



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

JANUARY 2016

January Program Avi Tuschman: Our Political Nature: The Evolutionary Origins of What Divides Us

Avi Tuschman's talk will give an overview of the emerging science of human political orientation, summarizing groundbreaking research from the fields of primatology, genetics, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and anthropology. In addition, his talk will explain the natural history of the political spectrums that run through populations around the world, as well as their underlying logic and various influences on their distributions.

Avi Tuschman is an expert on the science of human political orientation. His 2013 book [*Our Political Nature: The Evolutionary Origins of What Divides Us*](#) (Prometheus / Random House) proposed the first theory of political orientation that links measurable personality traits to quantitative measurements of fitness in contemporary populations. Tuschman's research has received coverage in media outlets from twenty-one countries, and praise from political scientists Francis Fukuyama, Moisés Naím, Jerrold Post, and John Hibbing, as well as from science writers Chris Mooney and Michael Shermer.



Tuschman began his career in politics as the youngest advisor in the government palace in Lima at the age of 23, and later served as senior writer and advisor to President Alejandro Toledo (Peru, 2001-2006). He holds a B.A. and a Ph.D in evolutionary anthropology from Stanford University.

When: Saturday, January 16th, 2016

Where: Patio Room, Vista del Monte (**Park ONLY in spaces marked "VDM"**).

Time: Meet at 2:30pm for socializing and light refreshments provided by HSSB. Program begins at 3:00 pm

Donation: \$2 members/\$5 non-members. Students with ID are free.

Optional Buffet Dinner: Dinner buffet at Vista del Monte. \$25 includes tax and tip. RSVP to judithannfontana@yahoo.com or 805-967-7911.

For More Info: Call 805-769-4772 (769-HSSB)

Activities

Judy Fontana

Vista del Monte did it again. They catered a fantastic meal for us for our Winter Solstice party. Many thanks to them for a lovely meal!

And now you can enjoy their fine cuisine again. This month's program and meal will again be held at Vista del Monte. The menu is mixed green salad with assorted dressings, sourdough rolls, balsamic glazed chicken, sautéed shrimp, rosemary roasted potatoes, rice pilaf, heirloom carrots, vegetable blend, assorted desserts, beverages and wine. Cost per person is \$25 which includes tax and tip. RSVP to judithannfontana@yahoo.com or call 967-7911. Look forward to seeing you there.

Welcome to Our New Members!

Pamela Rodgers, Santa Barbara

President's Column: Another Year Colin Gordon

The New Year is already upon us. Time for resolutions as to how we can make this year better than the last. We resolve to do those things left undone last year and to embark on new enterprises that will pave the way to a new and better life for ourselves and those dear to us.

That is a good plan and, come to think of it, applies also to our Humanist Society. How can we make it better this year than it was in good old 2015? Actually it is pretty good already and improvements won't be easy to come by. We have been on cruise control for many years with an excellent speaker at each of our monthly meetings except for the two months when we enjoy our solstice parties. For these events, we thank our Program Committee and

our Activities Committee.

Our society was founded by Keith Bailey and Dick Cousineau way back in 1995, and in 2001 we incorporated as a tax-exempt non-profit organization, designated by the mystic formula 501(c)(3). According to our by-laws we are required to have three officers, President, Secretary and Treasurer, who have reserved spaces on the Board of Directors; and we may have up to eight additional Board members. All positions on the Board come up for election in June, although we usually try to have a slate available by April, and the new fiscal year begins July 1. At present, each of the major committees is represented on the Board by its chair. This arrangement seems to work well; it gives rise to lengthy and sometimes intense discussions. All members are invited to come to a Board meeting to see democracy in action, but please let us know if you would like to attend.

This is where I make an appeal for more members to become active in our society. Become a member of the Board or take over one of the many jobs that need to be done; for example, the monthly meeting reception table has been manned by Lou and Josette Barsky for many years, and they deserve a break. So will two people step up to take over their job? If not permanently, then just occasionally would be a great help. The audio/video system needs to be set up before the meeting and taken down afterwards. You don't have to be an electronics wizard, just be able to insert plugs into the right holes, as advised by our resident experts.

Membership holds fairly constant around 140 or so, of whom about 40 attend our meetings, usually the same people. Nothing wrong with that. If a member comes only occasionally to hear a speaker that is of particular interest to him/her, that's OK. Do we want to increase our membership? Perhaps the most noticeable thing about us is that the average age is high and probably increasing. But it has proved near

impossible to lower it by attracting young people to our society. When they see the grey hair they shy away, never to return.

It is not something we need feel guilty about; we have simply encountered a larger social trend. Young people just don't join societies much these days. The electronics revolution has provided them with smart phones, tablets, lap-tops, PC's and all manner of electronic devices, and they spend much of their time messaging or texting or looking at Facebook, Snapchat, Skype, Netflix or any of the myriad apps provided for their amusement - and with the occasional rock concert thrown in. It is much easier for them to organize their social lives than it was in the old days of snail mail and land lines (the good old days that is). No time left now to join societies.

Perhaps we should turn our attention outwards and spend more time spreading the word that Humanism holds the key to future progress for the human race. But humanists tend to be somewhat introverted with respect to their beliefs, or lack thereof, and don't want to get into discussions with fervent believers. There is an element of negativism in that we deny all the supernatural beings that so many people seem to need, but we are convinced that humanism's trust in logic and common sense, with a strong dose of science, can cure the world's ills.

So let us move into 2016 with high hopes for humanism and for the future of our society. Happy New Year!

Vistas Lifelong Learning Ray Stone

The following Vistas Lifelong Learning classes are coming up:

- The First Transcontinental Railroad (January 4, 11, 18, and 25)
- Damming the Colorado (January 13)
- Strategic Architecture of Victory &

Defeat - WWII, Korea, Vietnam & Iraq (January 20 and 27; February 3 and 10)

- Race to the Poles (February 2, 9, 16, 23; March 1, 6, 15, and 22)
- Campaign Finance and Political Polarization, Sources, Evidence, Implications (February 18, 25; and March 3)
- Eleanor Roosevelt (February 15)

For more information about these and other classes, check out VistasLifelongLearning.org, or email vistas@silcom.com or call 805-967-6030.

Freethought Meetup Group

Be sure to check on the local Freethought Meetup site to see what activities the local Meetup group is doing. They have a Game Night, Drinking Sceptically, and Coffee and Chat scheduled for January, and a Darwin Day Celebratory Hike is scheduled for Saturday, February 13:

<http://www.meetup.com/freethought/>

Savage Chickens

by Doug Savage



www.savagetchickens.com

**November Program:
John Foran: Finding Solutions to
Global Warming and Climate
Change
Robert Bernstein**

UCSB Sociology Professor John Foran spoke to the Humanist Society about climate change a week after the Paris terrorist attack and a week before the COP21 Paris United Nations Conference on Climate Change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) includes hundreds of scientists who meet every few years and synthesize their climate data. There have been five reports since the 1990's. Each is more clear. The year 1800 was the dawn of the Industrial Revolution and represents a baseline. Over 200 years, global temperatures have risen 0.8 ° C. Just 3 degrees separates us from the last ice age for comparison.

Most of the change has occurred since 1950 when the slope steeply rises as a "hockey stick," due to burning fossil fuels and methane released from cows, fracking and mining.

The UN summit will set a 2 degree limit. But there is a lag. If we stopped all carbon pollution now, temperatures would still rise by 1.4 degrees.

We have a budget of fossil fuels. We cannot burn more than 565 Gigatons (GT) of fossil fuels to stay under 2 °C. Proven reserves are 5 times that, or 2700 GT, which means most remaining fossil fuels must stay in the ground.

This goes directly against the business model of the fossil fuel industry. But for only one reason: The fossil fuel industry is not paying the true cost of dumping their waste in the atmosphere.

There is no free market in energy without accounting for that cost. That is the most

important point. And it is the one point that was totally missed at the Paris summit. NASA climate scientist James Hansen was interviewed by *Democracy Now!* at the Paris summit. He said nothing that happens at the summit matters unless there is a carbon tax. And that is exactly what was never discussed.

The fossil fuel industry could not compete in a true free market against sustainable energy supplies.



Our November speaker, John Foran. Photo by Robert Bernstein.

Foran noted that most of Congress is elected with the help of fossil fuel money. Again, this distorts our policies and economics.

Carbon pollution's biggest effects go into the oceans. The added heat warms the ocean and has caused delays in seeing the temperature rise in the air and on land. Carbon pollution also is acidifying the oceans. This causes damage to coral reefs and shellfish, including micro-organisms at the base of the food chain.

Inequality is already a global problem. Climate change increases these problems and effects. The poorest people tend to live in places that will be first to flood with rising sea levels and storm surges. Ironically, these are the people who least contributed to climate change.

Foran thinks good win-win solutions are possible; solutions that decrease consumption and increase leisure in the developed world.

Previous climate summits have promised \$100 billion each year be paid from the developed world to the developing world, to help them cope with climate disasters and to help them transition to sustainable energy.

In principle, countries like India and China could leapfrog over polluting energy sources directly to sustainable energy. In the same way they skipped land lines and went directly to cell phones. Three hundred million people in India have no electricity. That is an opportunity to get it right. Foran said that Obama has been working directly with India and China with promising results. These *ad hoc* negotiations may produce more than the big summits.

And Germany and China have already invested enormously in solar electric technology. This has driven down the cost for everyone so that fossil fuels soon won't be able to compete. Even with the enormous subsidies that fossil fuels receive, such as not paying for their pollution.

Foran made it clear that natural gas from fracking is not a solution. Fracking releases methane, a potent climate change gas.

Foran invited questions from climate change deniers or doubters, but received minimal response.

At the end of the meeting, Foran answered a question about candidates. Bernie Sanders is the only candidate who understands climate change is our biggest issue. Senator Sanders is also the only candidate to come out in favor of a carbon tax. He is doing well in the polls, which gives Foran hope.

Here is the report from the Paris COP event:
<http://climatejusticeproject.com/>

Note to our newsletter readers: You can listen to John Foran's presentation on our website:

<http://www.santabarbarahumanists.org/article/7996-audio-of-nov-2015-talk-on-climate-change-by-john-foran>



Greetings from Floyd Sandford

Ray and family, on days like this when I look out at the ice and snow, I have fond memories of my visits to Santa Barbara. Best wishes for a Happy New Year, and much good health and fortune in 2016. Please convey my good wishes to all the SB Humanists who might remember me.

--Floyd

(Note: Floyd Sandford has performed several presentations for HSSB as Charles Darwin. His last appearance at HSSB was in February, 2014)

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As the storm raged, the captain realized his ship was sinking fast. He called out, "Anyone here know how to pray?"

[One man stepped forward]

"Aye, captain, I know how to pray."

"Good," said the captain, "You pray while the rest of us put on our life jackets-we're one short."

Former Pastor Ryan Bell Reflects on Life Without God, a Year After Coming Out

Hemant Mehta

(Note to our readers: Ryan Bell spoke to HSSB in March 2015. This piece by Hemant Mehta is from the Friendly Atheist Blog, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2016/01/02/former-pastor-ryan-bell-reflects-on-life-without-god-a-year-after-coming-out/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook)

It was two years ago when **Ryan Bell**, a professor and former pastor of a Seventh-day Adventist church, announced that he would “try on” atheism and “live as if there is no God” for 12 months.



Last year, he announced that he was an atheist.

How’s he doing now? Here’s a glimpse of how things have changed for him:

“I don’t have secrets anymore, which is a huge mental and moral relief. I also wrestle with less cognitive dissonance than ever. All of this means I’m more at peace and more comfortable in my own skin. I give far fewer fucks about what people think of me and my decisions. My ire is raised, from time to time, by unfair attacks, and I will probably always

struggle with my tendency to be a people pleaser, but I am in recovery. I’m learning to tell the truth on a more regular basis and trust that people can handle the truth (whether they actually can or not). **I’m learning to trust myself and what I know while remaining open to critique and able to say I was wrong.”**

That’s the sort of reaction I’ve heard from a lot of atheists who wrestled with their faith in the past. Once they realize it’s okay to stop believing in a lie, they feel more relaxed, more honest, less conflicted about everything.

Bell is now working on a project to help others in his situation and you can learn more about his work — and support him on that journey — right here:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/yearwithoutgod/2016/01/01/two-years-without-god/>

Poem: *I Love Our Country* John Coppejans

I love our Country, but I can see
It is not a true democracy.
The two parties that do set the rule,
Are either the Elephant or the Mule,
but both have to answer in the end
to the powers that do set the trend.
No matter what, they have to dance
to the powerful tune of high finance
and they certainly would not dare
to fight capitalistic “*laissez faire*.”
It’s sad to say, but it’s the case
that big business puts them in their place.
So that will influence their vote
and they’ll avoid to rock the boat.
Another player in the action
is the powerful religious faction.
They do not want to see a diction
that is not based on mythical fiction.
What they believe in is the right

to oppose clear reason in their fight.
 They want a chance to set their sights
 on chopping away at the Bill of Rights
 and then remove that what they hate,
 the separation of Church and State.
 Racism is still a problem here
 And many people make it clear,
 in spite that twice he's been voted in,
 they don't like a leader with darker skin.
 So they fight decisions that he makes,
 no matter how simple are the stakes.
 I for one do not like his decision
 to use our money to favor religion.
 All citizens for their land they pay,
 while religions still do get their way.
 Praying at government meetings is not right.
 What God do they pray to without causing a
 fight?
 There are thousands of religions on this planet.
 So which one is your favorite tenet?
 Let science and good sense lead the way
 And go to a church if you want to pray.
 I hope that we all will realize
 that to reason is not dumb but wise
 and that if we want to set the pace
 and do what's right for the human race,
 we'll have to change our course of action
 and get a different type of election,
 where one with no church affiliations
 and does not depend on huge donations
 can be elected and lead our land
 into a future that's really grand.

At the age I am, when time flies by,
 I won't see this happen, but I can dream,
 can I?

**“Right” Trumps “Religious” in
 Evangelicals’ Support for The
 Donald
 Rob Boston**

*(Excerpted from TheHumanist.com, October
 2015)*

To the Religious Right, it can be awfully hard
 for someone to be a “true Christian.”

Consider President Barack Obama. He's a
 longtime member of the United Church of
 Christ and has been known to quote scripture
 in speeches—yet he still gets labeled a secret
 Muslim or a fake Christian.

Then there's Jimmy Carter, a man who knows
 the Bible so well that he teaches Sunday school.
 Despite this, he gets attacked by the minions of
 the Christian right wing.

But, apparently, it's not a problem for
 billionaire real estate developer Donald Trump
 to have a checkered personal life marked by
 sexual escapades and indifference to religion.
 He can do these things and still be lauded as a
 champion by far-right evangelicals.

Trump, a Presbyterian, is not known for his
 piety. Even the pastor of Trump's church says
 the man rarely darkens the door there. Yet, as
 of late Trump has taken to portraying himself
 as a deeply religious man who loves to read the
 Bible. It is, he now claims, his favorite book.

But there's a problem: the current frontrunner
 for the Republican presidential nomination
 doesn't seem to know what's in the book that
 he claims to love so much. Trump was recently
 asked by a reporter with Bloomberg News to
 talk in a little more detail about his religious
 life. John Heilemann asked Trump to name his
 favorite Bible verse. This really shouldn't have
 been a problem for someone who claims to
 enjoy reading the Bible, but Trump was at sea.
 In fact, it was downright painful to listen to
 Trump's response.

“Well, I wouldn't want to get into it because to
 me that's very personal,” he stammered. “You
 know, when I talk about the Bible it's very
 personal.”

...I'm not in the habit of judging the depth of
 others' religious commitment. We get far too
 much of that from the religious right. But in
 Trump's case, I think it's safe to assume that

this is a man who's not very familiar with the Bible. That actually puts him solidly in the mainstream of American life. Americans have a habit of lauding the Bible, but a lot of them aren't very familiar with what's in it.

So let's try a thought experiment: let's imagine for a moment that it wasn't Trump who said these things about the Bible and displayed such ignorance of that book. Let's pretend it was Hillary Clinton, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), or Vice President Joe Biden.

How do you think the leaders of the religious right would have responded? Would they have just shrugged it off, as they did with Trump? Not only did these groups ignore Trump's comments, one of them, the Family Research Council (FRC), invited him to speak at its "Values Voter Summit" in September, where he received a warm welcome (although he could only muster fifth place in the group's straw poll)...

But Trump, who has spent the past several months making brazen statements on issues like immigration, military policy, and "American exceptionalism," has continued to dominate in the polls among Republicans overall. He couldn't be doing that without a decent amount of support from right-wing evangelicals.

What does this say about the religious right?

The obvious thing it says is that these people are hypocrites. They will scream bloody murder if a politician who leans left, or is even perceived to be that way, fails to meet their religious test for public office. When a conservative Republican does it, they yawn.

But it says something else as well—that, at the end of the day, this is a movement that will happily elevate the "right" part over the "religious" if it suits their needs.

In recent years I've been struck by how little religious talk there is at the religious right meetings I attend. Sure, they rail against legal abortion and marriage equality, but at the last few Values Voter Summits, the issue that really worked people up was the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"). At times, I felt as if I were attending a Heritage Foundation briefing—and in a sense, I was. For the past several years, Heritage has been a co-sponsor of the Summit...

People often ask me how it's possible for groups like the FRC, the American Family Association, and others to spread so much hate when they claim to be doing the work of Jesus. The answer is that these days, Jesus is being pushed out the picture in favor of the true god of today's religious right—Ronald Reagan...

Trump, who is thrice married and used to publicly boast about his sex life, can join Reagan because he tells the religious right activists what they want to hear. Sincerity doesn't seem to matter.

It should to the rest of us. The fact that Trump and people like him can be elevated despite their obvious pandering on religion and lack of real knowledge about the theological concerns "values voters" claim to treasure, speaks volumes about the integrity of the members of that movement.

Chiefly, it says they don't have any.

See the entire article here:

<http://thehumanist.com/magazine/november-december-2015/church-state/right-trumps-religious-in-evangelicals-support-for-the-donald>

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- January 17: Bob Ladendorf: *History and Practice of Citizen Science Through a Personal Account of an Earthwatch Project*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/History_and_Practice_of_Citizen_Science_1-17-16/
- February 7: Donald Prothero: Special Darwin Day Lecture – *Evolution: What the Fossils Say*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/evolution_what_the_fossils_say_2-7-16/
- February 21: Michael DeDora: *Political and Legal Strategies: Advocating for Science and Secularism*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/advocating_for_science_and_secularism_2-21-16/

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- May 26-29: American Humanist Association 2016 75th Annual Conference, Chicago, IL.
<http://conference.americanhumanist.org/>
- June 2-5: The Reason Rally, Washington, D.C. (Note: American Atheists is a major sponsor of this rally.)
<http://www.reasonrally.org/>

“You won’t burn in hell. But be nice anyway.”
– Ricky Gervais

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 805-967-3045 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





Humanist Society of
Santa Barbara
PO Box 30232
Santa Barbara, CA 93130

HSSB Calendar

Tuesday January 12: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday January 16: Monthly Meeting: Avi Tuschman will talk on “Our Political Nature”; 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.

Sunday January 31: (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 February 16: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday February 20: Monthly Meeting: Bill Meller, M.D., will talk about Medical Myths; 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.