men described terrible perversions they would do to her. She was used to obscene phone calls, just never in person.

Then one said, "We think you are a writer." She wondered if it was real. She imagined kissing him. Just revolting enough to distract her, but not enough to "flunk."

She managed to lift several documents in their offices, including a list of some students. Eventually she was called to their "ethics office." She said OK, but first she had to go to the bathroom. They refused. She threatened to pee on the floor, so they let her go. She managed to escape from the bathroom and never went back.



Our May speakers Tony Ortega and Paulette Cooper. Photo by Robert Bernstein.

In 1969 she published an article. It came out in England. She only found out because she started getting death threats.

The Guardians Office of Scientology formed in 1966 to harass anyone they saw as a threat. Paulette received their full force. The scale of that force was so enormous, some of it was only realized when Tony Ortega researched her case for his book. Ortega, a former editor of the *Village Voice*, is a formidable researcher, having reported on the brutal Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Arizona.

In 1972, two half-illiterate letters came out threatening to bomb the Scientology offices. They blamed Paulette. They found her

fingerprint on one letter and an expert testified that it had been typed on her typewriter.

Paulette was indicted in May 1973, with an October trial date. She faced 15 years in jail. She considered suicide. The public did not know what Scientology was capable of, so her credibility was in question. She was single and attractive, traveling the world.

Paulette's parents had been killed at Auschwitz and she was later adopted. She was horrified that her adoptive parents would have to deal with her trial. And it would be the end of her career.

She had saved Valiums and one night she started taking them and getting drunk. A friend from her college days at Brandeis called by chance and talked her through it.

One mystery: How did Scientology have so much detailed information on her? It turned out she had a roommate, Jerry Levin, for four months, who turned out to be a Scientology spy!

He would relay to other Scientology agents what she would be wearing that day so they could follow her. He had access to all of her things. So, who was he? It was determined that he was also called Don Alverzo. But who was he? Even the FBI did not know. It took Tony's diligent research to find out his real identity: a former helicopter pilot in Vietnam.

He used to go on the roof of her building to relay information back to Scientology. He would also try to get Paulette to come up on the roof, but she had a moderate fear of heights. It was 33 stories up and he would try to get her to go out on a ledge. He would dance around on it. She realized how easy it would have been to have her "accidentally" fall. That did give her a real fear of heights when she realized this later.

She managed to get out of the prosecution in 1975. She took truth serum and gathered evidence.

Years later, the Scientology documents about their framing of her were found. It was called "Operation Dynamite." In 1976, Scientologists tried again, having someone make threats in her name.

They had found her diary from age 17 where she wrote, "I hate my parents." They copied that and gave it to [American writer] Len Zinberg to put on her father's office desk. Zinberg was not supposed to look, but he did. He is one of the few who later apologized to Paulette.

Paulette published *Scandal of Scientology*. One Scientologist's job was to steal all the copies from the libraries in Michigan and elsewhere.

During questions, she explained that everyone who joins Scientology is "audited." This includes recorded "confessions." Scientology does not need to blackmail anyone. The possibility of blackmail is enough to keep people quiet, even if they leave.

Scientology claims membership as high as ten million. She claims their peak was around 100,000 worldwide in 1990. It is now 40,000.

Scientology does have an appeal that older religions lack. It is not about a larger than life figure of thousands of years ago. It is all about you.

In 1985, it was finally over for Paulette. She settled with them. They claimed they had changed. But she continued to hear about others. But there were also others to carry on the story.

Thanks to her courage, others could now speak out, too.

Scientists: Earth Endangered by New Strain of Fact-Resistant Humans

Andy Borowitz, *The New Yorker* (May 17, 2015)

Note to our readers: *The article below is satire. Andy Borowitz is an American comedian and New York Times bestselling author who satirizes the news for his column, "The Borowitz Report."*

Scientists have discovered a powerful new strain of fact-resistant humans who are threatening the ability of Earth to sustain life, a sobering new study reports.

The research, conducted by the University of Minnesota, identifies a virulent strain of humans who are virtually immune to any form of verifiable knowledge, leaving scientists at a loss as to how to combat them.

"These humans appear to have all the faculties necessary to receive and process information," Davis Logsdon, one of the scientists who contributed to the study, said. "And yet, somehow, they have developed defenses that, for all intents and purposes, have rendered those faculties totally inactive."

More worryingly, Logsdon said, "As facts have multiplied, their defenses against those facts have only grown more powerful."

While scientists have no clear understanding of the mechanisms that prevent the fact-resistant humans from absorbing data, they theorize that the strain may have developed the ability to intercept and discard information en route from the auditory nerve to the brain. "The normal functions of human consciousness have been completely nullified," Logsdon said.

While reaffirming the gloomy assessments of the study, Logsdon held out hope that the threat of fact-resistant humans could be

mitigated in the future. "Our research is very preliminary, but it's possible that they will become more receptive to facts once they are in an environment without food, water, or oxygen," he said.

"I think it's much more interesting to live not knowing than to have answers which might be wrong. I have approximate answers and possible beliefs and different degrees of uncertainty about different things, but I am not absolutely sure of anything and there are many things I don't know anything about, such as whether it means anything to ask why we're here. I don't have to know an answer. I don't feel frightened not knowing things, by being lost in a mysterious universe without any purpose, which is the way it really is as far as I can tell."

— Richard P. Feynman



A Theology of Atheism Molly Worthen

(Excerpted from The New York Times, 5-31-15)

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — One Sunday last month, I walked into an auditorium past greeters and a table loaded with coffee, fruit and cookies. Onstage two young men tuned their guitars. A blank screen hung down, a silent signal that not knowing the words would be no excuse for not singing along. But this was no typical church service.

I'd come for Sunday Assembly, a godless alternative to church founded in London in 2013. A cheerful woman with a name tag stood and promised a crowd of about 40 people "all the fun parts of church but without any religion, and with fun pop songs." The band led us in secular "hymns" like "Walking on Sunshine" and "Lean on Me." The day's guest preacher, a Ph.D. candidate from Duke, described his research on bonobos and the biological roots of our species' instinct to help one another — the "seeds of a nature that is good," he told us.

Is this what secular humanism — the naturalist worldview that many nonbelievers embrace and religious conservatives fear — looks like in practice? In one sense, secular humanism is a style of fellowship intended to fill the church-shaped void, but it is also a strand of the liberal intellectual tradition that attempts to answer the canard that godlessness means immorality. It's no secret that nonbelievers still grapple with social stigma. Last year, more than half of Americans told pollsters that they would be less likely to support a presidential candidate if they learned he was an atheist. The nonbelievers I met were eager to challenge the stereotype of atheists as ill-tempered nihilists whose only sacred tradition is picketing the City Hall Christmas tree.

How will these nonbelievers do that? By focusing on a "100 percent celebration of life" and being "radically inclusive," according to Sunday Assembly's non-creedal creed. They'd rather befriend a Christian than argue about faith and reason. "When it comes to daily life, ideas are not the thing that matters; human connection matters," said Nichelle Reed, who helped found Chapel Hill's Sunday Assembly...

Read the rest of the article here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/31/opinion/sunday/molly-worthen-wanted-a-theology-of-atheism.html? r=1>

Letter from FFRF

Ray Stone received this letter from the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), regarding an article in the AARP magazine.

April 17, 2015

Ray,

The February/March 2015 issue of AARP magazine included an article entitled, "The Paradox of Prayer: A Pilgrimage," by Bill Newcott, which explores prayer across cultures and generations. Its inclusion in the magazine prompted Editor-In-Chief Robert Love to comment in the same issue, "I learned that prayer is a primal human instinct that crosses faiths and cultures, and extends even to those who don't believe in a personal God." He also claimed, "We older Americans are a prayerful people."

Love is mistaken. Prayer is not a primal instinct. Reliance on prayer is taught. Without learning religion, people naturally depend on themselves and each other instead of a higher power. Additionally, people who don't believe in a god also know that nothing fails like prayer. To insist that prayer extends to those who don't believe in a personal God is incorrect. It is disrespectful, if not absurd, to

claim nonbelievers find meaning in prayer.

Several FFRF members who are subscribers to AARP magazine were irritated by the implication that they, too, pray. Sue, a member from Wisconsin, wrote to Love to say that she found his comments “offensive,” stating, “it is bothersome to us nonbelievers when someone lumps everyone together,” referring to his comment that older Americans are “prayerful.” Michael, a member from New Jersey, wrote the magazine to express his frustration at the article's inclusion in the first place. “If I wish to read proselytizing messages and articles, there are dozens if not hundreds of magazines, periodicals, and faith-based organizations of which I can avail myself.”

To balance its coverage of religious issues, AARP magazine should consider reporting on the growing number of people who, when asked their religious preference, answer “none.” These “nones” make up 21% of Americans according to a [2014 General Social Survey](#), which is on the rise from previous years. There are almost as many “nones” as there are Catholics (24%) in the United States, which is something the editor-in-chief at AARP Magazine should consider when selecting content.

Scott Walker Has No Backbone. Who Has the Courage to Accept Evolution?

David S. Wilson and Eric M. Johnson

(Excerpted from This View of Life)

A new invertebrate life form has been discovered—politicians who have no backbone when it comes to what they say about evolution.

They are a secretive breed, slithering away at the merest hint of the E-word, but one of them named Scott Walker was captured by a

reporter on a trip to the UK. When asked whether he is comfortable with the idea of evolution by natural selection and whether he believes in it personally, he replied: “That’s a question a politician shouldn’t be involved in one way or another.” Later he tweeted “Both science and my faith dictate my belief that we are created by God. I believe that faith & science are compatible & go hand in hand.” Still no answer to the question about evolution. On that topic, Scott Walker has no more backbone than a sea cucumber.

Mike Huckabee, another Republican presidential hopeful, has more backbone than Walker on the subject of evolution. He was bold enough to say during the 2008 presidential campaign that evolution is just a theory that should be taught alongside creationism in schools. Then he added: “None of us are running in order to be an eighth grade science teacher. We’re running to be president.”

Do *any* politicians have enough backbone to say that they accept Darwin’s theory of evolution? All UK politicians do, according to the reporter who captured Walker. Why not, since Darwin is so politically correct over there that he’s on their ten pound notes? Among American presidential hopefuls on both sides of the aisle, Hillary Clinton arguably had the most backbone when she said, “I believe in evolution, and I am shocked at some of the things that people in public life have been saying...

Read the rest of the article here:

<https://evolution-institute.org/article/politicians-without-backbones-who-has-the-courage-to-accept-evolution/>

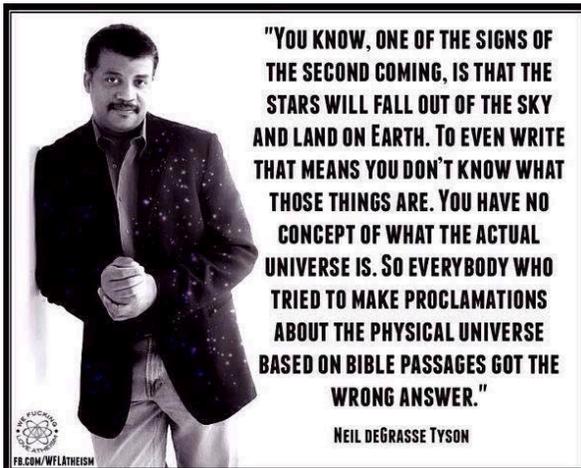
Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- June 7: Robert McNally: *A Visit with Robert Green Ingersoll*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/a_visit_with_robert_green_ingersoll/
- June 21: Joe Kirschvink: *A New History of Life: Are We Really Martians?* Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/a_new_history_of_life_are_we_really_martians/

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- June 11-15: Reason for Change: A CFI International Conference. Speakers include Tom Flynn, Kendrick Frazier, Harriet Hall, David Gorski, Phil Zuckerman, and many others. Buffalo, NY.
<http://reasonforchange.centerforinquiry.net/>
- July 16-19: The Amazing Meeting 2015. Includes conference sessions, workshops and panels, exhibit halls, and many speakers from the skeptics and atheist community. Las Vegas, NV.
<https://www.amazingmeeting.com/>



HSSB Contact Information

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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. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. Students are free with a Student ID.

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

To join HSSB, please send your contact information and a check for your membership dues to HSSB, PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, Attn: Mary Wilk. For membership information contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or mwilk@cox.net.

Copies of this newsletter are posted on the HSSB website. Photos are on the website and available via the link

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

See us on Facebook



HSSB Calendar

Tuesday June 16: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Sunday June 21: Summer Solstice Picnic. We are meeting at Stow Grove Park, Goleta, at 1 p.m. for our annual summer solstice party. Food, games, good conversation. The cost is \$10 per person.

Sunday June 28: (and the last Sunday of every month), 10 a.m., **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.

Tuesday July 14: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday July 18: Monthly Meeting: HSSB member Deborah Rogers will speak on "Prisons, Profits, and a Little Bit of Politics: Visiting Immigration Detainees at Adelanto"; the Patio Room at Vista del Monte. Meet at 2:30 p.m. for socializing and light refreshments. Talk starts at 3:00 p.m. Optional buffet dinner after the talk at Vista del Monte.



Humanist Society of
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