



# The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

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

JUNE 2024

## *Summer Solstice Celebration At Stow Grove Park*

**When: Saturday June 15, 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm PST.**



**Where: Stow Grove Park  
Area 2, 580 N. Patera Lane,  
Goleta, CA**

**Food – Games – Conversation!**

**\$5 for members  
\$10 for non-members**



**Bring an appetizer, salad, side dish, or dessert to share.  
Bring your own plates, cups, and flatware.**

**Sandwich fixings and beverages will be provided.  
Area 2 is an open area (not a shelter). Bring your hat and sunglasses.**

**RSVP to [judithannfontana@yahoo.com](mailto:judithannfontana@yahoo.com)**



**Dr. Albert Gleason Carter**  
**How Then Shall I Live?**  
**Worldview For These Times 5-18-24**  
*By Robert Bernstein*

Albert Gleason Carter, retired habilitation psychologist, and author of *Man Created God, Worldview For These Times*, spoke to HSSB on Zoom and in person at Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Goleta.



**Dr. Albert Gleason Carter**  
*Photo credit: Robert Bernstein*

HSSB member Jon Mills introduced Al Carter as his friend for 40 years through their work together, helping people find employment.

Carter began his talk by holding up his book, *Man Created God*. He quoted Anaïs Nin, “We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.”



**HSSB member, Jon Mills, introduces Al Carter**  
*Photo credit: Robert Bernstein*



Carter spoke of watching an interview with conservative talk show host, Dennis Prager. Prager was saying it is rational to be Jewish or Christian. The interviewer asked what would have happened if he had been raised in a Hindu household? Maybe he would say being Hindu was rational? No. Prager insisted he had come to his beliefs rationally. Carter looked up Prager’s background and saw that indeed he had attended a yeshiva (Jewish school) in the Bronx. Carter said that we are all about the mythologies we grew up with as well as the music we grew up with.

He went on to read from his book, starting with a definition of the word “worldview” which appears in the title of his book. He said that a worldview is about two things: What exists and how do we know it.

Carter grew up in the Eagle Rock neighborhood of Los Angeles between Glendale and Pasadena. His family belonged to Eagle Rock Baptist Church and that was their life. And it was wonderful.

Over time, Carter came to realize there was a world of belief beyond this. He realized that Catholic theologians like Thomas Aquinas had much to offer. He stepped back further and saw there are three Abrahamic religions. Stepping back further, he saw other galleries with Buddhism, Zen, and the Bhagavad Gita. He finally stepped outside all of this, from representations to reality; not learning from texts, but learning from reality.

He asked us to consider what was going on with us at the age he was getting into his religion.

At age 9 he accepted Jesus as his savior. He said his pastor asked him to recite John 3:16. The King James Bible has this as, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Carter mistakenly said *forgotten* instead of *begotten*. Many years later he encountered the pastor and was touched that the pastor remembered this moment.

HSSB member David Echols recalled being confirmed as a memorable experience.

Carter went on with a story of walking home from school with his best friend, Elliot. Two other kids attacked Elliot and beat him for no apparent reason. Carter ran home crying and asked his mother why Elliot was beaten. Her answer: “Because he is Jewish.” I should note that my brother was very popular in school, until it was learned that we were Jewish. He, too, was beaten up for that. We were forced to move to a new city.

Carter was born in 1931 and was ten when WWII started. He used to visit a fruit stand with his mother at the corner of Townsend and Colorado Boulevard. The vendor would give him a strawberry as his mother selected fruit. One day, the vendor was gone. Why? He was of Japanese ancestry and had been sent away to an internment camp here in the U.S.

Carter noted this is because we are tribal: Us vs. Them. This began 70,000 years ago and it isn’t going away. We see tribalism in Gaza, Ukraine, and Africa, he said.

He made an aside about a quibble he has with Humanism. His world view is nature. That humans are not the center of everything. But he quickly acknowledged that Humanists also

value nature. He explained that what exists is the cosmos; that you and I are just a part of that cosmos.

At age 13 his family moved to Upland, an area of orange groves below Mount Baldy. He loved it. He talked about a kid on the high school debate team who talked about being Black in a white high school. Carter hadn’t realized he was Black.

After high school Carter attended Bob Jones University. There were some groans in the audience! Carter was quick to say it was a wonderful school and that he got a wonderful education there. The school is in Greenville, SC.

Soon after arriving in Greenville, he took a bus downtown to check out the town. He sat in the back of the bus. The driver got up and told him he could not sit there. He was shocked. In high school he liked to sit at the back of the bus and sing, but it was not allowed here. He was the wrong race to sit in those seats. Carter was shocked that there were places in the U.S. where someone could tell you that you can’t sit in certain areas. He was then shocked that there was a dining room for whites only.

In preparation for this talk Carter said he had looked at his book. He noticed a poem he wrote in 2019, 13 years after his wife had died. Saying that, he became emotional.

He has many quotes in his book. He noted one from Einstein: “We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humanity is to survive.”

Carter came back to the question, “How then shall I live?”

He said that sacred texts may enrich lives, but they distort the world. He noted that we never see our own face, just the faces of others. We can look in a mirror, but that is just a reflection, not our actual face.

He talked of the conflict in Israel and Gaza and how in the Biblical God told Moses to kill every living thing. We created this god.

Carter noted that Genesis says: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” But the reverse is actually true. God did not create man in his image. We created God in our image.

He later explained his point to me: “We create gods in our own image – which includes men and women, goddesses and warriors, and gods that are both male and female. Athena, Hermaphroditus, Hestia, and others. Our gods, naturally, reflect us and as a result, we can learn a lot [about ourselves] from them.”

People today are more free to explore their gender identity; ancient religions had gods that were mostly male or female. Our gods reflect us. These stories were written down and these written texts became an authority. Such unexamined authorities can blind us to the world as it really is.

The Enlightenment brought progress, but priests and kings are still with us, “The limiting comfort of superstition remains.”

He said that Evil exists when suffering exists that could have been prevented. We must reduce suffering, for example, the suffering of a girl with an unwanted pregnancy. We must end poverty. He invites us to listen to our Catholic and Jewish neighbors.

He said that prayer is a way of being in the world and being connected to others. Ron Kronenberg asked to whom he is praying. “To the silence of awe,” was Carter’s answer.

Spirituality is about awe: when a baby smiles, when the evening clouds turn pink. He worships the sunlight filtering through the trees. Words are meaningless in such cases.

He asked us to consider at age 9 or 13 what had us become a Humanist.

HSSB President Judy Flattery shared that she grew up in a Catholic working class neighborhood where the only “us and them” was which Catholic parish your family belonged to. Then, when she was in the sixth grade, her family moved to a more affluent and diverse community near the university where there were Jews and Hindus, non-believers and couples in mixed marriages. It started there. Carter replied that curiosity is a wonderful thing.

One woman said she was raised Catholic and was in Catholic school. One day her cat was run over by a car. She asked the nun at school about this. The nun said that animals have no souls. For her, that was the end of religion.

My wife, Merlie, spoke up from the back of the room. She rarely likes to speak in public, let alone about what she experienced growing up. Merlie talked about being raised in the Philippines in an evangelical Christian home. On her way to school she regularly would have to step over dead bodies. It made her question the teaching of the church. Her parents didn’t explain why they saw these things. She was more afraid of the teacher punishing her than the horrors she saw on the streets.

Carter noted that Abrahamic religions are about obeying. Merlie said that school started at 6 am and they had to hurry to get to school on time, which meant jumping over these dead bodies.

Meredith said her awakening was more gradual. She was raised Catholic and began to see the inconsistencies. The process has never ended and she sees herself as a “recovering Catholic” even now. She grew up wondering about death and about Heaven and Hell. She wondered about God being loving and also punishing, even punishing babies. Where do



they go if they die? It struck her about age 12-13. She talked of a couple who had been married in the Church and later got divorced. They could not re-marry in the church.

A tougher case for her was a woman who miscarried. The baby couldn't be baptized. It seemed wrong to her.

Meredith went to the University of Santa Clara after Catholic high school. Her view began to shift when she took a mythology class. She realized that all these religious stories were myths and that every religion has its own weird beliefs, notably, transubstantiation for Catholics.

Carter said these stories bring back memories for him. He knew a priest who married a nun and he was excommunicated for that.

Carter was invited up to St. Anthony's for holy communion. He was freaked out by the idea of ingesting the body and blood of Christ, yet he was also able to see these people as loving.

Carter participated in a Native American sweat lodge. All day they heat stones and bring them into a little tent. All the men are naked together. Pine needles burst into flame; he enjoyed that fragrance. He remembered hearing stories of young braves dying in there. He looked at it

through the eyes of a recovered Baptist. He saw the fires of Hell. He imagined what the missionaries saw when they arrived and observed these ceremonies. They likely thought the Natives were headed to Hell.

Carter went to the Mekong River in

Vietnam into a cave with thousands of little statues. These statues meant nothing to him, but meant so much to the worshipers.

He closed his talk with a reading from the Epilogue of his book. A bit of poetry entitled:

*Still Like the Raging Sea.*

*The ancient pine precariously silhouetted above  
me against the late August sky.*

*Gazing at it, I miss the rising tide moving toward  
me and, feeling it at my feet, jump out of the way.*

*Looking up again, the leafless tree, branches  
bleached grey from the years, seems a reminder  
of something.*

*Something long ago green and flourishing, but  
now sturdy in its stalwart presence high above  
me.*

*High above the moving sea.*

*Its stillness captures me in silence.*

*It needs no story of lightning or wind, of raging  
waves collapsing the earth nearer and nearer.*

*It does not stand in awe or terror awaiting  
further storms unleashing their power against  
the crumbling cliff.*

*Its stands.*

*Branches against the sky. Without waiting.*

*Without longing. It stands.*

*It is I who is in awe-- looking up at the stark  
trunk, limbs naked against the distant sky.*

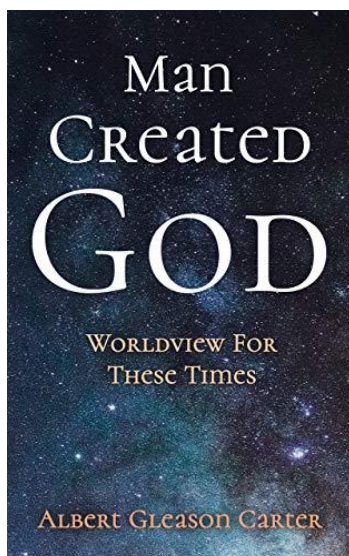
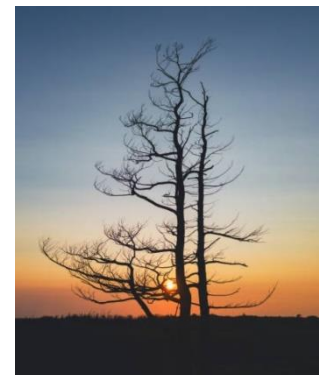
*It is I who hears the moving waves.*

*Feels the breath of the ages.*

*The warmth of the morning sun.*

Copies of his book, *Man Created God: Worldview For Our Times*, are available [here on Amazon](#).

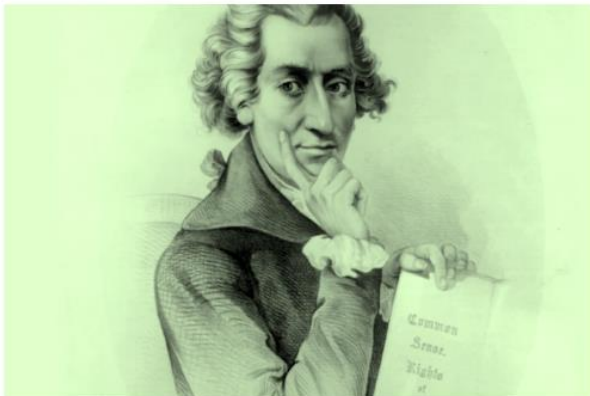
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Getty Images, iStock





HSSB gathers to hear Dr. Al Carter  
Photo credit: Robert Bernstein

**Read Andrew Seidel's Interview with  
Rep. Jamie Raskin & Margaret Downey  
on Founding Father Thomas Paine**  
[Here is the link.](#)



MAY 29, 2024

**AN INTERVIEW WITH REP. JAMIE RASKIN ON  
THE FEMINIST AND ABOLITIONIST FOUNDER  
WHO HAS SLIPPED INTO A MEMORY HOLE**

Thomas Paine was an American hero: he named our country, he authored *Common Sense* and donated the proceeds to support the Continental Army, he spoke out against slavery and for women's rights. He was a feminist, a suffragist, and an abolitionist. Seidel writes in his article, "Paine embodied the best of both men [Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson] and, remarkably, without the serious historical baggage nearly all in the founding generation carry."

The Thomas Paine Memorial Association is raising funds to construct a fitting memorial to this founder in Washington D.C. Please consider donating to the [Thomas Paine Memorial Association](#).

**Upcoming Events  
of Interest to Humanists**

*Submitted by Diane Krohn & Melanie Jacobson*

- June 2 at 10 am: *The Art of Empathy*. As an exploration of the possibilities of Compassionate Communication, Rev. Jonathan Young will look at *The Princess and the Pea* as a tale of sensitivity and community. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 820 N. Fairview, Goleta CA.
- June 9 at 10 am: *Pilgrimage*. Travel of all kinds can be enlightening. Rev. Jonathan Young will reflect on journeys as spiritual quests. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 820 N. Fairview, Goleta CA.
- June 16: *Satan's Guide to the Bible* film screening plus Q & A for the filmmakers. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. [Satan's Guide to the Bible Film Screening](#)
- June 16 at, 10 am: *Fatherhood: What Was I Thinking?* Jim Pearson, a member of the Live Oak community, will reflect on the unexpected and sometimes challenging changes he's perceived in himself as a result of parenthood. With permission from his young-adult children, Jim shares his experience as both son and father. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 820 N. Fairview, Goleta CA.
- June 20: Dr. Anthony Pinn: *What is Black Humanism?* American Humanist Association virtual event. [Dr. Anthony Pinn](#)
- June 23, 10am: *General Assembly Service~ UU Association (UUA)*. This final day of UUA General Assembly features a special, inspirational Sunday service, streamed by UU congregations across the country. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 820 N. Fairview, Goleta CA.

- June 30, 10am: *Summertime*. Rev. Jonathan Young will reflect on the personal meanings of the season, the lavishness of long days, memories of wonders we have seen, and savoring the times of our lives. An after-service discussion follows. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 820 N. Fairview, Goleta CA.
- July 26-28: *Skepticon 2024*, St. Louis, MO. A celebration of science, social justice and dinosaurs! [Skepticon 2024](#)
- September 26-29: Freedom From Religion Foundation National Convention, Denver, CO. Speakers include Katherine Stewart, Ron Reagan, Michelle Goldberg, Bradley Onishi, and many others. [FFRF National Convention 2024](#)
- October 24-27: CSICon 2024, Las Vegas, NV. Speakers include Brian Cox, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Banachek and Michael Mann. [CSICon 2024](#)

### Recently Released HSSB YouTube Videos

Did you miss one of our recent speaker meetings? We post edited versions of the talks on our HSSB YouTube channel. We have 83 videos published so far. Here are videos posted within the past month.

- Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson: [Gen Z Humanists in the Hood](#)
- Dr. Greg Daddis: [Is This Tomorrow? Cold War Comics and American Identity](#)
- Dr. Paul Larsson: [Drugs and Punishment in an Exceptional Country](#)

Overall, our speaker presentation videos have garnered **over 26,000 views** and **380 regular subscribers**. Subscriptions are free. Subscribers are notified every time we post a new video. These videos reach many more people than we could reach with in-person meetings only. If you haven't subscribed yet, please do so at this link:

[Subscribe to HSSB YouTube Channel](#)

### HSSB Contact Information

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#### Newsletter Editor & Submission Deadline

Judy Flattery, [sbhumanisteditor@gmail.com](mailto:sbhumanisteditor@gmail.com)

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*. E-mail copies provided to members and interested non-members at no charge.

**To Join or Donate to HSSB:** Annual Membership dues are \$36 for an individual, \$60 for a couple, \$100 for a Society Supporter, and \$300 (or more) for a Society Patron. Dues payments and other donations can be made via PayPal ([Paypal.me/SBHumanists](https://Paypal.me/SBHumanists)), check or credit card. Include your name and contact information when submitting payments. Make checks out to *Humanist Society of Santa Barbara* and mail to Mary Wilk, P.O. Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130. [mwilk722@gmail.com](mailto:mwilk722@gmail.com). Dues, donations, and payments can also be remitted via this PayPal QR code. At the PayPal site, select 'Send' then log into your PayPal account to complete the transaction.



Watch our speaker videos on [YouTube](#). Subscribe to our [Meetup](#) page to be notified of upcoming events.





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### HSSB Calendar

**Tuesday June 11. 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting.** Members always welcome to attend.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>.

**Saturday June 15. Noon-3 pm HSSB Summer Solstice Picnic.** Stow Grove Park, Area 2. RSVP to [judithannfontana@yahoo.com](mailto:judithannfontana@yahoo.com). Bring a dish to pass. \$5 members, \$10 non-members payable at the picnic.

**Tuesday July 9. 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting.** Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>. Members always welcome to attend.

**Saturday July 13. 3:00 pm. Dave & Judy's California Prison Experience.** Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.

**Tuesday August 13. 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting.** Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>. Members always welcome to attend.

**Saturday August 17. 3:00 pm. Seth Andrews,** former Christian broadcaster and host of [The Thinking Atheist](#) podcast. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.