



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

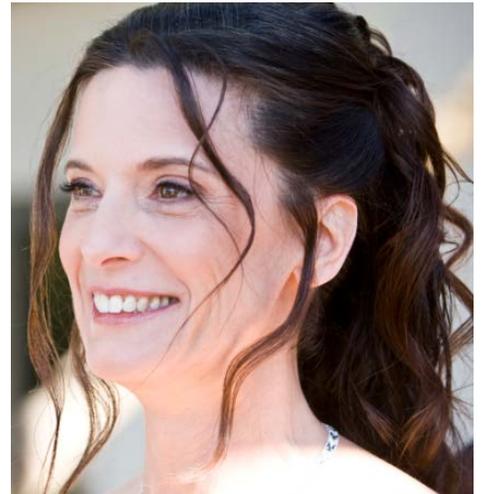
OCTOBER 2016

October Program:

Donna Lewis:

Scaliageddon? Chaos or Status Quo after Scalia's Last term

Antonin Scalia's strong conservatism and fiery way with language has inspired ire as well as additions to the lexicon, such as Scalia-ese, defined as Scalia's version of legalese. This walk through Scalia's last US Supreme Court term will highlight cases on topics relevant to Humanism's core tenets, i.e. separation of church and state, commitment to the idea that ethics and morals do not require religion to exist, that ideologies should not be accepted on faith, and that open and pluralistic societies are best able to protect human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.



An engineer and a practicing attorney who teaches at Santa Barbara City College, Donna Lewis is, by her own admission, as nerdy and annoying as they come. During the run of the cable TV show *What Not to Wear*, several persons threatened to turn her in. As the ink was drying on her Brown University degree, she fled Rhode Island. She is the only past president of the century-old Santa Barbara County Bar Association who is married to another past president, Tom Hinshaw, an actor (appearing in SBCC's *Other Desert Cities* in October) and Superior Court research attorney who makes a mean spaghetti *aglio olio*. Ms. Lewis' practice emphasizes employment and business law.

When: Saturday, October 15th, 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 Nan Cisney by 12 noon on Thursday, October 13th: cisneynan@gmail.com

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

Activities

Don't forget that we have a wonderful buffet dinner following the Saturday program on October 15th. The menu is mixed green salad with assorted dressings, pot roast, fresh catch of the day fish, green beans, orange beets, mashed potatoes, multi grain rolls, and assorted desserts. Cost is \$25 per person, which includes tax, tip and wine. RSVP to cisneyan@gmail.com no later than 12 noon, Thursday, October 13th. You can submit your payment to Nan before 3 p.m. on Saturday, before the program begins. If you are paying by check, make it payable to Humanist Society. **Please note:** It is very important to RSVP for the dinner and then attend it if you have signed up for it; otherwise, HSSB has to pay for no-shows.

Welcome to New Members!

Yvonne Kane, Goleta

Don and Mary McKenzie, Santa Barbara

President's Column: Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu Roger Schlueter

As you may have noticed, the Catholic Church has added yet another Saint to its uncountable collection of holy figures. This new blessed new saint, Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, better known as Mother Teresa, has arrived at her exalted position justified by some *very* generous interpretations of her work, and achieved through some highly suspicious processes. Let's explore Mother Teresa's (MT) life and death and holy resurrection from a Humanist perspective.

MT's initial rise to fame from the slums of Calcutta is based on fiction, a fact which will be repeated throughout the remainder of her life.

In 1969, the BBC commissioned a special program called *Something Beautiful for God* to be produced by a devout Catholic, Malcolm Muggeridge. Several weeks after returning from shooting film on scene, one particular segment was showing the House of Dying, where MT worked. It showed amazing clarity and light compared to all other footage shot on scene. Muggeridge called it "divine light," touted it as a miracle, and attributed it to MT.

Unfortunately, Muggeridge failed to listen to his cameraman, Ken McMillan, who testified that he used a new, high quality film produced by Kodak that accounted for the better quality images. Thus, a saint was generated through an amalgamation of advancing film technology and Muggeridge's fanaticism and bluster.



Mother Teresa

Of course, MT is most noted for her Sisters of Charity, which housed the sick and dying. Sadly, these facilities were not places for healing and comfort. "Patients" (a better word would be inmates) were given no serious medical attention and no pain relief beyond, possibly, aspirin. They were not allowed visits by family or friends, were kept in terribly unsanitary conditions and could not leave to visit a hospital.

In short, MT created a death cult where suffering was seen as a path to god. She saw no need to alleviate symptoms or even provide

sanitary facilities but rather let nature (read: god) take its course. Worse, as her fame grew, she spread this idea of the connection between suffering and god to all corners of the globe. At home in India, when the Bhopal chemical spill happened, her recommendation for the afflicted: "Forgive. Forgive." Around the world, she opened over 500 Houses of Dying similar to the one in India where suffering was seen as a good thing.



House of the Dying

MT also emphatically supported the Catholic position on birth control and abortion. In her speech upon accepting the Nobel Peace prize, she stated, "The greatest destroyer of peace today is the crying of the innocent unborn child. If a mother can murder her own child in her own womb what is left for you and me to kill each other." What she meant is that there's nothing to stop you and I from killing each other if we allow abortion.

MT's sainthood process was a debacle from beginning to end. The normal five-year waiting period after death for a nominee was waived. The requirement that two miracles have to be attributed to the nominee was reduced to one. The miracle case chosen involved the case of Monica Besra, who claimed an image of MT placed on her abdomen cured her of tuberculosis and an ovarian cyst. Her husband disagreed. He said she used good old-fashioned

western medicine.

This is just a very short summary of all the wrongs committed by and for MT. But you may say, "So what? Let the Catholics have their imaginary god and all his saints." But MT's life and sainthood have caused endless unnecessary suffering and death. And her influence extends beyond the Catholic Church. As Bill Donohugh, President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, says, "I've never seen any single person as revered as Mother Teresa by people all over the world by people of different civilizations, religions and demographic groups."

As a Humanist, I think this mythology surrounding MT is a disgrace to all who hold Humanist values. Should you ever have an opportunity to destroy or damage or even call out this myth, please do so.



September Program:

John Woolley: Legacies of 2016 Robert Bernstein

UCSB Political Science professor John Woolley began his talk on this unusual election year with a poll of those in attendance. The result? Thirty-two (32) of the 36 votes were for the Democrat. He did the same in 2000 at a downtown talk where 90% were for the Democrat.

Woolley grew up in the Deep South long ago. Being an isolated outlier in a hostile environment is something he is used to. He noted his sympathy for the one Republican in the audience.

Woolley considers this to be the most remarkable election campaign in his lifetime. In the spring of 2015, one of his teaching assistants said that Bernie Sanders will be the Democratic Party nominee. Woolley laughed at this. Sanders was not a Democrat. He is from a non-Democratic state. He is a cranky old man, and a socialist.

Woolley also made fun of Trump in his class back then. He predicted Trump would go away in two months. Then the Republican Party would go on to serious candidates to take on Hillary. He was wrong and he was not the only one.

Bernie was never close to winning, in Woolley's view. But he did far better than anyone predicted.

What might change? It depends on who wins and by what margin. It also depends who wins in the House and Senate.

Woolley claims that both the Democrats and the Republicans have become more ideological, causing an ever-growing partisan split.

I will note that this is highly debatable. Many independent observers have said that the Republicans have become ever more ideologically extreme, and the Democrats have tended to follow them, but more watered-down.

Take health care as an example. True universal health care was considered mainstream in both parties through the 1970's. Only the means was in dispute. The Republicans rejected this view starting with Reagan. And the Democrats moved toward "compromises" that have left millions without health care under Obamacare. The US is almost alone in the world in thinking this is acceptable.



Our September speaker, John Woolley (L), with HSSB President Roger Schlueter (R). Photo by Robert Bernstein.

Bernie Sanders argued repeatedly that there are large areas of agreement on the most important matters to the majority of Americans. It is only the deliberate "wedge issues" that divide us.

Woolley noted that it is easy now to live in a media bubble where we only hear views matching our ideology. He compared Fox and

MSNBC. I would dispute the balance of this comparison. Fox is almost pure ideological partisan propaganda. MSNBC is corporate media with some liberal programming mixed in. Woolley argues that winning strong identifiers with either party will not be enough to win. There has to be an appeal to the center.

Again, I have seen strong challenges to this view. Some scholars claim there really is almost no "center." People may hold views from a variety of ideologies. But these are still principled views, not a "center" position.

If anything, this election season has shown that people are looking for principled leadership, rather than muddled, watered-down "moderate" or "main-stream" positions. Woolley argued, though, that both Hillary and Trump have moderated their positions at times to appeal to swing voters.

This election is the most closely followed since 1992. It is also the one with the least liked candidates since Clinton-Bush in 1992.

Woolley presented Pew Research data showing agreement across the political spectrum on these important issues: Jobs, Infrastructure Investment, Prison Sentencing Reform (reducing mandatory sentencing terms), Health Care Reforms, Caution in Military Use, Paid Family Medical Leave, and Addressing Terrorism.

Pew also showed a political divide on these issues: Treatment of Racial Minorities, Environment, Climate Change, and LGBT Issues,

Conclusion: There is more agreement than you might think based on partisan conflict.

Consequential elections tend to have specific consequences. To get this takes a huge margin in the popular vote and in the Electoral College. He thinks this will not be such a year. The election will be close and little will change.

The Senate has become important. It takes 60 votes to block a filibuster and that has become the new threshold to pass important legislation. Most notable: Voters don't care much about information. Trump reversed his "birther" claim about Obama. His supporters did not care. His supporters actually like that Trump violates norms of conduct.

A lot of Trump's impact has been on changing the norms. Much of our system is not written in law, but in custom. Up until 1900, candidates did not campaign. 1932 was the first time candidates were even at the party conventions to accept the nomination!

Trump has blown through campaign norms in every way. Who ever heard of encouraging supporters to beat up dissenters? Future politics will be wild, Woolley warns. He noted that there is no comparable Democrat.

The Republican leadership does not defend Trump. They just attack Hillary on Benghazi and such.

The debate will set new standards. Will there be name calling? Interruption? Eye rolling? Sighing? Hillary will have to stay under control. Trump won't. Many will watch for entertainment.

Elections now come down to swing states. Most states are solidly red or blue. It is only the few close states that get all of the campaigning attention.

Woolley claimed that party allegiance is formed at age 20. When he was 20, he was influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, the US War in Vietnam, protests at home and Nixon's behavior. People of his cohort disproportionately became Democrats.

Racial and ethnic minorities are growing and they vote Democratic. Eighty percent (80%) of people under 30 supported Bernie!

The Republican Party is adapting to these demographics. They want the Presidency, but they have shifted their focus to the states and to Congress.

The Republicans now have a majority of governors. The state legislatures are controlled by Republicans. They will control redistricting in 2020 and increase gerrymandering for Congressional elections. This focus already has made it difficult for the Democrats to win the House or to win 60 seats in the Senate.

House Republicans are disciplined. All they have to do is kill any deals. It is hard to bargain with that. But in the longer term the demographics will shift. Republicans will lose Texas.

During the Question and Answer segment of his talk, Woolley said the Supreme Court appointments of the next president will matter.

He was surprised that Hillary has not done more to embrace those who “read and enjoy *The Nation* magazine.” Hillary does \$250,000 fund-raisers which does not look good to the generation that supported Bernie.

Woolley noted that Trump is running pretty much on what he wrote in *The Art of the Deal*: Attack your opponents hard. And there is no such thing as bad publicity.

Additional note: The American Presidency Project is one of Professor Woolley's current achievements and can be viewed at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

*Objective truths are established by evidence.
Personal truths are established by faith.
Political truths are established by incessant repetition.*

--- Neal DeGrasse Tyson

Member News

Meredith McMinn will be featured in the SBCC Theater Group's presentation of *Other Desert Cities*, at the Garvin Theater, October 12-29. <http://www.broadwayworld.com/santa-barbara/article/The-Theatre-Group-at-SBCC-Continue-1617-Season-with-OTHER-DESERT-CITIES-20160906>

Does Your Social Security Number Include the Digits 666? You Can Legally Change it Hemant Mehta

(Excerpted from FriendlyAtheist.com, October 1, 2016)

The Social Security Administration allows you to change your number only in a handful of instances, like when you're the victim of identity theft and the number is still causing problems, or someone else has the same number you do...

Let's call it the Social Security Administration's "666 Rule." If your number freaks you out for religious/cultural reasons, they'll accommodate your irrational beliefs.

It's not illegal or anything. It's just kind of amusing because you have to assume the office was getting so many requests to change numbers, they eventually decided there should be a formal policy.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/page/2/>

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Did you hear about the dyslexic devil-worshipper? He sold his soul to Santa.

The Conservative Case for Contraception and Abortion

Thomas Buonomo

(From The Secular Coalition for America blog, September 23, 2016)

Self-described conservatives have long attacked women's reproductive rights as established by *Roe v. Wade* based on the belief that the government's responsibility to provide for the basic security of its citizens begins at the point of conception-i.e. when a sperm fertilizes an egg.

The staunchest opponents of women's reproductive rights base their position on a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. This constituency would more appropriately be described as 'theocratic' rather than conceded the political cover of "conservative."

Conservative philosophy limits government to providing basic security for its citizens and maintaining the proper functioning of the free market, while it abhors government interference on broader socioeconomic issues. True conservatives should view government imposition of religiously motivated laws on its citizens as anathema.

Theocrats, in contrast, believe that government should make policy based on religious justifications.

While some within this constituency may be genuinely concerned about the lives of the unborn, their underlying fixation is sexual control-i.e. they believe that sex should remain within their religiously defined confines of marriage and that abortion (and for many, contraception) violates divine statutes that they consider superior to state and federal law.

If this were not the case, they should have no moral reservation about a sentience threshold for abortion based on scientific consensus.

It should be apparent to genuine conservatives that government should have no business controlling people's sexual activity so long as it is consensual. The more complex questions are at what threshold or under what circumstances human life should be protected and how policy can maximize the greatest good for the greatest number. At this point some empirical analysis might be useful to temper ideology.

The first point one might make is that there are an estimated 7.3 billion people (and counting) populating our planet and that as long as we continue striving to build modern, industrial economies, our planet will no longer passively accommodate us unless we take global measures to address the climate and related security consequences of our collective activity. Increasing access to contraception and abortion globally would significantly help to address these problems, providing greater quality of life for this and future generations.

A second point one might make is that one of the major structural drivers of political instability and violence in the world-one thinks of the Middle East in particular-is the gap between job and population growth.

This problem has several causes, including corrupt, authoritarian governance, but one of the long-term solutions is to address the demand side by providing greater access to contraception and abortion as well as education to challenge the religious and other cultural barriers to family planning.

Although conservatives by definition would tend to oppose public funding of these measures, the question is whether the cost to taxpayers of not providing them would be more. This question should be answered with proper economic analysis rather than starting

with one's ideologically motivated conclusion. It should include the cost to taxpayers of funding welfare benefits, police departments, and prison systems—three variables strongly correlated with unplanned pregnancies.

Although reasonable people can disagree on the threshold at which abortion rights should be limited, this debate should be framed in utilitarian rather than religious fundamentalist terms in which theocrats start with their conclusion and construct arguments based on what they presume to be divine will. The moral questions associated with abortion and contraception are in reality more complex and multidimensional.

Article and links here:

<https://www.secular.org/blogs/anonymous/conservative-case-contraception-and-abortion>

Humanist Schools in Uganda Henri Pellissier

Hello — I am the director of the Brighter Brains Institute, we're a nonprofit in the San Francisco Bay Area, we've been in existence for just 3 years.

In 2014 we started supporting Kasese Humanist Primary School (KHPS) in western Uganda - we set up a clinic, we bought them shoes, clothes, musical equipment, we sponsored orphans.

In 2015 we worked with KHPS to launch BiZoHa, the world's first atheist orphanage, in the nearby town of Muhokya. Using GoFundMe, and email campaigns, we raised enough money (\$35,000) to build the orphanage, and an orphanage school. Our funds built 9 classrooms, kitchen, dining, hall, girls dormitory, boys dormitory, clinic and road-side stand. Plus, we build nearby, 1 mile away, a Kahendero Humanist Nursery School, with

another 3 classrooms, administration building, kitchen, dining room, latrine and clinic.

In 2016 we started expanding our humanism in the region. I asked local schools if they wanted to be humanist, and 9 have joined us as partners. Four of them are directed by women's collectives, and 3 of them are orphanage schools. We provide financial help to the new humanist schools in multiple ways. They agree to the Ten Humanist Principles that the Uganda Humanist Trust promotes, they forbid indoctrination at the school, they exclude priests and ministers from being on their boards, they post the The Humanist Principles in their classrooms and they read our humanist lectures to their students.

The 12 Humanist Schools in western Uganda we are partnered with are:

Kasese Humanist Primary School
BiZoHa Orphanage Humanist School
Kahendero Humanist Nursery School
Vision Care Humanist School
Rays of Light Orphanage Humanist School
Mother Givers Humanist School
Mughete Junior Humanist School
Kanyenze Humanist School
Kasanga-Kaghema Orphanage Humanist School
Garama Secondary Humanist School
Nyakiyumbu Widows Orphanage Humanist School
Kibirigha Humanist Nursery School

Brighter Brains Institute (BBI) is a non-profit charitable organization in Piedmont, California that builds and supports humanist orphanages, schools, and clinics in western Uganda.
<http://brighterbrains.org/>

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- October 16: Eddie Tabash: *The Threat to Church/State Separation and the Supreme Court in This Presidential Election*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
<http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/the-threat-to-church-state-separation-10-16-16/>
- October 16-17: California Freethought Day (October 16) and Secular Advocacy Day (October 17). Speakers include Aaron Ra, David Silverman, Mya Saleem, David McAfee, and others. Sacramento.
<http://freethoughtday.org/>
- November 6: Tom Flynn: *The Trouble With Christmas*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
<http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/The-trouble-with-christmas/>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- October 7-9: 39th Annual Freedom From Religion Foundation National Convention. Speakers include Daniel Dennett, Susan Jacoby, Lawrence Krauss, Jerry Coyne, and many more. Pittsburgh, PA.
<http://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>
- October 27-30: CSICon Las Vegas. Speakers include Richard Dawkins, Jim Underdown, Harriet Hall, James Randi, Eugenie Scott, Susan Gerbic, and lots more! Las Vegas, NV.
<http://www.csiconference.org/>

Tell people that there's an invisible man in the sky who created the universe, and the vast majority will believe you.

Tell them the paint is wet, and they have to touch it to be sure.

--- George Carlin

HSSB Contact Information

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Colin Gordon

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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
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HSSB Calendar

Tuesday October 11: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday October 15: Monthly Meeting: Donna Lewis will present our third annual discussion of recent Supreme Court decisions 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 October 30: (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 November 15: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday November 19: Monthly Meeting; Jerry Roberts will speak on the 2016 National elections; 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.