

The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

JUNE 2021

Join us for our June Speaker Event on Zoom...

Gender: How Things Have Changed Since We Were Kids

Program: How did we think about gender in the 1950s and 1960s? What has changed? Marian Shapiro & Dr. Scott McCann will share what may seem “new” regarding gender, particularly regarding the “T” in LGBT. They will clarify the terminology (e.g. non-binary, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, gender fluidity, etc.) and will describe the discrimination, danger, and outright hatred that Gender-Non-Conforming children and adults face in the world today, often as a result of religious teachings. They will share ways to be supportive of Gender Non-Conforming friends and family ... which might even save someone’s life. Our speakers have experience with LGBTQ students and parents and will make the case for our society to be more inclusive, accepting, and celebratory about this community.



Marian Shapiro and Dr. Scott McCann

Our Speakers: Dr. Scott McCann has been a licensed clinical social worker for 40 years. He served as the Vice President for Education at Planned Parenthood for 16 years and Director of Education at the Santa Barbara County Health Department for six years. He taught human sexuality at Santa Barbara City College and at Antioch University for 20 years, and currently facilitates the Prostate Cancer Discussion Group at the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center.

Marian Shapiro MSW, worked as Director of Education for Planned Parenthood in the Bible Belt for 20 years. She was certified in Sexuality Education by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists. She got her BA degree from UC Berkeley, and her Masters in Social Work from Kansas University. She worked across Kansas as an Education, Counseling, and Training Specialist, and taught at two State Universities there. In 2002, Marian returned home to California and taught The Psychology of Human Sexuality at Santa Barbara City College for 11 years, retiring in 2015. We are so fortunate to have Marian as an HSSB member. Her enthusiasm, community activism and photographic skills, are much appreciated in our community.

Saturday June 19, 2021 at 3:00pm PST. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84324695013>

Also in June:

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

Read this award-winning novel about a family raising a transgender child, *This is How it Always Is*, by Laurie Frankel, then join the book discussion lead by **Marian Shapiro**.

Saturday June 5th at 3:00 pm PST Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82598900099>

June COVID-19 Update: Are We There Yet?

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

Sunday June 27 @ 3pm. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82598900099>

The HSSB Secular Circular – June 2021

Hank Pellissier

Humanist Global Charity: Who They Are, What They Do, Current Focus & Projects - 5/15/21

By Robert Bernstein

Hank Pellissier attended UCSB in the early 1970s after growing up in a conservative Christian household. His UCSB education caused him to question his faith and he came to realize he was a humanist.

Over the years he has been involved in a range of humanist, transhumanist, atheist, educational, and humanitarian causes. He helped build the first atheist orphanage in Uganda in 2015.



Honorary Board Members Steven Pinker & Daniel Dennett. HGC President Karen Zelevinsky and Executive Director, Phil Zuckerman.

His Brighter Brains Institute evolved into the Humanist Global Charity (HGC) which now provides about \$100,000 a year for humanitarian aid projects.

Here Pellissier kindly [shared his slides](#) showing the work of HGC.

HGC's vision: "We work toward a world with humanist values, that respects science, secular

education, sustainability, kindness, peace & democracy."

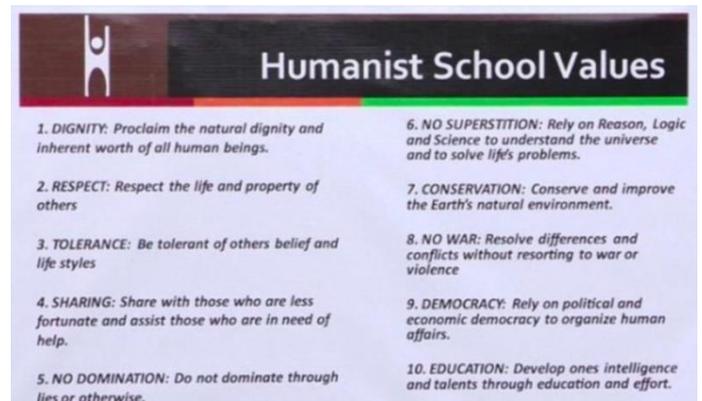
Ugandan Bwambale Robert Musubaho is a primary partner in HGC. An orphan himself, he has founded humanist schools and orphanages in Uganda. Here he is with Pellissier:

In Uganda and in some other parts of Africa the biggest religious threat is witchcraft. Beliefs in these traditional religions result in ongoing atrocities. One example was sacrificing albino people into volcanoes in Cameroon. Traditional witchcraft has also been responsible for abducting and murdering children for their body parts.



Africa is also home to many armed conflicts that rarely make the news in the U.S.

Humanism has spread in Uganda with about 10 Humanist schools. Many Ugandans are now familiar with humanism.





Hank then continued to describe other recent projects. Sanitary pads are extremely important for young girls in the developing world. HGC distributes them in Africa, India, and Nepal. They allow girls to stay in school; otherwise, girls stay home from school a few days a month, then fall behind in their studies, and drop out. HGC has experimented with different designs and sources. Perhaps the best right now are AFRIPads made in Uganda. They can be washed and reused. These girls and young women show off the packaged pads.



There are 16 Humanist clinics providing free basic medicine.

Pellissier briefly digressed to tell of his interest in transhumanism when showing an image of a project which was jointly supported with Alcor. "Transhumanists want to live forever and are even willing to become robots to do it." Alcor is a company that posthumously freezes their clients' heads in the hope of extending their life with future technology. For Ugandans, an extended life might be living to 60. Pellissier says he is considered to be an old man in Uganda!

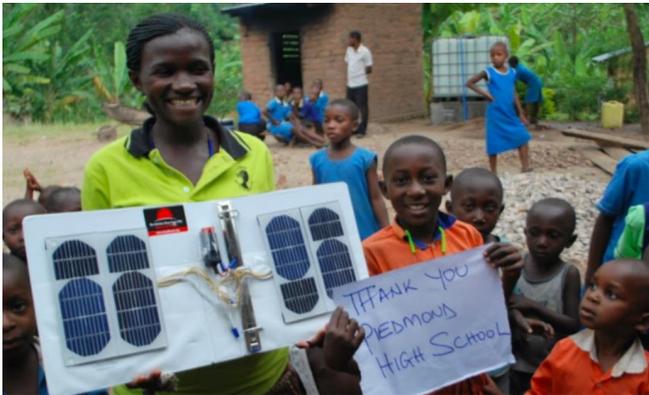
I will add that transhumanism is also about transcending the limits of human intelligence to super-human intelligence. Some think that this is a path to a more sustainable and rewarding future. I consider myself to be a transhumanist.



Many countries in Africa are notoriously homophobic, with homosexuality a crime in several countries. HGC has partnered with LGBT organizations such as this lesbian organization.



Pellissier lives in Piedmont in the Bay Area. A local Piedmont High School physics class created and donated solar powered phone chargers they made in class!



A recurring theme in the talk was all the work being done to assist orphans. I was curious as to why Uganda has so many orphans. Hank claims that 10-15% of children in western Uganda are orphans for a number of reasons. Western Uganda borders Congo. There are dozens of militias in that area run by warlords or bandits. They enter Uganda to rape, kill, and steal.

Also, Uganda has national parks to protect endangered animals. Some of the orphans' fathers were killed for poaching these animals.

Pellissier went on to describe an impressive list of other HGC projects and shared photos of them.

One project supports orphan boys in recycling used tires into sandals. Another is the Eco-Briquette project. This uses recycled materials to be turned into briquettes for cooking rather than cutting down trees for fuel.



Another project has created a carpentry workshop for orphan boys.

The Humanist Orphan Center in Kenya works with the Center for Inquiry. The latter bought them a popsicle machine so they can make popsicles for their own enjoyment and to sell for a profit.



As mentioned earlier, albinos in Africa suffer loneliness and ostracism. HGC provided art supplies to an albino orphanage.

HGC has also invested in a cricket farm. The crickets are ground up and used as a protein supplement. A similar project was launched by others in the U.S., but high labor costs in the U.S. required automation to make it profitable. In Uganda availability of labor is not a problem.

HGC spends time finding new kinds of projects so that their funding sponsors don't get bored! Obviously, the best projects are those that are both self-sustaining and which donors are motivated to support.

Pellissier is a trained mediator and is proud of the Humanist Peace Service Center in Maseno, Kenya.

Nigeria is perhaps the most interesting, volatile, and dangerous place where HGC works. They have to be very careful in Nigeria. They use the term "critical thinking" instead of "Humanism".

The north of Nigeria is predominantly Islamic, under sharia law, and is the base of the terrorist organization, Boko Haram. Approximately 85% of Boko Haram is made up of boys who were abandoned by poor parents in Islamic centers perhaps in hope of a better life for their son. At the center, the boys are taught Islamic fundamentalism.

Hank says this becomes a vicious circle when some of these young men turn to terrorist jihadist activities, which kills more parents and creates more orphans. Many children have been abandoned in northern Nigeria and are being raised with only a fundamentalist Islamic education.



He showed this group photo in Nigeria. HGC supported the project to secure a safe house for Humanist activists. At far left in the blue shirt is Humanist activist Mubarak Bala, who was arrested and has been held in prison for over 14 months for his humanist activism. It is dangerous to be an outspoken Humanist in Nigeria.

Pellissier showed a photo of the World Internet Peace Cafe, started by a brilliant 24 year old man in Nigeria. Another HGC project is an ice cream factory staffed by widows.

Pellissier went on to talk about HGC staff member Dan Beaton's work in Ghana. A person can accuse their neighbor (generally an elderly widow) of witchcraft. The accused is forced to leave and go to a "witch camp" and the accuser often gets to take over the accused person's house and property.

In the Philippines HGC works with HAPI, the Humanist Alliance Philippines International. One of the most effective uses of donations is for deworming medicine.

Pellissier talked of an indigenous tribe in the Philippines called the Aeta. They had been hunter-gatherers, but this practice is no longer allowed. So,

HGC is helping them learn agriculture by providing fruit trees to plant.

HGC also buys rice in bulk in the Philippines and provides it to single mothers in a Manila suburb. The mothers make a 30% profit selling it which can be self-sustaining.

Pellissier talked of a battered women's shelter project in Myanmar which has become difficult to support now with major conflicts in that country.



India is huge and complicated religiously. He said there are not many Humanists in India. He found one in northern India who started a Rationalist Library and another Humanist who has a podcast. "Rationalist" is the term for Humanist there.

HGC also helps an oppressed minority in India that is related to the Roma (Gypsies) of Europe.

He talked of the Adivasi tribal people who are considered lower than the Untouchables. HGC helps the people who live on the sidewalks or in the Mumbai slums.

Nepal gained more support from HGC this past year, primarily for heating fuels (gas and kerosene) and for sanitary pads. Nepal also has a caste system (and a recent Maoist revolution!).

HGC bought \$300 vegetable carts in Katmandu so single mothers in Nepal could sell their vegetables.



HGC also has projects in Europe with the Roma in Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania. HGC buys milk goats for \$120 and geese for \$25 that provide eggs.

Pakistan has been a difficult challenge for HGC. They have very few Humanist contacts there. More contacts “disappear” there than in any other country.

Someone asked if HGC works in the U.S. He said they tried to work in Appalachia, but they could not find a single secular humanist! Appalachia is very Christian.

Someone else asked if HGC promotes family planning. He said they tried distributing condoms for a while, but enterprising recipients were reselling them rather than using them.

HGC has also done projects in Zambia, South Africa, Rwanda, Haiti, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Alaska, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Morocco.

Please visit <https://humanistglobal.charity/> to learn more about the work of Humanist Global Charity (HGC) and consider supporting their work through charitable donations.

[You can also watch the edited version of [Hank Pellissier's presentation](#) on our HSSB YouTube channel which, by the way, now includes 17 excellent speaker videos, 123 subscribers, and nearly 7000 views total—plus you can watch it with the closed captioning feature – ed].

Movies for (Skeptical) Humanists: *The Hippopotamus* (2017)

By Diane Krohn

Based on the comic novel by noted Humanist actor, broadcaster, comedian, director and writer, Stephen Fry, *The Hippopotamus* is a comedy about investigating miraculous claims.

Edward Wallace (Roger Allam) is a has-been poet and curmudgeon, lives alone, drinks too much, and barely makes a living as a newspaper critic, writing reviews of small-time plays. He gets fired, but then his goddaughter, Jane, contacts him and tells him about

her miraculous recovery from leukemia. Jane asks Ted to investigate the miracle cures at her family's country estate. Ted refuses, but after Jane sweetens the deal by offering Ted money, he reluctantly agrees to visit the estate and determine if the miracles are authentic.

The estate is owned by Ted's former friend, Michael. Ted arrives at the estate to find that the supposed miracle worker is his teenage godson, David, one of Michael's sons. Over a weekend, several more people arrive at the estate to get their own miracle cures. Ted remains skeptical, but as he observes and learns more about David, he begins to understand what is going on at the estate. To say further would give away the movie; however, it ends with what might be considered a miracle indeed!

Note: This movie contains sexual content and a fair amount of creative British profanity. No hippopotamuses were harmed in the making of this movie. [The Hippopotamus](#)



Pride Month & The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

June is Pride Month. Several Humanist Organizations have published statements of support for Pride month. Humanist International tweeted: “Humanism is a long standing and unfaltering ally of LGBTI+ individuals and their rights. This year’s #PrideMonth2021, let’s work together until everyone can enjoy their lives in open freedom and human dignity.”



The American Humanist Association tweeted “Here’s wishing a wonderful Pride Month to all LGBTQIA+ humanists. We love and celebrate you and your immeasurable contributions to our movement and the world at large- today and beyond!”



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. Perhaps it’s time to update the UDHR with more inclusive language.

Article 16

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage, and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Humanist Support for Juneteenth

The June 19th 2020 posting of humanist.com featured an article entitled, *What Would a Humanist Do? Celebrating Juneteenth*.

As you know, June 19, 1865 was the day when the last of the enslaved people in the United States learned of their emancipation nearly two and a half years after it had been proclaimed.

The *What Would a Humanist Do?* feature offers multiple staff opinions on a given question. As they explain: “humanists are committed to being good without a God, but sometimes they need a little advice on how to pull it off.” [The article](#) offers suggestions of how Humanists can learn about and support Juneteenth.

AHA staffmember, Emily Newman, suggested the following: “The best way to commemorate Juneteenth is to learn about and discuss why it was established and how America’s history of slavery developed into generations of racial inequality. There are lots of articles and talks online, and I strongly recommend everyone visit the National Museum of African American History & Culture (both online and at some point in person) and watch *The 13th*, a documentary on how the prison system continues to enslave African Americans today.

“As we reflect on the past, we must also apply that awareness and knowledge to a more just future for all. Donate to social justice organizations, support black-owned businesses, and fight for racial justice on every level of society.”

Successful May Day for Humanity

The May 6th Mayday for Humanity event raised over \$24,000 to support secular homeless shelters and food pantries in the U.S.

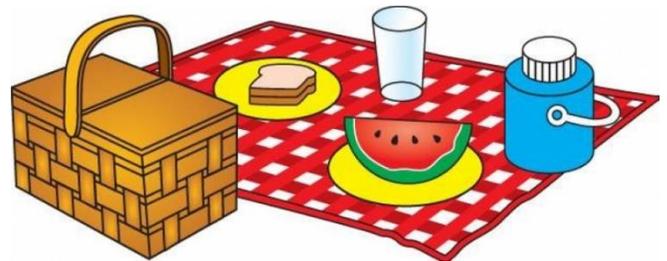
This event, on Zoom, was attended by over 800 people and featured a broad variety of talented performers. If you missed this event, you can watch the recording at [this link](#).

From Our Friends at Atheist Republic: American Secular Groups Hold Historic Meeting with White House

On May 14th, White House officials Melissa Rogers, Josh Dickson, and Ben O’Dell met with the leaders of several members of the Secular Coalition for America. The main topic of conversation was to maintain church and state separation, and equality under the law. The conversation stressed the importance of rescinding dangerous and discriminatory actions taken by the Trump administration. The atheist groups suggested that the judicial nominees take strong stances on religious equality and support those who are nonreligious. The organization American Atheists talked about policies needed to ensure that no one is rejected from shelter, adoption, or foster agency, or denied access to any other essential service due to religiously motivated discrimination.

Listen to one of our past speakers, Armin Navabi, discuss this news: <https://youtu.be/dkIUyFYW75c>

How About An HSSB Summer Picnic?



Zoom has been so valuable in keeping our society connected and informed throughout this pandemic, and yet, wouldn’t it be nice to safely meet face to face again?

We are considering holding a **members only** summer picnic get-together. If you are interested in sharing your ideas and joining the planning team, please contact Nan Cisney (cisneynan@gmail.com).

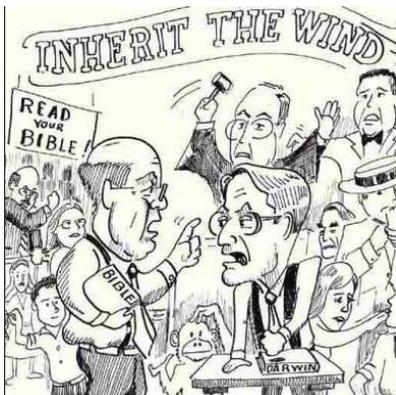
On-Line Events of Interest to Humanists

- June 6: *American Satanism with Steve Hill and Friends*; a discussion on the origins and current state of Satanism. SoCal Secular Coalition event. [American Satanism](#)
- June 8: *Thomas Paine Day*: a summary of the life and works of Thomas Paine, presented by several members of the secular community. SoCal Secular Coalition event. [Thomas Paine Day](#)
- June 13: *Mass Incarceration: A Look at the Prison System in America*. SoCal Secular Coalition event. [Mass Incarceration](#)
- June 16: Andy Norman: *Mental Immune Collapse: Mind Parasites and the Roots of Mass Irrationality*. American Humanist Association event. [Mental Immune Collapse](#)
- July 10: Kate Forest: *Jewish Without God: Living a Meaningful Secular Jewish Life*. SoCal Secular Coalition event. [Jewish Without God](#)
- July 14: Roy Speckhardt: *Justice-Centered Humanism*. American Humanist Association event. [Justice-Centered Humanism](#)
- July 24-25: 80th Annual Conference, American Humanist Association. This is a virtual event celebrating 80 years of humanism. Speakers TBA. [AHA 80th Annual Conference](#)

There's Still Time to Join the Cast

Parts are still available in the HSSB performance of *Inherit the Wind*. Please contact Nan Cisney (cisneynan@gmail.com) or Meredith McMinn (meredith48@me.com) if you are interested in participating in this educational (and fun!) activity.

We hope to pre-record this performance to share at our November meeting.



HSSB Contact Information

Officers:

President & Newsletter Editor: Judy Flattery, sbhumanisteditor@gmail.com

Secretary: Diane Krohn, djkrohn@cox.net

Treasurer: Sondra Wikman, sondra.wikman@gmail.com

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, 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.

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
P.O. Box 30232
Santa Barbara, CA 93130

HSSB Calendar

Saturday June 5th, 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 19th, 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>

Sunday June 27th, 3:00pm. Dave Flattery, *State of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic*
Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82598900099>

Tuesday, July 13th, 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>. Members always welcome to attend.

Saturday July 17th, 3:00 pm. Speaker TBD.

Saturday August 21st, 3:00 pm. Professor Joe Uscinski. *Conspiracy Theories Are For Losers.*