



# The Secular Circular

## Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

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

MAY 2021

**Please join us for our May Speaker Event on Zoom...**

### **Humanist Global Charity: What's It All About?**

**Our Speaker:** Hank Pellissier is a writer, editor, speaker, producer, and nonprofit director. He has been involved with transhumanist, atheist, educational, and humanitarian causes. Pellissier co-produced an atheist film festival in San Francisco and was The New York Times columnist of *Local Intelligence*. His Brighter Brains Institute built an atheist orphanage in Uganda in 2015. Pellissier stated that he finds it “appalling that people want to go to Mars but they neglect the fact that there are millions of people in the world who are starving.”

In 2020, his nonprofit changed its name to Humanist Global Charity. Its vision: “We work toward a world with humanist values that respects science, secular education, sustainability, kindness, and democracy.” It provided over \$100,000 in humanitarian aid in 2019 to secular humanists in India and Sub-Saharan Africa and it offers internships in Africa Development, India Development, and Wealth Redistribution. Pellissier’s recent project, Egalitarian Planet, indicates his interest in global egalitarianism.



Hank Pellissier

**Saturday May 15, 2021 at 3:00pm PST**

**Zoom link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82040473424>

### **May COVID-19 Update**

Dave Flattery will present his monthly update on the *State of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic*

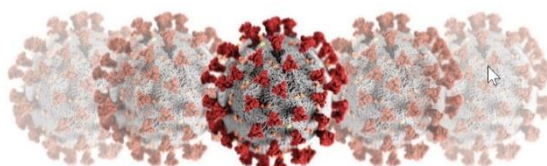
**When:** Date TBA. Members will be notified via email when the live event will occur.



Dave Flattery

**Zoom link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82598900099>

The recorded presentation will be available on our HSSB YouTube channel.



## The HSSB Secular Circular – May 2021

### **Mark Juergensmeyer: Proud Boys & White Nationalists: Christian Terrorists?**

4/17/21

By Robert Bernstein

UCSB Professor Mark Juergensmeyer was recently interviewed by a reporter from *The Economist* magazine. She wanted to know what religion has to do with the rise in terrorism in the world today.

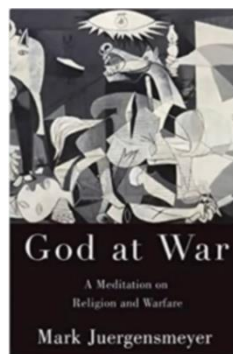
The answer to that question is the subject of his talk to the Humanist Society. He began with a discussion of the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.



Dr. Mark Juergensmeyer speaking to HSSB.

Dr. Juergensmeyer is a pioneer in the global studies field, focusing on global religion, religious violence, conflict resolution, and South Asian religion and politics. He has published more than three hundred articles and thirty books, including the recent *God at War*.

Gavin McInnes was the founder of the Proud Boys, one of the groups involved in that attack. Born in Scotland, his family migrated to Canada when he was four. He had been a reputable journalist and was a co-founder of Vice Media. He became a white supremacist and took on a new mission in life.



Proud Boys takes its name from the song [Proud of Your Boy](#) from the Disney musical *Aladdin*.

After McInnes stepped down from leading the Proud Boys, Cuban American Enrique Tarrío became its leader.

Why would a Cuban American be a champion of white supremacy?

Juergensmeyer has been to Cuba and witnessed racism worse than in the U.S. In Cuba, a distinction is commonly made between being of Spanish (European) descent vs. being descended from African slaves. Tarrío is typical of some Cuban Americans who don't want to be lumped together with other minorities.

The Oath Keepers is another group that participated in the January 6 attack. It is composed of current and former military, police, and other first responders. They imagine an American past of a Christian nation that never really existed.

In fact, the Founders of the United States were mostly deists. When Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, he referred to Nature with a capital N as the source of our rights, not to the Christian god.

QAnon is a wacky conspiracy theory group that sometimes claims to be a secret branch of the government. It is led by an anonymous leader who calls himself, "Q". Their ideas are closely tied to religious concepts of *Millenarianism* and *Apocalypticism*, the idea that we are in "End Times". *Left Behind* is a bestselling series of books that promotes this idea.

[Note: The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Millenarianism as "the doctrine of or belief in a future (and typically imminent) thousand-year age of blessedness, beginning with or culminating in the Second Coming of Christ. It is central to the teaching of groups such as Plymouth Brethren, Adventists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses; belief in a future golden age of peace, justice, and prosperity."

Wikipedia defines Apocalypticism as "the religious belief that there will be an apocalypse, a term which originally referred to a revelation, but now it usually refers to the belief that the end of the world is imminent, even within one's own lifetime." -ed.]

These groups see Trump as their savior. His actions as savior are prophesied to happen in his second term, which is why they see it as so crucial that he win a second term.

They also deal with anti-Christ evil. This evil includes journalists as well as figures like Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. They have invented an utterly absurd array of conspiracy theories.

Notably, QAnon adopted the bizarre Pizza-gate conspiracy theory which involves claims of pedophilia, child abduction and a D.C. pizza parlor. A Pizzagate follower, Edgar Maddison Welch, opened fire on that pizza parlor in his delusional state, thinking he was going to rescue children in their basement... except the place has no basement.

Jake Angeli (born Jacob Anthony Angeli Chansley) is the notorious character seen in fur and horns at the Capitol attack. He carried a sign that proclaimed, "Q Sent Me" on one side; on the other side it read "Hold the Line Patriots – God Wins".

Juergensmeyer showed other images from the Capitol attack with obvious religious messages: a woman carries a poster of Jesus wearing a MAGA hat, and, of course, that massive wooden cross.



He showed an image of Oath Keepers bowing and praying before the Capitol attack. He noted that, in general, churches don't support these groups.

Many of those participating in the attack care about white supremacy and Christian supremacy. Anti-Jewish themes are a part of this ideology. He showed photos of a man wearing a "Camp

Auschwitz" tee shirt and another with a tee shirt proclaiming that "Six Million Wasn't Enough".



This was also seen in the Charlottesville riot. Their Christian ideology also includes being anti-Muslim and anti-gay.



Where is this discontent coming from? Globalization, a sense of losing national culture, and feeling left out of one's own society.

Juergensmeyer noted this is not unique to the U.S. It can be seen in Germany, Austria, Denmark, and among Shinto Japanese. They want to recreate an imagined past that never existed.

Putin also uses these sentiments to his advantage in Russia. Juergensmeyer showed a photo of former Communist Putin posing with Russian Orthodox church figures.



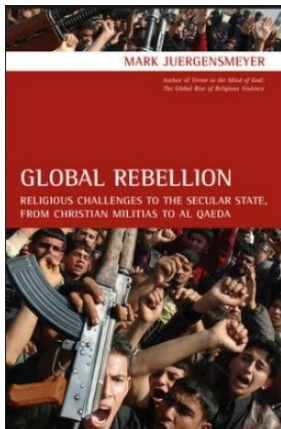
This also explains the sentiment behind Brexit in England. Although sold as delivering real economic advantage, England has actually suffered economically from Brexit. Juergensmeyer also mentioned that the mayor of London is originally from Pakistan.

Trump voters echo the comments of Brexit voters: it is about trade, foreigners, and protecting “our culture”.

Juergensmeyer reminded us of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing by Timothy McVeigh. McVeigh was not portrayed as a Christian, but Juergensmeyer said Christian identity was very important to McVeigh. When he was arrested, his trunk was full of copies of *The Turner Diaries* that he had been selling.

*The Turner Diaries* is about a fictional revolution in which Jews, non-whites and liberals are exterminated. It even includes details very similar to how McVeigh carried out his truck bombing attack.

McVeigh could not quote the Bible. It was not about that. It was about Christian identity.



Juergensmeyer wrote the book *Global Rebellion* that explains that for these frightened and angry people it is all about three things:

- Authority.
- Identity.
- Security.

Juergensmeyer went on to talk about the crisis in Iraq after the U.S. invasion. Under Saddam Hussein Iraq had been secular. The war planners thought it would stay secular, but Iraq has religious divisions between the Sunni minority and the Shia majority. The minority Sunnis had more power under Saddam Hussein.

Most Iraqis live in the [fertile area near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers](#), which is mostly Shia like nearby Iran. The U.S. invasion was a chance for the Shia to gain power and for Iran to take control of Iraq.



Juergensmeyer showed a photo of himself at a refugee camp. The refugees explained that as awful as ISIS may be, they represented a chance for Sunnis to regain power.

Another Millenarian vision includes the Caliph and the Savior at the end of time. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi claimed he was that prophesied savior.

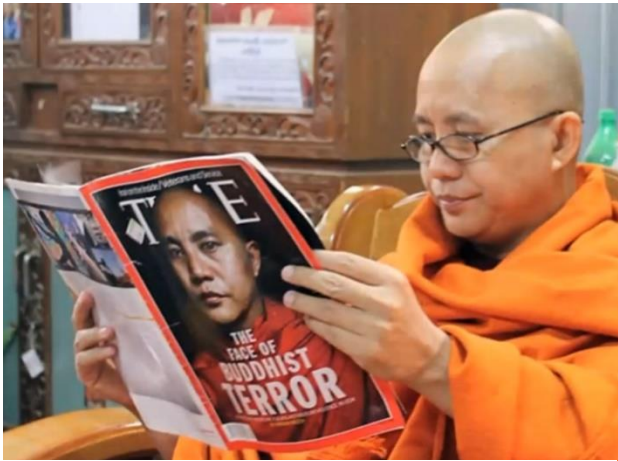
Juergensmeyer showed an image of Mosul after U.S. forces brutally bombed it. The justification was to get rid of ISIS, but thousands of homes were destroyed making conditions ripe for a new ISIS.

He then spoke of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. We think of Buddhists as being all about peace and non-violence, yet Buddhist monks have attacked the tiny Rohingya Muslim minority.

Their attacks were savage, burning villages and burning Muslims alive while the police stood by and watched. What could justify that?

The Buddhists have the same fear as the white supremacists in the U.S.: They fear globalization and a loss of their identity.

Time magazine featured “The Face of Buddhist Terror” on its cover.



Wirathu reading article about himself.

His name is Wirathu. Juergensmeyer met with him. Wirathu has a collection of news clippings about himself, both positive and negative. He asked Juergensmeyer, "Do I look like a terrorist?" Juergensmeyer's replied, "Actually, yes."



Dr. Juergensmeyer meets with Wirathu, featured on Time magazine cover as “The Face of Buddhist Terror”

Juergensmeyer went on to discuss the issue of security in the case of the island of Mindanao in the South Pacific. It is technically a part of the Philippines, but for much of its history it was mostly neglected by the Philippines government, except to the extent that the Moros, a Muslim minority there, were oppressed.

This old Muslim kingdom considers itself separate. The Philippines government brought in Christians from other areas to change the character of Mindanao.



Some Moros identified with ISIS to feel part of a global movement. They took a city hostage so the government bombed the city and destroyed it.

Juergensmeyer talked to a man in that city. He had not been supportive of Muslim separatism but the bombing convinced him to oppose the government.

Amazingly, this story has a happy ending.

Juergensmeyer was part of an effort with the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities to come to a negotiated settlement.



Negotiation produces a positive outcome for Mindanao Muslims.

The Muslims were given autonomous regions in the southern part of Mindanao and so far, it has worked to keep the peace!



Juergensmeyer ended by returning to the central point of his talk: Why the return to religion? It all comes back to those same concerns of:

Authority...Identity...Security.

Globalization has people feeling uncertain. Religion tells you who is in charge, how to behave, and what to believe.



Juergensmeyer is optimistic that there is a future beyond these divisions.

During the question and answer he gave the example of Northern Ireland as another case where seemingly impossible divisions were overcome, decades of "Troubles" including bombings, assassinations, and torture by both sides. People became exhausted. It took courageous people on both sides to move beyond the conflict.

Humanist Society President Judy Flattery asked about Biden's proposed withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Juergensmeyer sees it as a gamble but, really, there is no other choice. There is not just one Taliban. An agreement with one group may not be recognized by another. Some of the violence is among these Taliban factions. If a solution has not been found in 20 years, it is not likely that more time will help, especially since the American presence itself is part of the conflict.

It is important to remember that the U.S. is largely responsible for the oppressive power of extreme fundamentalist Islam in Afghanistan. For decades, the Soviet Union had backed a secular liberal government in Afghanistan.

Juergensmeyer was based in Punjab, India back then and loved to visit Kabul. For example, women wore skirts (not burkas), and the country was truly modernizing.

Juergensmeyer stated that President Carter and then President Reagan funded and armed the most extreme Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan, not in response to the Soviets, but to provoke the Soviets and create a crisis which forced an invasion and a war that could not be won. The result was horrific war and Afghanistan's transition to the most backward and oppressive form of Islam. The U.S. presence serves as a recruiting tool for the Taliban.

Whether it is the Taliban, ISIS, or the Proud Boys, people get caught up in what he called a "cosmic war" fighting for something they believe is really important.

Perhaps if we give people something big and positive to be a part of, they can get that sense of purpose and accomplishment while making the world a better place.

Juergensmeyer emphasized that peaceful settlements require all sides to feel that they have been heard and that their true needs have been met. A good settlement does not have to give everything that each side is asking for. A good settlement may provide something even better: it addresses the root cause of the needs they have.

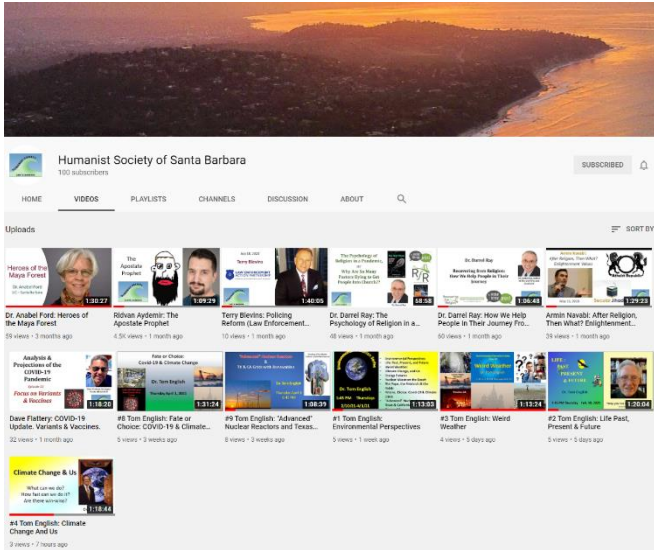
### **HSSB YouTube Channel is Growing**

We now have *thirteen video recordings, 100 subscribers, and nearly 5000 views* of our Zoom speaker presentations on our [HSSB YouTube channel](#), with more coming. As a 501.c.3. educational non-profit organization, making the education provided by our speakers available to a broader on-line audience furthers our Society's mission. If you have missed presentations from the past year, several are available on the channel.

We have also been granted permission to edit and post the videos from Dr. Tom English'

Environmental Education Series which we have been promoting in recent newsletters.

Please “subscribe” to our [YouTube channel](#) to be notified automatically whenever a new video is posted. Here is what our YouTube channel looks like (*Santa Barbara banner photo courtesy of local photographer, Eddie Frye*):



## Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Articles 11-15

One of the outcomes of our celebration of Human Rights Day last December was a commitment to become more familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Here are five more of the thirty articles, which are well-aligned with Humanist principles:

**Article 11:** Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

**Article 12:** No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home, or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 13:**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

**Article 14:**

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 15:**

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

## HSSB Supporting Secular Student Alliance (SSA) College Scholarship

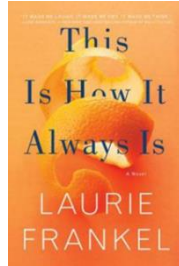
The HSSB Board approved contributing \$500 towards a college scholarship for a secular student activist. Several member organizations of the Southern California Secular Coalition are pooling funds to support this scholarship. SSA will advertise the scholarship to potential applicants, collect applications, manage the funding process, along with required tax documents.

HSSB and the other sponsors get to do the fun part of selecting the winning student(s). We intend to support a student with ties to Southern California or the Central Coast (perhaps one who might be interested in taking on a leadership role with our organization upon graduation!).

If you are interested in participating in the winner selection process by reading student essays and ranking them, please email the editor ([sbhumanisteditor@gmail.com](mailto:sbhumanisteditor@gmail.com)).

**HSSB Book Discussion Group:**  
*This Is How It Always Is*

This award-winning novel, *This is How it Always Is*, by Laurie Frankel, provides a frank and intimate look at a family growing to understand their child’s world, when their little boy starts seeing himself as a little girl with a boy’s body. Marian Shapiro will lead the book discussion. Please let her know if you plan on participating on June 5th at 3pm [on Zoom](#).



**May Day for Humanity Auction is Open**

The Mayday for Humanity auction is now open! Funds raised will support secular food banks and secular homeless organizations. Please visit BiddingOwl to see the art, antiques, and collectibles donated by John de Lancie, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Ann Druyan, Frudakis Studios, Robert S. Porter Fine Art Photography, Glen Loev, Curt Anderson, HSSB, Charlotte Carney, and Lorne Corley.

Here is a link to the items and bidding process: <https://bit.ly/Mayday4Auction>



The Mayday For Humanity event will be held on Thursday, May 6, celebrating The National Day of Reason. This entertaining and enlightening

program will interweave messages from co-sponsors, celebrity supporters, and people who are conducting local community service projects during the 2021 Secular Week of Action (April 30-May 9). Comedians Leighann Lord and Ian Harris will co-host this 3-hour event. They will usher in an array of comedians, poets, and musical performers (including LA’s Voices of Reason!). The event will begin with a 4:00 PM PST/7:00 PM EST Happy Hour. Register for this event at: [bit.ly/Join4Humanity](https://bit.ly/Join4Humanity). Pre-event donations can be made at: [bit.ly/MAYDAY4HUMANITY](https://bit.ly/MAYDAY4HUMANITY). You can also donate via text! Just text the code: “MAYDAY4HUMANITY” to 44-321.



NOT



WHY?



(...especially when mixed with empathy, compassion, and aligned committed action).



## On-Line Events of Interest to Humanists

- **May 4:** Heather McGhee: *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. [Heather McGhee](#)
- **May 8:** Baruch Spinoza -- Lecture and discussion. Southern California Secular Coalition event. [Baruch Spinoza- Lecture and discussion](#)
- **May 9, 1pm:** Dr. Eugenie Scott, former Executive Director of the National Center for Science Education. *What People Get Wrong (and sometimes right) About Evolution*. Sponsored by Humanist Association of San Diego. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85764826832>
- **May 11:** Arthur Brooks: *National Renewal*. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Arthur Brooks](#)
- **May 12:** Patrice Cullors: *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Dialogue*. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Patrice Cullors](#)
- **May 15-16:** *Secular Student Alliance Annual Conference*. Free. Sasha Sagan on rituals in secular life, conversation with members of the Congressional Freethought Caucus, Clara Fang on solving climate change, Rebecca Markert and Elizabeth Cavell, from FFRF, on civil rights after *Bostock v. Clayton County* - On the Basis of Sex. Debbie Goddard and Alison Gill from American Atheists, on their secular community research. Jon Steingard, former lead singer of the Christian band, Nelson Hawk, sharing his deconversion story and more. Registration is free: [bit.ly/SSAcon2021](http://bit.ly/SSAcon2021).
- **May 18:** *Creating Hope with His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama*, in conversation with Pico Iyer. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Creating Hope with His Holiness the Dalai Lama](#)

## HSSB Contact Information

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Board Members at Large: Wayne Beckman, Robert Bernstein, Nan Cisney, Dave Flattery, Mary Wilk

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

Our web site, [www.SBHumanists.org](http://www.SBHumanists.org), archives current and past issues of the Secular Circular. We also have a Facebook Page, a private Facebook Group, and a public YouTube channel with videos of past speakers.

Annual HSSB membership dues: \$36 for an individual, \$60 for a couple, \$100 for a Society Supporter, and \$300 (or more) for a Society Patron. Non-members may subscribe to hardcopy of this newsletter for an annual fee of \$20. E-mail copies provided to members and interested non-members at no charge.

To join HSSB: Send your contact information and a check for your membership dues made out to *Humanist Society of Santa Barbara*, to Mary Wilk, P.O. Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130. For further membership information contact Mary Wilk at [mwilk@cox.net](mailto:mwilk@cox.net).

For more information about HSSB, contact any of the officers at their email or at the P.O. Box address shown above.



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

## HSSB Calendar

**Thursday May 6, 4:00-7:00 pm. *May Day For Humanity.*** A charity & entertainment event on the National Day of Reason (same day as National Day of Prayer). [Register here.](#)

**Tuesday, May 11, 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting.** Click on the following link as early as 4:45pm for dinner & socializing. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>

**Saturday May 15<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 pm. Henri Pellissier. *Humanist Global Charity: What's It All About?*** Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82040473424>

**Saturday June 5<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 pm. Marian Shapiro Leads Book Discussion: *This Is How It Always Is.*** By Laurie Frankel. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82598900099>

**Tuesday, June 15, 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting.** Click on the following link as early as 4:45pm for dinner & socializing. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>

**Saturday June 19<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 pm. Dr. Scott McCann & Marian Shapiro, MSW. *Gender: How Things Have Changed Since We Were Kids.*** Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84324695013>